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**A FEMINIST INVESTIGATION OF GENDER PERFORMANCE THROUGH A
REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS OF CERTIFICATION IN A
NONTRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**

by
Kimberly Lynn Clark

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Ane Turner Johnson

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Dedication

This scholarly work is dedicated to the friends and family members who supported me throughout many, many years of graduate studies. My support net is wide, and for that I am grateful. Much of my academic and professional success can be attributed to my parents, Karen and John Clark, who have always encouraged me to pursue my dreams and who have unlimited faith in my abilities. They are parents, friends, role models, and mentors to me. Of very special note is my husband, Jason Capelli, who helps me to find balance in my life. He enjoys every moment of every day, and that is inspiring – every day is a holiday when we are together. Most importantly, Jason allows me to be genuine by loving me as I am, feminist and all.

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This acknowledgment would not be complete without thanking my mother and husband, who served as my primary editors, reading dozens of rough drafts prior to publication.

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Abstract

Kimberly Clark

A FEMINIST INVESTIGATION OF GENDER PERFORMANCE THROUGH A REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS OF CERTIFICATION IN A NONTRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The purpose of this study was to better understand the role of gender performance for aspiring school leaders through a reflection of their journey through the administrative pipeline. The transformation of professional aspirations throughout and following the certification process and during employment was also analyzed. Finally, the appealing factors of a nontraditional administrative preparation program were evaluated to better understand the role of alternative licensure programs in advancing women school leaders. Using heuristic qualitative methods, 18 women graduates of New Jersey's Expedited Certification for Educational Leadership program participated in focus groups and 5 returned for individual interviews. Coding was employed to analyze the data collected while the theoretical concepts of gender performance, feminism, and critical social theory were used as lenses through which decisions and actions of participants were examined. The findings indicated that participants entered into school leadership as a result of an external catalyst, a mentor, which inspired a process of self-empowerment that led to their pursuit of administrative certifications and positions. This process was cyclical and reproduced itself at every stage of career advancement. The nontraditional program and its appealing characteristics added to the realization of their current leadership positions. The findings also suggest that women school leaders fluctuate between gender roles dependent on their context with gender performance transformations evidenced episodically.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

[In the professional world Fu Jun explained that] Women and men are like two athletes running on the same track. But the men run free while the women balance children in one hand and kitchenware in the other. And even if the encumbered women run as fast as the men, people then criticize them for not running gracefully. (as cited in Coleman, 2005, p. 4)

Babysitters, domestic workers, cashiers, and homemakers are all jobs stereotypically associated as being occupied by members of the female sex (Thompson & Armato, 2012). These sex-typed occupations generally place men and women into specific positions in which the effectiveness of an individual is judged by the person's conformity to expected gender behavior (Arkkelin & O'Connor, 1992; Elsesser & Lever, 2011). Oftentimes employment considered women's work requires little education and a nurturing disposition (Collins, 2000); these positions most commonly fall within the informal economy as they do not contribute to the fabrication of goods within the production boundary (United Nation, 2013). The proportion of women working in the labor force has risen from 30% in 1950 (Toossi, 2002) to 53% in 2010 (U. S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2011).¹ The increase in women obtaining positions in the formal economy escalated since the woman's rights movement in the United States whereby women entering the workforce were more educated and, therefore, more likely to obtain traditionally male-oriented jobs (Zalokar, 1986). The advancement of women in higher education equips them with a ticket to apply for most jobs (Castells, 2009), and impacts their participation in the labor force – leading to a reduction in the employment gender gap by an increase in women working in the formal economy (Toossi, 2002). This trend

¹ Current population survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011

is strikingly different from the decades prior to the feminist movement when society had “strong, ingrained ideas about what women should or should not do... [and] citizens were seriously disturbed over the wisdom of bringing married women into the factories” (Fortune, 1943, p. 100). Sex-role stereotyping in addition to the extent to which women have participated in formal education has influenced their participation in the workforce with an increase in education advancing the number of women working, and prepared to work, in the formal economy.

Since the 1970s, trends show an increase in women entering the formal economy; in 2010, 53% of the female population and 63% of the male population were working, whereas in 1970 those percentages were 40% and 76% respectively (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2011). Despite this proliferation, occupation of top-level positions in the business world by women within the United States is sparse, with their highest representation appearing in the area of senior/corporate officer positions of which 17.7% are women (Catalyst, 2010). This means that despite the more equalized quantities of women and men working in the formal economy, women are not achieving upper-level positions at the same rate as men; indicating that women continue to be sex-role stereotyped into positions that are less powerful and less lucrative.

The paucity of women in upper-administrative positions is not confined to the business world; this incongruity also exists within the realm of public education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the United States, during the 2007 – 2008 school year, women held 58.9% and 28.5% of principal positions in elementary and secondary public schools respectively (NCES, 2009). Also, less than 20% of the school districts in the US were led by women superintendents (Glass, Bjork,

& Brunner, 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Considering that on average women constitute over half of the students enrolled in graduate programs – of all disciplines (Glass, 2000; Logan, 1999; White House Council and Women and Girls, 2011) and represent 75% of the educational workforce (NCES, 2009), it is clear that a substantial discrepancy exists between the quantity of women who are qualified to work in the area of school leadership as compared to the few who achieve the opportunity to put their education into practice.

Throughout the 1950's and 1960's various civil rights organizations, such as the National Organization for Women, worked to use law as a means to improve issues of gendered social inequality, and were successful. The Equal Pay Act (1963) was put into place prohibiting gender discrimination in wages for men and women working the same jobs. Then, the Civil Rights Act (1964) was passed, of which Title VII effectively outlawed discrimination in hiring practices on the basis of color, sex, religion, race, or national origin. Additionally, Executive Order No. 10,925 (1961) was used to promote *affirmative action*, a term designated to label all actions taken to achieve non-discrimination in an effort to provide equal employment opportunity. Later, Executive Order No. 11,246 (1965) mandated employers with federal contracts to demonstrate efforts taken in good faith to diminish discrimination; this order did not originally include gender, but it was added by Executive Order No. 11,375 (1967). These federal regulations were proposed and passed in the years prior to Title IX, setting the stage for the legislation that most affected the world of education and the discriminatory practices it perpetuated.

This problem is so widespread that attempts have been made to ameliorate discrimination based on gender through policy instruments by the federal government. One of the most notable is the passage of the Education Amendments (1972). Title IX of this amendment asserts that no individual on the basis of sex shall be discriminated against, denied the benefits of, or excluded from any educational program or institution that receives federal funding; this applies to both staff and students of federally subsidized organizations. In their meta-analysis of sexism in education, O'Reilly and Borman (1987) provided a thorough critique of this law after their findings indicated that discrimination based on gender still dominated schools at all levels, inclusive of leadership. Decades have now passed since Title IX was established in order to promote gender equality; however, incongruities resulting from gender have, and continue to, exist within public schools, particularly in leadership positions (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Ross, & Chung, 2003; Grogan, 1999; Hodgins, 2007; Hudson, 1991; Joy, 1998; Lankford, O'Connell, & Wyckoff, 2003; Marshall, 1993; McGee Banks, 1995; Moreau, Osgood, & Halsall, 2007; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; O'Reilly & Borman, 1987; Ortiz & Covell, 1978; Rammer, 2007; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Schmuck 1995, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999; Skrla, 2003; Walby, 1990; Young & McLeod, 2001).

Feminism and Women's Work

The passage of legislation aimed at promoting gender equality in the workplace can, in part, be attributed to the civil rights movement when activist groups sought equity against hegemonic laws and institutions. Feminists of this era were very politically-minded (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Mann & Huffman, 2005; Siegel, 1997) and tended to

work within the confines of existing theories such as liberalism and socialism (Mack-Canty, 2004). These second-wave feminists did not aim to deconstruct social infrastructures that perpetuate discrimination, but rather worked within its confines, and for this reason critical theorists have criticized their efforts.

Critical social theory (CST) purports that in order to effect change focus should be on altering the hierarchical arrangements that preserve inequalities (due to race, class, sexuality, among other aspects of identity), rather than focusing entirely on the binary system of gender (Martin, 2003). The fact that discrimination in education is still evidenced today could be attributed to the dichotomous nature of earlier waves of feminism, which focused solely on gender, man and woman, and failed to take into account the intersectionality of factors that also lead to oppression (Mack-Canty, 2004; Martin, 2003). The multiple factors that oppress women can stem from socioeconomic status, race, religion, and sexuality (Collins, 2000). Therefore, focusing solely on gender, rather than the intersectionality of personal identities, ignores the other elements that might also hamper individuals.

Social changes affecting the rights and equality of women were undoubtedly made during the civil rights movement; however, a debate continues as to whether the endorsed changes related to feminism were successful or egalitarian (Peters, 2005). In the area of higher education, more women than ever have entered college and graduate school following the civil rights movement (Coldin & Shim, 2004; Dugger, 2001; Peters, 2005). In fact, studies indicate that as early as the 1990's women outnumbered men in undergraduate programs and equaled their number in graduate-level programs focusing on educational administration (Mischau, 2001; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2004);

in the general field of education, women earned 78.7%, 77.3%, and 67.5% of bachelor's master's, and doctoral degrees in the year 2006-2007, respectively (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Yet, despite an increase in the educational achievements of women since the 1970's, they still are not receiving employment in the top-level positions at a rate equivalent to that of their men counterparts (Bayard, Hellerstein, Neumark, & Troske, 2003; Cappelli & Hamori, 2005; Jones, 2009; Lavelle, 2001; Sharp et al., 2004).

The impact of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism takes a macro focus on the economic context in which gender impacts the opportunities of women. Educationally, the effects of an increasingly neoliberal educational environment creates a system in which the rational and emotional are separate, and as such women (with a social perception of being emotional beings) are restrained; under this system education has become increasingly economic (Lynch, 2010). Androcentric neoliberal ideas transferred into the field of education transforms education into a product or service for sale to those who can afford to purchase it (Giroux, 2002). The transition into a neoliberal educational system promotes a system of leadership, just as in the corporate world, where men – who based on society's standards, have less household responsibilities – maintain positions of power that require increased freedom to manage long professional work weeks and omit the responsibilities of caring for family and household responsibilities (Lynch, 2010).

The larger, more conceptual neoliberal economic perspective, helps to explain how occupational gender segregation within the United States labor force continued until the 1970's as a result of legal, governmental, and religious support for gender inequality and how it continues today (Thompson & Armato, 2012, p. 149). Scholars have attempted to explain the context in which the oppression of women is societal, not

exclusively individual or resulting inherently from the structure of the educational system: Estler used the phrase “women’s place model” (1975, p. 368); Schmuck termed it "the social perspective" (1980, p.243); and, Shakeshaft implied it was the deeply ingrained "social structure of society... [and] the root cause of inequities" (1989, p. 83). These sexual politics are connected to economics and various aspects of social organization that establish a hierarchy that effectively influences all aspects of existence (Young, 2005). Capitalist systems perpetuate the economic oppression of women by maintaining a system in which women are exploited as unpaid workers in the home and are pigeonholed into sex-segregated positions within the formal economy that are low-paying, have low prestige, and offer few opportunities for advancement (Gerson, 1985). The struggle for equality in women’s employment is not exclusively within the territory of economics; most social justice initiatives have been met with resistance by political conservatives and religious groups alike (Thompson & Armato, 2012). There are many layers of oppression affecting the ability for women to scale the ranks of educational administration, and the neo-liberal direction education is taking provides a more inclusive picture of the various societal factors that thwart the advancement of women leaders.

Gender performance. Derrington and Sharratt (2009), who were seeking to determine barriers for women attaining the school superintendency, noted that women voluntarily avoided top-level positions due to familial responsibilities; this is consistent with other empirical research in the area (Edson, 1995; Gajda & Militello, 2008; Joy, 1998; Loder, 2005; Picker, 1980; Riehl & Byrd, 1997). Decisions such as this relate to what Butler (1988) terms gender performance – the notion that individuals *perform* their gender through the repetition of acts which society has deemed to be appropriate for

women and men. This social constructivist ideology posits that gender is a creation, not inherent. Thus, women who are certified as school leaders that choose not to pursue a career in the field might believe their decision to be a personal one, but rather results from shared social structures that influence individuals to behave in accordance with gender norms, which with regard to social hierarchies, the area of employment notwithstanding, oppress women.

Women in Educational Leadership

A purportedly antiquated cause. As early as the 1980s, educational stakeholders argued that feminists had successfully met their goals in advancing women in the field of educational leadership (Glazer-Raymo, 1999). One New York City Board of Education member even claimed women dominated the field and that men seeking educational leadership positions needed to be protected (Franse, 1988). His assertions were based on one district in Bronx County that hired 89 administrators who were men as compared to 99 who were women in the previous ten year span. Although the hiring of ten more women school leaders does not constitute large-scale domination, in some ways feminist naysayers such as Franse are right; there are small pockets of educational leadership where women outnumber men, such as in the arena of elementary education where it was reported that 59% of principals were women (NCES, 2009). In the same year, 85% of teachers in elementary schools were also women. This might indicate domination of sorts; however, the number of woman leaders is still not at par with those in positions as educators, and women choosing to work in this environment are conforming to gender roles as the caretakers of young children (Estler, 1975). Other areas, however, including that of the superintendency, still have diminished quantities of women occupants; in 2007

only 20% of chief school administrators were women (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). A look at school administration as a whole demonstrates that the quantity of women school leaders pales in comparison to that of men (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Gates et al., 2003; Grogan, 1999; Hodgins, 2007; Hudson, 1991; Joy, 1998; Lankford, O'Connell, & Wyckoff, 2003; Moreau, Osgood, & Halsall, 2007; O'Reilly & Borman, 1987; Ortiz & Covell, 1978; Trinidad & Normore, 2005). Moreover, women consistently occupy fewer positions in school leadership, yet they constitute over half of the students enrolled in graduate programs in the area of educational administration and are at parity with men in doctoral programs of this nature (Glass, 2000).

The administrative pipeline. Women are steadily meeting and exceeding the quantity of men who attend undergraduate and graduate schools. In the field of education, women are receiving certifications as school administrators. Yet, something is transpiring within the pipeline of school leadership, which reduces the quantity of women who obtain administrative positions. Generally, the career pattern of superintendents entails working first as a teacher, then a principal, and finally in middle-level management (central office experience), prior to receiving a position as the chief school administrator (Estler, 1975). Then, the process of entering school administration is comprised of multiple stages (Anthes, 2004; Eberts & Stone, 1985); these include achieving certification, seeking employment, interviewing, receiving job offers, and deciding whether to accept offered positions (Riehl & Byrd, 1997). With an overabundance of women working in an elementary school setting, this process limits their ability to enter the established pipeline. Elementary schools generally have only one school leader, unlike secondary school situations where multiple supervisors, vice principals, and deans

of discipline comprise the administrative team. Different from the elementary environment, 40.7% of men are teachers at the secondary level, giving them an enhanced opportunity to enter the pipeline as compared to the 15.2% of men working in the elementary arena (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008b). It is clear that somewhere in this process, regardless of the educational level at which they work, women are failing to meet the aim of obtaining positions in school leadership at the same rate as men.

A background in coaching can also improve a candidate's chances of obtaining a position in school leadership. Coaching experiences and extra-curricular positions such as band director at the junior and/or senior high school levels, has also proven to be an initial step towards a school leadership position (Glass, 2000). These positions allow educators to show their leadership skills, management abilities, and ease in working with fellow community members – all traits of effective school leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2008). Unfortunately, few elementary school teachers have the opportunity to work as head coaches or band directors due to a lack of these positions at the primary level. Since more women work as elementary school teachers than men, 84.8% to 15.2% respectively, the lack of coaching/directing opportunities obstructs women from taking the initial means of climbing the administrative ladder (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008b). Even at the secondary level, however, women are less likely to coach. In data provided by 22 of 50 state high school associations, only 822 of 7,041 coaches that were reported were identified as women (Whisenant, 2003). So, overall women are less apt at both the elementary and secondary levels to use coaching as a means of entering the administrative pipeline.

Obstacles to leadership. In the United States, gender segregation by occupation within the workforce is prevalent, with men and women dominating distinct occupational categories; the only professional category in which women and men are equally represented is that labeled “business management and professional” (White House Council and Women and Girls, 2011). In this category, which bundles several professions together, women are more highly employed in lower-paying positions despite the general statistic that would lead one to believe that women and men are more proportionately represented. This is similar to the field of education where in K-12 districts the majority of educators were women while less than 22% of all school superintendents would be categorized as such (Glass & Franceschini, 2007), and in institutions of higher education in which approximately 40% of the faculty and senior staff positions were occupied by women, yet only 21% of the presidencies were (Hamilton, 2004). Myriad studies provide insight into why women are less likely to earn administrative positions than men, addressing such practices as discrimination, double-duties in work responsibilities, and society’s gendered expectations (Adkinson, 1981; Banks, 1995; Bell & Chase, 1993; Eagly & Koenig, 2008; Estler, 1975; Lynch, 1990; Shakeshaft, 1989). Following is a discussion regarding the numerous barriers that women face to pursuing a career in educational leadership.

Discrimination. Discrimination in the hiring process is a major barrier for women as society has consistently promoted and preserved a system in which masculine figures are associated with power and control (Coleman, 2005; Jarrell & Stanley, 2004; Joy, 1998; Marshall, 2003; Skrla, 2003; Thompson & Armato, 2012; Walby, 1990; Young, 2005; Young & McLeod, 2001). Even with multiple federal regulations, discrimination in

hiring, salary, benefits, and promotion is still prevalent (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Koenig, 2008; Marshall, 1993; McGee Banks, 1995; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Schmuck 1995, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999; Skrla, 2003). Studies indicate that both women and men superintendents and school board members have a tendency to select men candidates over women candidates for top-level positions in school districts (Marshall, 2003; Young & McLeod, 2001). In a study done by Coleman (2005) concerning women principals, over half of the interviewees purported to have personally experienced discrimination in relation to applications and promotions, and most of the participants who stated that they had not experienced discrimination later gave examples which contradicted this claim.

Discrimination can partly be attributed to stereotyping in which occupational gender segregation associates women and men with particular types of positions (Thompson & Armato, 2012). Eagly and Koenig (2008) showed that gender role stereotyping happens and is evidenced in reduced pay for women, in tougher performance standards, as well as a lessened possibility of advancement. This gender-based discrimination is described by role congruity theorists as occurring as a backlash to women who do not adhere to prescribed gender roles in leadership positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Elsesser & Lever, 2011; Schein, 1975).

Occupational gender segregation aside, differences in pay rates based on gender persist, even after taking human capital variables into account such as education level, experience, and work schedules (Jarrell & Stanley, 2004; Kolesnikova & Liu, 2011; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003). Although the wage gap between the genders has decreased, it still remains that women and men with similar credentials, in analogous careers, earn different salaries (Jarrell & Stanley, 2004; Kolesnikova & Liu, 2011).

Regardless of the strides women have made in the work force since the civil rights movement, they are still at a disadvantage due to discrimination in many aspects of the labor force from hiring to salaries earned. Overt and covert discrimination against women inhibits their advancement to positions in administration, maintaining a largely androcentric system of leadership (Knights & Richards, 2003; Olsen, 2005).

Double-duty. In reference to the egalitarianism of changes motivated by the civil rights movement, women school leaders are held to different standards than similarly employed men particularly within their households where there is little change to their familial responsibilities (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Edson, 1981; Glazer-Malbin, 1976; Loder, 2005; Parkway & Currie, 1992; Peters, 2005). During the work day it is expected that women will adopt the same work patterns as men; yet as women return home they continue to perform chores traditionally associated with women such as maintaining the cleanliness of the abode, caring for children, and preparing meals. These household duties are made more difficult for women as many of their family members do not provide support to compensate for their added professional responsibilities (Myers & Ginsberg, 1994). The double-duty that women administrators face is one of many reasons that women choose not to enter the field of school leadership – or take higher positions (Bruckner, 1998; Nichols, 2002; Young & McLeod, 2001).

The balance of professional and personal responsibilities is compounded by the ever-increasing workload of school leaders. According to Martin and Willower (1981), school principals worked an average of 53.2 hours each week, while more recent studies indicate that this number has risen to between 60 and 80 hours per week (McAdams, 1998; Read, 2000; Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998). In addition to the increased work

expectations of school leaders, career responsibilities have not been offset by a decrease in the duties women complete at home thus creating more barriers that inhibit women from entering and continuing in careers in the field of educational leadership. With an increased workload professionally women are unable to hold administrative positions, such as the principalship, while also sustaining the quantity of tasks required on the home front, forcing many women to either strain to perform double-duties, share responsibilities typically stereotyped as being feminine with their partners, or choose between being successful professionally and maintaining a household.

Social expectations. Deeply ingrained notions of gender roles also impact the decisions that women make. Society's clearly defined gender expectations can create internal conflict within women who have an intellectual desire to excel, but who seek social acceptance (Estler, 1975; Peters, 2005). This internal incongruity affects the decisions women make and can inhibit their professional advancement. For example, in educational leadership women earn degrees at the same rate as men, however, only approximately 10% are choosing to pursue certification as a superintendent (Glass, 2000; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Logan, 1999, Sharp et al., 2004); additionally a mere 25% of women occupy administrative positions in the field of education (NCES, 2009; Sharp et al., 2004).

In their study, Derrington and Sharratt (2009) explained that many women felt as if the decision not to seek top-level school administrative positions was self-imposed, citing familial responsibilities, motherhood, and not having the freedom to relocate as reasons for not seeking the position; this is consistent with other empirical research in this area (Edson, 1995; Gajda & Militello, 2008; Joy, 1998; Loder, 2005; Picker, 1980; Riehl

& Byrd, 1997). Decisions of this nature demonstrate how women *do* gender – by making individual choices, and then taking actions, that sustain society’s gender arrangements (Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1993; Risman, 2004; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Societal expectations put women in a bind that forces them to make decisions about their own educational and career aspirations within a world where appropriate roles for women have already been determined that might contradict their professional aspirations (Estler, 1975). Factors inhibiting women in the workplace are not limited to outside forces; they are also internal, as women make decisions about their lives based not only on their own wishes, but also on society’s expectations of the roles that they should inhabit as a result of their gender (Konrad, 2003). Ultimately, societal beliefs bind women who are educated, capable, and motivated enough to become successful leaders, because of the contradiction of these characteristics with their expected gender behavior.

Preparation for leadership. In the area of women’s studies, leadership has not been a top concern as this field has traditionally focused more on the interconnectedness of race, class, sexuality, and gender, as well as on the critique of the social norms that act as obstacles to women (Trigg, 2006). At this juncture, scholarship supports the notion that cultural norms and their socializing forces negatively impact the professional advancement of women (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Lybeck & Neal, 1995; Thompson & Armato, 2012). From their earliest experiences, girls are taught to be submissive to men; this societal gender norm has roots in religious teachings, from which many social norms are based, and which creates an environment in which girls are raised that is incongruent to, and discouraging of, woman leadership (Thompson & Armato, 2012). The impact that society’s gender norms have on influencing young women is important to recognize as

studies have noted that women who have succeeded in the field of educational leadership predominately cited women, such as relatives and schoolteachers, as individuals whom they viewed as leaders and who impacted their decision to pursue a leadership position during childhood (Lafreniere & Longman, 2008; Madsen, 2007; Marshall & Kasten, 1994; Young & McLeod, 2001).

Women have, and continue to be, underrepresented in formal leadership positions, yet they have had important informal leadership roles (Thompson & Armato, 2012). The development of women's leadership was founded on recognizing the ways in which women have historically demonstrated leadership and promoting this as a means to advance women professionally (Trigg, 2006). Charlotte Bunch, the director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership, has asserted that more women need to take on leadership roles as they bring a unique perspective that differs from that of the traditional masculine leadership orientation (Institute for Women's Leadership, 2002); additionally, an increase in women leaders will assist in providing role models to young girls to promote their desire to become leaders themselves. Women are inspired and motivated through the influence of women leaders who serve as role models for others (Madsen, 2007; Young & McLeod, 2001). According to Lafreniere and Longman (2008), mentoring experiences, an all-female environment, and informal conversations with other women are the most effective means of increasing the confidence of women who participate in a leadership program; this subsequently boosts self-efficacy and promotes their drive to become leaders.

Research supports the assertion that women employ different leadership styles than men (Aurora & Caliper, 2005; Bjork, 2000; Coleman, 2005; Young, 2005), and the

leadership styles of men have become standard, as men have traditionally been associated with positions of power (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Schein, 1975). Because traditional programs have not aimed specifically to promote women in leadership, many programs have been created to nurture women leaders such as: The University of Richmond's Women Involved in Living and Learning Program; The Leadership Institute at Columbia College in South Carolina; The Corps of Cadets; Old Dominion University's Women's Institute for Leadership Development; the Women's Leadership Development Institute; Mount Saint Mary's College Women's Leadership Program; Barnard College's Young Women's Leadership Institute; The Mount Vernon Campus of George Washington University's Elizabeth Somers Women's Leadership Programs; and, Mary Baldwin College's Virginia Women's Institute for Leadership (Jurgens & Dodd, 2003). Common threads in these programs include the exclusive enrollment of women, curriculum inclusive of women leadership development, as well as the incorporation of women guest speakers, mentors, and leaders. Programs of this nature work to counteract the gender norms that university-level women experience, and give them the self-efficacy and empowerment to succeed in a male-dominated occupational field.

A study by Duke University explored the culture of college campuses and found that undergraduate women feel compelled to conform to an idealized standard in which their physique and reputation trump their intellect – causing most women to focus on their appearance and social perception rather than on their academics (Lipka, 2004; Trigg, 2006); this is strikingly similar to what Peters (2005) described as the culture of college campuses in the late 1960s. Women-centered leadership programs aim to develop

women who are self-empowered to reach their leadership potential despite cultural gender norms that promote submissiveness.

Women's leadership programs are also in harmony with a growing body of literature supporting the concept of defining moments, which can be described as a pivotal point in an individual's life that acts as a catalyst towards moving into (and successfully maintaining) a leadership role (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Bennis & Thomas, 2007; Lafreniere & Longman, 2008). Scholarship concerning defining moments asserts that these experiences cause an internal assessment of core values ultimately leading to a new self-awareness that manifests itself in actions (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Lafreniere & Longman, 2008; Quinn, 2005). During a series of interviews of effective leaders, Bennis and Thomas (2007) found a connection between their effectiveness and defining moments that these leaders could pinpoint. Avolio and Luthans (2006) said a defining moment is a "leadership development jolt" that propels future leaders to a new self-awareness and focus that promotes their leadership success (p. 11). Participation in a women's leadership development program could be considered a defining moment, as any experience that causes self-evaluation and reflection can be classified as such. The literature available demonstrates that the leadership development of women is a more recent concept that has proven effective in encouraging women to seek leadership positions in many professional fields, and which continues to grow. A new type of educational leadership development program has recently been formulated that does not aim to focus on the advancement of women in the field, but that may inadvertently meet this goal.

Nontraditional Administrative Preparation Programs

Surprisingly, there is a purported shortage of qualified administrators for whom positions need to be filled (Herrington & Wills, 2005; Hickey-Gramke & Whaley, 2007; Lovely, 2004). For this reason, nontraditional means for preparing school administrators for certification have been created and instituted in at least 13 states (Anthes, 2004). Supporters of alternative certification programs claim that this is an optimal way to entice competent individuals from other fields to pursue a career as a school principal or administrator (Hecht, Ashby, Azinger, & Klass, 2000; Hess, 2003; Mazzeo, 2003). In comparison to the traditional means of certification, nontraditional programs are still in a fledgling stage and as such still need to be critically examined (Hickey-Gramke & Whaley, 2007). With regard to women school leaders, the question at hand is whether nontraditional programs adhere to the status quo in their ability to assist women in entering the professional field of educational leadership.

Historically the term *qualified* has been used as a proxy for “man” with regard to discussions of a scarcity of competent school leaders (Young, 2005). Do nontraditional administrative preparation programs conform to this standard set by their traditional equivalents or do they produce certified men and women who enter the field at a comparable rate? One article on alternative administrative preparation programs does promote the need for a study where principals certified by nontraditional means are analyzed to determine whether graduates receive employment following certification (Brown, O’Connor, Neal, & Overturf, 2011). This study took that recommendation and focused specifically on women, providing a means of evaluating the success of these nontraditional programs from a social justice perspective. This research study analyzed the NJ EXCEL program from a qualitative standpoint to delve into the histories of

women graduates to explore their gendered experiences within and following certification in the program; this provided insight from the perspective of women regarding this nontraditional administrative preparation program.

School Leadership in New Jersey

The arena of educational leadership in the state of New Jersey has changed dramatically since the turn of the century. Due to a state-level mandate, in 2004, educational leadership preparation programs were required to align their content with the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortia (ISLLC) standards (Goduto, Doolittle, & Leake, 2008). At that time, the 17 educational leadership preparation programs in New Jersey created a chapter of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, which resulted in a collaborative professional learning community for professors of educational leadership at colleges and universities around the state. In addition to this push from the state that resulted in enhanced collegial collaboration and standardization of curriculum, fluctuations were also evident in the quantity of persons receiving master's degrees in educational leadership as well as in the demographics of persons employed in school leadership positions.

In the realm of higher education, more educational leadership preparation programs emerged in the state since 1998, and the overall number of individuals receiving degrees has increased. Between 1998 and 2011, the quantity of traditional post-graduate educational leadership programs in the state enlarged from nine to 17 (New Jersey Department of Education, 2011). Meanwhile, the number of students graduating with a master's degree in educational leadership from those programs increased to a peak in 2004, after which a slow reduction has been evidenced (New Jersey Department of

Higher Education, 2011). On the other hand, the number of doctoral degrees conferred during that same time period has increased, with 22 students being named doctors of educational leadership in 1998 compared to 84 students in 2011 (New Jersey Department of Higher Education, 2011). Table 1.1 provides a visual depiction of these changes. Overall, since 1998, New Jersey has more students obtaining degrees in educational leadership and offers more program variety.

With regard to women school leaders in New Jersey, the proportion employed in the state has raised at parity with the national averages. Since 1999, the percentage of women working as school leaders in NJ has steadily grown from 42% (New Jersey Department of Education, 2010), to 51% in 2012 (New Jersey Department of Education, 2012). Nationally, the number of women school principals has risen from 43% in 1999-2000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000), to 51% in 2007-2008 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008a). The averages above, although similar, compare the quantity of *all administrators* in New Jersey to the number of *principals* nationally; therefore, a direct evaluation is not sound. It is clear, nonetheless, that women are advancing with regard to employment in the field of educational leadership both in the State of New Jersey, and within the United States. However, there is room for growth as the number of women educators is still vastly larger than their administrative representation.

New Jersey's nontraditional administrative preparation program. Within the State of New Jersey, in addition to the traditional means of obtaining the education and certifications required for a job in educational administration, there is also a

nontraditional route available for interested individuals entitled Expedited Certification for Educational Leadership (NJ EXCEL). This program is an administrative certification

Table 1.1

Quantities of Students Earning Post-Graduate Degrees in Educational Administration/Supervision by Year in New Jersey's Institutions of Higher Education

Year	Total Masters Degrees Conferred	Number of Institutions Offering an MA in Educational Leadership	Average MA Graduates per Program Yearly	Total Doctoral Degrees Conferred
1998	320	9	35	22
1999	437	9	48	36
2000	435	9	48	29
2001	483	11	43	53
2002	638	13	49	47
2003	689	14	49	55*
2004	1,010	15	67	39
2005	985	15	65	50
2006	1,003	16	62	51
2007	980	15	65	45
2008	951	15	63	81
2009	968	17	56	52
2010	821	17	48	56
2011	849	17	49	84

Note. This information was gathered from the New Jersey Department of Education from a spreadsheet entitled *Degrees & Certificates Awarded by NJ Institutions of Higher Education 1998 through 2011*. Retrieved from: http://www.nj.gov/highereducation/degree_data/

preparation program initiated in 2003 and maintained by the Foundation for Educational Administration (FEA). The NJ EXCEL program requires that interested parties have at least a master's degree in a field linked to education as well as five years of experience in the field of education as either an educator or educational specialist (NJ EXCEL, 2013). Successful program participants gain the necessary experiences and knowledge of educational leadership to apply for endorsement in New Jersey as a supervisor, principal, and/or school administrator.

The differences between NJ EXCEL and its traditional New Jersey counterparts are in the areas of program duration, required time commitment, cost, and educational outcomes. The length of time a NJ EXCEL candidate will spend in the program is determined by the certifications that they hold; the general timeframe for completion is between 12 and 18 months (NJ EXCEL, 2013). This is unlike a traditional program, which exceeds two years ("M.A. in School Administration", n.d.; "Master of Arts in Education", 2013). Although more colleges and universities offer hybrid and online courses, a traditional program requires students to attend class at least once a week for the duration of the program. NJ EXCEL requires more than this, as students attend class once a week and two Saturday's a month in addition to four, 16 hour summer classes (during which time the regularly scheduled classes are on hold). Regarding cost, the NJ EXCEL program's total tuition was approximately \$12,000 in the year of this manuscript's publication (NJ EXCEL, 2013), whereas the cost to complete a master's degree in educational leadership at Rowan, at the time, was approximately \$28,000 ("Master of Arts in Education", 2013) and the same program at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey totaled \$21,000 ("Cost of Attendance", 2013) – these tuition totals all exclude the

cost of books. As far as financial aid, NJ EXCEL candidates are not eligible for federal loans (but an agreement with The Bank of Princeton allows candidates to obtain unsecured loans), while in traditional programs financial assistance for institutions of higher education is available (NJ EXCEL, 2013). Finally, in the area of outcomes, both traditional and nontraditional programs boast of preparing students to complete the required state exams as well as provide them with the coursework and internship experiences necessary for state certification. Following completion of the NJ EXCEL program, candidates only accumulate additional post-graduate credits, while students in a traditional program earn a master's degree in educational leadership with the graduate credits they receive. In short, NJ EXCEL has the prerequisite of a master's degree, costs less, and requires less of a time commitment; however, in a traditional educational leadership program, students earn more accolades (through earning a degree) in addition to receiving the preparation needed to achieve state certification in the field.

NJ EXCEL was an intriguing location for this study for several reasons: little research has been done regarding the program, there is a disproportion of women to men participants, and many administrators are receiving employment following completion of the program. This program consistently sustains a 7:3 female to male ratio of aspiring school leaders – numbers which more closely mirror that of the educator workforce rather than current demographics of school administrators (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). Moreover, the number of program participants has steadily increased since its inception as evidenced by their third program location opening in southern New Jersey in 2010. One consistent demographic throughout the program's existence has been the high quantity of women participants; what was unclear at the outset of this study

concerned whether the women graduates of NJ EXCEL chose to obtain employment in school leadership positions post-certification.

Traditional educational programs have not amended the gendered problem at hand, yet there is little research concerning the effects of nontraditional programs on advancing women in school leadership. Nontraditional programs are novel, and based on the information available regarding New Jersey, women are increasingly entering the profession of educational leadership (NJDOE, 2011); at the same time, NJ EXCEL is seeing an increase in their participation with the inordinate amount of women participants. Is there some connection between the two? Nontraditional administrative preparatory programs are designed specifically to expedite the certification process for qualified and experienced individuals (Hecht et al., 2000). These programs aim solely to prepare participants for certification. If women traditionally pursue education in the area of school leadership, but not certification, it is extraordinary that 70% of the participants in NJ's nontraditional program, NJ EXCEL, are women.

