EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN LEADERS IN SECONDARY EDUATION:
NEGOTIATING GENDER SCRIPTS IN AN AGE OF ACCOUNTABIITY

A Dissertation
by
LESLIE ATCHER ALEXANDER

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Abstract

EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN LEADERS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION:

NEGOTIATING GENDER SCRIPTS IN AN AGE OF

ACCOUNTABILITY

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The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of the women

principals who lead in secondary education in a southeastern state of the United States.

Specifically, the research explored their understanding of gender scripts that exist in the

discourse of secondary education and how these women accept, reject, or negotiate

scripts in an effort to lead their high schools. Previous studies have explored leadership

in general, but few studies focused specifically on the experiences of women high school

principals. This qualitative study filled a gap in the literature by using feminist

standpoint theory as a framework that allowed these women to add to the existing

knowledge base regarding gender scripts and the power structures that support them

within the discourse of secondary leadership. A semi-structured interview with each

participant allowed for information to be gathered regarding the lived experiences of each

participant. Through this research and an analysis of each case, followed by a cross-case

analysis, nine themes emerged: 1) expectation to be nurturing; 2) avoidance of appearing too emotional; 3) expectations around appearance; 4) higher expectations for women principals; 5) feeling voiceless with male colleagues; 6) expectation to collaborate; 7) lack of credibility; 8) lack of support among faculty and staff and 9) lack of support from female faculty and staff. Principal preparation programs can use the findings of this study as they work to prepare women principals to work in secondary leadership positions. In addition, the findings may be useful to district leaders as they work to place and support women leaders. Future research might seek to use a post-structural framework to gain further insight into the lived experiences of women principals who work under mounting pressures of accountability for student performance outcomes.

Dedication

When I first began this project, my inspiration came from the female characters in *The Odyssey.* As a high school English teacher I was always curious why Homer allowed the main character Odysseus to be so complex, exhibiting intelligence, bravery, charisma, sexuality and arrogance. Odysseus was easy to love because he was so real. The women, however, were rather flat characters. Penelope was loyal and nurturing, Athena powerful, and Circe sexual. Upon closer analysis, I realized that Athena and Circe were only allowed to have these more masculine characteristics because they were goddesses. Average mortal women were expected to behave like Penelope. Penelope, along with all other Greek women, had a limited script that they could follow, while Odysseus, and all other Greek men, had more varied (and interesting) options of scripts. As a high school principal, I made the observation that women high school principals share a similar fate as Penelope. We are limited to gender scripts, which reinforce an essentialized view of women, yet we are called to perform in an environment that requires more powerful, traditionally masculine behaviors. Unlike in *The Odyssey*, there is no Goddess Athena on call to outsmart the men or aid us in battle. We, as mere Penelopes, have to follow the script and attempt to negotiate the available behavior options while striving to be successful. This becomes difficult, frustrating and exhausting.

This study is dedicated to all the women who serve as high school principals. These women lead in highly masculinized roles where expectations of effective leadership are complicated by gender scripts and stereotypes of what is expected and

acceptable of them as women. They lead out of a desire to serve students. Many do so while attempting to balance a marriage and/or children. These women lead in environments that continue to be influenced by patriarchy and they function with limited scripts for what effective female leadership should look like. I dedicate this to them and the work they do every single day. Their rejection and negotiation of limiting and essentializing gender scripts disrupts the existing discourse in ways that are necessary if we hope to create positive and empowering scripts for women leaders.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The absence of women is evident in educational leadership, and more particularly in educational leadership in secondary schools and the superintendency. According to the U.S. Department of Education, "Of our nation's 13,728 superintendents, 1,984 today are women. Yet 72 percent of all K-12 educators in this country are women" (Glass, 2017). With so few women in leadership positions, it is not surprising that the discourse of secondary educational leadership is patriarchal in nature. A patriarchal discourse is one in which "the social roles of women are defined in relation to a norm which is male" (Weedon, 1997, p. 2). When using the term discourse, I will use Laclau and Mouffe's definition, which defines discourse as including language and all social phenomena as cited in Jørgensen and Phillips (2002). This means that a discourse references the language and concepts that are considered normal and acceptable in a particular social setting that is historically located. If the dominant discourse in education is patriarchal, then the male model of leadership is considered the norm and women are measured against that norm. A patriarchal discourse produces expectations for behavior, or scripts, that influence the way women leaders act and how others interpret their behavior. Through this project, I intend to look at the experiences of women leaders in education and the ways that they navigate the prevailing gender scripts in an era of increasing pressure and accountability for principals and other leaders in the field of education. In this initial chapter, I will explain my personal connection to my dissertation topic and outline the problem statement. I will include a brief section defining key terms before introducing the research questions. Next, I will outline my methodology and discuss the significance of the issue, which gives urgency to the study that I propose. I will conclude the introductory section by outlining the organization of this study in

order to facilitate the understanding of this proposal.