When discussing women who enter school leadership, Marshall and Kasten (1994) raised the question, "What inspires and supports them as they consider entering that profession?" (p. 1). Ultimately, an exploration of the decision-making processes, and influences of aspiring women administrators assisted in our understanding of their experiences – permitting for relevant recommendations to be made as to other means to motivate women to seek administrative certification and eventually become school leaders, and led us to better answer their question. We know that a continued disparity exists when one makes a comparison between the number of women teachers and the number of acting women administrators (Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger,

2007). By working to advance women in the field of educational leadership, we are breaking the cycle of gendered oppression in education and promoting social justice in our educational organizations.

Problem Statement

Women are still at a disadvantage with regard to obtainment of upper-level management positions in both the business (Cappelli & Hamori, 2005; Jarrell & Stanley, 2004; Jones, 2009) and educational domains (Joy, 1998; Ortiz & Covel, 1978; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Riehl & Byrd, 1997). Despite federal legislation enacted to prevent it, gender-based inequities continue to encumber the progress of professional women seeking upper-administrative positions. In educational leadership, much research focusing on the paucity of women school leaders has been completed, each study confirming that gender did, and continues to, hinder women (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Marshall, 1993; McGee Banks, 1995; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999; Skrla, 2003; Young & McLeod, 2001). In this manner, educational institutions reinforce social inequalities, rather than act as the “great equalizer” schools are purported to be (Mann, 1848). As moral leaders and responsible stewards of schools, we as educational leaders should seek to establish institutions that promote social democracy (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2012).

The disparity between women and men in executive positions could, at one time, be ascribed to a lack of education on the part of women. However, currently, more women than men are completing graduate-level programs in the area of educational leadership; nevertheless, the proportion of practicing administrators does not mirror this trend (Glass, 2000; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Logan, 1999; Sharp et al., 2004). Women

students outnumber men in doctoral programs in educational leadership and, thus, there are more women than men graduating who are qualified to lead schools; yet, this same proportion of women is not pursuing and subsequently practicing their trade in the field – demonstrating that the educational achievement of women is not the factor inhibiting their advancement in the educational leadership.

Men and women alike are receiving certifications as school leaders and still, a gender divide remains with regard to these individuals receiving employment in the area of school administration. This quandary has been examined from many angles ranging from discrimination in hiring practices to the inequity in personal responsibilities of professional women as compared to men. Gender continues to obstruct women in educational leadership and this can be attributed to gendered discrimination (Eagly & Koenig, 2008; Marshall, 1993; Skrla, 2003), the double-duties of maintaining a household and a professional career (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Edson, 1981), society's gendered expectations (Lorber, 1993; Risman, 2004;), and lack of opportunities to enter the administrative pipeline (Estler, 1975, Glass, 2000). It is clear that gender norms have also imposed restrictions on women who at one time sought positions as school leaders (Gajda & Militello, 2008; Joy, 1998; Riehl & Byrd, 1997). Many scholars have studied this discrepancy from a social discrimination perspective, but one angle that has yet to be explored is the role that gender performance plays in the certification and employment of aspiring women school leaders.

Based on the data available regarding New Jersey, women are increasingly entering the profession of educational leadership (NJDOE, 2011). At the same time, New Jersey's nontraditional administrative preparation program, NJ EXCEL, is seeing an

increase in their participation with an inordinate amount of women participants – a program that aims specifically to prepare candidates for certification. If women traditionally pursue education in the area of school leadership (through traditional educational leadership programs), but do not seek certification, it is extraordinary that 70% of the participants in NJ EXCEL are women and makes one question whether a connection exists between these phenomena.

An investigation of women who became certified as educational leaders through nontraditional means was a novel approach to exploring how gender role-playing intersects with the decision-making processes and subsequent career paths of individuals who graduated from a nontraditional administrative certification preparation program; it served to enhance our understanding of the extent to which neoliberal social structures impose restrictions on women in this alternative educational program. We know that a continued disparity exists when one makes a comparison between the number of women teachers and the number of acting women administrators (Shakeshaft et al., 2007). If we do not attempt to meet the goal of advancing women in educational leadership, we are sustaining an educational system in which the reproduction of gender inequalities is prevalent and, as such, are ignoring our duties as ethical leaders to promulgate social justice within our schools.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this heuristic qualitative research study was to investigate the experiences of women following completion of the NJ EXCEL program, in order to explore transformation in gender performance during the process of certification. The theoretical concepts of gender performance, feminism, and critical social theory were

used as lenses through which the decisions and actions of participants were analyzed. This exploration was to better understand the role of gender performance for aspiring school leaders through a reflection of their journey through the administrative pipeline, by conducting focus groups and then individual interviews, at the NJ EXCEL central location, to gather descriptions of women participant's gendered experiences.

Research Questions. Due to the fact that nontraditional programs are in their early stages of development coupled with the increase in women entering the field of educational leadership in New Jersey (coincidentally at the same time this program is producing masses of women graduates ready to enter educational administration) despite the continued barriers they face as a result of their gender in administration, queries abound regarding the experiences of women who choose to participate in this nontraditional program and their career outcomes. Thus, the research questions this inquiry answered are as follows:

1. How do women graduates of the NJ EXCEL program describe the role of gender in educational leadership?
 - In what ways do they believe gender inhibits or advances them professionally?
2. How have the participant's gender performance evolved over the course of training and leadership attainment?
 - How does gender performance manifest itself in the actions as well as the personal/professional lives of women NJ EXCEL graduates?

- What behaviors do NJ EXCEL graduates describe that reveal their gender performance throughout and following the educational leadership preparation and certification process?
 - In what manner do the professional goals of NJ EXCEL women graduates transform throughout and following certification?
3. How does double-duty impact the participant's descriptions of gender and leadership?
 4. In what ways do women NJ EXCEL graduates identify gender acts as challenging leadership assumptions?
 - What experiences have NJ EXCEL women graduates had in which they feel gender was a factor either promoting or inhibiting their advancement in the field of educational leadership?
 - What factors and experiences led women in the NJ EXCEL program to choose to participate in a nontraditional administrative preparation program?

In heuristic inquiry, the researcher has personal experience with the phenomenon being studied. The foundation of the study stems from a question that is “strongly connected to one’s own identity and self-hood” (Moustakas, 1990). As a woman graduate of the NJ EXCEL program, twice-over, and a school leader in New Jersey, I have personally experienced that which is being researched. This personal connection between me, as the researcher, and the development of this inquiry will be expounded upon in chapter three of this manuscript.

Key terms. The use of a common language is an important part of effective communication (Marzano, 2003). The following terms and their subsequent definitions are provided to ensure clarity of the abstract concepts found within this text.

- *Gender* is a social construction that articulates differences between females and males through a shared system of practices and beliefs that vary by culture and context (Connell, 1987; Thompson & Armato, 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1987).
- *Gender performance* is the repetition of acts (gestures, movements, enactments, etc.) that conform to society's constitution of a particular gender; the act of gender put on by an individual for their social audience (Butler, 1988). In modeling a gender, an individual is compelling the body and mind to conform to the historical and social idea of woman and/or man.
- *Gender norms* are society's prescribed gender guidelines as to how women and men should behave including how one should dress, act, the type of work they should secure, and what their interests should be (Peters, 2005).
- *Sex* is distinct from gender as it refers to the biological aspects of human beings which society has agreed on that make a person either male or female (Lorber, 1993; Scott, 1988; Thompson & Armato, 2012). The distinctions that society created between males and females results in confusion in which biological sex is frequently misconstrued as gender (Butler, 1990).
- *Social construction* is a phenomenon produced and agreed upon collectively within a culture (Thompson & Armato, 2012).

Significance of the Study

This research project has implications that extend much farther than the confines of this inquiry. The following is a look ahead at how the results of this study will impact current and future research, policy, and practice.

Research. This study will advance the field of research focused on women in educational leadership as well as that of nontraditional educational administration preparation programs. A munificence of scholarship has examined educational leadership particularly the grossly disproportionate number of men to women occupying these positions (Bell & Chase, 1993; Coleman, 2005; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Gates et al., 2003; Hudson, 1991; Joy, 1998; Lankford, O’Connell & Wyckoff, 2003; Moreau, Osgood & Halsall, 2007; O’Reilly & Borman, 1987; Ortiz & Covell, 1978; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Pounder, 1994; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Schmuck, 1980; Shakeshaft, 1987, 1999; Tallerico, 2000; Young, 2003; Young & McLeod, 2001). However, few studies have explored the impact of gender on the decisions of individuals to pursue, or not pursue, administrative work (DeAngelis & O’Connor, 2012). The closest that prior inquiries have come to analyzing educational leadership from a gender performance perspective has been the evaluation of professional women who work a double day; where women work at their professions and then return home to care for the family and household – the same chores as those who are not employed in the labor force (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009).

One researcher, Estler (1975), explained how society’s gender role expectations oppress women into pursuing careers in socially acceptable areas, which in educational administration consists of curriculum, guidance, and elementary education. Yet, my study

was unique in its exploration of how gender performance transforms over the course of administrative certification. If gender consists of a person's continual repetition of acts over the course of their lifetime, can one break from their gender role performance? Can enrollment and participation in a nontraditional administrative preparation program break the gender performance cycle? Future research of this topic would need to examine how this knowledge can be used to determine what factors impacted an alteration of gendered decision-making and how this differs from that which occurs in traditional school leadership programs.

Another area in which research will be impacted pertains to the integration of feminism with critical social theory. The connection between these theories has not historically been stressed due to the differences in their suggested remediation of social injustice issues (Martin, 2003). This theoretical connection allowed for a stronger focus in this dissertation research on the intersectionality of individual characteristics that impacted gender performance, while previous literature examined these issues solely from a gendered perspective (Arneil, 1999). The broader analysis of the factors affecting the subjugation of women within the world of educational research opens the door to additional studies where third-wave feminism, which is more cognizant of various contextual factors impacting oppression, can be used as a theoretical lens through which the topic is examined.

In the field of research surrounding nontraditional administrative preparatory programs, this study also provides a new outlook. The scholarship of nontraditional programs of this nature centers on a comparison of these programs across the United States (Anthes, 2004; Hecht et al., 2000; Herrington & Wills, 2005; Hickey-Gramke &

Whaley, 2007) and on their effectiveness in preparing school leaders as equated to traditional programs (Anthes, 2004; Brown et al., 2011; Hess, 2003; Lovely, 2004; Mazzeo, 2003). This inquiry distinctively seeks to explore the impact that these nontraditional programs have on gender performance and on promoting gender equality with regard to securing positions in educational leadership.

Policy. The policy implications of this study are far-reaching, as a review of the current literature reveals that there is not consistency between nontraditional certifications programs across the nation (Herrington & Wills, 2005; Anthes, 2004). Furthermore, there is little uniformity between states with regard to their general school administrator certification requirements (Anthes, 2004). As this inquiry examined the nontraditional administrative certification preparatory program of New Jersey, an assessment of similar programs nationally would assist in determining their effectiveness in securing positions for graduates and their success in increasing the number of qualified candidates for school leadership positions. The implementation of a national policy concerning certification of school leaders, either trained through traditional or nontraditional means, would increase the reliability and effectiveness of school administrator certifications nationwide and ensure school leaders have the necessary skills and abilities to successfully lead our nation's schools.

It is surprising that a national policy has not already been instituted considering the strict regulations pertaining to standards for teachers in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which required all teachers to be highly qualified in their subject matter (NCLB, 2002). With the continual backlash against public education that began with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (United States Department of Education, 1983),

regulating the endorsement of school administrators would assist with enhancing educational reform via the leadership of schools as 21st century institutions.

Practice. Having an enhanced understanding of how gender performance transpires throughout the process of achieving certification in a nontraditional educational administration preparatory program is intended to find means to increase the proportion of women who ultimately obtain employment in the field. Currently, many women complete traditional educational leadership graduate programs (Dugger, 2001; Glass, 2000; Lankford et al., 2003; Mischau, 2001; Young & McLeod, 2001), but few enter the workforce as educational administrators (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012; Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000; Henke et al., 1996; Shakeshaft, 1999; Gates et al., 2003; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; NCES, 2009; Pounder, 1994; Shakeshaft, 1987, 1999; Skrla, 1999). If nontraditional preparation programs produce men and women graduates who obtain employment in the field of educational administration in a proportion more congruent to that of practicing educators, a practical solution to the issue at hand will be evident – examine the differences between these programs to determine how to replicate these results on a larger scale. Essentially the goal would be to either offer more nontraditional programs of this nature, or integrate the relevant components of these programs into traditional educational tracks, across the nation.

Limitation and Delimitations

Biesta (2010) explains that the only way to solve a problem is in an intelligent manner consisting of a systematic inspection of the issue and a formulation of subsequent suggestions for addressing them. This process is noteworthy as it is the means by which the limitations of this research will be addressed. There were several limitations to this

study that were considered and planned for including access to the NJ EXCEL site and the self-reflection aspect of heuristic research. The following delimitations, the factors that can be controlled by the researcher, were taken into consideration when designing a valid and rigorous inquiry.

Site access. One aspect of this research study that was uncontrollable pertained to my ability to employ the resources of NJ EXCEL to assist in obtaining participants for the study. This potential barrier was anticipated for and an action plan was put into place to improve my chances at accessing the site. In this plan, early contact was made with relevant parties and proper protocol was followed to officially request permission to employ NJ EXCEL's electronic resources and facility.

Objective self-reflection. In heuristic research, the goal is to both better understand the phenomena relevant to one's own life and experiences; the researcher is both the inquirer and a participant in the study through which the data is filtered and better understood (Moustakas, 1990). Unlike in phenomenology where the researcher need not have a connection with the phenomenon, heuristic research requires this personal connection. This difference adds a layer to the inquiry process as this particular type of research is aimed towards discovery that integrates Gendlin's (1962) theory of experiencing – the idea that a deep understanding can result from experiential knowledge and the meaning that results when language is used an intermediary between experience and articulation. This form of research necessitates the use of self-dialogue, tacit knowledge, indwelling, and an internal frame of reference (Moustakas, 1990). These processes require the researcher to be open, honest, reflective, and in-tune with themselves

(Rogers, 1969); then, the researcher can extend and deepen their understanding through the voices and experiences of others.

One limiting factor concerns the issue that the personal experiences of the researcher will override that which is garnered from the data. To prevent this, I planned to include myself as a true participant and determined to interview myself and participate in the focus groups as a participant and researcher. In this way, the analysis of my personal experiences as compared to the other participants would be facilitated. In order to meet this aim, I solicited the assistance of a fellow doctoral student, who agreed to administer the individual interview. This plan allowed me to both perform self-reflection and the various self-induced analysis as well as to physically see my experiences and thoughts intertwined with the larger group.

Participant attrition. When conducting a longitudinal study, one area of concern is the retention of study participants (Fairweather & Davidson, 1986; Graziano, 1993, Sullivan, Rumpitz, Campbell, Eby, & Davidson, 1996). Literature asserts that subgroups of participants who fail to complete longitudinal studies differ from those who traditionally take part in all follow-up interviews (Graham & Donaldson, 1993; Harway, 1984); this could alter the results of the inquiry. Therefore, plans to prevent attrition were considered in the planning stage of the inquiry (Nishimoto, 1998). Because this study included follow-up interviews with some of the focus group participants, early planning for retention of interviewees was necessary and following are the steps that were taken to prevent participant attrition.

Disclosure. The competence of the interviewer is essential for procuring a successful response rate (Freedman, Thornton, & Camburn, 1980). Competence takes

many forms and, with regard to participant retention, aptitude and application of ethical practices impacts individual's willingness to participate in research studies (Patel, Doku & Tennakoon, 2003). One manner to retain participants is through informed consent and maintaining the confidentiality of participants (Hulley, Cummings, Browner, Grady, & Newman, 2001).

For this reason, potential interviewees needed to be fully aware of the time commitment, what they would be asked to do, and how the information gathered would be used (Patel, Doku, & Tennakoon, 2003). In order to be open and honest with participants, cover letters with detailed information regarding the study and expectations were provided to participants, the same information was discussed prior to the start of each interview session, each person was asked to sign a participation-release agreement, and steps were taken to ensure the confidentiality of the participants (enhanced information regarding these actions and documents can be found in the ethics section of chapter three). Being forthcoming about the research and participation guidelines was a means to establish respect and trust, making participants more willing to take part in, and follow-through with, this inquiry (Miller, Rosenstein & DeRenzo, 1998; Sullivan et al, 1996).

Interviewer expertise. The influence of the interviewer with regard to retaining participants extends beyond their use of ethical practices; it also results from their interviewing abilities (Given, Keilman, Collins, & Given, 1990). Skills of importance are: the capacity to listen well, relating to others, being nonjudgmental, paying attention to detail, and persisting in the face of obstacles (Prinz et al, 2001). My expertise in these areas comes from past practice. I previously conducted a series of individual interviews

for a qualitative inquiry from which an article was written (although not published). Also, as an acting assistant principal, I work on these skills daily (comforting of students as well as interviewing of students takes place in my office – interviews are generally employed to determine that which occurred in various disciplinary situations). The overall ability of the interviewer to establish a rapport with the participants, through means such as empathetic listening, is vital to preventing attrition (Collins, Given, Given & King, 1998); and it was my responsibility as the researcher to ensure that my abilities were sufficiently perfected, which was assured through continued practice.

Contacting participants. The ability of the interviewer to retain participants over several interviews also depends on their persistence in making contact with them (Eckland, 1968). When it comes to preventing subject attrition, losing contact with participants is one of the areas over which the investigator has the most control (Capaldi & Patterson, 1987). The importance of maintaining updated contact information and creating documentation records of all attempts made to communicate with participants are practices that have been proven effective in preventing attrition (Green, Navratil, Loeber, & Lahey, 1994; Stouthamer-Loeber, van Kammen, & Loeber, 1992).

Sullivan et al. (1996) provided practical ways to maintain communication with participants. They suggested asking interview participants to provide their most current contact information, asking for the names of at least two people outside of their household who would know their whereabouts in the case of an emergency, and making contact with subjects between interviews to maintain communication throughout the inquiry process. This advice was followed. The contact information and records of participants were collected and stored in a secure electronic file with relevant details of

all communication attempts listed (Coen, Patrick, & Shern, 1996; Sullivan et al., 1996). The maintenance of contact information and recording of communication attempts were strategies that took minimal time and effort, but which have been proven to reduce participant attrition. At the conclusion of this study, this additional precaution was found to be unnecessary as every participant was easily contacted by email and telephone.

Participant comfort and honesty. In both group and individual interviews there was the possibility that some aspects of the research topic would make participants uncomfortable, and therefore reluctant to participate (Navratil, Green, Loeber & Lahey, 1994). The topic of gender and performance is very intimate and personal, particularly because many of our gender performances happen unconsciously (Butler, 1988). Participant unease over participation when discussing personal matters raises concerns over the truthfulness of responses. Three factors have been identified as positively influencing participant comfort: homogeneity within interview groups, the gender of the interviewer, and the collaborative relationship established between the interviewer and participants.

Homogeneous interview groups. Whether individuals act and respond differently in mixed-groups is a long-standing debate (Thorne & Henley, 1975); and that fact alone can rationalize homogeneity in focus group interviewing (Morgan, 1997). Homogeneous groups maximize the connections between participants, which in-turn facilitates discussion (Montell, 1999; Morgan, 1997). Several feminist studies promote homogeneity in participants when conducting focus group interviews on topics related to gender due to participant comfort (Madriz, 2003; Montell, 1999; Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000; Wilkinson, 1999). As this is a feminist investigation, the focus of the

inquiry was on the gendered experiences of the women NJ EXCEL graduates and in an effort to ensure open-communication, women were the only persons interviewed.

Interviewer gender. In addition to the homogeneousness of the group, Walby and Myhill (2001) asserted that the interviewer's gender is also salient. Both men and women more willingly reveal sensitive experiences when interviewed by a woman (Sorenson, Stein, Siegal, Golding, & Burnham, 1987). Since women were interviewed by me, a woman, in small-group and individual interviews, homogeneousness was maintained and gender was in my favor, which promoted open, and honest, discussion within the group.

Participants as co-researchers. Feminist interviewing has long been touted as more conversational than traditional social science research due its collaborative nature (Bristow & Esper, 1984). Researchers have found that conducting interviews that are more like conversations rather than traditional question-and-answer sessions have been successful in feminist studies due to the collaborative ambiance open dialogue creates (Madriz, 2000; Mishler, 1986; Montell, 1999; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000; Wilkinson, 1999). In a collaborative interview, the interviewer is charged with creating an environment where the voices of all participants are equally valued and all participants, including the researcher, work together as partners to answer the inquiry's research questions (Mishler, 1986). Self-disclosure on the part of the researcher also assists in creating an environment in which others are more comfortable relating personal experiences as well (Jourard, 1971). Since I have experienced the phenomenon, I was able to share my personal experiences as a means to facilitate discussion.

Collaborative research techniques have been studied and promoted by many researchers (Chirban, 1996; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Lincoln, 1993;

Scheurich, 1995), and were used to promote honesty in research participants. What made this inquiry unique from traditional collaborative interviews was the consciousness-raising effects of the dialogue. The heart of heuristic research is self-searching and self-revelation (Moustakas, 1990), much like feminist interviewing (Montell, 1999). Throughout these collaborative interviews, open dialogue was used to promote honesty and assist the researcher, as well as the participants, to better understand themselves. When rapport is sufficiently developed between the interviewer and the participants, it is more likely that the data obtained from interviewees will be accurate (Groth-Mamat, 2003); the establishment of a collaborative and self-consciousness raising exchange between participants were used to meet this aim.

Nature of the conceptual framework. Another possible limitation to this study concerned the munificence of theories that bounded the inquiry. This quantity of theories, which included feminist theory, critical social theory, role congruity theory, and gender performance theory, could have proven limiting with regard to data analysis. The constraints that this put on data analysis were taken into consideration prior to conducting the research, and to prevent a myopic interpretation of the data a researcher journal was employed. Janesick (1999) promoted this practice as a means for researchers to “refine the understanding of the responses of participants in the study,” to “become connoisseurs of their own thinking and reflection patterns,” and to “pursue interpretations in a dialogical manner... a type of member check of one’s own thinking done on paper” (p. 506, 513). The journal served as a means for me to reflect more critically on my influence as an instrument in this qualitative inquiry through written reflection. This helped to

prevent the conceptual framework from limiting the findings as manifested in my interpretation of the study's results.

Dissertation Outline

The text that follows includes an in-depth description of the research completed as well as a thorough analysis of the data collected in each strand of research. Chapter two is an abridged literature review that delves into the theoretical lenses that bounded this inquiry. Chapter three contains both a description and rationale for the study's methodology. A concise summary of findings is found in chapter four. Chapters five and six are articles designed for publication in journals of educational leadership pertaining to the outcomes of the focus groups and individual interviews, respectively, inclusive of literature review, data collection, results, analyses, interpretation, and discussion of how these new insights impact the field of educational leadership.

Chapter Two

Conceptual Framework

Every morning I'd dress for class in full makeup, matching shoes and purse, and braid my hair into a crown like the Norwegian matriarch in the television series, 'I Remember Mama.' But at night, like Clark Kent, I switched into my power suit. Jeans, oxford shirt, and sneakers transformed me into my masculine half. Only then could I straddle my desk chair and do the day's real work of writing, calculating, and analyzing. For me, intellectual life of the intensity to which I aspired was a male pursuit. If we can be said to be 'doing gender,' that is, following prescribed gender guidelines, I was doing both. (Peters, 2005, p. 67)

This chapter contains the study's conceptual framework, a tool that outlines the theories, perspectives, topics, and information that drive the research process (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). This dynamic device was updated throughout the life of the investigation so to ensure its continued accuracy. According to Maxwell (2005), a framework of this nature is useful during analysis as it details the lens from which the data is examined, and assists in displaying bias while highlighting areas in need of further research. As a result of this dissertation's manuscript format, where chapters five and six are prepared as journal articles, this chapter's content is less extensive as literature reviews will be included in the two manuscripts created for publication.

This investigation concerned women in educational leadership, and its specific intent was to explore how gender performance transforms for individuals who completed a nontraditional administrative certification preparatory program, if at all. The inquiry examined performance indicators such as decision-making, professional aspirations, and employment opportunities between the process of completing the program and obtaining employment. Following is a discussion of the concepts and theories which bound this dissertation including feminism, critical social theory, role congruity theory, and gender

performance theory; theories that were used as lenses through which the data was analyzed and interpreted and also that provide a map through which connections were made between decisions of participants and their external impact. This chapter also highlights how the relevant theories are interrelated as well as personal experiences that influenced the research topic and process.

Gender Performance Theory

One of the major theories that drove how the data was examined is gender performance. According to Butler (1988), gender is constituted through a series of acts that reinforce themselves via repetition.

Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self (Butler, 1988, p. 519-520).

Gender performance theory posits that gender is not a priori, but rather is a social construction, communicated through actions, appearance, and discourse, all of which vary by the culture of an individual (Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1993; Nicholson, 1994; Scott, 1988; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Simone de Beauvoir explained the difference between biology and gender best when stating, "One is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman" (1974, p. 38). In this mindset, the sex of an individual at birth is not that which governs gender; instead the actions of individuals communicate their gender to others.

Gender norms are created socially and are perpetuated by their continued adherence; an example of this would be that men do not wear skirts or that women are emotional beings. These norms are embedded so deeply within culture, that it is difficult to discern these socially created categories from biological differences (Gramsci, 1971; Gray, 1992). The continued replication of acts that adhere to specific gender roles begets an appearance of gender that is communicated socially. Certain acts are interpreted as expressive of a gender or identity, and these will either conform with or contradict social expectation (Butler, 1988).

In this study, how individuals performed gender assisted in the analysis of their actions and decision-making processes. As individuals completed the program and sought employment, I examined how they performed their gender to determine whether a transformation occurred over the course of administrative certification and employment seeking. This gender performance perspective is novel in the analysis of women in educational leadership. The examination of participants in nontraditional programs adds to the study's uniqueness as there is little research in this area, gender notwithstanding, and these types of programs are intended purely to prepare students for administrative certification; thus participation by women in these programs demonstrates that they are already contradicting gender norms through their desire to obtain positions generally filled by men.

Role congruity theory. Related to gender performance is role congruity theory, which focuses on how others evaluate a person based on their conformity to gender expectations (Elsesser & Lever, 2011). With regard to this study, the pertinent contradiction stems from the discrepancy between society's perception of leadership and

the traditional female gender role, as positions of power have conventionally been associated with men (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Schein, 1975). Studies employing role congruity theory have generally focused on how societal expectations are manifested in discrimination towards women who seek leadership positions, as was described in chapter one (Coleman, 2005; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Jarrell & Stanley, 2004; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008; Joy, 1998; Marshall, 2003; Schein, 1975; Skrla, 2003; Thompson & Armato, 2012; Walby, 1990; Young, 2005; Young & McLeod, 2001). Women in positions of power receive lower salaries, less benefits, and are less likely to be promoted as a result of their gender (Skrla, 2003); these women are also evaluated more critically as a result of the incongruity that exists between their gender and work roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In this investigation, rather than focusing on how society's perceptions inhibit aspiring women school leaders through discriminatory practices, there is a shift in perspective by examining how women respond to the social implications of nonconformity, by means of analyzing how their gender performance changes, if at all, in the face of this gendered discrimination as they enter into a nontraditional program, receive training, and climb the ranks of educational leadership.

Feminist Theory

Another prominent theoretical lens through which this inquiry was established and analyzed was feminist theory. There is a strong connection between feminism and gender theory as the abovementioned gender norms assist in establishing the gender-based discrimination that feminists aim to eliminate. Feminist theory was structured after early feminist movements with an aim at exploring women's experiences and social roles

to better understand gendered inequality within society (Chodorow, 1989; Gilligan, 1977).

There have been several generations of feminists characterized by each movement's distinct views and actions. Archetypical feminists would be the second-wave group, popular for their political activism, anti-feminine attitude, and a dualistic perspective of society (Mann & Huffman, 2005). Contemporary feminists (known as either third-wave or post-modern feminists) are more global in their aims, focusing less on the traditional white, middle-class women's perspective and more on the combination of factors that oppresses women (social class, race, religion, sexuality) in interaction with their gender (Arneil 1999; Aronson, 2003; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; Mack-Canty, 2004; Mann & Huffman, 2005; McCall, 2005; Plumwood 1992; Springer, 2002). Following is a discussion of the theoretical perspective post-modern feminism added to the formulation and analysis of this inquiry.

Feminist standpoint theory. Due to this study's focus on exploring the experiences of aspiring women administrators, there was an evident association between this line of inquiry and feminist standpoint theory, which uses women's interpretations of reality based on their experiences to provide a fuller understanding of the world (Haraway, 1991; Longino, 1999). Scholarship of this nature gives voice to the lived experiences of women who have traditionally been silenced so to uncover knowledge contained from their unique perspective (Brooks, 2007). The act of liberating the voices of women in educational leadership has proven to uncover a unique perspective and has revealed the silent oppression that women face (Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000). Standpoint feminism makes the concrete experiences of women the starting point for

investigations in order to understand the world through their eyes/experiences, and apply this newfound understanding to social activism and change. As a practitioner-researcher, use of this theory was apropos due to its fusion of academia and practice.

As members of an oppressed group, women have an awareness of both the dominant group (men) and the subdominant group (women), and this double consciousness provides a unique perspective that members of the dominant group do not possess (Nielson, 1990; Smith, 1990); for example, men are blind to the daily labor women perform to maintain the household and care for the family. Jaggar (2004) takes the perspective argument a step further when she asserts that as a result of the social hierarchy and their place in it, women have a more objective and trustworthy perspective than the men who work to preserve the status quo that provides them with power.

Without motivation to uphold the established social hierarchy, women have no reason to misconstrue reality (Harding, 1993). Regardless of the debate over objectivity resulting from social position, the distinctive perspective that women provide is noteworthy.

Standpoint feminists value the unique standpoint that is shaped from women's diverse experiences and the knowledge that this combined understanding provides (Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1991, 1993, 2004; Longino, 1999). These exclusive perspectives were sought throughout this research study.

Intersectionality. As third-wave feminists, contemporary standpoint feminist scholars understand that no universal women's experience exists because of the various differences that divide women and impact their perception of reality (Narayan, 1989). From the above discourse it might seem that feminist standpoint theory is myopic in its perspective by ignoring the "matrix of domination" that Collins (1990) described as the

intersection of factors that oppress women such as race, socio-economic status, and sexuality (p. 234); however, this is not the case. Women's experiences provide a relational standpoint because individuals can be oppressed or privileged in situations depending on their complex identities (Andermahr, Lovel, & Wolkowitz, 1997). Feminist standpoint research provides a place for allied communication between groups of individuals who do not traditionally participate in open dialogue (Longino, 1999; bell hooks, 1990; Nielsen, 1990); thus creating a more complete understanding of women's experiences from all intersecting identities and a more solid base from which to translate knowledge into practice (Brooks, 2007).

Critical Social Theory

Parallel to the gender and feminist lenses through which the data was analyzed, another of the theories that guided this research was critical social theory (CST), which is described as “a multidisciplinary knowledge base with the implicit goal of advancing the emancipatory function of knowledge” (Leonard, 2004, p. 11). CST is a fusion of critical theory and social theory, which were integrated and employed by scholars including Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte (1999), Morrow and Torres (1995), Craig Calhoun (1995), and Patricia Hill Collins (1998). CST and education have been intertwined, thus their importance in this study. Combining CST with education was popularized by Paulo Friere (McLaren, 1999; Weiler, 1994), who described educators as cultural workers and intellectuals (Giroux, 1988); this integration has Deweyan influences due to Friere's philosophical discourse and ideological critique in educational theory, strengthening education's connection to CST (Sirotnik & Oakes, 1986).

Critical social theory and educational administration. CST and educational leadership are interwoven in the ideals they value and promote. Foster (1986) explains that critical theorists maintain that practice should be informed by theory; in this mindset, although impediments might arise, school leaders should be the realization of CST. Critical leaders, as Foster (1989) terms them, work towards liberation from oppressions including those imposed by social gender expectations. Marshall (1995) connects this to educational leadership in envisioning critical school leaders as those who aim to create and nurture school systems where ethics and democracy are principles to be modeled and implemented. Fennell (2008) adds to this theoretical discussion by stressing how critical leaders promote emancipation by engaging stakeholders in a critical analysis of the oppressive structures within an organization, and to use education to remove these configurations, effectively overcoming ideas and traditions in schools that have fostered persecution. In these ways, educational leaders are *expected* to model CST through the embodiment of transformational leadership and morals, the critique of current systems, and the education of others to the cause.

Critical social theory and feminism. Feminism and CST have evolved separately; however, just as with education, there is also a connection between them. The distinction between these theories results from their individual centers of analysis, which for feminism is sex and gender while critical theorists use class, race, and ethnicity (secondary foci for feminists) as the fulcrums of investigations (Martin, 2003). Calhoun (1995) includes a discussion of standpoint feminism in his book *Critical Social Theory* proposing that CST encompasses this branch of feminism. Moreover, feminist Patricia Hill Collins (1998) was one of the authors that disseminated an integration of critical

theory and social theory in her book *Fighting Words*, demonstrating a triadic relationship between these theories. The goal of both CST and feminism is to alter social relationships that create domination of one group over another in society, hence their association and relationship in the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

Personal and Professional Experiences

Heuristic research is an adaptation of phenomenology in which the researcher's experiences and subsequent internal discoveries lead to the formulation of a study intended to result in a better understanding of the phenomenon through investigation and analysis (Moustakas, 1990). The researcher is, therefore, not detached from the investigation, but rather puts personal significance on the search for knowledge. Rogers (1977), a scholar whose work influenced the creation of heuristic research, focused on self-awareness and the necessity for accurate self-labeling. The internal understanding Rogers speaks of, and the desire that stems from self-discovery, are the driving forces behind this branch of qualitative research. For these reasons, the following personal experiences and insights provide a background prompting this investigation.

Seeking certification. Within my first two years as a high school Spanish teacher, I had a desire to enter school administration, but it took six years to reach that goal. As a married woman, I shared this vision with my husband who informed me that he would not support me in this venture; he refused to assist financially. He later explained that few women become school leaders, citing only a handful of women superintendents in New Jersey, because physically they do not look like leaders, and he noted that my personal disposition would not make me effective in a leadership position. So, instead I received my master's degree in education and then continued to take courses through Marygrove

College in the area of education/curriculum. This follows gendered expectations as graduate degrees in supervision, curriculum, and counseling are “socially acceptable” areas for women to pursue due to their nature (Estler, 1975, p. 366).

A few years later, I finally had the opportunity to pursue my educational and career goals when taking a few classes in supervision and instruction. This occasion arose after I finished my first marathon – this could be described as a defining moment for me. After the race, while staring in the mirror I realized that I was not the person I desired to be; I was not being true to myself, but instead was mired in mediocrity playing the role of a good wife. After my divorce was finalized and my finances were straight, I took the two classes needed to obtain a certification as school supervisor in New Jersey. It was during my last supervisory course that I learned about the NJ EXCEL program from a guest speaker, a woman assistant principal who had completed the program just a year before and who was already working in the field. In 2009, I joined NJ EXCEL as a student, which eventually led to both my enrollment in Rowan’s doctoral program as well as my obtainment of principal and chief school administrator certificates in New Jersey.