Personal Connection

During my eight years as an administrator I have served as an assistant principal, as principal of a small magnet high school and a principal of a large high school. The challenges that I have faced in each of these positions have varied. I have struggled to understand the learning needs of students, attempted to involve parents of at-risks students, managed overly involved parents of affluent students and restructured the teaching expectations of a ninety-five-year-old flagship school whose teachers saw little need for change despite the school's chronic low student achievement. While the struggles in each situation have been different, the obstacles I have faced as a woman leader at a secondary school have been consistent. These obstacles range from being seen as too direct and controlling to not being taken seriously by colleagues. I have had success in moving student proficiency scores in a short amount of time in two high school settings. I believe that this success is a result of being strategic, knowing what is essential to change, and then working directly with faculty members in these critical areas to raise performance quickly. This involves establishing a compelling vision and setting clear expectations for performance. I believe new and struggling teachers should be provided sufficient and ongoing support so they can master the skills necessary for improving student learning. However, I also believe it is my responsibility as the leader to establish clear consequences for teachers who see no need for improvement or who refuse to adapt their teaching strategies to meet student needs. This approach, while producing significant positive change in student performance, has not produced positive feedback from all teachers. In my current high school we have been able to move from -3.06 EVAAS growth to +6.0 in two years. While my superintendent is ecstatic, and the teachers who have bought into our vision are

excited, teachers who have continued to resist change are not so complimentary. In our 2016 Forsyth County Association of Educators (FCAE) anonymous survey, I was labeled as "controlling" and "intimidating." When I read the results of this survey, I wondered had been a male leader, would I have incited such negative feedback. I have found that as a woman leader there seems to be an expectation that I will be "softer" and more "collaborative" than I am in actuality. This can cause a barrier to effective leadership because the message that I am attempting to share regarding the importance of reaching all students is overshadowed by the fact that my communication style is too direct and too focused on measureable results to be well received by those expecting a gentler communication style.

Ironically, on the other end of the spectrum, as a woman leader in a secondary school, have found that it can sometimes be difficult to be taken seriously by my predominately male colleagues. When I first became a high school principal five years ago I remember feeling somewhat intimidated by the 17 male principals who seemed to know so much about the athletic programs that play a major part in managing a high school successfully. My response to my uncomfortable new situation was to sit quietly during these discussions, and not even ask questions for fear of confirming the perception of those in the room who felt I was not "up for the job."

Over the past five years, through a lot of hard work and consistent positive student performance results, I have managed to earn the respect of a good number of those initial doubters. However, the struggle to be taken seriously continues. Just last week my lead guidance counselor, who remains friends with our former school attorney, told me that he asked about how I was doing. She clarified her comment with "Of course, you know he still refers to you as AP Barbie." While I chose not to allow my indignation to be seen, I felt very frustrated to

be compared to an object that signifies that a woman's appearance is her most salient characteristic, not intelligence, not compassion, not accomplishments. In this person's mind, although he is aware of the progress of my career and the success of my schools, he still refers to me as an Assistant Principal and as a Barbie. It is situations such as these that have made me aware that the expectations placed on women leaders differ than those placed on men, which is what makes this research so compelling.

Problem Statement

This qualitative research study will focus on the experiences of four women leaders in secondary educational leadership in a southeastern state in order to obtain a deep understanding of the ways that they negotiate the dominant discourse of gender scripts that may limit women leaders. By incorporating the experiences of women leaders, I will examine how women make sense of the prevailing gender scripts in order to better understand how they are complicit or resistive to those scripts.

In this study I will interview four women leaders who are current or past leaders of comprehensive public high schools in an eastern state of the United States. It is my intent to interview principals who have experienced similar responsibilities that accompany leading a large public high school and the micropolitical demands that result from being accountable to multiple stakeholder groups. Because discourses are always created socially and are situated historically, I have elected to limit the geographical area of my applicant pool to women leaders of secondary schools in the same eastern state in an attempt to secure principals who are most likely to have experienced similar discourses.

This study will attempt to identify how women leaders interpret and respond to prevailing gender scripts. For example, leaders of secondary schools are expected to possess characteristics

that have typically been defined as masculine, such as being independent and decisive. When male leaders exhibit these characteristics they are seen as charismatic and heroic (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). By contrast, women are limited to gender scripts that reflect the traditional female, such as "working collaboratively and sharing leadership" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 111). Unfortunately, the characteristics associated with feminine behavior are in contrast to those assertive qualities associated with successful leadership (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Burton & Weiner, 2016; Coleman, 2005; Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Fuller, 2013; Longman & Madsen, 2014; Trinidad & Normore, 2005). This dilemma affects the few women who make it to the upper levels of educational leadership when they find themselves in a situation where the gender scripts available to them as a woman conflict with the characteristics often required for effective leadership. This struggle is perhaps one reason there are so few women in leadership positions.