NJ EXCEL insights and experiences. Throughout my time as a candidate in the NJ EXCEL program, the topic of women in educational leadership was an issue that my experiences oftentimes made me ponder. My *Model 2* cohort (the program towards certification as a principal) had approximately 23 candidates and only about four were men; while my *Model 4* cohort (the program towards certification as a superintendent) had approximately 13 candidates of which only 5 were women. This discrepancy was one that stuck with me over the years. I also recall that the types of jobs many of my women, *Model 2*, peers pursued related to supervision of student services and central office

positions (for which principal's certificates are required), rather than school principalships. My memories reveal that many of my women colleagues frequently discussed the familial responsibilities that negatively impacted their ability to complete projects/internships in the desired timeframe, while I do not recall the men mentioning concern over this issue – this is also true of my doctoral program cohort. Gerson (2011) provides insight into this phenomenon when she explained that in modern society, women depend on self-reliance where they work to succeed in the workplace as well as continue to care for their families, while men revert back to neo-traditional arrangements in which their careers take priority over the egalitarianism of relationships within their household. Upon reflection, this was certainly the case with my NJ EXCEL cohort members.

Scouting for educational leadership positions. After seven years as a high school Spanish teacher and coach, I entered the realm of educational administration when I applied for, and obtained, a position as the supervisor of special education in a regional school district. Three years into the job (after several budget cuts threatened the security of my position) I was qualified, experienced, and ready to move up the administrative ladder to a principalship. After four out-of-district interviews, I applied a fifth time, in-house, and was promoted to assistant principal of my district's junior high school; the position that, at the time of this dissertation's preparation, I held.

While seeking employment as a principal, my gender both positively and negatively impacted my success. In one interview, it was clear that the district was in search of a woman candidate; based both on conversations I had with district employees, and on my observations in the waiting room for the interviews – no men were present at

the first or second interview except as interviewers. In another case, I was told post-interview that they were looking for someone who physically appeared to be a disciplinarian (more cop-like), and that I did not fit that ideal.

Gender has also been a factor in hiring personnel within my district. When hiring for another assistant principal in my building, the issue of gender was discussed. The direction I received from my principal, a man, was that men candidates were preferred. Although individuals of both sexes were interviewed, a man was hired. When I inquired about diversity on the team (and I was referring to diverseness of race, sexuality, and religion), it was explained that as a woman I *am* the team's diversity.

In each of the districts I have worked, there were clear delineations between the positions men and women held in the administration. In supervision, the majority of department supervisors were women; with only one or two men being represented on these teams (they oversee the areas of science/math and athletics – stereotypically male disciplines). Of the ten assistant principals I have worked with, only two were women. Out of the five principals I have served, none were women. Furthermore, every superintendent for whom I have worked has been a man. In my current district, every director is a woman. Thus, my professional experiences with women in educational leadership have helped to shape my interest in the topic of this study so to promote their professional practice in all areas of school leadership.

Gender performance reflection. Upon researching gender performance, I analyzed my own gender role-playing while enrolled in the NJ EXCEL program, a doctoral program, and in gaining employment in the field. Interestingly, there has been a role reversal within my household, leaving me with less domestic responsibilities;

whereas professionally, I more strictly conform to social gender expectations for women by wearing more feminine attire such as skirts and high heels. This transformation in adherence to gender norms professionally has been mostly in appearance, as characteristics such as my outgoing personality and alpha-leader tendencies have not changed. Peters (2005) discusses that she had similar experiences when enrolled in a male-dominated university in the early sixties, and this forces the question of how many other women experience a transformation in gender performance when deviating from traditional professional roles by participating in nontraditional administrative preparatory programs. This observation regarding a relationship between occupation and household chores was examined by Bittman et al. (2003); they asserted that couples who are gender deviant in their occupations may overcompensate for this by “doing gender” within the household. The effects of occupation on household work has been examined from the breadwinner perspective and the literature does suggest that women who break gender norms by acting as the highest salary earner in the family compensate for this gender deviance by increasing their time spent on completing more feminine-typed chores such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry (Schneider, 2012). This gender deviance neutralization theory most assuredly aligned with my own experiences, but did it for others in the NJ EXCEL program as well?

Social constructivist stance. Social constructivism is the belief that people create the meaning of the phenomenon being explored both individually and collectively (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). One’s background, context, history, and varied experiences alter how they perceive a situation. Within this study, the society in which the individuals were located largely impacted their perception of how gender was

performed throughout their experiences, because the concept of gender itself – the phenomenon that was studied – is a social construction. Societies have already created and categorized individuals into distinct genders with specific roles that we, as members of the society, assist in perpetuating through our adherence to gender norms, such as the use of distinct men’s and women’s public bathrooms (Lorber, 1993).

According to constructivists, all entities are continuously shaping one another and, therefore, it is impossible to delineate between cause and effect (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009); this is especially true of gender as these societal norms are so deeply ingrained in us that many are blind to their roots as a social creation. Gender norms dictate how people behave and also manipulate how the actions of others are interpreted (Thompson & Armato, 2012). Because of the difficulty associated with discerning between what is innate and the social expectations of gender, a thorough investigation of various individual’s experiences were necessary in order to distinguish patterns.

This constructivist paradigm is consistent with my personal assumptions and feminist stance. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), interpretive communities such as feminism operate at a less philosophical level; however, its inclusion here helps to establish my constructivist worldview. Collins (1990) strikes at the heart of constructivism when explaining how “the overarching matrix of domination houses multiple groups, each with varying experiences with penalty and privilege that produce corresponding partial perspectives [and] situated knowledges...No one group has a clear angle of vision. No one group possesses the theory or methodology that allows it to discover the absolute ‘truth’ or, worse yet, proclaim its theories and methodologies as the universal norm” (p. 234-235). Thus, a combination of voices, inclusive of my own, was

necessary to gain a more inclusive understanding of the varied realities of all research participants based on their distinctive perspectives and societal situations.

The scarcity of women school administrators has much to do with discriminatory practices (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Rammer, 2007; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Walby, 1990), and also with the social construction of gender (Butler, 1998; Eberts & Stone, 1985; Joy, 1998). There is still a need to augment the number of women who become educational leaders. This study is unique in that it will examine whether there is a transformation in gender role-playing between the process of completing the program and obtaining employment. Gender performance, standpoint feminism, intersectionality, and critical social theory assist in furthering our understanding of that which motivates and oppresses women in the field of education. Through these lenses, a clearer vision of the forces influencing the behaviors of school administrators is possible.

An in-depth review of the literature reveals areas in need of further examination. According to DeAngelis and O'Connor (2012), a shortcoming of most studies regarding the pursuit and attainment of positions in educational administration is their inability to connect the perceptions or intentions of individuals to whether they decide to pursue (or not pursue) administrative work. This lack of knowledge is compounded by the question of whether the advancements of women with regard to gender roles have been egalitarian (Peters, 2005). Thus, in part, I sought to determine how gender roles manifested themselves within the candidates personal and professional lives as women decided to obtain certification and subsequently seek employment in educational administration. Young and McLeod (2001) noted that the leadership orientations, positional goals, and career commitments of their participants changed over time, which inspired the question

of how gender performance might also change as women receive training about, and experience, the male-oriented profession of school leadership.

Few studies have looked at nontraditional administrative preparatory programs from a feminist perspective; however, the continued discrepancy between the quantity of women and men administrators in preparation programs and working in the field indicates that this is necessary. Due to the focus on the intimate nature of gender performance, traditional methodological approaches will not permit a complex analysis of the graduates of NJ EXCEL. Therefore, an integration of personal experiences with a traditional qualitative approach will yield an enriched contextual understanding of the issue (Moustakas, 1990). The majority of research on this topic is qualitative; however, the heuristic spin on this inquiry adds a fresh perspective to the literature and augments our depth of understanding of the issue.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Women's subordinate status in society, combined with their capacity for double consciousness, grants them a kind of 'epistemological privilege' from which new and critical research questions arise. These new and critical questions, if explored, may produce a less 'distorted' and more 'reliable' understanding of social reality. (Brooks, 2007, p. 69)

The purpose of this heuristic qualitative research study was to investigate the experiences of women following completion of the NJ EXCEL program, in order to explore transformation in gender performance during the process of certification. The theoretical concepts of gender performance, feminism, and critical social theory were used as lenses through which the decisions and actions of participants were analyzed. This exploration was to better understand the role of gender performance for aspiring school leaders through a reflection of their journey through the administrative pipeline, by conducting focus groups and then individual interviews, at the NJ EXCEL central location, to gather descriptions of women participant's gendered experiences.

1. How do women graduates of the NJ EXCEL program describe the role of gender in educational leadership?
 - In what ways do they believe gender inhibits or advances them professionally?
2. How have the participant's gender performance evolved over the course of training and leadership attainment?
 - How does gender performance manifest itself in the actions as well as the personal/professional lives of women NJ EXCEL graduates?

- What behaviors do NJ EXCEL graduates describe that reveal their gender performance throughout and following the educational leadership preparation and certification process?
 - In what manner do the professional goals of NJ EXCEL women graduates transform throughout and following certification?
3. How does double-duty impact the participant's descriptions of gender and leadership?
 4. In what ways do women NJ EXCEL graduates identify gender acts as challenging leadership assumptions?
 - What experiences have NJ EXCEL women graduates had in which they feel gender was a factor either promoting or inhibiting their advancement in the field of educational leadership?
 - What factors and experiences led women in the NJ EXCEL program to choose to participate in a nontraditional administrative preparation program?

Assumptions of and Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry

This research was undertaken to explore the experiences of women who graduated from a nontraditional administrative preparation program in an effort to examine their gender performance throughout the educational process, job search, and into their professional careers. Qualitative research techniques best allowed for a thorough investigation of participant experiences and perceptions. In qualitative research, there is a focus on the words, descriptions, histories, and explanations of the experiences of individuals from their own voices (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Because statistical

inquiry can overlook the uniqueness of individuals in a study (Creswell, 2009), a methodology that would permit for vivid, more contextualized descriptions by participants was required.

As Marshall and Rossman (1999) explained, “One cannot understand human actions without understanding the meaning that participants attribute to those actions—their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive worlds; the researcher, therefore, needs to understand the deeper perspectives captured through face-to-face interaction” (p. 57). Qualitative research allows for this depth of understanding of personal and individual perspectives via interpersonal means, such as through direct conversations with and observations of others in their natural setting (at work or home) where one can explore their stories unencumbered by that which appears in the literature. Characterized by the collection, analysis, interpretation, discussion, and presentation of narrative information (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), qualitative inquiry was most suitable to the goals of the study.

Researcher paradigm. The selection of a methodology does not depend solely on the type of information that one desires to collect; there are worldviews and philosophical assumptions that must also be considered in order to select the methodology best suited to the researcher and the study. Qualitative inquiry is commonly associated with an interpretivist-constructivist worldview (Howe, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Maxcy, 2003). Assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge, reality, and values were critical to selecting a research methodology that correlated to the study’s goals and the philosophies of the inquirer. My status as a social constructivist, in addition to my deep ontological, epistemological, and axiological

beliefs are most closely linked to the dominant characteristics of qualitative research. Since worldviews are described by Guba (1990) as “beliefs that guide action”, the personal assumptions detailed in the previous chapter assisted in the formulation of this qualitative research study (p. 17).

Knowledge of the world is mediated by cognitive structures resulting from the interaction of the mind and the environment in which individuals are situated (Schwandt, 1997). For this reason, constructivism is oftentimes combined with, or classified as, interpretivism (Mertens, 1998). The fact that gender was being studied in this inquiry also had a large influence on the use of a qualitative research methodology because how this phenomenon is perceived and performed by individuals varies as a result of their interpretation of gender and their decision to conform to the societal norms associated with this classification. A social constructivist worldview manifests itself in phenomenological research, and its branches, where individuals describe their experiences that are combined to produce an overarching description of the lived phenomenon based on these rich descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). Reichardt and Rallis (1994) assert that most researchers accept that realities are socially constructed; however, this paradigm is most common in qualitative researchers.

Within qualitative research, inquiry is value-bound (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research method used in this study, heuristics, centered me as the researcher, at the heart of the study. My biases, experiences, and background provided a matchless perspective on the interpretation of the data that was collected from participants. Rosenthal (1976) termed this as the *experimenter effect* when describing the idea that the perspective of the researcher affects the results of the study. As a woman who graduated from the NJ

EXCEL program it seemed implausible to believe that my personal experiences would not influence the interpretation of the data; hence, my interest in qualitative inquiry. In this type of qualitative study, my experiences were necessary to complete the inquiry as heuristic inquiry integrates my values and beliefs into data analysis and interpretation.

A heuristic strategy of inquiry. The roots of heuristic inquiry, the strategy used in this dissertation study, are found in the meaning of heuristic, which stems from the Greek word *heuriskein* – meaning to discover (“Heuriskein”, 2013). More people are familiar with this word’s cousin, *eureka*, as it is a common phrase to use when one makes a striking realization (Moustakas, 1990). Clark Moustakas is the foundational author of this form of qualitative research, which is distinguished by the internal search that the inquirer undertakes in an effort to discover the meaning of a lived experience and to subsequently develop the necessary methods and procedures for additional investigation and analysis (1990, p. 9). His works, *Loneliness* (Moustakas, 1961) and *The Touch of Loneliness* (Moustakas, 1972), were the first to employ this systematic investigation of the internal experience using the researcher as an internal frame of reference. A heuristic qualitative researcher uses personal experiences in combination with the first-person accounts of others to determine the nature and meaning of a phenomenon which is illuminated by the firsthand descriptions of all participants (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). Due to the researcher-as-participant characteristic, heuristic research is similar in some ways to John Heron’s (1998) notion of *lived inquiry* and the concept of *mindful inquiry* styled by Bentz and Shapiro (1998).

The researcher-as-participant is that which distinguishes this inquiry style from others. Heuristic research is an adaptation of phenomenological investigation that

acknowledges and integrates the lived experiences of the researcher into the study and places them at the heart of the exploration (Hiles, 2002). Moustakas (1990) explained that in heuristic research there must be an autobiographical connection to the lived experience being explored by the researcher, unlike phenomenological studies that do not have this prerequisite. The subjectivity of heuristic research is more striking than in other qualitative approaches. Qualitative researchers recognize that the researcher is an instrument whose background and experiences affect the interpretation of the data, but in heuristic research this is more pronounced. Self-searching and internal exploration are the main methods used to uncover the nature and meaning of a phenomenon; it is the researcher's responsibility to take part in a self-exploration to ultimately discover the nature of the lived experience (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). Moreover, the internal realizations, as a consequence of the "self as researcher being present throughout the process," gives light to the meaning of the phenomenon; this also results in enhanced self-awareness and self-knowledge (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9).

In heuristic inquiry, the researcher is more than an interpretive instrument, she is the person from whom the inquiry began as a seed, who nurtured the seedling through self-exploration and growth, who watered the plant with personal accounts from others, and who harvested the fruit in the form of an enriched understanding of herself through the discovery of the nature and meaning of the lived experience under investigation. For these reasons, the researcher is the only person who can account for the validity of the investigation's findings.

Polyani (1969) emphasized that the essence of a human experience is the outcome of the researcher's search for knowledge and as such, that which they deem to be true or

implausible can only be endorsed on the grounds of personal knowledge and judgment (p. 120). Since the inquirer is the only person there from the beginning to the end, and must endure the internal processes of self-discovery, she is the only person qualified to evaluate the data and make statements regarding the essence of the lived experience in question.

Empirical knowledge. At the heart of heuristic inquiry lies a deeply philosophical issue regarding epistemology. Polanyi (1983) has stated that all knowledge consists or is rooted in acts of comprehension that are made possible through tacit knowing:

We can know more than we can tell... Take an example. We know a person's face, and can recognize it among a million. Yet we usually cannot tell how we recognize a face we know... this knowledge cannot be put into words. (p. 4)

This leads to a question of what makes knowledge. Pecorino (2000) explained that there is a type of knowledge that comes from one's senses, empirical knowledge; he claims that scientific knowledge comes from a process in which empirical evidence is collected to support or disconfirm the truthfulness behind what we initially sensed.

For this reason, tacit knowledge alone was not sufficient to make assertions regarding the experience of gender transformation throughout and following participation in a nontraditional administrative preparation program. According to Moustakas (1990), the focus in heuristic research is the re-creation of lived experiences, including detailed depictions of events from the experiencing person's frame of reference (p. 39). In this study, the experiences of several individuals were used to portray the "qualities, meanings, and essences of universally unique experiences" including their similarities and deviations – these alone manifested the essence of the lived experience (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13). Through the stories of participants, which will be described in greater depth in chapters five and six, I was able to more fully understand my personal experiences and

gender transformation. Their narratives added the empirical evidence needed to support the formulation of new meanings and realizations relevant to my own experiences. This inquiry led to an understanding of how my experiences connected to others and helped to paint a picture of how participation in NJ EXCEL altered each of our lives in terms of gender performance.

Moustakas (1990) summarized it best when he stated, “The heuristic process is essentially autobiographical, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social – and perhaps universal – significance” (p. 15). This study began with a very personal question that stemmed from what I *knew* about myself regarding gender transformation, which led to a quest for knowledge to gain a deeper understanding of myself and to gain empirical evidence of the universal experience of gender performance throughout administrative certification in NJ EXCEL.

The heuristic inquiry process. All heuristic inquiry stems from “a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer” and a personal puzzlement in a “search to understand one’s self and the world in which one lives” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). For me, the question that arose related to the change in the type of professional clothing I was donning for work; a change had occurred in which I began conforming, very strictly, to the stereotypical “dress code” for women – high heels and skirts/dresses – which was very unlike my style for the first ten years working in education. Additionally, within my household, a more equal distribution of household tasks was evident. These changes began occurring while I was enrolled in NJ EXCEL. As Douglass and Moustakas (1985) explained, this inquiry stemmed from a desire to discover the essence of a human experience that the researcher lived; from which reflection, exploration, and

elucidation were used to subjectively find this meaning (p. 40). My confusion over the personal gender transformation that occurred led me to wonder how else I had changed with regard to gender performance during and after administrative certification and to question whether I was alone in this. Like all heuristic research, my own self-discovery, awareness, and understanding were the initial steps of this inquiry process (Moustakas, 1990, p. 16).

From this preliminary inquiry began a very self-involved internal process consisting of multiple steps, none of which were necessarily linear or required – as everything is determined by that which I as the researcher discovered. Salk (1983) called this set of processes the “inverted perspective” (p. 7). This is similar to the internal workings that Moustakas (1990) termed the *core processes* which include: identifying with the focus on inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowledge, intuition, indwelling, focusing, and the internal frame of reference. These steps required me, as the researcher, to: live the research question; allow the phenomenon to speak to one’s own experiences; use tacit knowledge to guide oneself in unexplored directions; use intuition to bridge the space between explicit and tacit knowledge; consciously turn inward to seek an extended comprehension of a quality of the human experience; sustain the process of internally embracing the central meanings of the experience; and, to ensure that ultimately the outcome of the inquiry resides within my own internal frame of reference (Hiles, 2001). For these reasons it is clear why Frick (1990) stressed that heuristic research places “an immense responsibility on the researcher” (p. 79). The internal workings were both conscious and subconscious, yet it was an intensely personal and illuminating process.

In addition to the internal processes the researcher undergoes, a specific research design accompanies heuristic research. Moustakas (1990) outlined the six phases to include: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. These phases respectively entailed: determining an interest that has social and personal value; living the research question and seeing its connections cross-contextually; allowing the subconscious to assess the issue at a more subtle level; modifying an old understanding based on the tacit/intuitive knowledge; fully examining the core themes that arose in the research; and, expressing the core themes in a creative manner (Hiles, 2001). This exploration was by no means linear, as a heuristic researcher I was forced to make necessary shifts in “method, procedure, direction, and understanding” to add “depth, substance, and essential meanings to the discovery process” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23). Regardless of the order, these phases aligned with the general framework of a qualitative research study, with the integration of a deep internal reflection from which core themes and new understandings arose.

As Moustakas (1990) explained, “In heuristics, an unshakable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling, and awareness” (p. 12). This was true from the initial data found within me as the researcher through the discovery and explication of its nature using the abovementioned internal and external processes. These processes were used to aid the researcher in reflecting on hunches, thoughts, images, and deeper knowledge while connecting to the larger meaning of the researched phenomenon (Braud & Anderson, 1998).

Ultimately, the outcome of this process was a depiction of my own, and my co-researcher's individual experiences. These descriptions include quotes, narratives, and verbatim conversations of *exemplary portraits*, as Moustakas (1990) termed them. These were formulated from the illumination that occurred from examining personal experiences and the data from co-researchers. Together this information was used to create a composite depiction of the experiences we had, from which the essential qualities and themes were generated. Moustakas (1990) uses the phrase *creative synthesis* to label the final product of a heuristic investigation. The synthesis in heuristic inquiry is unique from other forms of research as the experience as a whole is presented while leaving the individuals, from whence the data came, intact.

Context

The context of this study was a nontraditional program of administrative preparation in New Jersey entitled Expedited Certification for Educational Leadership (NJ EXCEL), which provides the schooling and experiences necessary for successful graduates to obtain certificates from the state of New Jersey in the positions of supervisor, principal, director of school counseling, and/or school administrator, all within in the realm of school administration. This site was chosen as little research has been done regarding the program, there is a disproportion of women to men participants, and this program is how I, a practicing woman school leader, obtained certification and employment in New Jersey. This program consistently sustains a 7:3 female to male ratio of aspiring school leaders – numbers which more closely mirror that of the educator workforce rather than current demographics of school administrators (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). Moreover, the number of program participants has steadily

increased since its inception as evidenced by the third program location opening in southern New Jersey in 2010. One consistent demographic throughout the program's existence has been the high proportions of women participants. What was unclear is whether these women graduates obtained employment in school leadership positions post-certification and their experiences following graduation from the program.

Site access. Access to this research site required permission from the New Jersey Principal's and Supervisor's Association (NJPSA). A few factors worked in my favor to gain approval to use the organization's resources as a means to contact possible participants: (a) my status as an alumna of the NJ EXCEL program; (b) my up-to-date and longstanding membership with the NJPSA; and, (c) the support of the Associate Director of the organization's school leadership programs (NJ EXCEL), Dr. Jeffrey Graber, who served as a member of my dissertation committee. Obtaining permission to use NJPSA's resources entailed the submission of a written request to the organization's director, Ms. Patricia Wright, including an executive summary of my proposed research, followed by an entreaty to the executive board for final approval (Appendix A). This process took several months; however, I was ultimately granted permission to use their resources to distribute a survey to all NJ EXCEL graduates from which my co-researchers were chosen. NJPSA also approved the use of their facilities to conduct the interviews.

NJ EXCEL program data. Supplementary to gaining approval for access to the physical site and agreeing to distribute the questionnaire, I was also provided access to the Foundation for Educational Administration's (FEA) demographic data for NJ EXCEL's candidates (Dr. Jeff Graber, personal communication, November 6, 2013).

Following are some gender-related statistics regarding NJ EXCEL, which proved to demonstrate how this nontraditional administrative preparation program results in novel professional outcomes for its women graduates. Of the 1628 candidates who have enrolled in the program, at the time of this manuscript's publication, 785 women and 331 men were considered alumni (FEA, 2013). Of those, 30% of the women graduates and 32% of the men reported back to NJ EXCEL that they received a position in educational leadership following program completion.

Once this data was disaggregated, some patterns arose; in some cases the outcomes of NJ EXCEL graduates conformed to the gendered trends of the past, but in surprising ways it promoted women in the field. In the areas of supervision, principalships, and superintendencies, women and men obtained positions at congruent rates (FEA, 2013). Yes, an *equal* percentage of women and men NJ EXCEL graduates received employment as superintendents, while women outnumbered men in the obtainment of assistant superintendent positions – 10% of the women and only 1% of the men. Consider that the most recent data regarding the superintendency approximated that less than 20% of the superintendents in the nation were women (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007), but, according to self-reported results, women graduates of NJ EXCEL are receiving employment in this top-level position at an equal rate as men (FEA, 2013).

In other categories, gender segregation in professional outcomes for NJ EXCEL graduates is diminishing as compared to historical statistics. According to the data, almost an equal percentage of men and women received positions as principals; however of those working as principals, 39% of the men achieved this position at the high school

level, whereas only 18% of the women did (FEA, 2013). Also, 44% of the women principals reported working at the elementary school level and only 25% of men worked at this level (FEA, 2013). Therefore, in some ways the outcomes of NJ EXCEL graduates still conformed slightly to the pre-established gender patterns that discriminate against women in the field of educational leadership, but they are making significant progress through promoting the attainment of the chief school administrator position for women.

Sampling Strategies

Since its inception in 2003, the NJ EXCEL program has averaged approximately 100 graduates per year; therefore, there were roughly 1,000 graduates who served as the initial population from whom the sample was chosen. With smaller sampling frames, it is suggested that a more comprehensive sample be used (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). As such, an initial census survey was employed where all available graduates received an email containing an electronic questionnaire and were asked to respond. Following the census survey, stratified purposeful sampling was used to categorize all respondents, then typical case sampling was employed to select the individuals who best represented the average each stratum and who would take part in focus groups, and lastly, intensity sampling determined who the co-researchers would be during the final research phase of individual interviews. Refer to Figure 3.1 for a visual representation of the sampling methods. Since no data was available at the time of research concerning NJ EXCEL graduates, I was unable to predetermine the characteristics of a typical case or intensity case for sampling purposes. Therefore, this was an emerging process that was sharpened when research was underway. Creswell (2009) explained that emerging research of this

nature is standard in qualitative inquiry since the research is often shaped by the researcher's experiences. A more detailed description of the sampling methods follows.

Stratified purposeful sampling. Using the data gathered from the preliminary questionnaire, stratified purposeful sampling was employed to select participants of interest. Patton described this sampling method as the selection of a sample from a sample (2002). Purposive sampling was the model of choice as it permitted for the selection of informative cases (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). With this sampling design, the sampling frame was separated into strata to create reasonably homogeneous subgroups and a purposeful sample. Stratified purposeful sampling is generally used in mixed methods research; however, since no data existed regarding the professional outcomes of NJ EXCEL graduates, the collection of preliminary data was necessary to make an informed decision when determining who to include in the purposeful sample.

Typical case sampling. In this inquiry, a typical case sampling design was then used to select a small sample from each stratum for the qualitative heuristic inquiry (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). This sampling strategy was chosen because the questionnaire that was distributed did not solicit detailed information, but rather was a quantitative survey in which basic information regarding employment, certification, professional achievements, and demographics were collected. This general information did not permit for a thorough assessment of participants that would clearly indicate who embodied an intensity sample as it relates to gender performance; hence the use of qualitative inquiry methods.

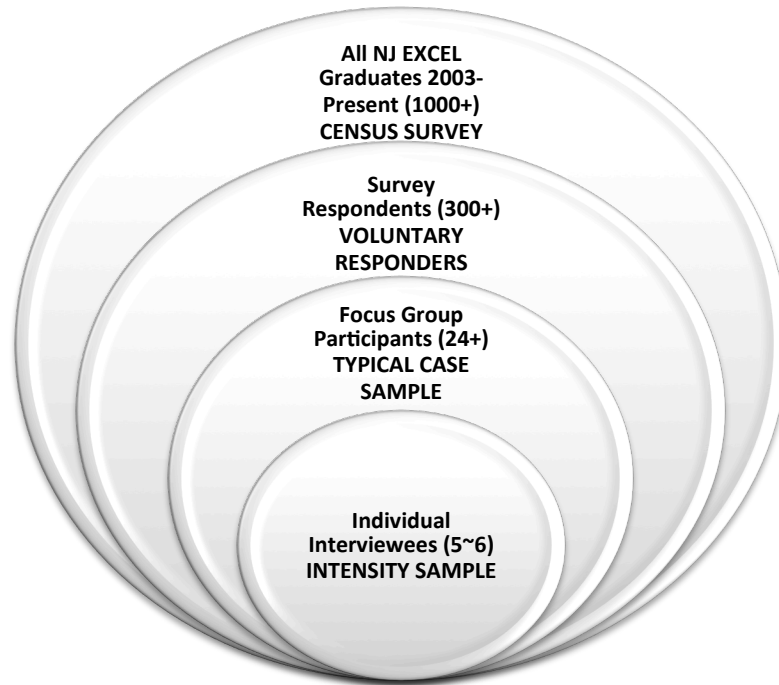


Figure 3.1. Sampling graphic which shows the sampling frame along with the purposeful narrowing of participants for the study.

Typical case samples were sought for the focus groups, based on general personal characteristics and career outcomes, from which more detailed information was collected during the first round of data collection – this allowed for evidence based decision-making with regard to the individuals selected for the last round of interviews. The demographic information that was collected in the questionnaire was used to ensure that individuals from various population sub-groups were included in the study. Succinctly, the census survey permitted me to choose a typical case based on the most common professional and personal characteristics from each stratum for further research, but did not provide the necessary gender performance information for a thorough investigation of this aspect of the participant’s experiences; therefore, a second round of interviewing became necessary to gather the depth of information necessary to both formulate a

general understanding of the interviewees gendered experiences as well as to solicit individuals who were representative of intense samples.

Strata. In this inquiry, four categories were formed into which every person in the surveyed population fell into only one (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011). All past and present NJ EXCEL candidates were surveyed, as there was no manner in which to distinguish between the email addresses on the basis of gender. The general strata into which the sample population was divided were: women graduates who did not obtain administrative positions, women graduates working in educational leadership, men graduates who did not gain employment in school administration, and men graduates serving as school leaders. In total, approximately 200 individuals responded to the survey. Of these, over 144 respondents were working in the field of educational leadership. Overall, 69% of the survey participants were women – this correlates to the breakdown of women and men enrolled in the program. Those groups served as the sampling frame, from which typical cases were selected to participate in the first strand of research, focus groups.

Typical cases from population subgroups were selected as these individuals represented the average/normal cases from the various strata (Patton, 2005). Average/normal study participants were chosen based on their experiences relative to the others in their stratum using basic descriptive analysis methods of mean, median, and mode. Characteristics of interest in this stage of the research included professional positions occupied, age, caretaker responsibilities, professional aspirations, relationship status, type of school district, and whether they felt gender inhibited/promoted them professionally. In an effort to deliberately identify information-rich cases illustrating relevant variations in the target phenomena (Sandelowski, 1999), I chose women that

embodied several typical characteristics in the abovementioned categories of interest. An attempt was made to have a fairly equivalent representation of the demographics of all the women respondents in the participant subgroup. For example, 28% of the survey respondents worked as supervisors/directors while enrolled in NJEXCEL; therefore, I attempted to have a similar representation within the interview group, of which 27% of the women interviewed were employed in this position throughout NJEXCEL training. Individuals who had average characteristics within the subgroups of interest were chosen for the focus group interviews. Appendix B includes several charts which compare the relevant characteristics of the study's participants to the larger sample population.

Intensity sampling. From the group interviews, I collected a plethora of data regarding participant experiences from which I was able to select participants for the final round of interviews based on the initial exploration of participant experiences with, and perceptions of, gender performance throughout the nontraditional administrative certification program and job search. The last phase of research entailed conducting individual interviews with an even smaller number of participants for which intensity sampling was used. Intensity sampling involved the selection of cases that were information-rich, and that “manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28).

This sampling technique was selected as it permitted me as the interviewer, and co-researcher, to hand-pick five to six individuals from the focus groups whose stories truly represented the phenomenon under examination, and to conduct additional investigation into their experiences. Rubin and Rubin (2005) explained that it is not the quantity of participants that makes the research credible, but rather the notion that the

information collected provides a complete picture. The individual interview participants were not chosen as a result of their strata; they were selected based on data collected from the group interviews regarding their experiences relative to the phenomena (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007); therefore, this group neither equally represent the four strata nor demographic sub-groups.

Participants. In heuristic inquiry, research participants are also referred to as co-researchers due to the collaborative nature of the inquiry. During the interviewing process, one method Moustakas (1990) recommended using was an informal conversational interview in which the participants and researcher engage in spontaneous and natural dialogue. As Jourard (1968) explains, when one person discloses personal information in a conversation, it promotes the same type of confession by others. In this manner, pathways are open in which co-researcher dialogue evokes the sharing of experiences regarding the phenomenon. Dialogue of this nature helps to arouse relevant experiences from both the researcher and participants and assists all parties in recalling histories of interest – making participants co-researchers through this sharing process that clarified internal queries for me as the researcher.

Moreover, although Moustakas (1990) only outlined six phases to the heuristic research process initially, which are described above, he also delineates a seventh phase in the process that involves validation of the work by sharing it with others (p. 32-37). Hiles (2001) suggests that this external validation, which is typical in other qualitative research inquiries, is good practice. I would add that when the researcher uses the research participants as the individuals who take part in the external validation, this also transforms them into co-researchers through their participation as both contributors and

evaluators. Despite their absence in the planning stages of the inquiry, heuristic co-researchers assist in both adding robustness to the empirical data and assessing the validity of the research findings.

Data Collection

Participant selection data. A quantitative survey was chosen as a means to initially collect information from NJ EXCEL alumni as it allowed for a large group to be contacted in a short amount of time (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). At the inception of this inquiry, little information existed with regard to the professional outcomes of NJ EXCEL graduates (during the research process NJPSA began to survey the alumni effectively increasing the data available). Thus, the first stage of research entailed gathering general information about NJ EXCEL graduates. As has been stated already, this information was not collected for data analysis purposes, but rather was used to identify possible research participants.

Through the use of an online survey, information regarding the professional experiences of graduates since completing the program was collected. This data collection technique allowed for a vast amount of data to be accumulated in approximately a one month window. Reminders were sent after the first 10 days, 20 days, and then after 30 days, as suggested by Fowler (2009) and Dillman (2007). These strategically timed reminders have been proven to increase the number of respondents. Participants received a researcher-created questionnaire electronically via the e-mail they provided to the NJ EXCEL program upon graduation as this was the most expeditious manner to contact this quantity of professionals. A mailed survey option was available for

those who preferred, and requested, this format so to avoid respondent bias (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011); a few respondents chose this option.

A cross-sectional survey type was employed as it provided a “snapshot” of the most current experiences and provided for prompt data collection (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012, p. 185). As this was a cross-sectional survey, data collection occurred only once in the fall of 2013 (Fink, 2008). Participation was voluntary; but, bias and response rates were not a concern since the information collected with the questionnaire was for sampling purposes only, and was not intended to be used for the inquiry portion of this study. The last question of the questionnaire asked whether the respondent would be willing to participate in further research for this inquiry. Participants for the first round of research, focus groups, were chosen based off of the information they provided in the survey, as was indicated above, as well as general demographics.

Focus groups. Qualitative means were chosen to explore the experiences of select women survey respondents. Group interviews, specifically focus groups, were used to collect in-depth information concerning the role gender has played in professional decisions and experiences as well as perceptions of gender performance throughout and following certification. Preliminary focus groups provided a useful starting point for the individual interviews that followed as it allowed for initial engagement of unfamiliar topics and between unacquainted informants (Morgan, 1997). Since focus groups can be considered formal, they are more likely to involve inviting *all* participants into conversation pertinent to the topic (Frey and Fontana, 1989; Kahn & Manderson, 1992). This allowed for more interaction and relevant discussion between co-researchers.