The dearth of women leaders of secondary schools and school districts across the country has obvious implications in the opportunities available for qualified women leaders, but there are also implications that affect education overall as few women find themselves in positions to influence educational policy. The underrepresentation of females also affects future female leaders because there are fewer female secondary and district leaders available to serve as mentors and sponsors of potential female leaders (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). As a result, female opportunity and female roles in the field of educational leadership have been, and continue to be, defined by a hegemonic patriarchal discourse (Fuller, 2013; Young & Skrla, 2003). Some feminist theorists have attempted to declare that the feminine style of collaborative relationships and increased communications are, in fact, superior to masculine ways of leading (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). While the result of these feminist studies may promote an appreciation for the traditional female leadership style, they do not allow for an expansion of existing gender scripts.

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Definition of Terms

Discourse analysis: Discourse analysis is a process that "looks for sense-making practices formed by the cohesion of clusters of terms and phrases, referred to as interpretive repertoires" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 47). Potter and Wetherell (1987) noted that an analytical approach is framed by key notions of construction, function, and variability (as cited in Hesse-Biber, 2014).

Essentializing/ totalizing theories: Much of feminist writings since the nineteenth century subscribes to a feminism that essentializes women as cooperative and collaborative and then casts femininity as morally superior to masculinity (Diamond & Quinby, 1988).

Gender Scripts: Gender scripts are roles that define expected behavior (Reynolds, 2002). Thus, gender scripts tell women how they should behave and they influence how others perceive the behavior of women. The discourse influences the availability of gender scripts (p. 4).

Research Questions

1. Among women leaders, what are the perceptions of gender in the workplace relative to their roles as educational leaders?

2. What challenges do women leaders face in their roles as principals?

3. How do they negotiate the prevailing gender scripts regarding women in leadership in education?

4. How do women cope with or manage challenges related to gender?

Methodology Overview

This qualitative study will promote a deep understanding of the gender relations that exist in the patriarchal discourse of secondary educational leadership. In a qualitative study "the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016,

p. 294). I will approach this study from a feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory was first presented in 1972 when Dorothy Smith noted that the majority of works in the field of sociology were by written by men and reflected the way that men viewed the world. She asserted that women needed to be producers of knowledge, not simply consumers of knowledge created by men (Harding, 2004). Later, researchers such as Nancy Hartsock, Susan Heckman, and Sandra Harding further developed this theory by asserting that women must tell their stories because they have a unique viewpoint that cannot be told by men. They turned oppression into an advantage by focusing on the knowledge that can be created only from the viewpoint of women (Harding, 2004). This theory will be helpful to me as I attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experience of women principals. As such, I will use women's reported experiences to locate the hierarchical networks that influence the power relations at work within this discourse. By attempting to uncover the metanarratives that influence how these women come to accept, reject or negotiate their subject positions, I hope to identify structures and practices that describe women's experiences related to the gender scripts that may be limiting to practicing women leaders in secondary education.

Significance of Issue

There is a lack of parity between the number of men and women serving as leaders in secondary educational leadership (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). The small number of women leaders in secondary education is noteworthy given that the vast majority of teachers are women. This problem is concerning because it may indicate that a large number of talented women are not making it into secondary and district leadership positions (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009). This could prove problematic because a lack of qualified candidates means fewer qualified leaders. In fact, Fuller (2014) declared that the lack of qualified leaders could mean that the future of

education may be heading toward a leadership crisis. Many of the women who make it to these upper level positions report feeling that they are judged more harshly than men, that they have to be better than their male colleagues simply to obtain the same positions, and that their skill set is often challenged due to their gender (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Why is it that in 2018 gender stereotypes and sexism still occur? This project will explore the discourse that exists in secondary educational leadership that may serve to perpetuate hegemonic patriarchal attitudes and practices. By limiting women to gender scripts that reinforce traditional female stereotypes, this discourse restricts women from leading in assertive or decisive ways. The next section will discuss the general organization of this study.

Organization of Study

In an effort to better understand the conditions within discourses that disadvantage women by limiting the scripts available to them, this research project will study information gathered from current women high school principals as they reflect upon their awareness of and response to the challenges that exists at the secondary level of school leadership. Through understanding the conditions that they face, this project will produce meaningful data for current and future women leaders in education as they navigate the conditions of their work and the available gender scripts in educational leadership.