Morgan (1997) promotes focus groups to produce data and insights that are not as accessible sans group interaction. Focus groups allowed for personal stories to be shared and facilitated discussion with other participants, effectively prompting the sharing of relevant anecdotes from co-researchers. In other studies, focus groups have shown that participants were eager to hear the stories of their peers and promoted insights that were otherwise missing from other methods of data collection (Morgan & Krueger, 1993; Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000). As mentioned in chapter one, these groups were homogeneous – with women as the only gender interviewed – this promoted comfort when sharing personal stories and allowed me as the researcher to focus on the group of interest, women. Another major advantage of focus groups (when compared to individual interviews) regarded the observation of interaction between participants relevant to the topic in addition to hearing their personal histories and perspectives without engaging in formal observation in the natural setting, which can be time consuming, and added another level of data to that which was collected verbally (Morgan, 1997). Since individual and group interviews can sometimes produce varied results, the information from the interview in addition to the interaction between participants assisted in validating the data gathered.

Other types of group interviews, both nominal and Delphi groups, do not actually involve group interaction between participants (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). According to Douglass and Moustakas (1985), the nature of heuristic inquiry calls for interaction because at “the heart of heuristics lies an emphasis on disclosing the self as a way of facilitating disclosure from other – a response to the tacit dimension within oneself sparks a similar call from other” (p. 50). Jourard (1971) stated that self-disclosure entails making

one's self manifest, which involves showing oneself to others so that they can truly perceive you. For this reason, I, as the researcher, also participated in the focus groups as more than just the moderator, so as to assist in creating an environment of trust and in which the co-researchers were able to see my personal relationship with the topic. This facilitation of self-disclosure through the sharing of experiences was best conducted in a focus group setting, where each participant more easily recalled knowledge about their experiences relevant to the topic after hearing those of others.

For the abovementioned reasons, focus groups or group interviews were used to gather data from select participants (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Three clusters of approximately six to eight people were contacted via e-mail, or telephoned for those who preferred it, regarding participation in focus group discussions (Carey, 1994; Morgan, 1997). A small group size was chosen because it provided a clear understanding of each participant's reaction to the topic of gender performance and allowed each participant more time to talk (Morgan, 1997). Fern (1982) stated that two eight-person focus groups could produce an equivalent number of ideas as ten individual interviews. Considering the amount of time it would take to conduct and analyze the same number of individual interviews, the use of focus groups was clearly a more efficient tool (Morgan, 1997).

Focus groups may have allowed for a large amount of data to be collected in a shorter amount of time; however, the sequence and combination of group and individual interviews was selected to explore the topic with a preliminary group of individuals after which in-depth data would be solicited in an individual setting. In multi-method studies of this nature, two common qualitative methods of gathering data (group and individual interviews) complimented one another and no one primary method determined the use of

the other (Morgan, 1997). Focus group discussions also provided immediate evidence with regard to the similarities and differences in participant opinion's and experiences - conclusions usually found during post hoc analyses of interviewee statements (Morgan, 1997). Overall, focus groups provided a rich understanding of the experiences of co-researchers, allowed for the observation of group interaction regarding the topic, as well as proved to be an efficient method of gathering exploratory information to both assist in the selection of participants for individual interviews and examine the similarities and differences between participant's gendered experiences during and following certification.

Location. As Creswell (2009) suggested, focus group interviews were held at a neutral location, the Foundation for Educational Administration (FEA) building in Monroe Township, New Jersey, where all NJ EXCEL graduates took at least a handful of classes during the course of certification. This facility is located in the center of the state and allowed for an equidistant drive for all co-researchers. In this location, the three groups of select individuals were gathered to discuss the role of gender in their experiences and decision-making. The only compensation provided was light fare before and after the interview(s).

Individual interviews. In this multi-method study the second, and more revealing, data collection phase included qualitative interviewing. These follow-up individual interviews were used as a complementary technique that strengthened the findings of the total research project (Morgan, 1997). Rubin and Rubin (2005) promoted this data collection method for use with feminist studies as it helps to support this sub-group's promotion in the workplace – one of the goals of this study. Since focus groups

with 8 – 10 people only generate approximately a tenth of the amount of information of each participant in a 90 minute session, individual interviews had an advantage at this stage in the inquiry as it helped to provide detailed information about select participants (Morgan, 1997). Polkinghorne (1989) recommended that between 5 and 25 individuals be interviewed to get a full account of the phenomenon; thus, the five interviewees chosen met this recommendation. This quantity of interviews was only settled upon after I had reached a data saturation point that is sought in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). This data collection phase allowed me as the researcher to delve more deeply into the histories of a small number of co-researchers whose experiences proved to be intensely representative of transformative gender performance.

As gender is a social construction, it is considered a part of culture. As was previously mentioned, gender norms are so deeply ingrained in culture that many people cannot distinguish between what is socially created and biological with regard to gender (Gramsci, 1971; Gray, 1992). This makes directly asking individuals about gender performance an inappropriate means of gathering the information sought (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Moustakas (1994) suggested asking two broad questions relative to the topic of interest to focus the attention of the interviewees to a textural description of their experiences. An oral-history interview method was chosen for this inquiry as it allowed me to subtly explore participant's experiences without directly asking the research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This was a form of cultural interviewing in which there was flexibility in that which is discussed since much of what the participants were explaining about gender performance through their stories may have been invisible to them (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In this manner, from their personal histories, I was able to

discern how the co-researchers performed gender throughout the certification and job seeking processes.

Instrumentation

Participant selection data. The initial survey tool, a questionnaire, included closed-ended questions and was pilot tested prior to use to ensure reliability and validity (Fink, 2008; Fowler, 2009). Creswell (2009) warned that online surveys are not appropriate for individuals who do not have computer skills; however, the participants in this study come from the NJ EXCEL program where computer skills are a graduation requirement. The pilot test was done with approximately 10 certified school administrators to ensure common educational levels and effective peer assessment of the tool.

As suggested by Fink (2008), the questionnaire was intended to gather information concerning graduates' demographics, experiences, knowledge, and behaviors of the participants. Specific variables on the instrument included graduate demographics, professional positions occupied, schooling following certification, and changes in personal situations. This information was sought to determine the experiences and behaviors of gender subgroups to determine possible study participants (see Table 3.2). A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C.

Focus group protocol. Focus group conversations were guided by a short interview protocol, which was designed by the researcher and based on the research questions as well as the data gathered from the initial survey. An informal conversational interview was employed to allow for the free-flow of data (Moustakas, 1990). Also, this interview format supported the sharing of stories in a natural dialogue that was

“consistent with the rhythm and flow of heuristic exploration and search for meaning” (Moustakas, 1990). If prepared correctly, Morgan (1997) stated that in exploratory research less structured focus group approaches are advantageous because interested participants are able to initiate an energetic discussion amongst themselves without the need of guidance from questions or moderator direction. Therefore, general conversation topics were created using the research questions and survey information to be used as a guide and to ensure similar experiences were shared in each group interview, but formal interview questions were not formulated.

Audio-recorded discussions and subsequent transcripts (Seidman, 2006), a researcher journal (Janesick, 1999) in which visual observations and other relevant notations were recorded, as well as researcher field notes from observations of focus groups (Glesne, 2006) were employed to record the interviews for analysis. Morgan (1997) explains that no amount of accuracy in transcription can reflect the excitement of the verbal and physical exchange between co-researchers, yet despite the inability to suitably record this group interaction, record of the event is necessary for post-interview analysis (Morgan, 1997). The combination of these various methods for recording the focus group interviews permitted for a more accurate analysis of the interactions post-interview.

With regard to the content of the focus group protocol, Merton, Fiske, and Kendall (1990) suggested four standards for an effective focus group interview: (a) cover a number of relevant topics; (b) gather specific data; (c) explore co-researcher feelings in depth; and, (d) consider the personal context of participants. Topics of interest in these focus groups regarded: the perceived role of gender attaining positions in school

administration, gender's influence on their career related decision-making, rationale for responses on the questionnaire, personal reflections on gender performance throughout and following certification, and professional experiences of participants during and after administrative certification (see Table 3.2). The general flow of the protocol suggested by Morgan (1997) begins with an introduction including the ground rules and the topic of interest, then leads to an ice-breaker that allows co-researchers to provide a short self-introduction, continues with questions regarding the topic, and then ends by asking the participants what they thought the most important elements of the discussion were (this is hard to determine afterwards). The length of the interview was approximated at 90 minutes; however, the co-researchers were told two hours to provide a buffer for those arriving late or needing to leave early (Morgan, 1997). The interview protocol used for the focus groups is found in Appendix D.

Individual interview protocol. Patton (1980) described three qualitative interview approaches that are each appropriate for heuristic inquiry: informal conversational, general interview guide, and standardized open-ended. The approach that is most consistent with the nature of heuristic research, and which was used in this inquiry was the informal conversational interview method, as it allowed for exploration of the topic via a free-flow of histories (Moustakas, 1990). Since the participants served as co-researchers, the use of dialogue correlated to the search and elucidation of meaning within our combined experiences. Buber (1965) emphasized the value of dialogue as a means to concurrently learn from one another and about oneself through open and honest conversation.

Table 3.2

Dissertation Protocol Matrix

Research Question	Focus Group Topics	Individual Interview Topics
RQ1. The role of gender in educational leadership.	Sex-typed school leadership roles; professional positions occupied with descriptions of the internal and external selection process	Experiences obtaining employment in administration; informal roles assigned professionally
RQ2. Gender performance evolution.	Changes in behaviors (personal and professional) during the period of interest; rationale for entering NJ EXCEL	Professional aspirations; professional attire; another reflection on changes in actions (personal and professional)
RQ3. Double-duty and participant descriptions.	Responsibilities personal and professional; explanation of administrative positions sought	Rationale for decisions made; reflection on changes in responsibilities
RQ4. Leadership assumptions challenged by gender acts.	Positions offered, and denied, in school leadership	Professional role models; motivators to achieving goals in school leadership; challenges faced with regard to entering school leadership

Due to my novice level of experience concerning interviews, a modified form of the conversational interview was conducted. As a person skilled at interpersonal communication, ensuring that a conversation flowed was not of concern; however, the need to keep the dialogue on-topic was an area of which I felt support was needed. For that reason, an interview checklist was prepared that delineated topics of interest and served as a reference during the interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). A guide of this nature was selected because it provided me piece of mind that we would discuss relevant topics, yet it permitted me to explore unanticipated topics. This was a support mechanism more than anything, but it served its purpose in providing piece of mind to this green interviewer. A copy of the interview checklist can be found in Appendix E.

With regard to the timeframe of individual interviews, nothing formal was set. In heuristic inquiry, Moustakas (1990) asserted that the interview should end when it comes to a natural point of closing – when one’s story comes to an end. On average, the individual interviews lasted around 80 minutes. Using Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) suggestion, the interviews ended when experiences were described: in-depth, in detail, vividly (in a nuanced manner), and richly. Since no formal protocol was formulated, and the interview was informal, each item on the interview guide was not always covered; however, the information obtained met the criteria of good qualitative data as described above.

Data Analysis

Survey analysis. In focus groups, controlling the composition of the group to match with chosen categories of participants is called *segmentation* (Morgan, 1997). In this inquiry, the quantitative survey was used to determine who the participants would be

for the focus group interviews. Morgan (1997) explained that sex, race, age, and social class are the most common background variables to consider when running segmented or mixed groups. Thorne and Henley (1975) asserted that a longstanding query concerning homogeneity is whether the sexes interact differently in mixed and homogeneous groups. This alone causes many researchers to segment by sex, which is what was decided for this inquiry (Morgan, 1997). Using the abovementioned strata of certified administrators who were working in the field and those not, the focus groups included just women. Also, using the general demographics data from the survey, I attempted to include members of various sub-groups of interest – since one goal of this inquiry was to liberate traditionally silenced voices, it was important to hear from members of varied backgrounds based on age, relationship status, caretaker responsibilities, cognizance of professional gender bias, and professional employment/aspirations. Overall survey analysis was used solely to identify relevant focus groups participants and did not inform the study's findings.

Focus group and interview data analysis. During the data analysis process four distinct coding processes were used: narrative, values, pattern, and propositional. The first coding cycles used were *narrative coding* and *values coding*. Saldaña (2009) explained that the narrative coding method is useful in exploring participant experiences and that this form of data analysis is suitable for critical/feminist studies (p.109). Vygotsky (1987) emphasized that participant's words are a reflection of their true thoughts. In this coding method, literary elements were used to analyze the text, which frequently appears in the form of stories (Saldaña, 2009). Polkinghorne (1995) described how human experiences can be uniquely expressed in stories as they portray one's actions and goals. These narratives were analyzed from literary, social, cultural, and

sociolinguistic perspectives which varied by individual (Cortazzi, 1993; Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004).

Common to qualitative research, historical, political, and social contexts acted as lenses through which the data was analyzed, making narrative coding an appropriate method to use for this inquiry (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The “prosaic, poetic, and dramatic elements” used to analyze the text included, but were not limited to genre, setting, plot, characterization, elements, and spoken features (Saldaña, 2009, p. 111-112). Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) asserted that the exploration of participant experiences, both inter-and intrapersonal, is suitably executed via narrative coding. This coding method allowed me as the researcher to examine the data being sensitive to the context of each co-researcher, and assisted in the identification of the linguistic phrases, facial expressions, tone, and other verbal and nonverbal cues that enhanced my understanding of each participant’s story.

Values coding was also used in the first iteration of data analysis. This coding method was used to identify participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, which combined to provide the unique perspective of each research participant (Saldaña, 2009). The addition of this manner of coding in the first cycle was particularly important to this study as gender performance is an intensely personal construct that is a reflection of how we as individuals respond to society’s gender norms (Butler, 1988). With this in mind, it was important to gain an understanding of the importance each co-researcher placed on gender during the time period of interest. The beliefs that co-researchers have are a reflection of their attitudes, which are subject to the concepts that have been socially learned (Shaw & Wright, 1967). Since heuristic inquiry is a very self-reflective process,

the value that participants put on their experiences was as important as gaining an understanding of their experiences in context (that which was sought in narrative inquiry).

The second coding cycle employed *pattern coding*, which effectively grouped codes into smaller sets or themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Kaplan (1964) emphasized that in an inquiry it is the researcher's quest to find "repeatable regularities" (p.127-128); from these regularities patterns are found. Since this was the second round of coding, the initial codes were re-evaluated for connections, from which new patterns emerged, and were combined into meta-codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This coding cycle entailed grouping patterns encountered into larger themes, searching for networks and patterns of human relationships, as well as exploring possible causes and explanations found within the data (Saldaña, 2009). Miles and Huberman (1994) explained that pattern codes are oftentimes captured in metaphors wherein large amounts of data can be amalgamated into one word or a single statement. This second coding cycle permitted me to synthesize the codes from the first coding iteration into smaller sets and themes.

The final iteration of coding used was *propositional coding*, which brought together the propositional statements of prior coding cycles to formulate one outcome proposition that encompasses them all (Saldaña, 2009). The propositional statements from the second coding cycle were compared to one another in order to discern possible relationships. Using the associations encountered between the statements, an outcome proposition was created based on the integration of the relationships found. This one umbrella propositional statement identified and summarized the relationships between the

various codes in former cycles. A graphic representation of the coding iterations is found in Figure 3.3 and the resultant code map appears in Appendix F.

Interpretation of data. Once overriding themes were identified, theory played an important role in data interpretation. Feminism, gender performance, and critical theory were the lenses through which the data collected were analyzed. As heuristic inquiry requires, personal experiences also assisted in final interpretation of the data. Moustakas (1990) asserted, “To know and understand the nature, meanings, and essences of any human experience, one depends on the internal frame of reference of the experiencing persons – by looking at their own experiences in perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and sense – to validly provide portrayals of the experience” (p. 26). Thus, my self-analysis assisted in the formulation of a description of the essence of the phenomena.

This description included verbatim examples elucidating the experiences of co-researchers, metaphors illustrating the themes encountered, and vivid portraits that systematically exemplify the phenomenon. Personal anecdotes peppered the document adding girth to the co-researcher data. Moustakas (1990) suggested a presentation of data with individual descriptions, a comprehensive depiction, as well as a handful of exemplary individual portraits, all put together in a creative manner. The creative synthesis that he described as a summation of the data and findings included the rich, thick descriptions traditional to qualitative research, in textual form (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). Miles and Huberman (1984) purported that words organized narratively are convincing and meaningful as a result of their concreteness, thus the use of vivid and detailed co-researcher stories to demonstrate and support the interpretation of the data in a textual creative synthesis.

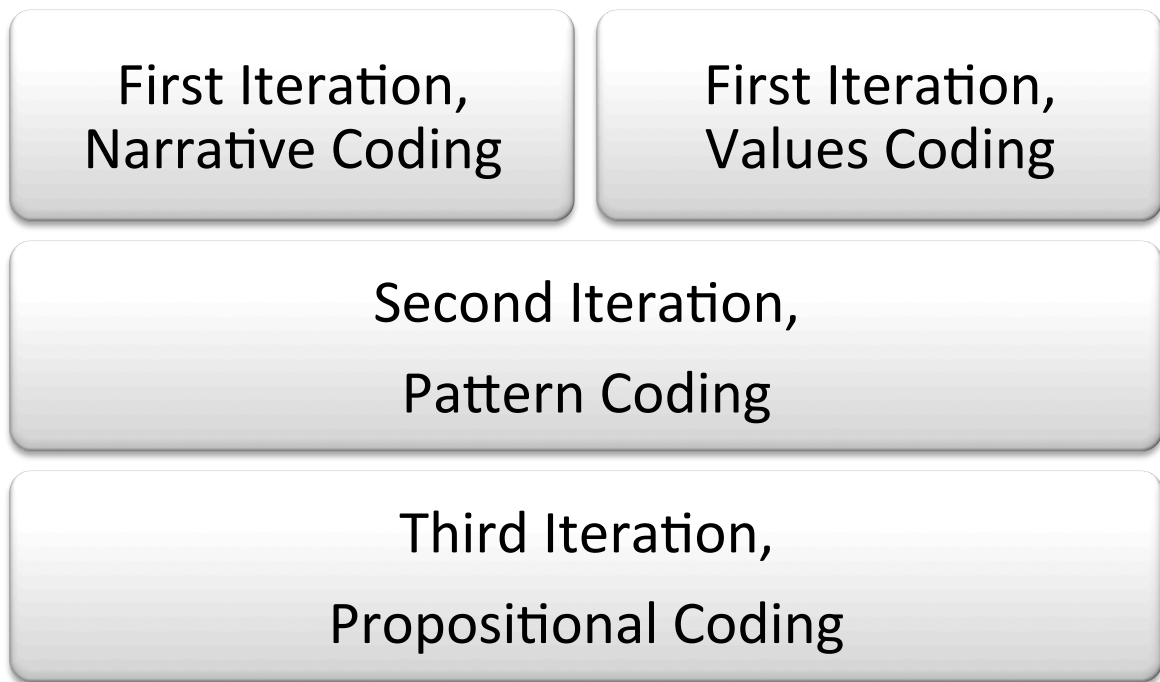


Figure 3.3. The three coding iterations employed to analyze the data collected.

Trustworthiness

In heuristic research, the determination of trustworthiness can only be decided by the researcher, as she is the sole person who has experienced the phenomenon, completed the self-reflective process, and dialogued with the co-researchers (Moustakas, 1990). Due to the personal nature of the research process that requires many steps of self-searching, the expertise of the researcher cannot be denied. Moustakas articulated this position best when he claimed:

The question of validity is one of meaning: Does the ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one's own rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others present comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience? This judgment is made by the primary researcher, who is the only person in the investigation who has undergone the heuristic inquiry from the beginning formulation of the question through phases

of incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis not only with himself or herself, but with each and every co-researcher. (1990, p. 32)

Smith (1978) claimed that findings in qualitative research, in general, are undeniable. In heuristic inquiry especially, it became my duty as the researcher to capture the meaning of our transformation by honoring the complexity of both my co-researcher's and my own experiences (Giorgi, 1970). It was ultimately my responsibility to make the final judgment regarding the validity of the research that was conducted; as I alone had the extensive experiential knowledge required of this task and had experienced the phenomenon along with my co-researchers.

Despite the inability of an outside party to assess the validity of the research findings, several strategies were employed to guarantee an appropriate level of quality and rigor with regard to this research. Three distinct criteria were employed to assess the trustworthiness of this inquiry: ethical validity, transferability, and reliability/dependability. These measures are consistent with that which is required in qualitative studies, making them appropriate to use with this inquiry (Creswell, 2009).

In the area of ethical validation two strategies ensured the trustworthiness of the research, a reflective researcher journal and the admission of research bias from the outset. Use of theory guided my interpretation of the data; however, in qualitative research, concern continually exists that personal experiences will overly influence the interpretation of the data. Since my own gender transformation during certification via NJ EXCEL prompted this inquiry and heuristic research is based on gaining a better understanding of one's own experiences, my bias influenced the findings. Nonetheless, the use of co-researchers was to better comprehend the essence of the phenomenon and to explore its manifestation in others as well – making the use of co-researchers necessary.

So not to undermine co-researcher participation in this study, and to ensure proper representation of everyone's experiences, a researcher journal was employed (Creswell, 2009; Janesick, 1999; Merriam, 1988). Marshall and Rossman (2006) warned that qualitative research, being a form of interpretive inquiry, prevents complete separation of the researcher's experiences/context from the researcher's interpretations. However, making personal worldviews and assumptions known within the journal assisted in clarifying how they affected interpretation thus avoiding substantial bias, and thus adding ethical validation to the inquiry. Thus, the researcher journal was referred to throughout the data analysis phase, as another source of data; assumptions were considered, and compared to, outcomes of the data analysis as a means of determining how they colored the interpretation, if at all – when this occurred, the data was reassessed with this congruity in mind and with the intent of more objectively interpreting the data.

Transferability was another concept used to ensure appropriate rigor in this study (Creswell, 2009). Two strategies were employed to meet the aim of transferability, the use of rich, thick descriptions in the findings, and purposive sampling. Integrating rich, thick descriptions into the final text permitted readers to create their own mental depiction of participants' experiences, thus allowing them to make a contextual connection with the stories. In this manner, readers are able to compare the textual experiences to other settings, allowing them to judge for themselves whether the information provided, and conclusions reached, are transferable to other circumstances (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). Purposive sampling allowed for the most relevant cases to be studied so that the data collected was the most applicable to specific subgroups (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Together these

two strategies, which are validated by qualitative researchers, ensured the rigor of this study via transferability.

The final manner in which this inquiry was assessed to be trustworthy was through triangulation. Triangulation occurred through the use of multiple and distinct methods, sources, and theories, which combined provided confirming evidence to support the research findings (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Erlandson et al., Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1980). Two research phases were conducted, and numerous individuals were chosen to participate in both research strands. Additionally, as chapter two demonstrated, various theories were used to interpret the data that was collected such as gender performance, feminism, intersectionality, and critical social theory. Together, these strategies ensured the triangulation of data that confirmed the validity and trustworthiness of the research findings.

Ethical Considerations

There are certain assumptions that a researcher makes based on their experiences and their worldviews. These assumptions shape how they look at research and how they analyze the results. I have a pluralistic and situational view of truth. Since all research is done in context, this shapes the truth/reality of the situation and the results. Other cultures have diverse norms and therefore distinct morals/ethics; these differences were accepted and valued within this inquiry – this one way in which intersectionality was integrated into this inquiry.

Several steps were taken to ensure that this research was conducted ethically. These steps included the completion of ethics training, obtaining approval from Rowan's

institutional review board (IRB), obtaining informed consent, and ensuring participant confidentiality. All approvals to conduct research were received by the end of September 2013, research began in October 2013, and all data collection was completed by January 2014.

Ethics training. The American Educational Research Association (AERA) is an organization that promotes ethical research for education. In addition to familiarizing myself with the AERA code of ethics, I successfully completed training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) which provides education to all members of the research community regarding ethical human subjects research practices and protection for participants. Because I interviewed women school leaders, ensuring their privacy and protection as well as making them aware of the risks involved was essential. Through CITI, I completed the course introduction and student research courses as well as the course entitled Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research (Appendix G). The purpose of ethics training was to learn and internalize the common value set on which educational researchers build professional and scientific work (AERA, 2011). The primary goal of the AERA, CITI, and all ethical research organizations is to ensure the welfare and protection of those with whom researchers work. All education researchers/students benefit from understanding the ethical standards guiding professional work, and it is the responsibility of each individual researcher to aim for the highest standards of conduct possible when researching, teaching, and practicing (AERA, 2011). The standards, which the AERA promotes and that were adhered to in this study, include: professional competence; integrity; professional, scientific, and scholarly

responsibility; respect for people's rights, dignity, and diversity; and, social responsibility.

Institutional review board. The IRB is charged with the responsibility of reviewing and overseeing research in which human subjects are studied. As an ethical researcher, it was my responsibility to obtain approval from this board prior to beginning research. The IRB review process was designed and intended to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects through assuring unbiased subject selection, guaranteeing sufficient informed consent, minimizing risks, and maintaining the confidentiality/privacy of all participants (AERA, 2011). Educational human subjects research at any institution of higher education should not be conducted without IRB approval, and this inquiry was no exception. In the summer of 2013, following approval from my committee to begin research, I applied for IRB approval from Rowan University and, as was previously mentioned, from the executive board of NJPSA. Approval from both organizations was promptly received. These confirmations can be found in Appendix H and Appendix I, respectively.

Informed consent. Informed consent is a "basic ethical tenant of scientific research" (AERA, 2011, p. 151). In this inquiry informed consent ensured that all participants were aware of the purpose of the research, my level of expertise as a researcher, the measures I would take to guard their privacy, and the risks that they might encounter as a result of participating. Through this process, I openly shared the measures that would be taken to ensure co-researcher confidentiality with the research participants which included: (a) the use of alias's when referring to participants in the published documents, and the numbering/coding of participants within surveys in lieu of their

names or other confidential identifiers; (b) safely locking files in private offices and the general use of security of all documents, audio recordings, questionnaire responses, and information shared during the research process; (c) the overall recording of participant information in a manner in which subjects cannot be identified either directly or via identifiers linked to the subjects; (d) the careful treatment of information disclosed in a relationship of trust so not to divulge this data in ways inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure without permission; and, (c) the general preservation of privacy for co-researchers throughout and following the inquiry process.

To document the informed consent of co-researchers, each participant received a document with instructions for research participants (Appendix J) and a participation-release agreement (Appendix K), which they signed and remitted to me prior to the start of the qualitative inquiry. For ethical reasons, only researchers were able to view, or access, the audio recordings of interviews, the data collected, and other private information gathered throughout the inquiry (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Morgan, 1997). Participants were also given the right to withdraw from the study, at any time, without consequences. Through these actions, I certified the confidentiality of my co-researchers and received their informed consent regarding the research process.

Confidentiality. Participant confidentiality is of supreme importance when conducting research. In qualitative inquiries deductive disclosure is of concern (Tolich, 2004); this occurs when descriptions of individual's traits and locales make them identifiable (Sieber, 1992). Kaiser (2009) explained that due to the nature of qualitative inquiry, in which rich descriptions provided by participants are used to support the findings, deductive disclosure must be prevented. Confidentiality is important as it

protects participants, particularly those from vulnerable populations, from negative consequences as a result of their participation in the inquiry (Baez, 2002). My goal as an ethical researcher was to collect, analyze, interpret, and report the research findings without compromising participant identities in any manner, which meant providing detailed and accurate descriptions without including possible identifiers.

Some of the measures taken to protect the identities of research participants were described when discussing informed consent; however, following are more specific actions that were taken to protect their confidentiality. I assured participants verbally and in writing that the information they shared throughout the process would be locked in filing cabinets and on password-protected computers. In focus groups, we discussed, and all parties agreed, not to divulge the information discussed with individuals outside of the group. Additionally, I explained that primary source documents (notes, consent forms, etc.) and recordings would only be accessible to me as the researcher and a transcriptionist, who signed a confidentiality consent form. Finally, in the published document, all participants were referred to by pseudonyms, which they were able to select themselves, as were any places of employment mentioned. Through these means I secured the privacy of all participants, upholding integrity in the research process.

Power Relations. As a doctoral candidate and researcher, one area of concern when conducting this research pertained to the power relationship between my co-researchers and me. These titles have a prestige and a power behind them could have tainted the openness of our communication and the subsequent data collected during conversations. As a heuristic researcher, the participants and I already had a connection as graduates of the NJ EXCEL program and educational leaders in the state. I maximized

the use of our similarities and employed Jourard's (1971) advice regarding self-disclosure as a means to begin communication and alleviate feelings of intimidation created by any power differences; I did this by openly sharing my personal experiences and how they sparked an interest in the inquiry. Furthermore, I acted with transparency with regard to the purpose of the research, answered all questions the participants had, played my normal personable self, and presented myself as an equal through actively listening throughout our dialogues rather than taking a position of control and omnipotence. These actions were an effective means to minimize participant discomfort and reluctance to converse by putting myself in a vulnerable position through being the first to share personal experiences relevant to the research, and transparently discussing the inquiry and process.

Sensitive or painful subjects. In heuristic research, the process is an investigation of a human phenomenon, but it is also a self-exploration that is intended to lead to realizations relevant to one's own life (Moustakas, 1990). In this inquiry, the participants were seen as co-researchers rather than subjects of an investigation. As such, many actions were taken to empower the women in this study and to build a rapport with them so to create a collaborative ambiance. Actions taken to meet these aims have been described in previous sections, and they included self-disclosure by the researcher, dialogical interviews (rather than traditional question-and-answer sessions), the creation of a collaborative relationship between the researchers, the use of homogeneous groups, and transparency – to name a few.

However, in interviews there was always the possibility that some topics would make participants uncomfortable (Navratil, Green, Loeber & Lahey, 1994). The topic of

gender and performance is very intimate and personal, particularly because many of our gender performances happen unconsciously (Butler, 1988). Thus, participant unease was still of concern. As the researcher, I made certain to ensure confidentiality, and to create an environment where participants felt comfortable opening-up. However, if a topic was too painful, my co-researchers were reminded that participation was voluntary and that no response was preferable to a false response. Although no participants took advantage of the opportunity, I also made available the option of contacting me privately afterwards to discuss topics too sensitive to share with a larger group in individual interviews and during follow-up communication.

Conclusion

The practical goal of this study was to enhance the proportion of women who occupy positions in educational administration. Since more women participate in NJ EXCEL than in traditional administrative preparation programs, an understanding of the decision-making of these women and their success in obtaining employment will be useful in determining that which can enhance women in the field. The data collection techniques were chosen to gather a great quantity of information regarding graduates of the program, combined with an in-depth analysis of their decision-making processes and how these decisions and their subsequent actions conform or contradict gender norms to see whether a transformation of gender performance took place during or following their administrative certification.

Within this study, the assorted experiences of women graduates with varying demographics were sought to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their uniqueness and commonalities pertaining to how they performed gender during the

period of interest. In practice, constructivist research resulted in the use of broad interview topics (so that interviewees could interpret the meaning of a situation), an analysis of the interactions amongst participants, and a focus on the contexts in which the participants live and work (Creswell, 2009). From there, as a constructivist inquirer, a pattern of meaning was inductively cultivated from the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Schwandt. 2001; Neuman, 2000).

Chapter 4

Research Findings

If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style. (Butler, 1988, p. 520)

This chapter provides a synthesis of my study's significant findings. With a focus on participants' gender performance, the data collected revealed connections between the socializing forces of gender and women school leaders' professional decision-making. Through the use of qualitative inquiry and subsequent analysis, via coding, various themes emerged with the most relevant identified in the following section. This chapter serves as a bridge for the last two chapters of this dissertation, which were composed as manuscripts for publication.

Key Findings

The theoretical lenses of gender performance, feminism, and critical social theory were used to analyze the data collected from group and individual interviews; from this, the findings indicated that gender was a major factor for participants with regard to their positions as educational leaders. Professionally, interviewees described how gender simultaneously inhibited and promoted them as school leaders, depending upon the position sought. Domestically, gender performance, in the form of obligatory domestic responsibilities, was a chief consideration and barrier when discussing career options. As you will see, participants also expressed that their professional positions challenged leadership assumptions. Commonalities existed with regard to the explanations of interviewees as to their decision to participate in a nontraditional administrative

preparation program, which inexorably concerned their familial responsibilities. Germane findings and themes are identified next.

The process for entering into school leadership. The data implied that women go through a necessary process before entering the field of educational leadership. This process consisted of antecedents, catalysts, and self-empowerment. The participants did not enter education with the intention of pursuing administration, but rather entered into administration haphazardly only after being prompted by a mentor. Prior to consideration of educational leadership as a career path, several elements were in place that primed the participants for their professional journeys as school leaders. On a broad scale, a paradigm shift occurred that promoted the need for *all* administrators to act as instructional leaders and which increasingly valued the role of curriculum and instruction in promoting student success (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004). Other contributory factors for entering school leadership were personal. Participants had a passion for enhancing their own instructional practices and recognized ways in which their school district could improve its practices too. Work ethic was another stimulus. The combination of external and internal factors began a cyclical process that participants began prior to entering school leadership.

Professional resistance. Once employed as a school administrator, participants were placed in an environment where they felt like an outsider. Interviewees described how their status as school leaders, especially for those in highly masculinized positions, resulted in social pushback, professional obstacles, and an awareness of their unique contributions to their respective organizations. Co-researchers frequently spoke of their desire for objectivity, feelings of exhaustion/defeat, being underestimated, and also

inability to access the “good old boys club” and its benefits in promoting men. Barriers faced as school leaders included resistance from the staff, conflict within the administrative team (with gendered divides), organizational decision-making, and the personal workload they still carried at home regardless of their administrative status.

Women’s leadership orientation. In spite of diverse obstacles, the contributions participant felt they made to their districts aligned with the changing face of school leadership thus validating their presence on the administrative team. Enhanced collaboration, instructional leadership, a focus on curriculum, empathy, and the promotion of professional growth, were all identified by participants as their legacies within their districts. It was clear that being the “other” and the resulting obstructions were not an impediment to finding professional success, yet this did not come without personal sacrifice and enduring internal struggle.

Benefits of nontraditional programs. The opportunity to enter a nontraditional administrative certification program, rather than pursue a degree in educational leadership from a traditional university, aided the participants in entering the field of school administration. Factors such as cost, time, a cohort-model, and project-based learning were appealing to these women, who struggled to balance their home-lives and professional lives. The perception was that an alternative program catered to their already busy schedules, making it convenient.

A dichotomous life. A paradoxical situation arose for the study’s participants that required the bridging of two worlds: one in which the participants’ primary obligation was to their household contrasted by another in which they were successful leaders within their organizations. This situation resulted in an internal struggle where society’s

expectations regarding the role of women predisposed participant's views of their professional potential. The discrepancy between their career prospects and expected gender norms was evidenced in descriptions of both professional and personal responsibilities.

Gendered roles. The responsibilities that interviewees had both personally and professionally were, in some ways, synonymous. Within their respective positions, each participant described situations in which they acted as the scaffolding that held their families and school systems together. From picking-up menial tasks (unsolicited) to being relied upon to take the lead in completing the largest projects (expected), participants felt did the majority of the work in both realms of their lives. The same expectation of care that was expected within households was also anticipated within the workforce. Interviewees described workloads that they perceived as more extensive than their peers and partners, which they felt obliged to complete despite the obstacles with which they were confronted.

Oppositional thinking. Acting against gender norms and the social pushback co-researchers encountered manifested itself in an internal struggle where women's traditional roles are valued, and inhibit career advancement, but are not followed. When discussing job opportunities interviewees showed both self-doubt and self-efficacy. Oppositional thinking was exposed mostly in reference to professional decisions regarding household responsibilities and their professional impact. Familial concerns were consistently at the forefront of their priority list – creating a constant battle between the professional and personal lives of participants.

Complacency. Women educational leaders' professional aspirations did not generally reach the top of the administrative ladder, rather the participants settled for support positions that would allow them to continue to perform their duties at home with little professional impact. Self-imposed barriers that inhibit women leaders from promotion have already been well noted (Derrington & Sharratt, 2007; Olsen, 2005). Regarding career advancement, participants were content in their current positions, much like when they were educators prior to being prompted to consider school leadership. Reluctance to reach the top of the professional ladder because of domestic responsibilities, despite professional abilities, is a classic example of how gender performance is evidenced within professional decision-making.

Implications

Due to the format of a dissertation written in manuscript-style, this chapter brings a close to the cohesiveness of the document and acts as a conclusion to the research as a whole. In order for the discussion of the findings, with accompanying limitations and implications, to be comprehensible, a review of the articles by the reader is necessary because several distinct suggestions will be made in the subsequent articles based on the unique findings and discussion outlined in each. Some examples of the recommendations made include the study of various nontraditional administrative preparation programs in the nation to enhance the sample size; this would provide additional empirical evidence of program outcomes as well as help differentiate how the intricacies of each state, such as New Jersey's salary cap on superintendents, impacts the advancement of women in the field. Also, the use of varied techniques to collect data on gender performance would enhance the quality of the data through triangulation.

A Look Ahead

The remaining two chapters of this dissertation will be in article format. Each article will explore a paramount finding of this study in more depth. The two topics featured in the next chapters relate to the process women take to enter into school leadership and the outcomes of living a dichotomous life. These were chosen due to their novel nature as some of the abovementioned findings mirror and support other established literature on women and educational leadership. These particular findings highlight the role of gender performance and bring to light various factors that both motivate and prevent women from entering top positions in school administration, providing an innovative perspective on an issue that has been studied for decades.

Chapter 5

Surrendering to gender in education?:

Complacency and the woman leader

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of our study was to better understand the role of gender performance for aspiring school leaders through a reflection of their journey through the administrative pipeline. The transformation of professional aspirations throughout and following the certification process and during employment was also analyzed. Also, the appealing factors of a nontraditional administrative preparation program were evaluated.

Methods: Using heuristic qualitative methods, 18 women graduates of New Jersey's Expedited Certification for Educational Leadership program participated in focus groups and 5 returned for individual interviews. Coding was employed to analyze the data..

Findings: Our participants entered into school leadership as a result of an external catalyst, a mentor, which inspired a process of self-empowerment that led to their pursuit of administrative certifications and positions. This process was cyclical. The nontraditional program and its appealing characteristics added to the realization of their current leadership positions. **Implications:** The recommendations we make in the areas of policy, research, and practice, each speak to a need for enhanced encouragement, by diverse means, of women school leaders at the national, state, and district levels.

Keywords: heuristic inquiry, educational leadership, feminism, gender performance, nontraditional administration certification

Introduction

In the field of school leadership, expectations for administrators have changed drastically in the past decade. In 1996, the introduction of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) outlined expectations for school administrators under a new conception of leadership and put student learning at the forefront of administrator's responsibilities (2008); this was the first time best practices and characteristics of effective school leaders were synthesized. The intention of these standards was to increase the principal's role in teaching and learning while also "expanding the nation's pool of effective administrators" (2008, p. 2). Despite the implementation of these standards almost two decades ago, there is still a purported shortage of qualified school administrators for whom positions need to be filled (Herrington & Wills, 2005; Hickey-Gramke & Whaley, 2007; Hine, 2013).

In response to this demand, nontraditional means for preparing school leaders for certification were created and instituted in at least 13 states (Anthes, 2004). Supporters of alternative certification programs claim that this is an optimal way to entice competent individuals from other fields to pursue a career as a school principal or administrator and augment the number of effective school leaders (Hecht, Ashby, Azinger, & Klass, 2000; Hess, 2003; Mazzeo, 2003). States, such as New Jersey, amended their policies and mandated that all state-approved educational leadership programs, traditional and nontraditional alike, align with the ISLLC standards (Goduto, Doolittle, & Leake, 2008). This directive would seemingly standardize curriculum and result in similar outcomes between traditional and alternative programs; however, few studies have focused on examining nontraditional administrative preparation programs. Due to their fledgling

status, these programs need to be critically examined for effectiveness (Hickey-Gramke & Whaley, 2007). Effectiveness concerns the degree to which something achieves a desired result (Oxford University Press, 2014); therefore the effectiveness of nontraditional programs, to which Hickey-Gramke and Whaley refer, can encompass many factors, and the advancement of women in educational leadership, as a function of parity in a field dominated by men, is a necessary inclusion in the evaluation of said programs.

Historically the term *qualified* has been used as a proxy for *man* with regard to discussions of scarcity of competent school leaders (Young, 2005). In the field of educational leadership, a plethora of research has identified the ways in which women administrators have been discriminated against (Coleman, 2005; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Marshall, 1993; Schmuck 1996; Shakeshaft, 1989; Skrla, 2003). Literature has also examined influences that promote women school leaders noting that successful administrators referenced strong women role models during childhood, which inspired them to pursue a leadership position in education (Lafreniere & Longman, 2008; Madsen, 2007; Marshall & Kasten, 1994). In addition to having female role models, women's entrance into school leadership was also motivated by the leadership styles to which they were exposed and the encouragement they received (Young & McLeod, 2001).

Scholarship supports the notion that cultural norms and their socializing forces negatively impact the professional advancement of women (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Lybeck & Neal, 1995). From their earliest experiences, girls are taught to behave according to their gender roles (Butler, 1988) and socially constructed gender norms are perpetuated within in both secular and religious, as well as small- and large-scale

organizations; promoting women as the “other”, and creating an environment in which they are discouraged from aspiring to leadership positions (Thompson & Armato, 2012). Yet little is known about how educational experiences may influence women to conform, or not conform, to gender expectations. Better understanding the gender expectations maintained within administrative preparation programs and educational institutions may provide a path to disrupting gender norms and expectations that prevent women from obtaining leadership positions.

Using this line of inquiry, our research focused specifically on women by exploring their experiences in a nontraditional leadership preparation program in New Jersey. From a qualitative standpoint we delved into the histories of women graduates to explore their gendered experiences within and following certification in the program. This provided insight into their journey in an alternative school leadership program and their subsequent employment as school leaders. Little research has been done on nontraditional programs in general, and using gender as a lens added uniqueness to this inquiry. In this article we make an argument regarding the need for the continued promotion of women in educational leadership, detail our research methods, provide findings that elucidate the process of empowerment for women school leaders, and ultimately outline the implications of our research while connecting it to current literature in the field of school leadership.

Women, Gender, and Educational Leadership

In the area of higher education, more women than ever entered college and graduate school following the civil rights movement (Dugger, 2001; Peters, 2005). In fact, studies indicate that as early as the 1990s women outnumbered men in

undergraduate programs and equaled their number in graduate-level programs focusing on educational administration (Mischau, 2001; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2004). In the general field of education, women earned 78.7%, 77.3%, and 67.5% of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in the year 2006-2007, respectively (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Women are steadily meeting and exceeding the proportion of men who attend undergraduate and graduate schools. Despite prolific enrollment in educational leadership programs, once in the field women certified as school administrators are not obtaining some administrative positions at the same rate as men (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Grogan, 1999; Joy, 1998; Moreau, Osgood, & Halsall, 2007; Ortiz & Covell, 1978).

Where are all the women? In the position of the school superintendency, the paucity of women representatives has been so prominent that Glass (1992) referred to it as "the most male-dominated executive position of any profession in the United States" because only 6% of school districts were run by women (p. 8). Since that time, little progress has been made with the latest national average of women school superintendents being 24% (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). This discrepancy is also found in the position of high school principal. During the 2007 – 2008 school year the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that women held 58.9% and 28.5% of principal positions in elementary and secondary public schools, respectively (NCES, 2009). Estler (1975) argued that to reach proportionality, the number of acting women leaders should be congruent with the quantity of educators. Using this argument, with a workforce of approximately 75% women (NCES, 2009), there is a long way to go until women are equitably represented in all positions of educational administration.

For decades scholars have examined the barriers that prevent women from obtaining positions in school leadership. Women's self-perception inhibits them from entering school leadership (Schmuck, 1976; Shakeshaft, 1989), which is partially a result of diminished self-confidence attributed to living in a male-dominated society (Shakeshaft, 1989). Low self-efficacy results in various outcomes that lead to women purposely avoiding leadership roles out of concern over a lack of skills, consequently sabotaging their career advancement (Jurgens & Dodd, 2003). Societal discrimination in the form of gendered stereotyping may also act as a barrier to administrative promotion for women (Derrington & Sharratt, 1993). Bias may be exhibited during the hiring process (Coleman, 2005; Marshall, 2003; Skrla, 2003; Young, 2005); in professional evaluations of women leaders (Elsesser & Lever, 2011; Schein, 1975); and in remuneration packages (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Kolesnikova & Liu, 2011). These obstacles for women school leaders may stem from the social construction of gender, which has promoted and preserved a societal hierarchy in which masculine figures are associated with power and control (Coleman, 2005; Thompson & Armato, 2012; Young, 2005), forcing women into lower-ranked positions.

Gender performance. Gender performance purports that gender is a creation, not inherently related to one's biological sex (Butler, 1988). Gender, therefore, is a socially promoted ideal communicated via actions, appearances, and discourse, which vary by the culture of an individual (Lloyd, 2007; Lorber, 1993; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender norms are so deeply embedded within a society's culture that discernment between biological differences and socially created categories is often challenging (Gramsci, 1971; Gray, 1992). The hegemony of gender and the perpetuation of gendered roles

oblige individuals to conform to a socially prescribed identity that uses biological differences as the basis for classification (Herstein, 2010; Johnson, 2013). It is the replication of acts by men and women that adhere to their respective gender group that precipitates the illusion that gender is organic; nevertheless, gender is socially created. For women, gender performance plays a role in the professional decision-making process. Society governs what is acceptable for men and women, prompting individuals to conform through verbal and nonverbal gendered discourse (Butler, 1993). In this way, social expectations affect the professional decisions women make (Thompson & Armato, 2012), such as the decision to enter school leadership.

Role congruence. For women school administrators, role congruity theory posits that female leaders suffer prejudice in the workplace stemming from divergence between the feminine social role and the leadership role (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008). Stereotypically, women are endorsed as nurturers and caretakers while men are promoted as aggressive and assertive, characteristics associated with leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women whose gender performance aligns with the agentic characteristics of conventional leaders, such as competitiveness and ambitiousness, are evaluated negatively for behaving in a manner incongruent with their feminine gender role (Acker, 2013; Elsesser & Lever, 2011). On the other hand, women who adopt feminine behaviors in the workplace are not seen as prospective leaders and their achievements and competence are not recognized as readily as those of men (Lewis & Humbert, 2010; Rapoport et al., 2002). Both types of bias leave aspiring women leaders in a double bind: if they act in a feminine manner they are not perceived as potential leaders whereas if they display masculinized traits they are evaluated less

favorably and are less likely to be recommended for promotion (Elsesser & Lever, 2011). However, women already in leadership positions, and whose leadership styles are consistent with socially accepted characteristics, experience less gendered bias (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Discrimination on this basis of gender is not exclusive to men evaluators, women also have a tendency to base decisions regarding hiring/promotion on role congruity (Marshall, 2003; Young & McLeod, 2001).

The actualization of women's leadership orientation in educational administration aligns with generalized descriptions of women's leadership, yet in this context distinctive characteristics materialize that correlate to emerging school reforms. Women educational leaders are focused on student achievement and are perceived as caring, child-centered, change agents, educational reformists, visionaries, community sensitive, efficient, problem-solvers, instructionally focused, ethical, and are also praised for their expert level of knowledge regarding child development and curriculum/instruction (Bjork, 2000; Grogan, 1999; Hill & Ragland, 1995). The abovementioned skills and characteristics parallel educational reforms that promote school administrators as instructional leaders, who focus intently on academic growth (Riehl & Byrd, 1997). It has been suggested that women school leader's passion for instruction/curriculum and children's development might be attributed to their accumulation of experiences as mothers and teachers (Ortiz & Marshall, 1988). This stance supports gender performance theory, showing that the continual repetition of the woman's role manifests itself in the actions of women school leaders, who almost "naturally" become nurturers in a school focusing on student growth. However it is apparent that, as women, these school leaders have been socially obligated

to play this role by the gendered discourse they are bombarded with and to which they resultantly conform.

Educational Leadership in New Jersey

Reform and women's leadership. A broad-scale paradigm shift in educational leadership has taken place, which aims to ensure school administrators are instructional leaders and places extreme value on curriculum and instruction as a means to promote student success (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004); New Jersey was not immune to these changes. The year this research was conducted, New Jersey mirrored this educational movement by mandating changes in school evaluation practices by passing the Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act (2012), which essentially incorporated student achievement as well as the outcomes of collaborative goal-setting into the evaluations of teachers and school leaders. This legislation demonstrated a commitment to the enhancement of student growth by means of increased attention to instruction and curriculum within schools, all in accordance with current federal regulations.

From a gender perspective, it may appear that these new standards corresponded to the strengths and characteristic of women leaders. In an environment in which women's skills as leaders are burgeoning, the effects of these changes on advancing women school leaders is promising. Indeed the proportion of women educational leaders in New Jersey has increased, bringing the overall average of school leaders to parity with the national average and in terms of the superintendency exceeding the standard. According to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), since 1999 the percentage of women working as school leaders in NJ has steadily grown from 42%

(NJDOE, 2010), to 51% in 2012 (NJDOE, 2012). Furthermore, as of the 2012-13 school year, 35% of the superintendents in the State of New Jersey were women (NJDOE, 2014). This figure surpasses the latest national average of 24% (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young & Ellerson, 2011), and demonstrates significant growth from the year 2000, when it was estimated less than 20% of school systems in the United States were run by women (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski et al., 2011). Despite the advancement of women educational leaders in New Jersey, growth is still necessary, as the number of women educators remains vastly larger than their administrative representation.

Certification preparation. The turn of the century brought another novelty to the field of educational leadership to the state of New Jersey in the form of a nontraditional administrative certification preparation program entitled New Jersey's Expedited Certification for Educational Leadership (NJ EXCEL). This program, established by the Foundation for Educational Administration (FEA) in 2003, was created to provide qualified candidates with the necessary internship experiences and educational leadership expertise to apply for endorsement in the state as a supervisor, principal, and/or chief school administrator. NJ EXCEL requires that interested parties have at least a master's degree in a field linked to education as well as five years of experience as either an educator or educational specialist (NJ EXCEL, 2013).

With regard to women school leaders in New Jersey, as of yet no research has indicated a connection between the increase in women school leaders and the establishment of alternative preparation programs. Nevertheless, NJ EXCEL data shows that women and men alumni obtained positions at congruent rates in the areas of

supervision, principalships, and superintendencies (FEA, 2013). That is, an *equal* percentage of women and men NJ EXCEL graduates received employment as superintendents, a statistic that shows significant progress in promoting women's attainment of employment as a chief school administrator. Our study explored the NJ EXCEL program and sought to understand this shift, from a qualitative standpoint, providing insight into program enrollment and employment outcomes from the unique perspective of women alumna.

Methods

The purpose of this heuristic qualitative research study was to investigate the experiences of women NJ EXCEL graduates, in order to explore the role of gender throughout and following the process of certification. The concepts of gender performance and role congruence were used as lenses through which the decisions and actions of participants were analyzed. In order to better understand the role of gender performance for aspiring school leaders, we explored their journey through the administrative pipeline by conducting focus groups and then individual interviews, to gather descriptions of women participant's gendered experiences. The research questions that guided this study were: (1) In what manner do the professional goals of NJ EXCEL women graduates transform throughout and following certification?; (2) What factors and experiences led women in the NJ EXCEL program to choose to participate in a nontraditional administrative preparation program?; (3) What defining moments do participants describe that led to leadership action?; and, (4) How have the participants' gender performances evolved over the course of training and leadership attainment?

With a goal of examining gender performance throughout the educational process, job search, and into professional careers, qualitative research allowed us to examine the words, descriptions, histories, and explanations of the experiences of individuals from their own voices (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This methodology permitted for vivid, more contextualized descriptions by participants (Creswell, 2009). “One cannot understand human actions without understanding the meaning that participants attribute to those actions—their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive worlds; the researcher, therefore, needs to understand the deeper perspectives captured through face-to-face interaction” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 57). The depth of understanding of individual perspectives required to answer the research questions necessitated the use of interpersonal means most closely associated with qualitative inquiry (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

The methodological selection for this study did not depend solely on the type of information that one desired, researcher worldviews and philosophical assumptions were also considered. Qualitative inquiry is commonly associated with an interpretivist-constructivist worldview (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The concept of gender is a social construction; it is a belief that people create the meaning of both individually and collectively (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This largely influenced our methods because how this phenomenon is perceived and performed by individuals varies as a result of their interpretation of gender and their decision to conform to the societal norms associated with this type of classification. In the constructivist paradigm, entities are continuously shaping one another, making delineation between cause and effect impossible (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009); this is especially true of gender as these societal norms are so deeply

ingrained that many are blind to their roots as a social creation (Lloyd, 2007). To fully understand this phenomenon, studying a combination of voices was necessary to gain a more inclusive understanding of the varied realities of the research participants based on their distinctive perspectives and societal situations.

Data collection and instrumentation. Data were collected via group and individual interview conducted between December 2013 and February 2014. Following methodology suggested by Carey (1994), the first stage of research consisted of five focus groups ranging from two to six participants each, allowing for initial engagement of unfamiliar topics between unacquainted informants (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups invited all participants into the conversation (Frey & Fontana, 1989), promoting interaction and discussion between participants. The small group size allowed each participant more time to talk (Morgan, 1997). Observations of the interaction between participants throughout the interviews were also collected, adding another level of data to that which was verbally amassed (Morgan, 1997), consequently supporting data validation. Ultimately, the data gathered in this stage was used twofold, for analysis and to select participants for individual interviews.

In this multi-method study, the second and more revealing data collection phase consisted of individual interviews. This complementary technique strengthened the findings of the total research project (Morgan, 1997) through a comprehensive exploration of the histories of participants whose gendered experiences were intensely representative of the phenomenon of interest. This was done using an oral-history interview method, allowing for the subtle exploration of participant's experiences without directly asking the research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). From their personal

histories, how participants performed gender throughout the certification and job seeking processes was also discerned. In total, five women were interviewed individually, a number settled upon only after data saturation was met.

Consistent with a heuristic qualitative research method, an informal conversational interview was employed, which allowed for a free-flow of data (Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 1980). This less structured approach was advantageous as it allowed for the initiation of energetic discussion amongst participants, particularly during focus groups, with little guidance from questions or moderator direction (Morgan, 1997). All interviews were guided by a researcher-created interview checklist, based on the study's research questions, which was referenced during interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). A guide of this nature led the discussion towards relevant topics while also permitting for the exploration of unanticipated topics. The 90-minute interviews were recorded and transcribed (Seidman, 2006), a researcher journal was kept (Janesick, 1999), and researcher field notes were collected (Glesne, 2006) in order to triangulate findings.

Data analysis and interpretation. A coding process bridging three cohesive iterations was employed to analyze the data. After preparing and organizing the data, four coding processes were used: narrative, values, pattern, and propositional. The first iteration included the simultaneous use of *narrative coding*, where literary elements were used to analyze participant stories, and *values coding*, which identified participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs (Saldaña, 2009). This first cycle was particularly important to this study as gender performance is an intensely personal construct that is a reflection of how we as individuals respond to society's gender norms (Butler, 1988). The beliefs

that participants have are a reflection of their attitudes, which are subject to the concepts that have been socially learned (Shaw & Wright, 1967). The second coding cycle employed *pattern coding*, which effectively grouped codes into smaller sets or themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Kaplan (1964) emphasized that in an inquiry it is the researcher's quest to find "repeatable regularities" (p.127-128); from these regularities patterns were found. This second coding cycle synthesized the codes from the first coding iteration into smaller sets and themes. The final coding iteration, *propositional coding*, brought together the propositional statements of prior cycles to formulate one outcome proposition that summarized the relationship between them all (Saldaña, 2009). Theory also played an important role in data interpretation; feminism and gender performance were at the forefront, acting as lenses through which the data was viewed.

The outcomes of our data analysis appear in the next section with rich descriptions included to support our assertions. The relationships between the various themes are recognizable particularly in the process of empowerment. The findings detailed below speak to the propositional idea of complacency that results from women who surrender to their gender within educational organizations.

Positionality. Qualitative researchers recognize that the researcher is an instrument whose background and experiences affect the interpretation of the data, but in heuristic research this is more pronounced. In heuristic research an autobiographical connection to the lived experience being explored is required (Moustakas, 1990). Heuristic research is an adaptation of phenomenological investigation that acknowledges and integrates the lived experiences of the researcher into the study (Hiles, 2002). This is the case with regard to this research study. One researcher's personal experiences as a

woman graduate of NJ EXCEL and current educational leader were used in combination with the first-person accounts of others to determine the nature and meaning of the phenomenon; these findings were then illuminated with firsthand descriptions from all participants (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). The notion of researcher-as-participant distinguishes this style of inquiry from others and naturally added to our depth of understanding of the phenomenon. The use of rich, thick descriptions in the findings permit readers to compare the textual experiences to other settings, allowing them to judge for themselves whether the information provided, and conclusions reached, are transferable to other circumstances (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Findings

Our research indicated that a process transpired for the participants that led them to attain their certifications, and subsequently a position, in educational leadership. This process began with a specific catalyst and was cyclical, repeating with each step they took towards promotional positions in administration. The appealing components of NJ EXCEL motivated our participants to pursue a career in educational leadership, which they would have avoided if another master's degree were required. Overall, the cyclicity of the process for entering school leadership has led to professional complacency with most women content in their current positions and only a few looking to progress to positions outside of their comfort zone. In the following section we outline the specifics of the process to entering school leadership via a nontraditional route and how this culminates into hesitance towards professional advancement.

The process of empowerment. Prior to aspiring to a position in school leadership, participants described a process in which they were extrinsically encouraged,

reflected on their self-doubt and professional accomplishments, and, consequently, were intrinsically empowered to pursue educational administration. This progression is congruent with Bennis and Thomas' (2007) theory of defining moments. The distinctiveness of our findings concerns the cyclical nature of this process and its reliance on a catalyst, which consistently manifested itself in the form of verbal encouragement from a mentor. From a more global perspective the myriad female role models to which the women were exposed and whose achievements they exalted facilitated this process.

Contributory factors. The women interviewed described a similar situation in which they were content in their current positions and did not envision themselves as school leaders, despite the female role models that surrounded them. Their lives were then transformed after a person, whom we term *mentor*, encouraged them to pursue first a degree in educational leadership and then an administrative position. This stimulus was the catalyst necessary to begin the cycle of empowerment the outcome of which was their entry into a position as a school leader. Their professional environment was a contributory cause and the verbal support was a necessary clause for the process to begin.

Contentment is the perfect word to describe the mindset of participants prior to being prompted to pursue educational administration. As teachers and counselors they were satisfied with their careers without a thought of professional advancement.

I figured I would be a school counselor for the rest of my life and that was it. And part of it is 'cause I'm Indian and I, my family, follows Hinduism and in terms of our religious beliefs like we have basically like stages where you're supposed to go to school at this period in your life. This period in your life you're just supposed to get married and have a family. This period in your life you are supposed to have your career, and then you have you retirement and that's when you focus on spirituality... So once I got married and I had my son that was supposed to be my focus. But I was like, I was done with school and I was supposed to focus on family and focus on career... You know, I love being a school counselor and I always did. (School counselor/program coordinator)

Whenever participants spoke of their previous positions, it was always with pride and admittance that they had not planned to make a change. One assistant superintendent shared, “So then I was really happy...I really found my home. I loved it. And I never had any – at that point I was happy teaching what I was teaching.” Contentment when reminiscing about previous jobs was consistent.

In addition to a feeling of comfort, each of our participants worked in environments where there were other female role models. These roles models were always women who were working as school leaders and whose leadership qualities they admired. One vice principal spoke of her role model, the former principal.

My mentor is my old principal and she provided the role model of how to be a strong female in educational leadership...She never, you know, backed down... She stood up for people and said, ‘look, I don’t think you should.’ And it got her in some hot water at times, but she always stood her ground. She always said to me, ‘I’ll never be less than who I am.’ She was a good role model. She was tough but she was good and I think she showed me how to sort of set or stay strong in this world of mess. You know and it’s tough I mean, it’s not so easy.

Various terms were used to title these women role models, but the gist was always the same. “She was my go-to person. Any decision I was making I talk to her about it.” Many times, relationships with these mentors were symbiotic, as one supervisor explained, “She and I really bonded and she would start calling me to run ideas by me, you know talk me through things with her and she came through NJ EXCEL.” Due to the dynamic nature of school leadership, women role models were not consistent.

Now my go-to person is this woman who just got promoted from my direct colleague in math to the director of staff development and teacher supervision. She actually reminds me a lot of my old mentor, that I spoke about earlier – just a really strong woman, very smart woman.

Consistent with other scholarship, female role models were a major inspiration for participants (Madsen, 2007), creating a fertile environment for empowerment to begin.

Necessary clause. Encouragement from a mentor to pursue educational leadership was the catalyst that began the process of empowering participants to become school leaders. This boost appeared in the form of verbal recognition accompanied by prompting. These mentors were of no particular gender or position; their only qualification was being someone whose professional opinion was of high regard. The role of the mentor functioned as the necessary clause to the process of empowerment.

The first round of advising led our participants to obtain certificates as school leaders. Mentors praised the participants professionally and then verbally prompted them to enroll in an educational leadership program. Some completed this solely through NJ EXCEL while others got their supervisory certificates via a traditional program and then attended NJ EXCEL for advanced certificates. One supervisor reminisced, “I shared an office with the assistant principal and he brought out the *NJEA Review* one day said, ‘You have to do this. I’m going to retire and you have to do this.’” Another administrator said, “I think it was the superintendent who had dropped the dime on me and said, ‘Well, why don’t you just take a look at it?’” One assistant superintendent vividly remembers the conversation that prompted her to pursue school leadership.

After 15 years in the classroom, there was a department head/supervisor who was actually one of my teachers in high school who said, ‘You know, you’d be great for this job and I’m going to retire.’ And I said, ‘Well, I don’t have the qualifications.’ He said, ‘I’ll stay until you get them.’ So I actually...it took me just...I did the same thing. I got my supervisory certificate.

Even husbands who worked with their wives acted as mentors, “My husband had gone back for his supervisory – it was just him suggesting it, you should take the courses.”

Each of these conversations was the catalyst needed to begin the process that eventually led to our participants' admission into NJ EXCEL.

As we previously mentioned, the process of entering school leadership was cyclical because once administrative certificates were achieved, most of the participants did not immediately apply for leadership positions. Once they held their certificates they were again encouraged to seek jobs by mentors. They were content in their positions until prompted to seek advancement.

I said to myself, 'Okay, I'm a supervisor. I love what I do and I'll be fine if I do this for [a bit].' Just like when I was a teacher I said to myself, 'I'll be fine being a teacher the rest of my life.' (Assistant superintendent)

Verbal encouragement was the only reason many of our participants applied for positions in school leadership.

She called me over Christmas vacation and she is like, 'I want you to apply for this job.' I said, 'Really? Okay.' And so I did... And so having that person's belief in you... it's helpful that you have somebody say to you, you are so ready to do this, you can do it. (District supervisor)

She was like 'excellent go back,' and always pushing me, I mean even now still there's a principalship at a big high school that came up here. She's like, 'Apply.' I'm like, 'I don't know.' [Her mentor says] 'No you should, you are good.' So of course I applied because, you know, it's like she goes even if nothing else you go on the interview and you – Just going forward and she pushes and that I think is, that's been a great help. But she was one of the ones with EXCEL. She said, 'Go without a doubt because you want to get the certification you need to move forward.' (Vice principal)

Regardless of their position, these mentors played the essential role of inspiring participants to enter school leadership. Without advisement participants felt they may not have ever taken the step into administration because they were content in their positions and were insecure regarding their ability to perform in an advanced position.

Self-doubt. Encouragement acted as a necessary clause for participants to enter school leadership because of participants' insecurity regarding their professional abilities. However, their descriptions of the trajectory from applying for jobs and current roles evidenced ongoing self-doubt. Myriad excuses were given by participants as to why they were neither the best candidates for positions nor prepared for administrative jobs.

Insecurity manifested itself in unjustified rationale. Lack of professional experience was one reason women recognized they did not feel prepared for administration. One participant said, "I actually don't know that I would have gone and applied in other districts at that point in time anyway and I was pretty inexperienced." Another said, "It's only my sixth year here. That's not long." Self-doubt took many forms yet the outcome was the same, a self-perception in which women did not feel suited to be school leaders.

I am not a dynamic, visionary leader. I am a good worker bee and I know that about myself and it doesn't mean that I don't have a vision, but I am really good at, you know, here's what we need to do let's break it down in subsets and do it.
(Supervisor)

Participant's self-descriptions revealed they felt better suited for supportive rather than leadership roles. One woman, who is now a high school principal, said, "I considered myself more of a real strong support person. So flying by the front seat as principal was, wow!" Insecurity acted as an internal barrier for our participants (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Along the same lines as experience, many participants shunned positions that were more administrative and less supervisory because they felt that their professional strengths were not suited to the principalship or the superintendency. Participants' focus on curriculum and instruction influenced their self-perception and resultantly their confidence in holding certain administrative positions. One supervisor said, "I don't think

I'm cut out for administration. I really like curriculum.” Another echoed this sentiment of insecurity, “I couldn't possible know enough to run the whole school system. I think with my experience as a curriculum supervisor, I could totally run the whole curriculum piece.” When asked about advancement to a principalship or superintendency one supervisor said, “I think right now my job is so very focused on the curriculum that I don't have, I don't have the balance of experience you need to do the operational and the finance side.” Ironically, after making this statement, we had a conversation about how she just finished her budget and was going to cut it with the business administrator. Self-doubt obstructed advancement into top leadership positions; yet once the catalyst was introduced, insecurities were overcome by self-empowerment. Many of the participants also contacted us post-interview to explain how empowering our focus group was to them – a sentiment that was echoed by the researcher as well.

Empowerment. The final phase of the process to entering school leadership was self-empowerment. After being advised to consider a professional advancement and recognizing their self-doubt, participants described a stage of reflection in which their professional accomplishments were contemplated. From this reflection they acknowledged the characteristics they embody that align with educational leadership. One assistant principal elucidated, “I subconsciously gave myself that empowerment that I could make some changes.”

A self-inventory of professional achievements was very motivating and inspiring. Some participants physically scribed their activities and successes, an inspiring act.

It was great to sit down and see everything I'd done as “only a teacher.” I had taken advantage of any opportunity my district offered to serve on a committee. I was a co-writer for an international studies magnet program... Which morphed

into the humanities magnet, which I served at then for the next 8 or 9 years.
(Supervisor)

I've gone onto Google docs and I have tried to list. It's difficult to do because of all the other stuff that you have going on during the day, but list all the tasks that I do on a daily basis... And then go back and say what's administrative, what's supervisory and right on down the list. (District supervisor)

For other participants, this process was not as literal, but still occurred. One supervisor who was applying for a superintendent position explained the self-assessment that led her to believe she would be successful.

That's totally what I do already in a lesser form. But, I have a really strong discipline understanding. I coached, so I've got the athletics piece. I have the performing arts piece. I did everything that all of the stakeholders that a superintendent would have to listen to... I've done all those things so that's what I think I could bring to a job like that.

Participants acknowledged this process of empowerment and were able to describe the motivation of reflecting on their professional practice.

For some participants, the process of empowerment occurred, but not as methodically. These women identified their thought process in a subtler manner. One principal explains how she realized she was already a school leader, just without the title, "I sort of was like a lead teacher without trying. People would come and say, 'I'm trying to teach this. How did you do that?' [I'd say,] 'Here take this, take that.' I'm not territorial." Another said, "So I became like a little team leader and a little leader of this within just my peers so they slowly, some of those leadership skills were developed and without even realizing it." At times specific experiences helped build confidence. One supervisor remarked, "My principals really gave me a lot of opportunity. I helped with the budget construction, a small little bit, but it gave me that experience." Elucidation of professional experiences was empowering.

I had a variety of grades I taught. I had been in a variety of buildings. I had worked in four of the elementary schools, had been [a] fourth, fifth, and sixth grade teacher and an instructional coach, had been on multiple committees things like that...I had work on budgeting, scheduling. I had the experience. (Supervisor)

This outcome of this empowerment process was that each participant was imbued with the confidence necessary to take action towards working in educational leadership. As participants explained, "You see yourself differently." After recognizing their qualifications, a participant noted, "[I] started to think over time that I probably had something to bring to the table...things change and you see yourself differently." One supervisor that was interviewed best summarized this process of empowerment: "You take those incremental small steps that when you look at them individually don't seem like they had anything to do with me becoming a school leader but they really did." In essence, this stage was empowering because participants were able to acknowledge all of their accomplishments, which together painted a picture of school leadership.

Ultimately, women who were empowered to become administrators were thriving in their positions. One vice principal stated, "I'm actually enjoying the administration, which everybody has always told me that I should do but I always said, 'No, I'm really a curriculum person.' So I still am geared to curriculum." Another shared her self-doubt and transformation.

It wasn't my goal to be like an administrator for whatever reason. I just don't think I saw myself that way. I just would have never envisioned it... Then all of a sudden I was doing it and I'm like, "What am I crazy?" I mean, it was really hard at first but then it wasn't.

One supervisor shared, "I struggled with like the challenges of entering school leadership...I think the biggest challenge was my own insecurity and can I really do this?" Confidence and low self-perception contributed to the need for a mentor to begin the

process of empowerment, inclusive of recognizing that insecurity was an inhibiting factor. As we discuss shortly, once empowered to enter school leadership, our participants became content in their administrative positions, and thus restarting the empowerment process.

Paying it forward. In addition to being mentored, our participants repeated the cycle of empowerment with others. Interviewees mentioned friends and colleagues who they prompted to consider educational leadership and who answered the call. A vice principal said, “One of my teachers is doing it in the northern [NJ EXCEL] cohort right now and I am his mentor.” Some participants recognized that they had inspired many people. “There were four teachers who had gone through the program that I mentored.” The desire to act as a mentor for other women was deliberate.

[I try to] pay it forward in my students...I have invested and try to support. People ask me, “Why are you doing this?” And I said, “A lot of people worked really hard for a lot of years to give me a great situation to be a great teacher and I want to do that for other people” so that’s what I did...I’m batting 1000 – both of my students that I’ve mentored have gotten supervisory positions and they’ve both gone through EXCEL. I have a third one now so I told her, you know, don’t screw-up my average.

Perpetuating the process of empowerment was manifested in the encouragement of others to enter the field of educational administration. In some ways encouragement was not intentional, but the result of role modeling behavior. “They never had anybody from my district and now one of the people who worked for me just finished.” Participants as a whole felt compelled to develop others, if not as school leaders then as professionals, a finding that suggests the cycle of women entering school leadership will continue.