A review of literature related to feminist standpoint theory, gender scripts, and gendered educational leadership is provided in Chapter 2. The research methods used in this study and an explanation of the qualitative research process is included in Chapter 3. Interview data will be included in Chapter 4, followed by research findings that will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

In this introductory section I have established my research problem and have presented the research questions that I will seek to answer through this study. I have provided an overview of the methodology and have presented why a qualitative approach is most appropriate for my research inquiry. In addition, I have argued that the negative effects of a limiting discourse on women leaders attempting to expand their behaviors beyond existing gender scripts is significant. Through defining meaningful terms that will be referred to throughout this project, and by outlining the organization of the study, I have attempted to provide the reader with an understanding of how my analysis of my project will unfold.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

In this chapter, I will conduct a review of literature relevant to women leaders in the field of education. Specifically, I will examine the factors that influence the development of gender scripts and how those scripts, in turn, affect the leadership behaviors of women principals at the secondary level. I will begin by establishing a need for additional research in educational leadership that treats gender as a meaningful variable for study. Next, I will discuss gender scripts and consider the influence that historical factors have had on their development, from the effects of WWII through the feminist research of today. I will argue that essentializing theories of many feminists, while proving to add value to the contributions of women leaders, limit gender scripts by creating their own universalizing theories of normalcy. I will follow by explaining how the majority of research in the field of educational leadership uses the concept of *power as a commodity* and classifies a leader's view and use of power as either masculine or feminine. I will then contend that these power binaries serve to reinforce traditional gender scripts, which disadvantage women leaders' ability to work effectively. I will explore how the market discourse of education today may require that women leaders have access to a wider variety of gender scripts in order to most effectively lead today's secondary schools. Lastly, I will conclude by discussing how the prescriptive behaviors imposed upon women leaders affect their leadership experience. Due to the fact that accountability is so pervasive and gender scripts are so limiting, more research needs to be done to facilitate a deeper understanding of how women leaders negotiate the gender scripts available to them.

A Need for Research with a Gender Focus

There is an ongoing need for research of gender-related issues in the field of educational leadership. While women account for a vast majority of teachers, there is significant underrepresentation of women as school leaders, especially at the secondary level and the superintendency (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011; Marshall, Johnson, & Edwards, 2017). Grogan (2014) stated that women make up only 28.5% of secondary school principals. A recent study conducted by the American Association of School Administrators in 2015 indicated that men are still four times more likely than women to be appointed to top positions of power in educational leadership (Robinson, Shakeshaft, Grogan, & Newcomb, 2017). It is unsurprising that there is a similar underrepresentation of research focused on women in educational leadership. Blackmore (1999) noted, "Critics of traditional research on educational administration suggest that the literature of the field is really the study of male administrative behavior" (p. 31). Historically, educational leaders have been men and, as a result, the perspectives shared in research are male perspectives (Gosetti & Rusch, 1995; Tallerico, 1999; Young & Skrla, 2003). The fact that women leaders continue to be underrepresented or that gender bias still exists does not seem to attract sufficient attention.

Research shows that masculine descriptors of a leader account primarily for gender bias within organizations (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011). In fact recent research indicates that the leadership is defined in terms that are culturally masculine and these definitions "disfavor women" (Eagly & Heilman, 2016, p. 349). However, regardless of this knowledge, there has been little analysis as to how such biases could be changed. Because feminists believe that gender is a legitimate area of analysis, they have been conducting research that attempts to bring these issues to the forefront (as cited in Newcomb and Mansfield, 2014, p. 4). Unfortunately,

there continues to be insufficient new knowledge about women in this field (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Newcomb & Mansfield, 2014). It is critical that additional research is needed to bring issues that directly relate to women leaders into the forefront of leadership discussions.

Feminist accounts assert that gender matters when analyzing leadership styles in schools (Adler, Laney & Parker 1993; Hall, 2002; Reay & Ball, 2000). Their concern is that, while there has been much research on leadership, not enough research has been focused on how gender, and the associated stereotypes, affects women leaders. Reynolds (2002) claimed, "There is a troubling message in terms of the literature on school leadership if we continue to ignore or mute themes of gender and the body work of leadership in schools"(p.141). This is especially concerning since research continues to confirm that stereotyping remains the most significant challenge facing women in leadership roles today (Maseko & Proches, 2013; Nguyen, 2013).

While there may be an increase in women researchers, and there was an increase in feminist research in the 1980s and 1990s, sufficient research has not been dedicated to gender issues in educational leadership to date. With the increased pressure of recent accountability models in education, research shows that the stereotypes associated with gender prove problematic for many women leaders. In this environment of increased focus on performance, school leaders must ensure that their schools meet expected targets. School principals are being required to lead successful schools and more and more success is measured in terms of student outcomes (Miller, 2017). As a result, women leaders find themselves in leadership situations that require agentic behaviors to ensure school success, while experiencing role incongruity when those whom they lead react negatively to such "masculine" behaviors (Caleo & Heilman, 2013). Understanding the prescriptive behaviors, or scripts, that people expect leaders to follow, is a topic in need of additional research. In the next section, I will look at a brief history of gender scripts and discuss

how they have served to limit women leader's behavioral options.