Professional complacency. Contentment in positions and apprehension of upper-administrative positions influenced participant’s professional aspirations. Interviewees

expressed satisfaction with their current job, similar to when they were teaching/counseling, which continued to prevent them from seeking promotional positions. Excuses, such as those discussed, contributed to participants' avoidance of upper-level administrative positions. This situation mirrors the initial findings, where a catalyst will be necessary to encourage these women to pursue higher levels of school leadership.

Our participants expressed happiness, a common progenitor of contentment, at working in administrative positions that they initially eschewed, and served as a reason women did not have aspirations to advance professionally.

I just went as a teaching supervisor. I had no desire to be in upper admin. and I think part was that I did have a great mentor and I clicked with her and we were doing a lot of good work. I mean we [were] doing a lot of good work with the teachers, a lot of – it was just a real open environment, very thriving. (Vice principal)

I do enjoy teaching, however, I know I'm making a difference as a supervisor because when they did a moving around of all the different disciplines they will not take the art and music people away from me because they are very pleased that there is a structure there that they never had before. (District supervisor)

This satisfaction negatively impacted our participants' desire for professional advancement; they continue to find happiness in their upgraded positions, hence the need for continued external catalysts for motivation.

Overall, our participants did not aspire to the chief school administrator position. "I don't know if I'd ever want to be a superintendent, which maybe gets into somehow why men get more jobs because I didn't see myself in that position." Most of our participants desired to maintain their current role or seek a position as a professor, supervisor/director, or assistant of some sort. When first asked, the response was oftentimes, "I don't know where I want to be. I don't know what I want to be doing."

When urged, responses were more concrete: “I want to teach biology to rock heads at the community college. That’s all I want to do” and “I would ultimately like a position [in] central administration, not a superintendent. I guess the furthest I'm thinking [is] maybe assistant superintendent.” The pattern of responses was clear, with our participants seeing themselves in positions that do not require them to be the ultimate decision-maker. They are defaulting to jobs aligned with their current positions and perhaps prescribed gender roles, such as support positions, but rarely strive for positions outside their comfort zone, such as the superintendency.

These downgraded professional aspirations, and the need for professional motivation from a mentor, have created a culture of complacency in which our participants do not seek positions without external motivation. Since so many women did not aspire to the chief school administrator position, we asked specifically about the possibility of seeking a principalship or superintendent position.

I’m not ambitious to get to the top but I’m competitive so there is a little bit of both. I’m not looking to be at the dais, like the director making the decisions. That actually makes me a little uncomfortable. (Supervisor)

It's nice to just be able to say, ‘You still have an issue? If our five conversations haven't cleared things up, you're probably going to want to contact the principal. He's aware of the situation and he knows the steps I've taken throughout this process. Here's his number.’ That is kind of nice. I try not to do that, but it is nice. There is a plus to being an assistant. (Assistant principal)

One supervisor, who was in the process of obtaining her superintendent certification through NJ EXCEL during our interviews did not aspire to the position. She said, “I want the certificate because I took the test, I want the certificate but I don’t necessarily ever want the job.” Interviewees sought certifications, and were successful as school leaders yet they were still hesitant to advance professionally. They took pride in their

accomplishments and were content with their professional lives regardless of their positions. “They call me doctor at work, and I love it. Some of the kids are like, ‘You are a doctor?’ And I am like, ‘I am and I’m proud to still be a teacher.’ It’s okay that I am a doctor and I’m a teacher.” Clearly, the abovementioned cycle continues despite the fact that our participants are now school leaders; they still require encouragement to move up the proverbial ladder.

Administrative preparation & empowerment. One factor that added to the complacency of potential women school leaders to advance professionally concerned their resistance to pursue another master’s degree. A prerequisite to enrollment in NJ EXCEL is that all candidates must have at least a master’s degree in an education-related field (FEA, 2013). Therefore, prior to being prompted to consider school leadership as a career option our participants had already successfully completed a post-graduate program. Moreover, our interviewees were self-admittedly ignorant to the fact that another option for promotion into educational leadership existed by means of a nontraditional program. As you will read in the following section, the introduction of this nontraditional educational opportunity combined with the unique characteristics of NJ EXCEL positively impacted participants’ decision to pursue a certificate in educational leadership and was empowering.

With regard to encouragement, many of our interviewees were not just prompted to enter into school leadership, but to specifically consider NJ EXCEL as a pathway to leadership. One supervisor recalled a conversation with her principal: “He told me, ‘There is this program called NJ EXCEL. Look into it. It’s a state accredited program.’ Because I refused to go for a second masters.” NJ EXCEL was introduced to our

participants by mentors and then praised by the alumna afterwards. It was clear that had they been forced to pursue their administrative certifications via a traditional route, they would not be administrators today. Factors such as cost, time, the cohort-model, and project-based learning motivated these women to enroll in this nontraditional administrative preparation program.

The NJ EXCEL program is less expensive than a traditional program, and this made matriculation into the program realistic. When asked about reasons for choosing NJ EXCEL, the rationale was similar and finances were a main concern. The first alluring characteristic of NJ EXCEL that was mentioned by each interviewee concerned monies.

I think that cost was definitely a factor across the board though because you already have a master's degree to get into the program, so you've already paid \$36,000 or whatever it was to get that. So then thinking about, alright I know this is going to take me to a different level, but you know 10 grand versus another 30 some plus the time, I mean for me it was also the time convenience. I would happily give up you know every other Saturday and one Wednesday a week, and be done versus you know doing it over and over again. (Assistant principal)

One supervisor who was supporting herself said, "A lot of it came down to the expense, NJ EXCEL is a fraction of the cost of a traditional university." The time requirements were also appealing. One vice principal explained, "With work and family responsibilities, to only have to go once or twice a week for a year is totally different than committing for three years to a program." Another explained

I was getting a little antsy and I said well I'm not getting younger and I don't, you know, to still do my regular job and to have a full time traditional classroom expectations and setting, I felt that this would be the best fit for me given I had the opportunity to start during the summer.

Affordability and accessibility, due to family and professional responsibilities, were attractive aspects of NJ EXCEL, according to our participants.

Convenience was another key word that was used to describe NJ EXCEL. The

manner in which the program was created, catering to working professionals, complete with various training locations and varied trainers, was appealing to working professionals.

It was fast, a fast program. It was relatively in a convenient location. I knew several people that attended the program. It was cost effective and I loved the way they designed the program that it was hands-on. And one more thing that was very interesting, I was very impressed with the level of knowledge that everybody that I encountered as far as professors and all that, not professors but the trainers, teachers. They were just so knowledgeable, professional. That just won me over.
(Supervisor)

By the time it was like I did want a certificate. So it was like, okay and you could get that in a reasonable amount of time. It was laid out pretty clearly. Once I got into it I really liked the practical applications aspect of it and I felt like once I got that new position that was extremely helpful because there were things that you just, it was more the problem-based scenario. People who'd actually done the job teaching the classes, not to knock professors in other universities, but sometimes they've never actually been in a real situation so...I like the idea, you know, everybody in it was in the same boat pretty much working people doing it around their schedule, proximity, even location was pretty good for me coming like after work, coming in the evening from where I was at the time and so and so.
(Superintendent)

Aside from the pragmatic aspects of the program, the networking it fostered combined with the performance-based projects created a situation in which our participants felt they left the program prepared to enter school leadership. "It was very much, and I'll use the term hands-on, that you were learning from either people that were practitioners or that were not out of the game for that long and I loved that aspect of it." The cohort model that NJ EXCEL used provided the opportunity for candidates to connect with colleagues around the state.

I love the networking, you know, and I...so it's been good. I just love hearing what is going on in every other school and I learn from that like 'cause I'm writing curriculum and, you know, and you get to hear what other people are doing.
(Teacher/curriculum writer)

Some candidates compared NJ EXCEL to a traditional program in their responses,

extolling the virtues of NJ EXCEL that made it more appealing than traditional programs around the state. “I think sometimes EXCEL is a little bit harder than [area university] in a way, I think because we have four projects but here you just have one ongoing.” These comparisons had similar rationale, promoting the nontraditional as more practical and collaborative, yet just as effective.

New Jersey EXCEL was a one-year intensive program. At [area university] in the fall semester [I] had gone to classes and then in the spring it was online. And I hated every minute of being online and I just wanted to be in the classroom. I needed to be actually there and interacting with other people and New Jersey EXCEL, which is everything I was looking for and it was perfect. And I really enjoyed the experiences. (Teacher-leader)

The NJ EXCEL program appealed to our participants because it was designed to be convenient for educational professionals. The cost was right, the time requirements were suitable, and the workload was practical. The characteristics highlighted by participants regarding the program delineate how NJ EXCEL did not overly interfere with their already busy schedules, allowing them to work, play their role as mother/wife, and still attend school. Without these features, interviewees felt that they would never have pursued their administrative certifications because they were not willing to commit to another full-time degree. Because our participants were content in their positions and had self-doubt regarding advancement, the suggestion of a mentor to pursue educational leadership as a career specifically via NJ EXCEL was motivating. Through the process of empowerment, the appealing factors of the program made the idea of continuing their education realistic despite schedules that were already filled with personal and professional responsibilities.

Discussion

Scholarship surrounding the topic of women in educational leadership is diverse and extensive, however, this study is a contribution in its analysis of women participating in a nontraditional administrative preparation program. Traditional graduate-level programs and their influence on advancing women in the field of school leadership have conventionally been investigated. Our findings indicated that the women in our study only decided to enter school leadership after receiving encouragement from a mentor and participating in a cycle of self-empowerment, of which participants felt that NJ EXCEL would fit into their lifestyles. Had NJ EXCEL not been an option, our participants made it clear that they were not interested in going back for a second master's degree, especially since they were content in their positions when approached to consider school leadership as a career option.

Our participants each experienced a defining moment that was the catalyst for them to pursue careers as school leaders. Previous research concerning defining moments illustrates an initial process similar to what was unveiled in this inquiry (Bennis & Thomas, 2007). Avolio and Luthans (2006) describe this as a "leadership development jolt" that generates a process in which core values are assessed, self-confidence improves, and from which leadership-centered action follows (p. 11). Research on defining moments emphasizes that one particular event leads to a process of empowerment and action into leadership. The cyclicity of the process we discovered is novel. Several defining moments were necessary for the career advancement for our participants. Mentors encouraged these women to enroll in NJ EXCEL. Then, despite having obtained certifications, advisement from another mentor was necessary prior to applying for a

position in school leadership. This repeated for each step in the participant's careers as school leaders. In understanding NJ EXCEL's role in this process, Dahlvig and Longman (2010) posit that pivotal moments can be transformational experiences from which leaders are formed; using this description, leadership development programs undeniably meet the criteria and, as our research suggests, nontraditional programs assist in the promotion of women school leaders.

The diversity of individuals who served as mentors to our participants during defining moments was also notable. Although role models that the women described were all women, the mentors that prompted them to enter a program in school leadership, such as NJ EXCEL, and professional positions were of both genders. Prior research has indicated that women need like role models (Madsen, 2007), but barely speaks to the nature of the defining moments women experience. In this regard, our data showed consistency in the catalyst that acted as the defining moment, and that sparked an interest and pursuit of educational leadership certificates/positions, of which gender was not important. In light of the context and sample size, this will need to be correlated with further research; nonetheless, for our participants there was no variation in this regard. The encouragement of a mentor, man or woman, was the necessary clause for them to consider a career in school leadership; the opportunity NJ EXCEL presented further impelled them to take action to this end.

The need for assurance from a mentor and the recurrent nature of the process of empowerment speak to the role of gender performance on aspiring women in school leadership. From a gender performance perspective, the encouragement from a mentor is akin to receiving permission from a member of the dominant group to stray from an

assigned role. By obtaining consent to pursue school leadership, our participants were unintentionally reproducing socially established gender roles. According to Butler (1988), gender is the performance of a series of acts; and with each recurrence of a defining moment and subsequent process of empowerment, women consciously broke the repetitiveness of their feminized gender performances. As our findings elucidated, once working as school leaders our participants returned to their traditional gender performances, being satisfied in subordinate positions and focusing on areas that fall within their established gender roles such as curriculum/instruction. This is consistent with other scholarship in school leadership that explains that there is a lower proportion of women in managerial-type school roles (i.e. principal, superintendent) as compared to other leadership positions (Moreau, Osgood & Halsall, 2007). This adherence to gender norms permeated the professional aspirations of our interviewees who shunned top-level positions, preferring to aim for supportive roles rather than building or district management.

The process of empowerment impacted gender performance by promoting acts of “temporal duration” (Butler, 1988, p. 525), such as participants’ enrollment in NJ EXCEL, yet it did little to transform the overall gender performances of our participants. This change process is one that Weick and Quinn (1999) describe as *episodic*. Within the educational leadership development context, instances of sporadic and infrequent changes to gender performance were followed by a period of equilibrium in which gender roles were adhered to until interrupted again by a mentor. With this in mind, it is possible that the purported aspirations of our study’s participants are downgraded due to their period of stability, which after interruption by a mentor, could be transformed long enough for

them to pursue a previously eschewed upper-level position. The overall lack of a drive towards professional advancement led to our description of women school leaders as complacent, content in their positions with little aspiration for promotion.

The NJ EXCEL program does not formally aim to enroll women in their program, yet this is occurring naturally. In addition to the attractive characteristics of the program, alumnae are one factor that sponsors the program and makes it appealing to women. Descriptions of how our participants have encouraged others to register for NJ EXCEL, and the quantity of people they listed that heeded their encouragement indicates that this is occurring organically. With each woman that NJ EXCEL graduates they are producing role models and mentors who, once disseminated around the state, make the possibility of school leadership more alluring and realistic for other women educators. Our participants themselves shared how they are perpetuating the cycle of empowerment through mentoring others. The impact of this mentoring is evidenced in our data, since each of our participants was prompted to enroll in the program through a mentor, many of whom were graduates of the program themselves.

The findings we detailed and discuss in the previous sections represent the responses, experiences, and sentiments of the large majority of the research participants. However, it should be noted that there was an occasional outlier, most often found within focus groups, whose experiences were not aligned with the common experiences of other interviewees. For example, several women interviewed were no longer caretakers because as they entered school leadership when their children were older, while another never had a traditional family. Because intensity samples were selected for individual interviews, the administrative journeys of participants in the second research phase were

more aligned. While all participants' voices are honored here they were not always reported due to small incongruences compared to the generalized experiences of the larger group. These outliers can provide opportunities for future studies that are not oriented towards the establishment of common experiences. As researchers we do not feel that the presence of negative cases detracts from the findings, instead they create more questions that we seek to answer.

Implications

The key findings of our study have outlined how women working in the field of education were prompted to enter school leadership. The process through which they each cycled in order to first enroll in a nontraditional administrative preparation program and then to pursue positions as leaders speaks to the ways in which our efforts need to be focused to promote women as educational administrators. Our participants' stories gave insight into the appealing characteristics of alternative certification programs, clarifying the way in which programs such as NJ EXCEL help to advance women school leaders. Below we describe implications of this research on policy, research, and practice.

Policy. Nationally, nontraditional administrative preparation programs are not offered in every state. Few studies exist concerning alternative administrative programs, yet the most recent statistics indicate that less than half of our states have implemented such programs (Anthes, 2004). Many participants emphasized how they would not have pursued their administrative certifications had it not been for NJ EXCEL and its convenience/effectiveness. Because education is an area governed individually by state, a federal initiative that endorses nontraditional administrative preparation programs is suggested. The implementation of state-level programs of this nature would benefit

education by supporting the recruitment of diverse candidates (women included) to educational leadership and act as another funding source for the state. More state-level programs would meet Hickey-Gramke and Whaley's (2007) call to draft more qualified administrators.

A national initiative would also assist with the standardization of nontraditional programs across the United States. With state-level oversight, consistency between alternative programs is nonexistent, a problem that would be remedied with the promotion of a national standard. This combined with the national ISLLC standards, which are aligned to women's leadership orientation (Bjork, 2000; Grogan, 1999), could positively affect a change in the proportion of women school leaders sought for decades.

Research. Scholarship in the area of nontraditional administrative preparation programs is scarce. Even NJ EXCEL, which was instituted in 2003, had yet to publish results regarding the outcomes of their program at the start of this inquiry. Ironically, at the same time that we inquired about using NJ EXCEL as the context for this study they began to conduct their own research, which we have supported with our own findings. Literature surrounding nontraditional school leadership programs is mostly descriptive in nature or investigates the professional outcomes of program participants (Anthes, 2004; Hecht et al., 2000). Hickey-Gramke and Whaley (2007) stated that alternative principal licensure programs needed more critical examination, and the paucity of literature on the topic indicates that this statement is true today. The impact of nontraditional programs on school leadership in the state of New Jersey is one area that is of interest. As we mentioned previously, the pool of women administrators in New Jersey has grown from 42% in 1999 (NJDOE, 2010) to 51% in 2012 (NJDOE, 2012) and women

superintendents in the state have reached a high of 35% (NJDOE, 2014). Did the implementation of NJ EXCEL impact this advancement of women school leaders in the state? It is suggested that the outcomes of nontraditional programs around the country be evaluated to discern their effectiveness in enhancing the quantity of women administrators.

Practice. The single most important factor that prompted our participants to enter school leadership was the encouragement of a mentor. One verbal suggestion from a professional, with whom our participants worked and respected, was enough to begin the process of empowerment leading to their enrollment in a certification program. On a practical level, our recommendation is therefore to make a conscious effort to encourage women educators to pursue educational administration. This is the catalyst that is necessary for women to consider this professional route and thus it is necessary to begin their journey into the field. To formalize this process of encouragement, creating a non-official mentoring process for women who exhibit the characteristics of a good leader is suggested. In this process, getting women educators involved with various aspects of the school as teacher-leaders, through practical experiences such as committee work, and then verbally encouraging them to consider administration as a career path is advocated. Women *need* this verbal prompting, making our proposal simple yet vital.

Conclusion

This study reinforced some of the research done regarding the experiences that impel women to pursue positions in school leadership. An examination of gender for women graduates of a nontraditional administrative preparation program revealed how social norms influenced their professional decisions, even those in seemingly

nontraditional roles. A transformation of gender performance was not evidenced in this study, but intervals of episodic change in this regard were. Short periods of relief from gender roles resulted from the cyclical process of defining moments that motivated women to pursue employment in a field that they hitherto had not considered. Adding to this analytical lens of gender performance was the examination a nontraditional administrative preparation program, NJ EXCEL. This context was significant because without this option our participants expressed that they would not have obtained upper-administrative certifications, relegating them to the gender appropriate roles of teacher and supervisor. With only 18 participants taking part in this study, further investigation of nontraditional programs is recommended. Our data suggests that this type of program is having a positive impact on advancing women in the field of educational leadership through the propagation of women role models and mentors, but additional empirical evidence is necessary to show a direct connection between the two.

Chapter 6

Careworker or leader?:

The paradoxical life of the woman leader

Abstract

In an effort to advance women school leaders, this qualitative study took an alternative view on this highly researched topic by examining the issue from a gender performance perspective. A New Jersey administrative preparation program was the context of the study as its self-reported results indicated progress in promoting women in top administrative positions. Our findings suggested that women school leaders fluctuate between gender roles dependent on their context, with alternative performances occurring professionally and traditional acts being performed domestically. Thus a gender performance transformation was evidenced exclusively in the professional arena. The result of frequent role conversions was exhibited in the oppositional thinking of participants as well as incongruence between their words and actions. Ultimately, our participants had an awareness of the constraints of gender and noted its negative professional impact.

Keywords: gender performance, educational leadership, heuristic inquiry, standpoint feminism

Introduction

Today's women leaders are in a unique position in which they are torn between two worlds, their professional and personal lives; as a result of the feminist movement, women are advancing professionally, which increases the number of hours they work in the labor force, while simultaneously performing the duties associated with the traditional role of mother and wife. In 1975, Estler explained that women were inevitably forced to choose between social acceptance and intellectual achievement, creating a "double bind", which is how she described the decision women are forced to make between adhering to society's gendered expectations of women as home-makers or pursuing their educational/professional aspirations. The "double bind" is still prevalent due to the gendered discourse in which women's actions, behaviors, and appearance are societally induced (Paechter, 1998). Women who disregard gender norms and transcend into culturally masculinized leadership positions, are externally inhibited by social expectations which lowers self-confidence and results in job-related discrimination as well as typecasting into feminized leadership roles (Coleman, 2005). This gendered discrepancy negatively impacts promotion, evaluation, and salary opportunities for women leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Elsesser & Lever, 2011; Nadler & Stockdale, 2012), constraining their career paths.

In the field of education, a traditionally feminized profession (Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supply, 2004), discriminatory practices resulting from gendered expectations are prevalent. In 1992, the United States Census Bureau characterized the school superintendency as "the most male-dominated executive position of any profession in the United States" (Glass, 1992). The continued absence of women in the top leadership

positions of school systems suggests that gender may adversely impact women's promotion in educational organizations (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Marshall, 1993; Schmuck 1996; Shakeshaft, 1989; Young & McLeod, 2001). Women who do advance to the superintendency interact with other professionals who maintain traditional social expectations with regard to behavior and gender performance (Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurick, 2000), creating a disconnect between social expectations and personal aspirations, the effects of which continue to be undetermined.

Our heuristic qualitative study looked closely at women school leaders and their gender performances throughout certification and employment in school administration in order to understand the interaction between the social and the personal. Since gender identities are dynamic and change from personal experiences (Acker, 2013), various women's perspectives were explored, with a focus on their lived experiences. Women school leaders were an ideal group for this research as studies have demonstrated their ability to identify inconsistencies between their own experiences and that of the dominant group (men), exemplifying diverse interpretations of reality from the unique perspective of a group traditionally "othered" in certain settings (Fennell, 2008; Gosetti & Rusch, 1995). Historically, research on women school leaders has focused on women's perceptions of influences on leadership attainment (Cooley & Shen, 2000; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Winter, Rinehart, Keedy, & Bjork, 2004). This inquiry, however, linked women's behaviors and perceptions, a shortcoming in the literature to date (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012). Gender performance frames this analysis of women school leaders throughout and following administrative certification, allowing for a focus on the connection between their values, beliefs, attitudes, and actions.

Literature Review

As of the 2012-13 school year, a mere 35% of the superintendents in the State of New Jersey were women (NJDOE, 2014). This figure, which is higher than the latest national average of 24% (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011), shows significant growth from the year 2000, when it was estimated that less than 20% of school systems in the United States were run by women (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011). This discrepancy is not specific to the chief school administrator position, but manifests itself in the school principalship as well. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) during the 2007 – 2008 school year, women held 58.9% and 28.5% of principal positions in elementary and secondary public schools respectively (NCES, 2009). With an educational workforce whose population consists of over 75% of women (NCES, 2009), equality would mean that the quantity of women working in the highest school leadership positions should be close to the percentages of those working as educators. This is clearly not the case.

In terms of leadership preparation, women are being educated and trained to perform administrative positions. University programs have been created to explicitly nurture women leaders (Jurgens & Dodd, 2003). Common traits of these programs include the exclusive enrollment of women, curriculum inclusive of women leadership development, as well as the incorporation of women guest speakers, mentors, and leaders. Furthermore, as early as the 1990's women outnumbered men in graduate-level and doctoral programs focusing on educational administration (Glass, 2000). Yet, despite an increase in the educational achievements and leadership preparation of women, they still

are not achieving employment in top-level positions at a rate equivalent to that of their counterparts (Bjork, 2000; Sharp et al., 2004).

The paucity of women school leaders is an issue that has been researched from myriad perspectives. Earlier studies found that professional obstacles women faced were most often attributed to gendered discrimination (Adkinson, 1981; Lynch, 1990; Shakeshaft, 1989), whereas more recent literature shows that barriers are oftentimes self-imposed (Bruckner, 1998; Derrington & Sharratt, 2007; Nichols, 2002; Young & McLeod, 2001). Various factors coalesce to create an environment in which women are not equally represented as school leaders and a dynamic social structure ensures that the obstacles they face are not static.

Motherwork. "Educated or not, the onus is still on woman to be a wife/mother – only the nun can escape motherhood" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 39). *Motherwork*, a term/concept introduced by Patricia Hill Collins (1994), describes the disparate nature of the socially constructed role of women and “challenges social constructions of work and family as separate spheres, of male and female gender roles as similarly dichotomized” (p. 47). This description illustrates the duality between the roles of women and men. The term *motherwork* was intended to elaborate on the oppressive experiences of Black women in the United States, whose depiction has evolved from “Mammy” to that of “emotional nurturers” working in low-paying positions where they continue to care for others in a domestic manner (Collins, 2000). The connection from Collins’ *motherwork* to this study is that her depiction is not exclusive to women who are literally mothers, but rather encompasses the mothering roles that women are expected to occupy (Johnson, 2013); a social norm that is not restricted by race. Women in general may be pigeonholed

into occupations that are low-paying and stereotypically nurturing due to gendered constructions (Bayard, Hellerstein, Neumark, & Troske, 2003).

Indeed, within educational organizations, women school leaders may find themselves pigeonholed into motherwork positions based upon gender expectations. Elementary school principals are predominantly women rather than secondary school principals, a position that serves as a pipeline to upper-administrative positions (Prolman, 1982; Riehl & Byrd, 1997, Young & McLeod, 2001). This can be attributed to the perception that women are not able to handle the discipline of older boys (Coleman, 2005). Women also occupy more central office staff positions than men (Blackmore & Kenway, 1997; Shakeshaft, 1989; Young & McLeod, 2001). Central office administrators generally oversee curriculum/instruction/supervision, while elementary school principals see to the care of little children – all tasks that conform to roles culturally approved for women. So, even as a school leader, a woman's role as caretaker is enforced.

Gendered structures. On the organizational level, norms are established which preserve gender bias. Acker (2013) uses the term “gendered substructure” to explain how organizations perpetuate gender roles by maintaining invisible cultures (values, images, beliefs, etc.) in which gendered assumptions are embedded. Expectations of femininity and masculinity are reproduced through workplace inequalities and prejudices. This, amalgamated with the manner in which educational institutions are rapidly adopting neo-liberal ideals, increasingly promotes men as the ideal worker and leader (Lynch, 2010). Overt and covert discriminatory practices, such as bias during the hiring process and the more stringent evaluation of women leaders, often combine to inhibit women's advancement into leadership (Knights & Richards, 2003; Olsen, 2005). Evidence of

institutionalized gender-based discrimination may lie in the virtual invisibility of women in upper-management positions (Knights & Richards, 2003; Lynch, 2010).

Organizational structures and their enforcement, therefore, seem to suggest a culture in education in which both women who legitimate gender norms and those who deviate from associated roles may be met with professional resistance, fundamentally shoring up and sustaining an androcentric system of leadership.

Theoretical Framework

Standpoint Feminism. Inherent to the research discussed thus far is the concept of duality, a notion prominent in second-wave feminism and traditional feminist research. Beginning in the 1980's, women of color argued that the feminist movement of the 1960's and 1970's had a singular focus on gender that did not encompass the oppressive experiences of all women, but rather those of dominant white, rich, heterosexual women (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; Mack-Canty, 2004; Smith, 1983). This critique was not exclusive to feminism; poststructuralists also argued that the binary categorization preserved the power of dominant groups (Mann & Huffman, 2005; St. Pierre, 2000). Crenshaw (1989) was one of the first to create a label describing the oppression of multiply burdened women and the construction of their unique identities, countering feminism's traditionally myopic focus on privileged groups: *intersectionality*. This revolutionary theory better captured the complex lives and identities of women as opposed to the simplicity that accompanies a classification based on gender alone (Nash, 2008). Intersectionality was introduced at a time "...in which hegemonic feminist theorists, poststructuralists, and antiracist theorists almost simultaneously launched assaults on the validity of modern analytical categories" (McCall, 2005, p. 1776). This

was the catalyst for what some call the third wave of feminism where intersectionality replaced duality (Arneil 1999; Plumwood 1992; Mack-Canty, 2004; Siegel 1997).

Thus the focus between generations of feminists shifted from duality to include hybridity in identity (Aronson, 2003; Heywood & Drake 1997), which by its nature necessitates analysis of individual women's perspectives (Arneil 1999; Mack-Canty, 2004). A key aspect to understanding intersectionality concerns knowledge of the groups with which the women self-identify, which can only be secured by giving voice to women and hearing their unique stories. This perspective, also known as standpoint feminism, undergirds the work reported here.

Performing gender. Culturally, social norms promote the notion that gender correlates to biological sex, yet third-wave feminists and post-structuralists acknowledge that categories (gender, race, sexuality, etc.) are socially constructed. Judith Butler theorized that gender is nothing more than a performance that creates the constructed image of man and woman (Butler, 1988). Butler asserts that there is nothing natural or biological about gender, it is completely culturally produced and reproduced (Harris, 2012). Gender is portrayed through the “repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (Butler, 1990, p. 44). This explanation of gender as a historical construction correlates to Simone de Beauvoir's (1974) description that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one. In this sense, gender is depicted and communicated socially via bodily gestures, movements, and enactments, which, in time create the illusion of the body as a gendered self (Butler, 1988). As Martin (2003, p. 342) explained, gender is “said and done.” Women and men,

through repeated gendered performances, communicate their gender to others (Butler, 1993). Thus, gender is a social construction, not *a priori*; it is a performance that men and women enact daily, which employs clothing, actions, speech, and other enactments that portray their gender to others.

The binary categories of gender and their oppressive nature are reinforced via several standard cultural institutions. People act as social agents to promote the reproduction of gender through social symbols, but their acts are not alone; through social structures, families act as agents in influencing and reinforcing gendered behavior (Butler, 1988). This speaks once again to the continued dominance of responsibilities with which women are domestically burdened despite their professional advancement. Religious and secular institutions also have power in supporting gendered roles (Harris, 2012). Churches have frequently been identified as a socializing force that contributes to the prolongation of beliefs regarding acceptable roles for women (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Lybeck & Neal, 1995). Gangé, Tewksbury, and McGaughey (1997), explained that gender "...is learned and achieved at the interactional level, reified at the cultural level, and institutionally enforced via the family law, religion, politics, economy, medicine and the media" (p. 479), and, one can add based on the previous discussion, education. Social interactions promote gender roles by providing a plethora of data, both invisible and visible, which influence our every thought, feeling, relationship, and action (Wittig, 1980).

As social beings, we have been exposed since birth to the influences of social interactions, which in infancy promotes societal gender expectations, guiding our every move – making gender a learned phenomenon that, with each action, we choose to

replicate. In conjunction with the assertion that women have multiple identities that “are constructed in relation to one another and structure women’s opportunities, interactions, and social location” (Johnson, 2014, p. 4), gender performance serves to demonstrate that these identities are produced socially and can therefore only be understood socially and in a natural setting.

Context

The arena of educational leadership in the state of New Jersey has changed dramatically since the turn of the century. In the realm of higher education, more educational leadership preparation programs emerged in the state since 1998, and the overall number of individuals receiving degrees has increased. Between 1998 and 2011, the quantity of traditional post-graduate educational leadership programs in the state expanded from nine to 17 (New Jersey Department of Education, 2011), which has enhanced the number of New Jersey students obtaining degrees in educational leadership.

With regard to women school leaders in New Jersey, the proportion employed in the state has raised at parity with the national averages. Since 1999, the percentage of women working as school leaders in NJ has steadily grown from 42% (NJDOE, 2010), to 51% in 2012 (NJDOE, 2012). Nationally, the number of women school principals has risen from 43% in 1999-2000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000), to 51% in 2007-2008 (NCES, 2008). The averages above, although similar, compare the quantity of all administrators in New Jersey to the number of principals nationally; therefore, a direct evaluation is not sound. The most recent numbers show that 35% of New Jersey’s school superintendents are women (NJDOE, 2014), an average much higher than the national average (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young & Ellerson,

2011). Clearly women are advancing in the field of educational leadership both in the State of New Jersey, and within the United States. However, there is room for growth as the number of women educators is still vastly larger than their administrative representation.

The research we report here was centered on one of New Jersey's administration preparation programs entitled Expedited Certification for Educational Leadership (NJ EXCEL), whose records indicate that an equal number of men and women graduates of program have obtained employment as chief school administrators (Foundation for Educational Administration, 2013). Moreover, their women graduates outnumbered men in the obtainment of assistant superintendent positions with 10% of women finding positions as compared to only 1% of men (FEA, 2013). Within this context we explored the role of gender and how its performance was manifested in successful women graduates of NJ EXCEL as a means to better understand their decision-making processes and influences. Through this research we sought to understand the motivation of women who aspired to be school leaders and the factors at play as a means to shed a light on gendered expectations and substructures in education that constrain women and promote opportunities for women's leadership in educational organizations.

Methods

This heuristic qualitative study was designed to explore how gender performance evolved for women school leaders while specifically examining the influence of motherwork and gendered substructures on participants' descriptions of their careers in education. With a focus on participants' words, descriptions, histories, and experiences, a qualitative research technique was most suited for a thorough investigation of

participants' gender acts during the process of entering school leadership (Miles & Huberman, 1994). From a standpoint feminist perspective, this methodology provided the means for women's concrete experiences to act as the building blocks from which the findings described here were constructed (Brooks, 2007). Characterized by the collection, analysis, interpretation, discussion, and presentation of narrative information (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), qualitative inquiry was most suitable to the goals of the study.

The research questions guiding this inquiry were as follows: (1) How does gender performance manifest itself in the actions as well as the personal/professional lives of women NJ EXCEL graduates?; (2) How have the participants' gender performance evolved over the course of their career trajectory?; and, (3) In what ways do they believe gender structures their professional opportunities?

Data collection. This inquiry employed two methods for the collection of data: focus groups and individual interviews. Focus groups provided a starting point for this research and allowed for the initial engagement of unfamiliar topics between unacquainted informants and produced insights that may have been inaccessible without group interaction and discussion to elucidate them (Morgan, 1997; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). The second, and more revealing, data collection phase included complementary individual interviews that strengthened the findings of the total research project (Morgan, 1997). Interviews were used to collect in-depth information concerning the role gender has played in professional decisions and experiences as well as determine gender performances throughout and following certification.

The interview approach most consistent with the nature of heuristic qualitative research, which was used in this inquiry, was the informal conversational interview

method. This technique allowed for exploration of topics via a free-flow of histories (Moustakas, 1990). Open discussion was a collaborative means to learn from one another through open and honest conversation (Buber, 1965; Chirban, 1996; Lincoln, 1993; Mishler, 1986). The use of dialogue correlated to our mode of inquiry and was a means to elucidate the meaning within our combined experiences. Feminist Joyce McCarl Nielsen (1990) explained that interview techniques with open dialogue allow for a “fusion of horizons” and promotes the communication between women as a way to enrich our own standpoints through the discussion of diverse experiences (p. 29). Conversations were guided by a researcher-prepared interview checklist that delineated topics of interest (based on the research questions) and served as a reference point during the interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). These less structured interviews promoted energetic discussion and the sharing of stories in a safe environment between women with various but similar backgrounds (hooks, 1990; Brooks, 2007; Longino, 1999), resulting in allied groups of women who, post-interview, commended the empowerment and revitalization they felt as a result of their participation in the study.