Gender Scripts

Gender scripts are roles that define expected behavior (Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Reay & Ball, 2000; Reynolds, 2002) Reynolds (2002) explained, "Organizational structures and contextual factors offer particular options or 'scripts.' Women and men choose gender scripts from available options allowed by the discourse" (p. 4). In understanding how gender scripts influence the behavior of women leaders, it is helpful to understand how gender scripts have evolved and how they are influenced by historical contexts. Reynolds (2002) analyzed the gender scripts of women educational leaders in the 1940s and 1950s and compared them to the gender scripts available to women leaders in the 1960s and 1970s. While Reynolds used data from a study conducted in Canada, the historical factors that influenced gender scripts in Canada were also influential in the United States.

After World War II, the most dominant gender script available to women was that of the *dutiful daughter.* This gender script stems from the expectations placed upon women during and after World War II with regard to their participation in the workforce. While women were welcomed into the labor force during World War II, after the end of the war sentiment regarding women in the labor force changed. After the war women were encouraged to leave their jobs through messages that emphasized the importance of women staying home to take care of their families. Just as women had responded to the needs of the labor market during the war, women were expected to respond to the conclusion of the war by giving up their employment to make space for men returning from battle (Hattery, 2001). Similarly, the *dutiful daughter* scripts in educational leadership involved women sacrificing for the good of others. Reynolds (2002) described the *dutiful daughter* script as the woman who "stayed close to home, made a

contribution to the community and often sacrificed her own wishes to satisfy the needs of the school organization" (p. 32). Women who became principals during the 1940s and 1950s were often recruited to lead schools that were struggling and were, therefore, less appealing to male candidates (Reynolds, 2002). Although these were not desirable schools to lead, women who accepted these assignments were often not well received by male principals who thought that the salary of the principalship should be reserved for men who had a family to support. Women who decided to accept the position of principal were supposed to be grateful for the opportunity and behave in a ladylike manner. The vast majority of the women who accepted this role during this time did not have children, nor were they married. The common assumption was that a woman would sacrifice her personal life to dedicate herself to her school and the children she served (Blount, 1998).

The 1960s and 1970s opened up a new gender script to women known as the *superwoman script.* These women attempted to work as a principal, have a husband, and often have children as well (Courtney, 2004). This script still exists and describes women who attempt to do everything and be successful in all areas of their lives. Acker (1995) called the principalship and the family *greedy institutions* because they both required so much from women leaders. Why did these women attempt to take on so much? Like women leaders of today, these principals felt that being selected as a principal was an acknowledgment of their abilities. However, they did not want to sacrifice their roles of wives and mothers in order to dedicate their lives solely to the principalship. Unfortunately, once hired as principal, these women leaders often found that discrepancies abounded in how men and women principals were treated. For example, women during this period struggled with the inequities that existed between women and men in areas such as salary. Women, however, hesitated to complain or stand up for

themselves because being a strong woman could jeopardize their position.

Women today are still expected to be modest (Seo & Huang, 2017). The social role expectations for women prevent women from engaging in behaviors that are acceptable for men. For example, men can discuss their successes when applying for higher-level positions. When women engage in the exact same behaviors they are viewed negatively (Ross, 2014). Caleo and Heilman (2013) explained that self-promotion for women violated the expectation that they should be modest in their behavior. Blackmore (1999) stated, "Strong women are often seen as difficult, dangerous, and even deviant, because they 'trouble' dominant masculinities and modes of management by being different" (p. 53). While overt discriminatory practices have changed, Diel (2014) pointed out that, "gender-based leadership barriers continue to exist" (p. 138). Such gender expectations cause roadblocks for women who are perceived as violating stereotypical norms. Such barriers, referred to as second generation gender bias, are "the powerful, yet often invisible barriers to women's advancement that arise from cultural beliefs about gender, as well as workplace structures, practices, and patterns of interaction that inadvertently favor men" (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011, p. 475). Such practices send the message that leadership is more appropriate for men. Therefore, women must continue to be strong to develop the capacity to perform as leaders in environments that produce gender scripts that are not conducive to women leaders. In the following section I will discuss the influence of a patriarchal discourse on the gender scripts available in educational leadership.

Gender Scripts in a Patriarchal Discourse

The discourse of educational leadership refers to the sets of meanings that influence how leaders are able to function within the field of education. Discourse is affected by social and cultural practices that influence how we see others and ourselves. St. Pierre (2000) noted

that discourses "organize a way of thinking into a way of acting in the world" (p. 485).