Participants. A total of 25 NJ EXCEL graduates were asked to participate in focus group; these women represented typical case samples from the larger sampling frame based on employment, certification, professional achievements, and demographics. Due to conflicts and other responsibilities, 18 women participated overall. Five focus group sessions were offered with between two and six participants attending each. The small group size provided more of an opportunity for all participants to speak and engage (Carey, 1994; Morgan, 1997).

Using intensity sampling, individual interviews were then conducted with women, based on the data collected during the focus groups, to expand upon their experiences relative to the phenomena (Patton, 1990). Five women of extreme interest took part in this research phase; a sufficient number to get a full account of the phenomenon commensurate with heuristic inquiry (Polkinghorne, 1989). It was not the quantity of participants in this stage that made the research credible, but rather the information collected that provided a complete picture of participants' lived experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Data analysis. To analyze the interview data collected, four coding processes were used: narrative, values, pattern, and propositional. According to Saldaña (2009), coding consists of assigning “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). The first two coding cycles used were narrative coding, in which literary elements were used to analyze participant's stories, and values coding, which is useful in exploring participant values/attitudes/beliefs and is suitable for critical/feminist studies (Saldaña, 2009). Since heuristic inquiry is a very self-reflective process, the value that participants put on their experiences was important to gain an understanding of their experiences in context.

The second coding cycle employed pattern coding, which effectively grouped codes into smaller sets or themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This was a quest for “repeatable regularities” in the data (Kaplan, 1964, p.127-128). From these regularities various patterns were found, revealing connections that combined to create meta-codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The final iteration of coding used was propositional coding,

which brought together the propositional statements of prior coding cycles to formulate one outcome proposition that encompassed them all (Saldaña, 2009). Using the associations encountered in the initial rounds of coding, an outcome proposition was uncovered; this one umbrella propositional statement summarized the relationships between the codes in former cycles. This shaped the way our findings were reported because the interconnectedness of our findings is evidenced in the occasional overlap of themes during elucidation of the general proposition. Moustakas (1990) used the phrase *creative synthesis* to label the final product of a heuristic investigation. The synthesis in heuristic inquiry is unique from other forms of research as the experience as a whole is presented.

Positionality. Heuristic inquiry, the strategy used in this dissertation study, is an adaptation of phenomenological investigation that acknowledges and integrates the lived experiences of the researcher into the study and places them at the heart of the exploration (Hiles, 2002). All heuristic inquiry stems from “a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer” and a personal puzzlement in a “search to understand one’s self and the world in which one lives” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). A heuristic qualitative researcher uses personal experiences in combination with the first-person accounts of others to determine the nature and meaning of a phenomenon, which is illuminated by the firsthand descriptions of all participants (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). This means that our experiences as educational leaders influenced the entirety of this study – from its conception to the interpretation of data.

In heuristic research, the determination of validity can only be decided by the researcher, as she is the sole person who has experienced the phenomenon, completed the

self-reflective process, and dialogued with the co-researchers (Moustakas, 1990). Due to the personal nature of the research process that requires many steps of self-searching, the expertise of the researcher cannot be denied. Moustakas articulated this position best when he claimed:

The question of validity is one of meaning: Does the ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one's own rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others present comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience? This judgment is made by the primary researcher, who is the only person in the investigation who has undergone the heuristic inquiry from the beginning formulation of the question through phases of incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis not only with himself or herself, but with each and every [participant]. (1990, p. 32)

In heuristic inquiry especially, it became our duty as the researchers to capture the meaning of our transformation by honoring the complexity of both our participants and our own experiences (Giorgi, 1970).

Finally, in this study we distinguish between leadership and administration. While our participants may or may not be in formal administrative roles, they each describe experiences consistent with leadership. We characterize leadership as a focus on, and inspiration of, growth/achievement in others while administration speaks to organizational management. As Kotter (1990) describes it, "Management is about coping with complexity. Leadership, by contrast, is about coping with change" (p. 104). Our participants, in their accounts, describe significant transformations and performances that come to define their work in education.

Findings

The following section outlines the major findings of this inquiry, which fall into two interconnected areas stemming from the disparate personal and professional responsibilities of women school leaders. They are tasked with varied responsibilities in

their roles as women and administrators, which often contradict one another. This discrepancy creates an internal conflict in which women administrators must figure out how to simultaneously adhere to and stray from gender norms in order to be professionally successful. As we explain, a clash between women school leaders' diverse roles resulted in a divergence between participant's beliefs and actions as well as in oppositional thinking. These are symptoms of their internal struggle.

A dichotomous life. Gender is nonverbally communicated via a person's appearance and actions (Butler, 1988), ostensibly continuing the conflict women school leaders face. Which role should they play? As both women and leaders, our participants' opposing social positions created a discrepancy that they must navigate. Prominent sub-themes in this realm concern the discrepancy between gendered actions personally and professionally, that emerged as workplace behaviors and household roles, as well as awareness of the disparate social standards of men and women, which we refer to as different standards.

Workplace behaviors. In the professional arena, behaviors stereotypically associated with women were considered shameful. However, certain situations made consistently eschewing expressive behaviors, those only women exhibit, difficult. Our participants shared how despite their efforts, they were unable to maintain composure in some emotionally charged situations. These inadvertent, yet stereotypical, actions reminded their colleagues that these school leaders were women, which they felt portrayed them as unsuitable administrators. Their mention of and dialogue regarding these experiences demonstrated their embarrassment in acting "feminine" while in a professional environment.

So, you know, it was working on me [not getting the promotion] and then they start squirming. And they were saying, “It was so hard and I thought we had na-na-na.” It was hard not to get teary even though I was actually kind of relieved. So it pissed me off that I was getting teary, right? Because, why would I get teary? And, I didn’t really want to let them off the hook, but I also wanted them to think that I was fine. (District supervisor)

Emotional outpourings were described when receiving professional criticisms as well.

So I went in with my budget information, then she gives me all this other stuff. And then she sees something on one of my websites that she doesn't like... finally I said, “[Boss], you’ve got to let me go.” And I just teared up, because with [recent policy change], a change of leadership for me in the summer, I’d had enough. (Department supervisor)

As our participants attempted to conform to their professional roles within the school system, crying and other expressions of emotion were shunned due to their conformity to the social expectations of women. The expressions of women administrators were thusly confined. One vice principal compared the expectations of women leaders to “the Stepford wives, and I'm not a Stepford wife...they don’t want you to step out.” For this reason, our participants often eschewed “acting like a woman” in professional interactions as a means to maintain their legitimacy as school leaders and not be perceived as stereotypically emotional or irrational.

Acting within prescribed gender roles did not always have an adverse outcome. Sometimes it was used as an advantage. Under the pretense of empowerment it was clear that over-performing one’s role as a woman was used to manipulate certain situations.

I consider myself very gender neutral, although many times I’ve learned to use femininity to get my way. Now if I really need something I wear a tight shirt, it’s perfect. But it took me four years to figure that out. It’s really silly I should have known that. When I get in trouble with the board secretary – he’s a male chauvinistic pig – I wear a dress. I get anything I need. (Department supervisor)

When discussing the role clothing plays on the psyche, the confidence a flattering outfit provided was evident, particularly emerging when participants discussed purchasing

clothing for their interviews. One supervisor, who interviewed for a principal position, said her friends agreed on,

“the hot principal dress. And when I got the second interview I said ‘Go big, or go home.’ The school’s color is orange and black. It was an October interview. I walked in that place with orange and the best pair of shoes I own.”

There was an underlying understanding of when to dress, or not dress, in overly feminine clothing due to its influences on others. “I look at it as a way to feel empowered and hold myself in a manner that is empowering. For [the business administrator] it’s totally a sex thing.” Apparel along with the self-assurance it provided participants was recognized and manipulated when necessary. The manner in which women, at times, used gender to their advantage is reminiscent of West and Zimmerman’s (1987) postulation that gender is created situationally. In this case, our participants used their bodies as a means to manipulate others, demonstrating that they were able, at times, to consciously perform their gender to the benefit of their careers.

Household roles. Despite abjuring womanly behaviors professionally, interviewees acted as traditional mothers and wives within their households. They assumed a caretaker role domestically; a fact of which they were oftentimes unaware and which had professional consequences. Performing traditionally feminized duties within their household added to their internal conflict.

When I went back to school – the first time when my kids were really young – I just, I had to make the time. My mother-in-law-and my father-in-law-were very good if I needed a little bit of extra time, they'd take the kids, sometimes for the weekend or whatever and I'd bang out the papers and you know. You do what you have to do... But, to watch them all day, that wasn't going to happen. This is my responsibility. (Assistant superintendent)

What’s interesting about this statement is that her husband’s support is not even presumed; she even states that their child is *her* responsibility. Even when discussing

whether to enter school leadership, for some participants a modification of gendered roles within their households was not even a consideration.

I said to my family, 'This is going to take me away.' And I am the one that champions with the kids, with the homework and whatnot. [I asked myself] 'Are you going to be able to do this?' He has a position where he's travelling. And when I went back to school my husband said, 'If the kids get sick you're taking the day off. I can't rearrange my schedule, absolutely not.' (High school principal)

In other cases, when significant others are obliged to take over some of the domestic responsibilities while their wives are working, our participants hear complaints.

He can do more and pick up the slack, and so for the most part that's okay, but it's funny because when I was going for a promotion he's like, 'you know go for it, more money.' And I think he likes to sort of brag a little but the reality is that sometimes it's a problem, you know, 'how many nights you've been out, how many nights you've been this?' You know picking up the slack here and you start to hear about it. (District supervisor)

This statement aligns with other research positing that American men who are not the breadwinners of the family do less housework than those who are (Brines, 1994; Greenstein, 2000; Schneider, 2012); this is major discrepancy considering the average woman spends 13 more hours a week on housework compared to men – approximately 29 hours compared to a man's 16 (Schneider, 2012).

Being women and school leaders meant that our participants had a plethora of responsibilities, personally and professionally, which resulted in the need to flip between gendered roles throughout the day. Within their homes, these women were traditional mothers and wives, very distinct from the roles they played professionally, sat times contrasting with and constraining experiences that may enrich work life.

Different standards. Participants' struggles as women and school leaders were exacerbated by the belief that their counterparts were not inhibited by personal

responsibilities resulting from their roles as fathers and husbands. It was commonly alleged by participants that their struggle as women was distinct from that of men administrators, who live relatively carefree lives. This assumption was pervasive in our interviewees' narratives.

I'm kind of torn because I'm afraid that if I pursue my professional dreams that maybe 20 years from now, I'm going to regret the fact that maybe I didn't do something personally and vice versa. I don't want to have a child or two and then have that be detrimental to everything that I've worked so hard for professionally and I think what's hard is I don't feel like men have that. (Assistant principal)

Men's freedom from familial responsibilities was assumed because of women's performances as mothers and wives. Our participants made sacrifices professionally to successfully perform their household duties and the belief that men did not have to do the same was unsettling to them. One participant stated of this belief pattern, "Usually though a lot of women put it [careers] off... 'cause your focus is your family and like, oh I can't do that now. How many men would say that?" Professional decisions were frequently considered from the men's perspective too, displaying an awareness of disparate social expectations.

I thought a lot about how [male counterpart] has kids the exact same age and I'm sure that it was never a negative consideration for him. No, in fact it was probably the opposite. He wants to move up for them to provide them with more. Right? And well, his wife is home with them. She's a teacher but she – they are at the same school, on the same schedule. So he's in a perfect position. He's not depriving them in any way of things, except he will be around less. (District supervisor)

When you're in the business world, men tend to have the ability to spend 16 hours at work and come home and then put their feet up and sit on the couch and not have to worry about any of that whereas, because of priorities, we as women don't always have that. (Assistant principal)

There was an omnipresent sentiment that the internal struggle resulting from dichotomous roles between their work and home lives was exclusive to women. From the

inessentials, “she had a fresh manicure, yeah, and men don’t have to worry about that,” to major decisions, “a woman has to choose between a family and a career, whereas a man does not,” participants felt that their gender exclusively restricted them while men were careless and free both personally and professionally.

Paradoxes. The internal struggle between lives as wives/mothers and school leaders resulted in paradoxical living for our participants. They were walking contradictions. The traditional woman’s role was valued but not adhered to, convictions were espoused but not always congruent with actions, and women were simultaneously confident and uncertain.

Women school leaders, by their existence, are defying gendered norms. Ironically, despite their departure from social gender roles, they valued women who observe traditional roles and, furthermore, expected other women to adhere to them.

What made me fall in love with her? Because I said, ‘Why would you leave that [prestigious university] to teach at a high school?’ And she said, ‘I had two little guys at home that needed me.’ I went, ‘Oh, done.’ So, I was in love with her.
(District supervisor)

Even this supervisor, whose sexual orientation was nonconforming, clung to social norms by valuing the traditional role that her colleague chose to play. Expectations of how women “should” act were also highlighted especially concerning familial responsibilities. One supervisor, who immediately returned to work and began graduate school after having her first child, shared her observations of women educators in her department returning from maternity leave.

I’m surprised at the number of women who come right back with no reservations and don’t mind at all. And they are like, ‘I was bored at home.’ Now, I have other women who are tortured and they’re in tears and it’s not working and then they leave. But, I would think more women would be like that.

Her expectation that other women will conform to the traditional role of mother, while she did not, demonstrates an incongruity between her words and actions.

The line that interviewees straddled between acting simultaneously as professionals and mothers/wives demonstrated how their espoused values contrasted with their actions. There was agreement that men administrators had less familial responsibilities, which the women in our study felt burdened them unequally and impacted professional opportunities and performance.

I don't know if you have kids too, but my husband is a teacher... When I was going for this job he's like, you know go for it, more money! And I think he likes to sort of brag a little, but the reality is that sometimes it's a problem... I had to have somebody go pick up my daughter today. But I'm just saying like I thought he [her husband] could make it and then he had a thing, so I kind of had to shuffle and so it's constant. (District supervisor)

I was up at 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock in the morning doing a lot of paperwork for my master's. I went to [state university]. That was a long drive and at that time my kids were younger. I'd come home and they'd say, 'We don't understand our homework.' And I'd say, "Where's daddy?" [He was] laying on the couch, sleeping. I just came from working all day, then being in school for hours. I have my own homework, I have a pounding headache, and now I have to help with their homework. (Principal)

These are classic examples of how childcare traditionally falls to women, despite professional responsibilities. Paradoxically, the clash between espoused values and participant behaviors demonstrated their juxtaposition.

Aside from personal responsibilities, there was also a professional expectation regarding other women and how they should perform their jobs based on assigned gendered roles. Women who were not conforming to stereotypical characteristics within their positions were identified by our participants, and questioned.

I don't know if she [the superintendent] came from [area school], but it's sort of fascinating what's going on. Their whole model is fire everybody, top-down, you know, directive leadership. [Their motivation] seems to be power, which isn't a

normal – this might sound very sexist but I think it's true...I don't think that the desire for power is what motivates most of the women I know to be in leadership.
(District supervisor)

Because this superintendent was using an assertive and aggressive leadership style, her motives were questioned; implying that it would be understandable for men to act similarly, but not women. What made conversations of this nature ironic was how participants valued the traditional ideal of a woman, and judged other women based on their conformity to their traditional gender roles, yet they themselves strayed from gendered norms.

Contradictions between actions and words were rife throughout the interviews. Argyris and Schön (1974) would call this a discrepancy between theories-in-action and theories-in-use; the values our participants espoused contrasted their actions. The most frequent manifestation of this emerged in discussions about employment opportunities. One assistant superintendent discussed her shock at getting a job that she felt she was most qualified for.

I was the 'dark horse'... I just felt that I knew the most about curriculum and instruction and that's really what this job is largely about. This is my bread and butter here... I knew everything that they asked - I felt it went well... About 9:30 that night I got a call offering me the position. And good thing I was down 'cause I was stunned.

There was much surprise at being hired, even after detailed explanations regarding their superiority over other candidates for jobs.

She offered me the job that night. And I go, "Really?!" I mean I was driving and I had to pull over. I go, "really?" I was so excited and then they asked me how much money did I want? Oh my god, I don't know what to answer with this question. So I asked for just around ten thousand more than I was making already. I figured that was reasonable, I should've asked for more...I was just surprised when they said yes. (K-12 supervisor)

In another inharmonious conversation, a supervisor applied for a job and then explained why she didn't want it. "I think that they are really kind of awful to teachers and stuff like that, but at the same time I don't necessarily want to, I don't know. What's the word? Go down with the ship." Another school leader, who for years worked as an administrator in the same building that her husband worked, contradicted herself when she explained, "I didn't apply for the assistant principal position at the high school for many factors one of which was, well, he's [her husband] there." However, they worked in the same building while he was a teacher and she an administrator for years. Incongruences such as these showed that women's actions often veered from their espoused beliefs and values, a product of the internal gender performance struggle our participants face daily.

Discussion

Gender's omnipresence (Hirschauer, 1994) has internal and external implications for women, and is therefore very relevant to this discussion towards the advancement of women administrators to leadership. The plethora of research evaluating the ways in which women are discriminated against in the field of educational leadership has thus far focused on the external factors that combine to inhibit women from advancement. A failure to analyze the internal forces that influence a woman's decision-making process has overlooked the most important, and controversial, component of this cause – the women themselves. For this reason, our study focused on research questions that placed women school leaders as inquiry's focus specifically examining the manifestation of gender performance in their actions and personal/professional lives, the evolution of gender performance throughout women's professional careers, and the gender structures of their professional opportunities.

Paradoxical performances. Our findings uncovered a tremendous discrepancy between women school leader's roles throughout the day. Professionally, our participants occupied all levels of administration whereas domestically they were stereotypical mothers and wives, performing duties expected of women within their households. Gender performance is often invisible to the performers who have been bombarded with images of what it means to be a man and woman since birth (Butler, 1988), and this was certainly true of our participants. They described familial situations that contrasted their professional lives, moving from a leadership role publically to a careworker role privately. This fluctuation supports the concept that gender construction is fluid, flexible, and context specific (Nentwich & Kelan, 2014). Butler (2004) noted that gender identity is a "practice of improvisation" and the vacillation participants experienced in gender performance between their personal and professional lives demonstrates the appropriateness of this statement. At times, gender performance was consciously employed to manipulate others whereas other times women fought to restrain themselves from acting femininely in the workplace. Hirschauer (1994) conjectured that women in masculinized roles, such as leadership, refrain from "doing femininity" in these positions yet this statement alone minimizes women's experiences. Our participants struggled to maintain a more masculinized veneer professionally and were not always successful. There was a constant vacillation between traditional and nontraditional gender performances dependent upon the context. Women were performing varied gender roles throughout the day, a fluctuation that caused internal struggle.

Manufacturing gender. Poststructuralism and discourse theory, inspired by Foucault (1976), posit that alternative performances alter binary gender categories

(Poggio, 2006). Through their repeated acts as women school leaders, our participants were inadvertently altering the masculinized position of school administrator.

Professionally women were more progressive in transforming their gender performance than domestically.

In addition to altering gender performances, research has shown that role models are essential in influencing women's behaviors (Lafreniere & Longman, 2008; Madsen, 2007; Marshall & Kasten, 1994). Publicly, women are exposed to various professional role models, both within the workforce and through media whereas motherwork (Collins, 1988) is modeled from infancy. Furthermore, employment is a sphere that is broached later in life, while children are exposed to mothers and their prescribed roles from birth. Hence socially approved behaviors and characteristics of women in the household are most deeply ingrained and are the last to change during the process of gender transformation. Domestically, there was little evidence of progress in transforming gender roles. Participants repeated actions that conformed to stereotypical expectations of mothers/wives while external exposure to social gender norms reinforced gender roles (Lloyd, 2007). Diverse gender performances throughout the day as leaders and then mothers/wives, manifested itself in the incongruence between participant's words and actions.

Carelessness. An awareness regarding the inequity between the responsibilities of men school leaders compared to women was also noteworthy. Through their dialogue, our participants unknowingly identified carelessness, a concept that describes how a lack of familial responsibilities is valued professionally and ultimately advances men within the workplace (Lynch, 2010). When relating their varied responsibilities, our participants

did not criticize their domestic gendered roles, yet they did recognize a discrepancy within the professional realm. Descriptions of inequality between genders resulting from household responsibilities shows that a problem continues to exist. Our participants recognized that men, due to the careless nature of fatherhood (Lynch, 2010), were less restrained professionally as a result of their gendered expectations.

This social situation was originally recognized by Hochschild (1989), in what she termed the “stalled revolution” where there was “...a change in women, a change in the workforce, but a constancy in the work-place policies that are inflexible to family demands” (p. 12). This scenario has not changed in over twenty-five years, creating the situation we uncovered in which women school leaders are professionally constrained by the traditional roles of mother and wife that they perform within their households. Women appear to be in a transitional phase in which they are clearly and continuously making advancements professionally, with domestic progress being slower to follow. It is not surprising, therefore, that the dichotomous lifestyle our participants led resulted in incongruence in actions and words; our participants transitioned between their roles so frequently that internal confusion was inevitable. How their awareness and contrasting values/behaviors will influence their gender performance in the future is unknown, and could be the topic of a future study; at this juncture, it has clearly not altered their gender roles as mothers and wives. A focus on the inequity resulting from gender demonstrated that women continue to be held to different standards and expectations than men, a situation that continues to need amelioration. Using the restraining responsibilities of motherhood as an example, for our participants, gender and its implied domestic responsibilities were compulsory and enforced (Butler, 1993).

The abovementioned findings highlight various aspects of the professional journeys of the preponderance of the interviewees. For transparency in reporting, it should be noted that there was an occasional outlier within our participant group. These negative cases were most often identified during focus groups because intensity samples were selected for individual interviews. As an example of this, several women interviewed entered school leadership when their children were older, effectively altering how their caretaker role impacted their positions in school administration, and another participant never had children. Despite small discrepancies, their distinct voices were honored in our descriptions, but not always reported as we were searching for common experiences. The presence of negative cases did not retract from this study, but rather enhanced it by providing another avenue for future research.

Implications

This research has implications for research, policy, and practice in educational leadership. As a social assumption, gender is often invisible to members of society (Butler, 1988); however, steps can be taken to prevent gender from inhibiting women professionally. Following are suggestions towards this end based on this study's findings.

Research. What can be done to break the cycle of repeating gender roles? These women are not in positions stereotypical of women, yet they still value the traditional. Gender performance is the repetition of gendered acts, which our participants clearly did not adhere to as women administrators, at least professionally, yet within their households a more traditional structure was evident and conformed to. Why the discrepancy? Scrutiny, via observation, between the personal and professional lives of women school leaders would more clearly delineate women's gender performance in

both realms of their lives and would more effectively reveal their gender performance. As this research showed, there was a discrepancy between their theories in action and use. Observation of women administrators in both their personal and professional worlds would more genuinely outline their gender performance, which this study only glimpsed from through participant narratives.

Policy. In terms of gender and policy, this study highlighted appearance as a decision-making factor in hiring and professional interactions. This emphasis on attire and others' perceptions affected employment-related decisions and job attainment. Although women sometimes used this to their advantage, appearance does not translate into job effectiveness. Therefore, it is suggested that procedures be implemented to ensure that appearance is officially eliminated from the evaluative process during interviews. On interview evaluation forms, sections regarding professional appearance should be reviewed to ensure that gender is not reflected in the potential employee's interview assessment. How good someone looks in a dress does not dictate how they will perform their job as a school leader. This would entail the use of interview evaluation assessments that are specific and focus on knowledge, job experience, educational background, and training, rather than on general categories such as "professionalism" where adherence to gender norms can be used to evaluate potential employees.

Practice. On a positive note, prior research on the pipeline into school leadership indicated that women oftentimes failed to reach the top of the proverbial ladder in school leadership because of the time they lost raising a family (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012), yet this was one area in which our study's findings showed advancement. Younger

participants were both working in school leadership while raising young children, not having taken more than a few months off of work for childbearing.

As women more frequently recognize the inequity in their positions, there is hope that this awareness will orchestrate changes within their own lives and households to better balance domestic responsibilities with their partners. Gendered roles and norms begin within the home, and reproduced in society (Khullar, 1999). Gender discrimination within the home strengthens the patriarchal tradition from which the value and practices extended to the public sphere are learned and solidified because the home is where socially desirable qualities are promoted (Lee, 1999). For each household in which women defy expectation by rejecting their gender role and altering their performance, a new generation of children can be raised with non-conforming women role models. This would foster a generation that does not feel compelled to adhere to gender roles, but rather makes decisions based on individualized interests and desires. The implications of these changes would assist with the promotion of women in educational leadership, and in other professions as well, by allowing them to freely choose leadership positions and put careers of this nature as a top priority in their lives.

Conclusion

The gender performance of women school leaders was at the heart of this study and the stark dichotomy between these roles was apparent. Acting as a woman administrator meant shunning feminized behaviors while acting as a mother meant embodying them. Unconsciously these women administrators fluctuated between genders throughout the day dependent upon the context. The daily repetition of performing oppositional roles created a discrepancy between their values and behaviors as well as

oppositional thinking. Inconsistencies of this nature evidenced an internal struggle between freedom from the constraints of gender roles and acceptance of them. In the field of educational leadership this internal conflict was enhanced by the anticipated feminization of the administrative roles in which women served, a feminization that was eschewed at times but exploited in certain contexts for professional advancement.

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Appendix A

Letter of Request for Research Approval for NJ EXCEL

May 2, 2013

Ms. Patricia Wright
Executive Director, NJPSA
12 Centre Drive
Monroe Township, NJ 08831

Esteemed Ms. Wright,

It is with great excitement that I scribe this letter of request to you concerning the possibility of working in conjunction with NJPSA to conduct research regarding women in educational leadership. In July of 2009, my personal journey into the field of educational leadership began within the walls of the FEA building in Monroe Township upon acceptance into the NJ EXCEL program, from which principal and school administrator certifications were earned. My subsequent entrance into Rowan's doctoral program of educational leadership was prompted both by educators in the program and my continued thirst for knowledge following NJ EXCEL. Four years after this voyage began I have successfully gained employment as a school leader and also finished the coursework required of Rowan's doctoral program in school leadership; thus, I am equipped, experienced, and eager to give back to the educational community that helped me to reach my own professional and personal goals.

Upon considering an area in which to conduct research for the culminating dissertation project, my sights kept returning to nontraditional administrative preparation programs due to my exceptional experiences within the NJ EXCEL program. Additionally, I have always had a penchant for gender studies due to strong female role models that I am surrounded by, including women such as you who hold positions of leadership in a male-dominated field. During my time as a model two and four candidate of NJ EXCEL, I noticed a discrepancy in the number of women in the program towards a principal's certification as compared to the quantity of men in the program (I believe we outnumbered them four to one); however, this discrepancy was not as prevalent in the program aimed at achieving a school administrator certificate. After doing some preliminary research and having various discussions with some of NJPSA's employees, I found that little research has focused on nontraditional administrative preparation programs, that an overabundance of women is a consistent characteristic of programs aimed at preparing students for a principal's certification, and that available research does not focus on the promotion of women within said programs.

The crux of this letter is to request permission to utilize NJPSA's resources to do a qualitative research study on women who have completed the NJ EXCEL program. My goal is to determine how strictly these women adhered to, or strayed from, gender norms throughout the process of becoming certified and attempting to obtain employment in the

field. The heart of my request is to ask your association to send emails to all NJ EXCEL alumni containing a quantitative survey, from which I will gather the relevant information needed to select willing and appropriate participants for the study; and to permit me access to the facility to conduct focus group interviews with study participants. I use the plural of the word email as I anticipate that the survey will need to be sent a number of times (3-5) at pre-planned and specific intervals, each with distinct cover letters attached, in order to garner enough participants for the study. From there, the interviewing phase would begin with school administrators who accept my invitation to take part in small group discussions. Agreeable individuals will be asked to participate in interviews more specific to the topic at hand. The interviews will tentatively include a few focus groups followed by a handful of individual interviews. At this point the abovementioned survey has not been created, however, the information sought is intended to help identify relevant participants and will ask questions concerning alumni demographics, career aspirations, professional employment, and the job search process. It is expected that, if this entreaty is granted, the survey will need to meet with NJPSA's approval prior to its distribution.

I realize the risk an organization takes when allowing an outside party to employ their resources. Therefore, please rest assured that I have successfully completed training through the [*Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative*](#) (CITI) which provides education to all members of the research community regarding ethical research practices and protection for participants (a certificate of this can be provided if needed). The information that I would receive throughout the process will remain confidential to protect participants, and statements regarding this would be provided to all relevant parties. This appeal is not asking for access to any confidential information from NJPSA, just the circulation of an email and the occasional use of a classroom; through the survey, I intend to collect all information pertinent to the study directly from willing respondents.

Because NJPSA would serve as an essential resource for this inquiry, please note that your organization would receive credit for your assistance in this research project. In addition to that which is included in the dissertation regarding your aid, I will be submitting two articles for publication in relevant journals throughout the research process. Having agreed to a "manuscript option" with my dissertation chair, these articles will be prepared specifically for selected journals of interest and will serve as chapters four and five within my dissertation document. Although I cannot guarantee publication within scholarly journals, it is an avenue that I will eagerly pursue, and which will hopefully result in positive press for both NJPSA and NJ EXCEL.

My goal through this inquiry is to gain a better understanding of women in the field of education particularly in New Jersey. A look at the state's statistics since 2000 reveal that the percentage of female school administrators has increased from 42% to 51% in 2012 (NJDOE, 2012); considering that the NJ EXCEL program began around 2003, I wonder what impact this program has had on the increasing quantity of women in the field. However, these statistics do not expose the entire story. The statistics provided encompass all school levels of school administrators; in looking specifically at the superintendency only 20% of women hold this top-level seat (Glass & Franceschini,

2007). Despite the fact that more women enroll in and complete graduate programs within the arena of school leadership, this is not consistent with that which occurs in practice – fewer women than men gain employment in educational administration (Glass, 2000). With your help, this research can assist in identifying some of the gender-related issues females in New Jersey face between certification and employment in the field, as this is where the discrepancy lies. Many women are receiving administrative certificates but then are not practicing their craft. What is happening between certification and job attainment that impedes them?

Looking forward, as a researcher-practitioner I anticipate that this will not be the only research I conduct throughout my career. The findings of this research will not only be shared with NJPSA, but may also lead to further research that could assist in promoting women in the field and in gaining an understanding of the impact that NJ EXCEL’s nontraditional program has had on educational leadership within the state. Thank you for your consideration of this request. This letter is accompanied by an executive summary of my research proposal that includes additional information about this study. I look forward to discussing this request with you as I believe it will allow us to work collaboratively to meet our combined goal of ensuring high quality educational leaders, of all genders, enter the field as practitioners.

Cordially,

Kimberly Clark

Kimberly Clark

Ms. Kimberly Lynn Clark
Pinelands Regional Junior High School Assistant Principal

Appendix B

Typical Case Sample Considerations and Statistics

<i>Percentages of Positions Held by All Women Survey Respondents Compared to Research Participants</i>				
Position	All Women Respondents: During NJEXCEL	Participants: During NJ EXCEL	All Women Respondents: Currently	Participants: Currently
Teacher	43%	44%	23%	22%
Counselor	17%	11%	13%	5%
Coordinator	9%	16%	5%	11%
Supervisor/Director	28%	27%	32%	33%
Principal/Vice Principal	1%	0%	13%	16%
Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent	0%	0%	6%	11%

<i>Ages of All Women Survey Respondents Compared to Research Participants</i>		
Age	All Women	Participants
26-30	6%	5%
31-35	12%	11%
36-40	9%	5%
41-45	10%	5%
46-50	16%	16%
51-55	23%	27%
56-60	18%	22%
61-65	4%	0%

Caretaker Responsibilities of All Women Survey Respondents Compared to Research Participants

Primary Caretaker of Children/Parents	All Women Respondents	Participants
No	46%	50%
Yes	54%	50%

Professional Aspirations of All Women Survey Respondents Compared to Research Participants

Aspirations	All Women Respondents	Participants
Supervisor	14%	5%
Director	33%	27%
Assistant Principal	14%	11%
Principal	25%	22%
Assistant Superintendent	9%	11%
Superintendent	6%	11%

Relationship Status of All Women Survey Respondents Compared to Research Participants

Relationship	All Women Respondents	Participants
Divorced	13%	11%
Married/Civil Union	71%	66%
Single/Dating	16%	22%

*Type of Current School System that Employed All Women Survey
Respondents as Compared to Research Participants*

Type of School	All Women	Participants
Public	96%	94%
Private	4%	6%

Appendix C

Online Survey

Subject Line: Supporting NJ EXCEL via Survey Participation

Message:

Greetings NJ EXCEL Alumni and Current Candidates,

My name is Kimberly Clark, and I am an alumnus of NJ EXCEL (models II and IV), and a doctoral candidate of Rowan University. My dissertation inquiry focuses on gender performance within the NJ EXCEL program. The data gathered from this study is intended to ultimately advance women in the field of school leadership. As current and former participants in this program, your involvement in this research is crucial to its success.

The purpose of the survey, that I am humbly asking you to complete, is to gather general information regarding the individuals who have enrolled in NJ EXCEL, and then to select participants who are willing to take part in one or more interviews that delve into specific experiences they had in the program. All of the information shared through this survey will remain confidential, be viewed solely by me, and used only for the purposes of research for this project. *The questionnaire is designed to take no more than 3 – 5 minutes to complete.* Thank you for your time and assistance; a response by Friday, November 22, 2013 is appreciated.