Educational leadership is described as a highly masculinized field (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Reay & Ball, 2000; Young & Skrla, 2003). Reay and Ball (2000) asserted that leadership characteristics and the masculine sex role correspond so closely that they are simply different labels for the same concept. In fact, "patriarchal and male power has shaped the construct of leadership, its culture, discourse imaging and practice for centuries" (p. 145). Reay and Ball (2000) also argued that such influence "has resulted in a conflation of traditional male qualities with those of leadership" (p. 185). While it may seem that gender equality in educational leadership should be making gains in our modern society, research shows otherwise. The "glass ceiling" continues to exist for women in top management positions. In fact, in 2014 only 5% of Fortune 500 companies had women CEO's (Catalyst, 2014). This lack of parity continues to exist in educational leadership as well because white middle-class heterosexual males continue to control most of the power. As a result, masculine leadership style remains associated with effective leadership (Marshall, Johnson & Edwards, 2017). Women have to work harder to be seen as equal. For example, the continued practice that men typically socialize together puts women at a disadvantage. Whether it is talking sports, using vulgar language, or meeting other male leaders at the golf course on Saturday, such practices are typically not inclusive of women. Blackmore (1999) noted that such social practices position women as outsiders, thus limiting their ability to influence the masculine discourse.

Another factor working against women in educational leadership is the continued influence of gender stereotypes that exist within the discourse. Recent findings show that the stereotypes associated with women are inconsistent with effective management (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Newcomb & Mansfield, 2014). Men are seen as

more competent in management and leadership, while women are viewed as weak and ineffective. Social role norms for educational leadership characterizes femininity as consisting of "dependence, passivity, fragility, low pain tolerance, non-aggression, non-competitiveness, inner orientation, interpersonal orientation, empathy, sensitivity, nurturance, subjectivity, yieldingness, receptivity, inability to risk, emotional liability and supportiveness" (Young & Skrla, 2003, p. 253). In contrast, men are defined in opposing terms that denote competence. Thus, a parallel and opposite list could be constructed for masculinity which could include "independence, assertiveness, sturdiness, high pain tolerance, aggression, competitiveness, outer orientation, self-sufficiency, stoicism, justice, objectivity, unyieldingness, remoteness, and risk taking" (Young & Skrla, 2003, p. 253).

Thus, the characteristics typically associated with men are more consistent with the characteristics of effective leadership and management, while the characteristics typically associated with women are perceived as being disadvantages to effective leadership (Burton & Weiner, 2016; Coleman, 2005; Newcomb & Mansfield, 2014; Reay & Ball, 2000; Trinidad & Normore, 2005). Similarly, men fare better when rationality versus emotionality traits are juxtaposed. Emotion is viewed as highly gendered. While men's rational behavior is seen as a positive characteristic for leadership, women's tendency to show their emotions is seen as dangerous (St. Pierre, 2000; Young & Skrla, 2003). Hekman (1990) remarked, "Not only are women deemed irrational and hence not fully human, but because of their association with nature, they are also associated with unknown, dark, and mysterious forces" (p. 36). Such unfavorable stereotypes are the result of a patriarchal discourse. Ironically, negative stereotypes of women as less effective leaders are shared by both men and women. In a research study conducted at the University of Virginia men and women were questioned about the positive

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association between women and careers. During direct question and answer women were twice as likely to associate women with careers. However, when respondents were tested regarding their unconscious attitudes regarding women and careers there was less than a 20% difference. This illustrates that even women who consciously strive to view women and men as equals, have been influenced by living in a culture dominated by patriarchal discourse (Ross, 2014). Together, these negative perceptions of women cause many to view them as a poor fit for leadership roles. Recent research in educational leadership continues to show that cultural messages that imply women are not leaders and that women need protecting, continue to exist (Marshall, Johnson & Edwards, 2017). Ironically, when women display an agentic leadership style they are criticized for their behavior. Ross (2014) points out that when a man is willing to behave assertively to get things done, people regard him as a strong leader, even if they don't like him all that much. However, when a woman exhibits the same behaviors she is labeled as a bitch (Ross, 2014). Such perceptions are influenced by descriptive and prescriptive norms (Caleo & Heilman, 2013). It is the "prescriptive role" of gender scripts that I will argue continues to affect women in secondary leadership positions in the field of educational leadership. In the following section, I will argue that the essentializing gender scripts promoted by feminists to combat these negative images can be just as limiting to the availability of effective gender scripts for women.

Feminist Gender Scripts

Since the early 1960's trait theorists claimed that the leadership styles of men and women were fundamentally different (Gilligan, 1982; Hartsock, 1990; Noddings 1984). In response to the hegemonic discourse that existed in educational leadership, and the accompanying lack of appreciation for feminine qualities, feminist researchers began emphasizing these gender differences by making connections between women leaders and positive leadership styles. In the

1980's this research began producing much data illustrating that women wanted to lead in ways opposed to men, and that these feminine ways were beneficial. Specifically, much feminist research argued that women share a relational leadership style that allows them to collaborate with others and build consensus (Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Lee, Smith & Cioci, 1993; Young & Skrla, 2003).

In some feminist research, the female world in schools is conceptualized as having four main features. These include women leaders being focused on relationships with others, maintaining teaching and learning as their focus, building community with staff, and the fact that, for women leaders, the line separating public and private is blurred (Collard & Reynolds, 2005). Given that the responsibilities of school leaders include garnering the intellectual and emotional investment of teachers, it makes sense that such qualities would be seen as beneficial (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Collaborative behavior that creates contexts that "encourages shared meaning" is noted to be indicative of female leadership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 113). The results of this feminist research are important because they illustrate the benefit of women's leadership styles in a field that before had only shown appreciation for masculine styles.

To combat the negative opinion of women's leadership attributes, feminists began claiming that feminine ways of leading were not simply different from masculine ways but, in fact, they were better (Daly, Der-Martirosian, Ong-Dean, Park, & Wishard-Guerra, 2011). Gilligan's (1982) analysis maintained that as part of their socialization, the moral development of girls and boys differ. According to her research, women "develop an ethics of care, as opposed to an ethics of rights and justice developed by men" (Collard & Reynolds, 2005, p. 4). Later, Noddings (1984) wrote about this concept of an ethics of care and argued that it

complements a feminine approach to education. Young and Skrla (2003) later found "leaders

adopting an ethics of care are more likely to see themselves in a relationship with each other" (p.

25). These findings support much of feminist research and further reinforce that women leaders

are concerned about those whom they lead. Gilligan's (1982) research analyzed the contrast

between feminine and masculine qualities. Her research into how men and women make

decisions was foundational to the argument that women are more "compassionate, cooperative,

communal and relational" (Collard & Reynolds, 2005, p. 4).

Feminist research that followed reinforced the superiority of women's leadership

behaviors over those of their male counterparts. Hartsock (1990) highlighted the benefits of

female leadership behaviors by claiming that women leaders prefer organic relationships to

hierarchical structures. Such leadership styles have been described as more productive than the

traditional masculine leadership behaviors. Lee, Smith, and Cioci (1993) purported that,

"Women principals are found to act in a more democratic and participative style, whereas male

principals are more directive and autocratic" (p. 156). Other benefits concluded from their

research were that women leaders utilized a more personalized style while male leaders tended to

prefer more structure. In addition, they found "women principals spend more time in classrooms

or discussing school's academic activities with teachers" (Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993, p. 156).

Women principals are comfortable exchanging information with teachers and are, therefore,

viewed as collaborative and communal. Such behaviors of women principals reinforce dominant

gender scripts. These socially agreed upon expectations reinforce that each gender is assigned

specific major attributes that are not interchangeable (Seo & Huang, 2017). While the research

that began in the 1980s brought positive attention to the under-appreciated qualities of feminine

leadership, it did not expand the options of gender scripts available to women leaders. Thus,

options for leadership behaviors have remained limited.

The feminist research that was at the forefront of women's educational leadership in the 1980s and 1990s further pigeonholed women into a narrow choice of behavior options. Reay and Ball (2000) recognized this problem when they declared that, "many feminist text on management and gender work with essentializing notions of femininity in which homogenizing conceptions of what it means to be female, depict women as uniformly nurturing, affiliative and good at interpersonal relationships" (p. 145). Thus in their attempt to show value in traditionally feminine leadership styles, feminists further solidified the expectation that all women should be nurturing and relationship oriented. For women striving to gain freedom to select from a variety of behavior options, it is apparent how such feminist research limits the proliferation of gender scripts available from which to choose. Reynolds (2002) noted, that while empowering for many women, promoting a discourse that categorizes all women as the same can be dangerous. "It's hegemony can lead to a lack of reflexivity, which produces a new meta-narrative about the category of women" (p. 63). This normalizing tendency promoted by many feminists is viewed as problematic by many women educational researchers (Blackmore, 1999; Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Fuller, 2013; Reay & Ball, 2000; Reynolds, 2002; Young & Skrla, 2003).

In the face of such popular essentializing theories, gender scripts available for women leaders become increasingly narrow. The *"women's ways of leading" script* is promoted by feminists as "superior" to other ways of being. Women who behave in a manner inconsistent with these norms and act in a more assertive fashion are labeled as following the "social male" script (Tooms, Lugg, & Bogotch, 2010, p. 110). To follow the social male script may mean communicating in a more direct fashion or it may imply that the women leader is following a more androgynous persona, which may include style of dress. Blackmore (1999) pointed out that

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the woman leader's body is "carefully scripted" (p. 176). Unlike men, women are more likely to receive negative feedback on their appearance. Coleman (2005) noted that in surveys where women were reflecting on unsuccessful interviews, women reported being told they wore too much jewelry or that they were criticized for the color of their nail polish or their choice of suit. It is no wonder that women struggle to know which script to follow when their persona is under such scrutiny.