Please use the following link to access the survey:

[NJ EXCEL and Gender
Performance Questionnaire](#)

With gratitude,

Kimberly Clark

Kimberly Clark
Doctoral Candidate, Rowan University
Assistant Principal, Pinelands Regional Junior High School

If you have any questions, experience any technical difficulties, or would prefer to complete a paper survey, please contact me either by phone (609) 226-5339 or email clarkk43@students.rowan.edu. Dr. Ane Johnson, my Rowan University faculty sponsor, can also be contacted at johnsona@rowan.edu with questions.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. Completion time will be approximately 5 minutes. Answers are completely anonymous (unless you choose to leave your name and contact information) and will remain confidential, to be viewed solely by me as the researcher. The information requested in this survey will be used to gather data and select participants for group and/or individual interviews concerning women, gender, and educational leadership. This is a hard copy of the survey, the actual document will be sent as an electronic form. To access the form that was sent, please go to the following website:

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Woman
 - b. Man
 - c. Transgendered
2. What is your relationship status?
 - a. Single
 - b. Married/Civil Union
 - c. Divorced
 - d. Widowed
 - e. Long-term partnership
 - f. Other
3. What is your age-range?
 - a. 21-25
 - b. 26-30
 - c. 31-35
 - d. 36-40
 - e. 41-45
 - f. 46-50
 - g. 51-55
 - h. 56-60
 - i. 61-65
 - j. Other (please specify)
4. Do you have a child, or children, for whom you are the primary caretaker?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. What area(s) is/are your master's degrees(s) in?
 - a. Education
 - b. Educational Leadership
 - c. Curriculum
 - d. Special education
 - e. Instructional technology

- f. Content area specific
 - g. Other (please specify)
6. When did you begin the NJ EXCEL program?
- a. January 2013
 - b. July 2012
 - c. January 2012
 - d. July 2011
 - e. January 2011
 - f. July 2010
 - g. January 2010
 - h. July 2009
 - i. January 2009
 - j. July 2008
 - k. January 2008
 - l. July 2007
 - m. January 2007
 - n. July 2006
 - o. January 2006
 - p. July 2005
 - q. January 2005
 - r. July 2004
 - s. January 2004
 - t. July 2003
 - u. Other (please specify)
7. In which NJ EXCEL model(s) were you enrolled? Please choose all that apply.
- a. Model I (Principal certification for supervisors with 3+ years of experience)
 - b. Model II (Principal certification for supervisors with less than 3 years of experience)
 - c. Model III (Supervisor and Principal certification program)
 - d. Model IV (Chief School Administrator Certification program)
8. In what year did you complete the NJ EXCEL program?
- a. 2003
 - b. 2004
 - c. 2005
 - d. 2006
 - e. 2007
 - f. 2008
 - g. 2009
 - h. 2010

- i. 2011
 - j. 2012
 - k. 2013
 - l. Did not yet complete the program
9. If you did not yet complete NJ EXCEL, what are the main reasons? Select all that apply.
- a. Money
 - b. Time constraints
 - c. Quantity of work
 - d. Did not pass the principal's or superintendent's exam (SLLA and SSA, respectively)
 - e. Motivation
 - f. Lack of support personally
 - g. Lack of professional support
 - h. Other (please specify)
10. What was/were your position(s) while completing the NJ EXCEL program? Choose all that apply.
- a. Teacher
 - b. Guidance Counselor/Child Study Team Member
 - c. School Support Staff
 - d. Supervisor
 - e. Unemployed
 - f. Other (please specify)
11. If you were working in education while completing the NJ EXCEL program, what level(s) were you working with? Select all that apply.
- a. Pre-K
 - b. Elementary education
 - c. Middle school
 - d. High school
 - e. Higher education
12. Did you lead any extracurricular activities prior to, or during, enrollment in the NJ EXCEL program? If you answer no to this question, please skip to question number 14.
- a. Yes
 - b. No
13. If you answered yes to the last question concerning extracurricular activities, what position(s) did/do you hold?
- a. Coach
 - b. Activity Adviser
 - c. Band/Choir director

- d. Other (please specify)
14. Do you currently work in the education profession? If you answer “no” to this question, please skip to number 19.
- a. Yes
 - b. No
15. What is the title of your current position?
- a. Teacher
 - b. Guidance counselor/Child Study Team Member/School Counselor
 - c. Dean
 - d. Supervisor
 - e. Assistant Principal
 - f. Principal
 - g. Director of Guidance
 - h. Director of Special Services
 - i. Director of Curriculum
 - j. Director of ESL or ELL
 - k. Director of Discipline
 - l. Athletic Director/Student Activities Director
 - m. Assistant Superintendent
 - n. Superintendent
 - o. Other (please specify)
16. At what level(s) do you currently work? Choose all that apply.
- a. Pre-K
 - b. Elementary education
 - c. Middle school
 - d. High School
 - e. Higher education
 - f. District/Central office
 - g. Other (please specify)
17. For how many years have you been in your current position?
- a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. 6
 - g. 7
 - h. 8
 - i. 9
 - j. Other (please specify)

18. What type of school system do you currently work for?
- Public
 - Charter
 - Private
 - Higher education
 - Other (please specify)
19. Have you participated in any educational leadership programs since your enrollment in NJ EXCEL? If not, please skip to question number 21.
- Yes
 - No
20. If the answer to the previous question was yes, please specify the program(s) you participated in below.
21. What New Jersey administrative certification(s) do you currently hold? Choose all that apply.
- Supervisor
 - Principal/Director
 - Chief School Administrator
 - Business Administrator
 - Other (please specify)
22. Approximately how many positions did you, or have you, applied for in school leadership?
- 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
 - 7
 - 8
 - 9
 - 10
 - Other (please specify)
23. Approximately how many positions did you, or have you, interviewed for in school leadership?
- 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5

- f. 6
 - g. 7
 - h. 8
 - i. 9
 - j. 10
 - k. Other (please specify)
24. How many school leadership positions have you held?
- a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. 6
 - g. Other
25. Did you ever feel that gender influenced whether you were hired for a position in school leadership?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
26. If you answered yes to the previous question, did you feel that gender positively or negatively impacted your candidacy for the position(s) in question?
- a. Positively
 - b. Negatively
 - c. Both
27. What is your ideal position in school leadership?
- a. Teacher
 - b. Guidance counselor/Child Study Team Member/School Counselor
 - c. Supervisor
 - d. Dean
 - e. Assistant Principal
 - f. Principal
 - g. Director of Guidance
 - h. Director of Special Services
 - i. Director of Curriculum
 - j. Director of ESL or ELL
 - k. Director of Discipline
 - l. Athletic Director/Student Activities Director
 - m. Assistant Superintendent
 - n. Superintendent
 - o. Other (please specify)

Thank you for completing this survey. As an acting school leader, I value your time and appreciate your contribution to this inquiry. If you are interested in participating in further research concerning women in educational leadership for this study, please provide your contact information below.

Name:

E-mail address:

Phone Number:

Best way to contact you:

Appendix D

Focus Group Interview Protocol

The following topics will be discussed during the focus group interviews held in the fall of 2013 regarding gender performance, the NJ EXCEL program and women in educational leadership. These are talking points for conversations, not questions.

- Current position/title and grade level
- Choosing between NJ EXCEL versus Traditional master's program
 - Appealing elements of NJ EXCEL
- Recruitment into NJ EXCEL
 - Communication of NJ EXCEL program to potential candidates
- Factors/motivators for entering educational leadership
- Family support
- Family/household responsibilities and equity
- Family/household responsibilities and impact on participation in NJ EXCEL
- The hiring process and experiences climbing the educational leadership ladder as a woman (opportunities sought and denied/offered)
- Professional responsibilities formal/informal (and the gender divide)
- Experiences with sex-typed school leadership roles
- Career goals and transformation over the course of one's career
- Factors influencing career decisions

Other possible topics (if needed) include:

- Gendered leadership styles
- Defining moments

Appendix E

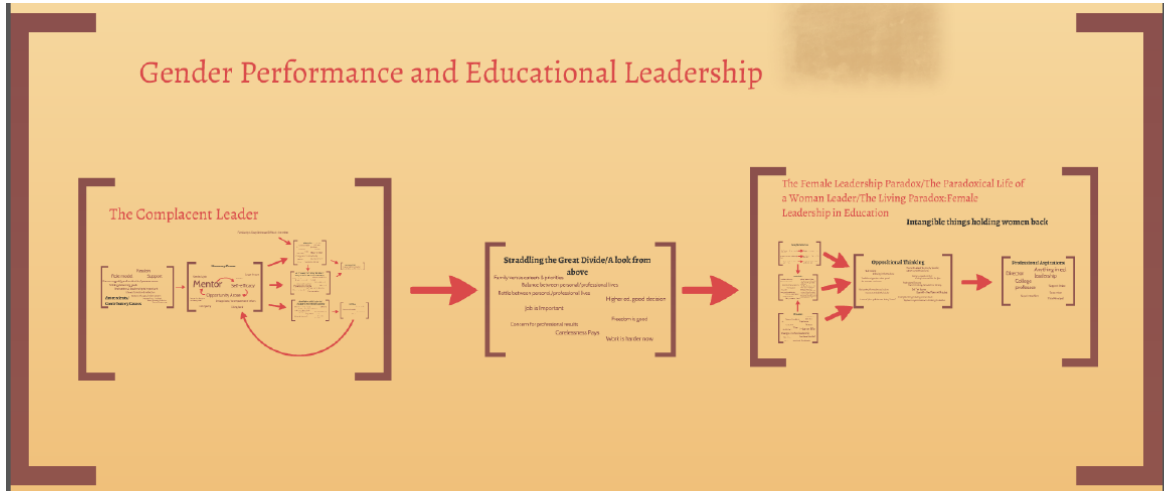
Individual Interview Checklist

The following topics will be discussed during the individual interviews held in the fall/winter of 2013 regarding gender performance, the NJ EXCEL program and women in educational leadership. These are talking points to guide our conversations and are not meant to be posed as questions, but rather as platform for discussion.

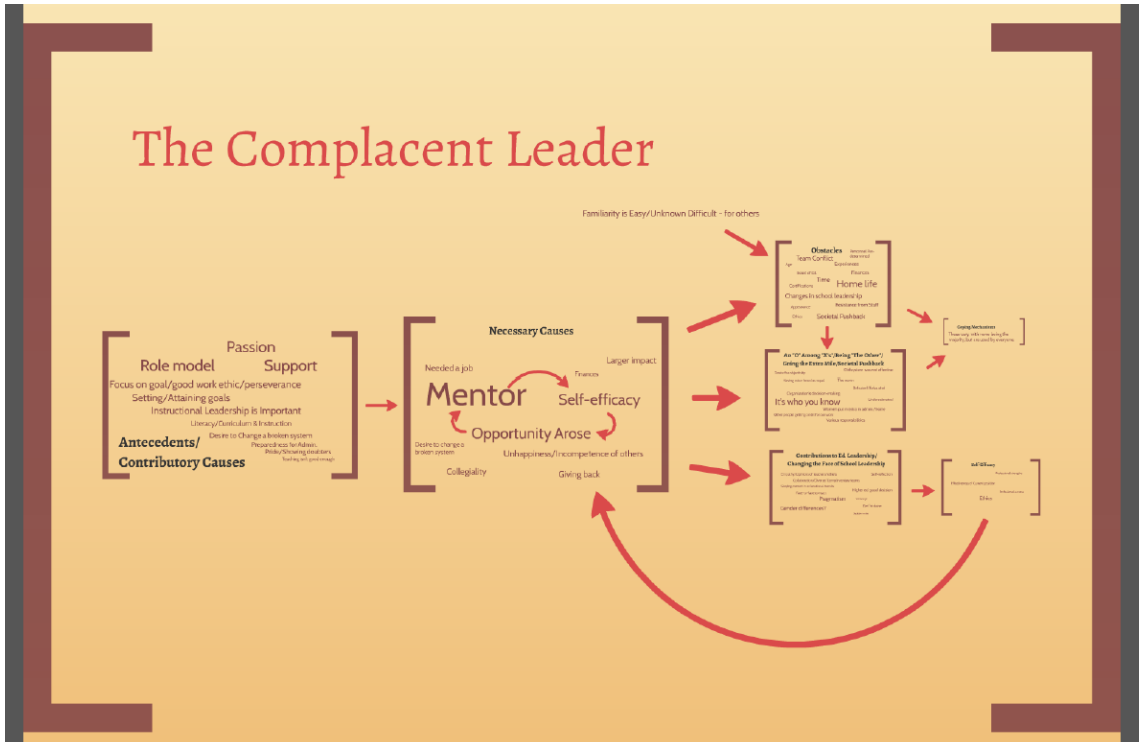
- Personal/professional journey leading to educational leadership
- Defining moments (as the pivotal point in an individual's life that triggers a self-reflection leading to action that affects/prompts leadership aspirations/effectiveness)
- Challenges to entering school leadership
- Motivators to entering educational leadership
- Perceived impact of gender on the professional journey/career aspirations
- Gendered professional experiences
- Informal (and formal) professional roles/responsibilities as a female school leader
- Changes in responsibilities personal/professional since enrolling in NJ EXCEL
- Family/household responsibilities and impact on professional career
- Professional role models/mentors
- Gendered leadership styles
- Women in educational leadership

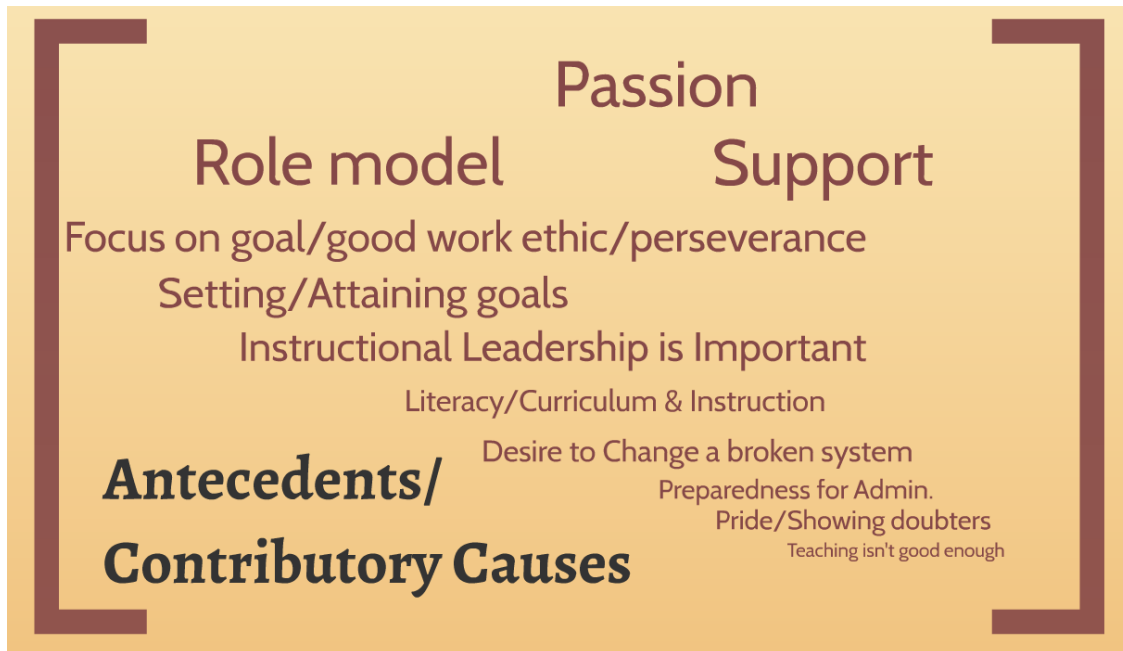
Appendix F

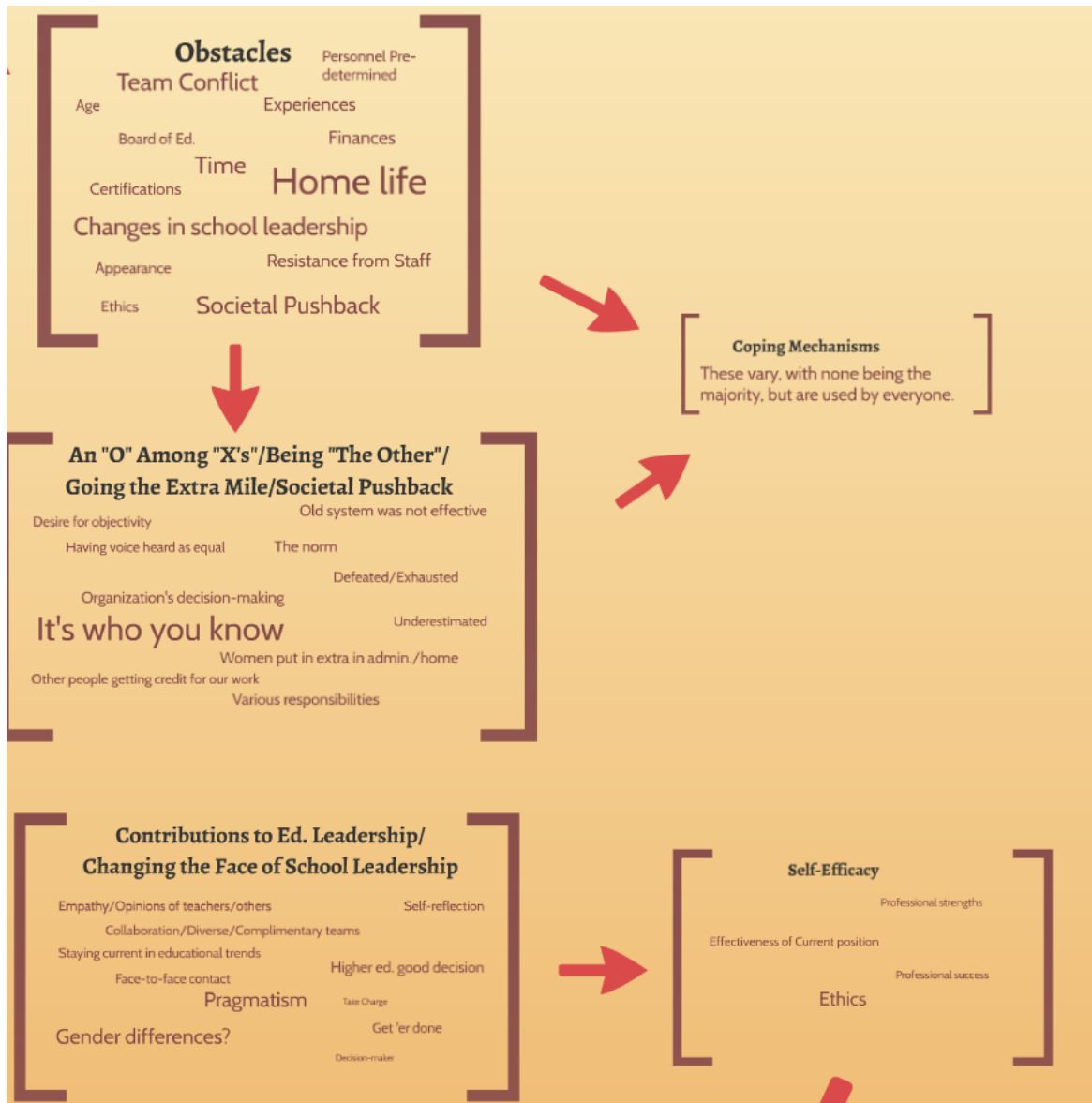
Code Map



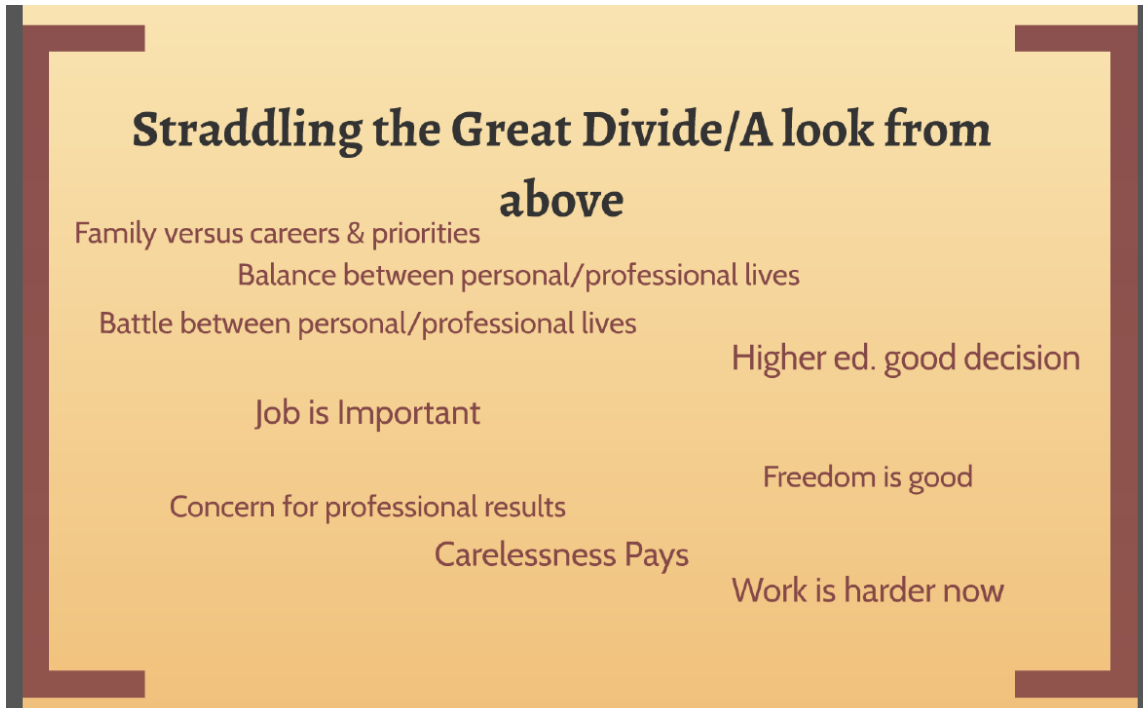
The Complacent Woman Leader



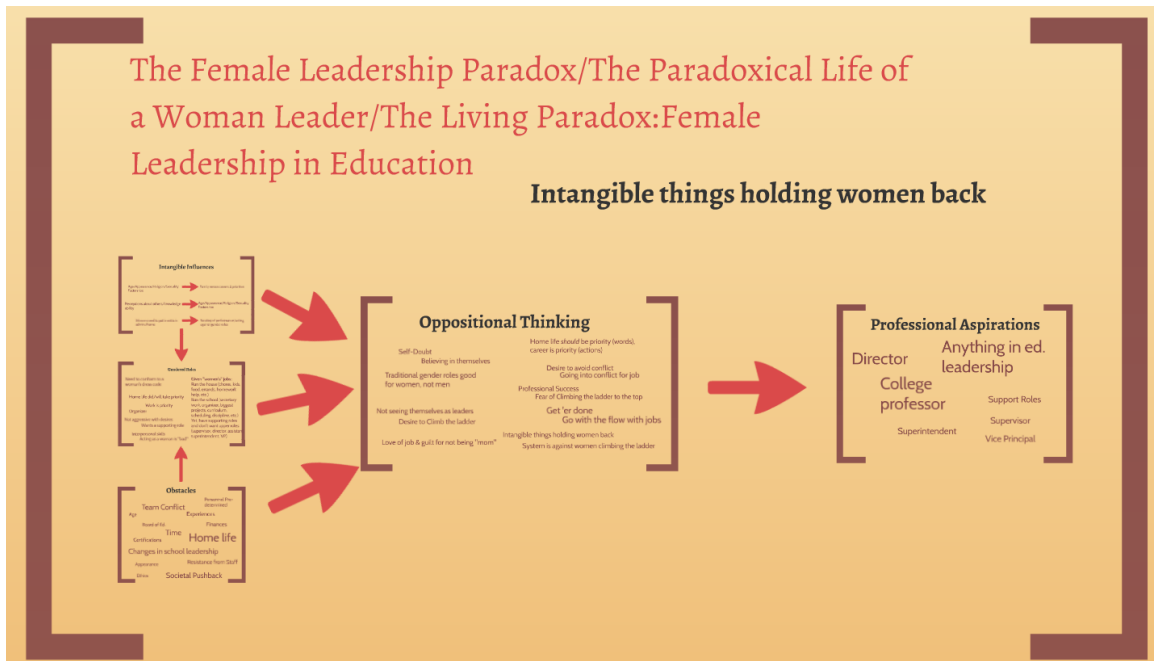


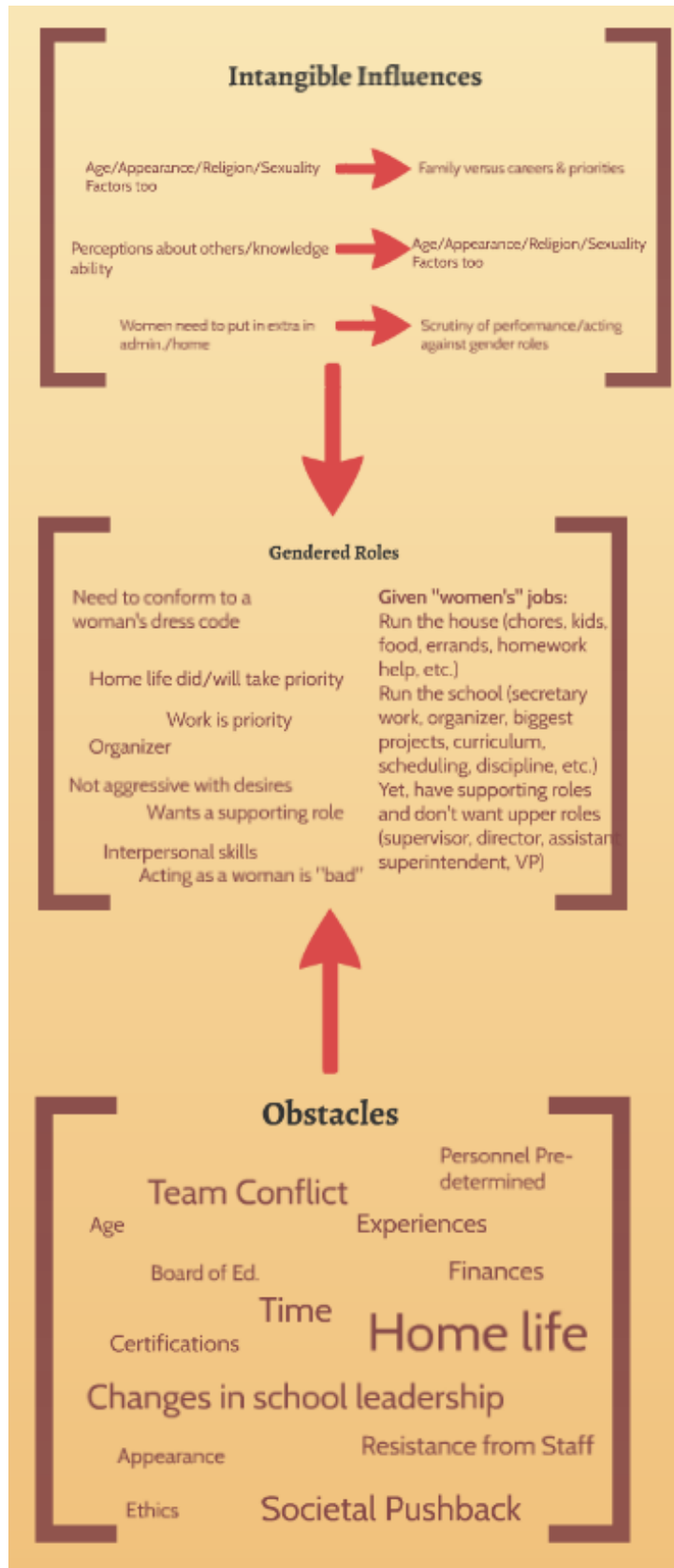


Connection Between Themes



The Paradoxical Life of the Woman Leader





Oppositional Thinking

Self-Doubt
Believing in themselves

Traditional gender roles good
for women, not men

Not seeing themselves as leaders
Desire to Climb the ladder

Love of job & guilt for not being "mom"

Home life *should* be priority (words),
career is priority (actions)

Desire to avoid conflict
Going into conflict for job

Professional Success
Fear of Climbing the ladder to the top

Get 'er done
Go with the flow with jobs

Intangible things holding women back
System is against women climbing the ladder

Professional Aspirations

Director

College
professor

Superintendent

Anything in ed.
leadership

Support Roles

Supervisor

Vice Principal

Appendix G

Ethics Training Certificates of Completion

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

**Students conducting no more than minimal risk research Curriculum
Completion Report
Printed on 7/15/2013**

Learner: Kimberly Clark (username: lovemscritch)

Institution: Rowan University

Contact Information 265 West 10th Street
265 West 10th Street
Ship Bottom, NJ 08008 United States
Department: Educational Leadership
Phone: 6092265339
Email: clarkk43@students.rowan.edu

Students - Class projects: This course is appropriate for students doing class projects that qualify as "No More Than Minimal Risk" human subjects research.

Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 07/13/12 (Ref # 8276205)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction	07/13/12	3/3 (100%)
Students in Research	07/13/12	10/10 (100%)

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Course Coordinator

[Return](#)

Appendix H

Rowan IRB Approval

NOTE: If the status of your proposal indicates that it is approved pending revisions, you will be contacted by e-mail within two weeks of the meeting date with information about the required revisions. For questions, contact Karen Heiser, Research Office, 856-256-5150

Protocol Number	Brief Title	Date Rec.	Status	Category
2014-001	Evaluating Astronomy Literacy for Adults	07/01/13	Exempted	2
2014-002	Engineered Sensors for the Pulmonary Forced	07/10/13		
2014-003	Perception of Wellness among Adult Employees	07/10/03		
2014-004	Baby We Were Born to Tweet: Bruce	07/11/13	Approved	
2014-005	Collaborative Research: Effects of Game-Based	07/16/13	Exempted	1
2014-006	Collaborative Research Training	07/22/13	Exempted	1
2014-007	Get FIT (Fitness, Inclusion, Training)	07/25/13	Approved	
2014-008	NJDMAVA Energy Audits	07/25/13	Closed	
2014-009	Low Achieving Students' Lived Experience	07/30/13	Approved	
2014-010	Undocumented Hispanic Students	07/30/13	Withdrawn	
2014-011	A Feminist's Investigation of Gender	07/30/13	Approved	
2014-012	Exploration of the Perceptions	08/06/13	Approved	
2014-013	Enhancing the STEM Curriculum	08/07/13	Exempted	1
2014-014	Functional Analysis and treatment of Ritualistic	08/12/13	Approved	
2014-015	Rowan CS4HS MOOC	08/21/13	Exempted	1, 2
2014-016	Library Snapshot Survey 2013	09/04/13	Exempted	2
2014-017	The Effectiveness of Problem Based Learning	09/04/13	Approved	
2014-018	Undocumented Hispanic Students	09/05/13	Approved	
2014-019	Coping Strategies, Psychopathological	09/05/13	Approved	Full Board
2014-020	Biological Sciences Programmatic and Course	09/06/13	Approved	
2014-021	CREATE, Cornerstone to Capstone	09/06/13	Closed	
2014-022	Music Digitization Issues and Challenges	09/09/13	Approved	
2014-023	The Effects of Frustration on VGP's and NVGP's	09/09/13	Approved	
2014-024	What Happens when Special Education Males	10/03/13	Approved	7
2014-025	Improving Reading performance of 2nd Grade	10/03/13	Exempted	1
2014-026	What Happens when Classified Second	10/03/13	Approved	7
2014-027	Using Multicultural Literature to Enhance	10/03/13	Exempted	1
2014-028	Using Digital Tools to Promote Fluency	10/03/13	Exempted	1
2014-029	Using Multicultural Literature	10/03/13	Exempted	1
2014-030	What Happens when Adolescent Boys	10/03/13	Exempted	1
2014-031	What Happens when Classified Second	10/03/13	Approved	7
2014-032	What Happens to Student Engagement Ways	10/03/13	Exempted	1
2014-033	How Does Choice in Text motivate Third Grade	10/03/13	Exempted	1
2014-034	How a Secondary School as an Organization	10/08/13	Exempted	1
2014-035	Pearls of Meaning: preschool Children Respond	10/03/13	Approved	7
2014-036	Using Parent Response Journals to Encourage	10/03/13	Approved	7
2014-037	Using Strategies such as Graphic Organizers	10/03/13	Withdrawn	
2014-038	What Happens when Struggling Readers	10/03/13	Approved	7
2014-039	Accessible Text in Content Area Classrooms	10/03/13	Exempted	1

Retrieved from:

http://www.rowan.edu/open/provost/research/Integrity_and_compliance/Irb/documents/2

[014Workbook-5-7-14.pdf](#)

Appendix I

Letter of Support from NJPSA



New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association

July 29, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter serves to verify that the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association supports the research of Rowan University's doctoral candidate, Kimberly Clark. NJPSA will allow Ms. Clark access to relevant information related to our alternate leader certification program, New Jersey **EX**pedited **C**ertification for **E**ducational **L**eadership Program, (NJEXCEL).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Patricia Wright'.

Patricia Wright
Executive Director

PW/sbj

12 Centre Drive | Monroe Township, NJ 08831
T: (609) 860-1200 | F: (609) 860-2999 | E-Mail: njpsa@njpsa.org | Web: www.njpsa.org

Appendix J

Instructions to Research Participants

Kimberly Clark
265 West 10th Street
Ship Bottom, NJ 08008

June 1, 2013

Dear Research Participant:

Thank you for your interest in my dissertation research on the experience of gender performance throughout and following participation in NJ EXCEL. I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study and am excited about the possibility of your participation in it. The purpose of this letter is to reiterate some of the things that we have already discussed and to secure your signature on the participation-release form which you will find attached.

The research model I am using is a qualitative one through which I am seeking comprehensive depictions or descriptions of your experience. In this way I hope to illuminate or answer my question: How does gender performance transform throughout participation non-traditional educational leadership preparation program and during the job-seeking process? The terms of my question, as I am using them, are as follows: *gender* is a social construction that creates differences between females and males though a shared system of practices and beliefs that vary by culture; *gender performance* is the repetition of acts (gestures, movements, enactments, etc.) which conform to society's constitution of a particular gender, the act of gender put on by an individual for their social audience, in modeling a gender, an individual is compelling the body to conform to the historical and social idea of woman or man; and, *nontraditional/alternative educational leadership preparation programs* provide an opportunity for individuals, without formal administrative preparation, the chance to earn certification as a principal – persons choosing to take part in these programs must partake in relevant training after which they can earn salaries and obtain the same rights and responsibilities of traditionally trained principals.

Through your participation as a co-researcher, I hope to understand the essence of the phenomenon as it reveals itself in your experience. You will be asked to recall specific episodes or events in your life in which you experienced the phenomenon we are investigating. I am seeking vivid, accurate, and comprehensive portrayals of what these experiences were like for you; your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as situation, events, places, and people connected with your experience. You may also wish to share personal logs or journals with me or other ways in which you have recorded your experience – for example, in letters, poems, or artwork.

I value your participation and thank you for the commitment of time, energy, and effort. If you have any further questions before signing the release form or if there is a problem with the date and time of our meeting, I can be reached at (609) 226-5339 or clarkk43@students.rowan.edu.

Cordially,
Ms. Kimberly Clark
Rowan Doctoral Candidate

Appendix K

Participation-Release Agreement (Informed Consent)

A Feminist's Investigation of Gender Performance through a Reflection on the Process of Certification in a Nontraditional Educational Leadership Program

The purpose of this inquiry is to explore transformation in gender performance during the process of certification of women school administrators who participated in a nontraditional educational leadership preparation program. For this study, gender performance is considered to be the repetition of acts that are associated with society's categorization of a particular gender; examples of this would be that women wear skirts or men watch football.

For this study, Ms. Kimberly Clark, the researcher, will be interviewing you in a group and/or individual interview setting to better understand the role of gender performance for aspiring women school leaders, such as yourself, through a reflection of your journey through the administrative pipeline.

Benefits: The information gathered from this inquiry is intended to ultimately advance women in the field of school leadership.

Risks: There are minimal risks involved with this study (no physical or psychological risks), all the data gathered will be confidential, and you as the participant are free to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Confidentiality: Your name and other identifying information – such as place of employment, length of service, etc. – will not be included in any written documents or discussions. These will be accessible solely to the researcher. All published documents will use alias' so to protect you as the participant.

Time Commitment: It is anticipated that group interviews will last for approximately 2 hours, and that individual interviews will last about 1 – 1½ hours.

Recording: In order to accurately record the data collected, the interview(s) will be audiotaped (please initial here) _____, this information will be used for data analysis purposes only.

Any questions concerning this study should be directed to the investigator, Ms. Kimberly Clark, at (609) 226-5339 or clarkk43@students.rowan.edu. Dr. Ane Johnson, the researcher's faculty sponsor at Rowan University, can also be contacted at johnsona@rowan.edu with questions.

For general questions concerning your rights as a research subject, please contact the Associate Provost at: Rowan University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects Office of Research 201 Mullica Hill Road Glassboro, NJ 08028-1701 Tel: (856) 256-5150

By signing below, you confirm that you understand the purpose and nature of this study and are participating voluntarily. You also grant permission for the data collected during group and/or individual interviews to be used for this inquiry and are cognizant that the findings of this research may be published.

Research Participant

Date

Researcher

Date