In educational leadership a leader's persona includes not only a leader's appearance and behavior but also reaches to include "gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexual identity" (as cited in Tooms, Lugg & Bogotch, 2010, p. 110). In other words, very little that an educational leader does or says goes without notice and all such details influence others' perception of a leader's gender. As a result, essentializing discourses reinforce the perception that gender scripts that vary from the norm are deviant if they do not align with traditional masculine or feminine qualities. In the next section, I will explain how a leader's use of power is, likewise, assigned masculine or feminine characteristics.

Masculine and Feminine Definitions of Power

Power is an important aspect of leadership because it enables leaders to accomplish their goals. As such, how power is defined and how it functions is a controversial topic. However, while much research has been dedicated to defining power, little research has been dedicated to behavior options that women have to obtain power. Hurty (1995) noted "With but a few exceptions, the educational research community has not focused its attention on women in the principal's office in order to understand the concepts of leadership and power" (p. 381). In considering the concept of power, it is important to note that there are two distinct views of power and how it is used. The research literature used in this project refers to the masculine

power over concept and the feminine *power with* concept (Lukes, 2005). The most frequently used concept of power in the field of educational leadership is that power is conceptualized as an influence on others, often through the use of dominance and control (Llanque, 2007; Morriss, 2006). For the purpose of this discussion, I will use Collard and Reynolds' (2002) understanding that while this masculine power over concept is associated with men, in reality, men and women may use power androgynously. Likewise, both men and women can incorporate the feminine concept of power with if they so choose. However, Blackmore (1999) explained that it should not be a surprise that most educational research uses the power-over definition given the masculine nature of schools. Mac an Ghaill (1994) supported this view when he refers to schools as masculinizing agencies. He explained, "Schooling is about the interplay of power and the sense of anxiety around losing power" (p. 180). Muir and Jessel, as cited in Witmer's 2006 research, stated that the pursuit of power is typically a male characteristic. While most men may be comfortable with power used to dominate or control, many women administrators are estranged by this view of power and do not characteristically use power in this way. More recent research confirms these findings. Women leaders were found to have lower power motivation, or the aspiration to influence others (Schuh, Bark, Van Quaquebeke, Hossiep, Frieg, & Van Dick, 2014). This research also affirmed that this difference in power motivation might have a direct impact on the gender disparity that exists in leadership roles.

The concept of power with has been associated with women because many researchers believe that it works most naturally with their disposition (Brunner, 2000; Hurty, 1995; Witmer, 2006). Reynolds (2000) noted, "It has become almost axiomatic that women leaders use power differently than most men leaders." (p. 24). Some women leaders have feelings of discomfort with the stereotypical male notions of power. These women leaders, while powerful, simply view

power differently (Hartsock, 1990; Hurty, 1995). Brunner (2000) identified relational

approaches of women in educational leadership. Because many women see themselves in a

relationship with others, they use these relationships to generate political power (Grogan &

Shakeshaft, 2011). Many women in positions of power in educational leadership define power as

the ability to get things done through collaboration and consensus building, while men leaders

define power as the ability to influence others (Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft,

2011; Hurty, 1995). Thus, feminist research suggests that both men and women think of power

as the ability to get things done. However, men attempt to control others to achieve those results,

while women build collaborative relationships to accomplish their goals.

In "Writing a Woman's Life," Carolyn Heilbrun (1988) used a gender-neutral definition

of power when she states, "Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is

essential to action and the right to have one's own part matter" (p. 96). However, how one goes

about taking one's place varies depending on the gender scripts available. Blackmore (1999)

wrote, "the very presence of the body of women in authority challenges gender power relations"

(p. 171). Gosetti and Rusch (1995) explained that women "challenge traditionally accepted

norms about leadership" (p. 11). However, feminist researchers are working to make others, not

only accustomed to seeing "women in authority," but also recognize the superiority of their

leadership style. This means, however, that gender scripts other than the *women's ways of*

leading script are not highly valued. This environment, which further universalizes women's

behavior, puts women who utilize other behavior styles at a disadvantage and reinforces gender

stereotypes. Collinson and Collinson (1989) asserted, "male power is seen as normal but female

desire (especially for power) is 'rabid and dangerous'" (p. 94). Therefore, it is understandable

that feminist researchers realized that re-norming the relationship between the perception of

women and power was necessary.

In summary, the recent revaluing of feminine ways of leading and relational power limits the availability of gender scripts for women that do not follow the *women's ways of leading* script. While women who work with others to accomplish goals find acceptance in this leadership style, women who work to obtain power as a commodity experience less favorable responses. Unfortunately, women are less likely to want to appear to desire power because of the unfavorable response from others. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) pointed out that when women leaders are hesitant to use a directive or authoritarian leadership style to assume the power of their positions it is often because others see them as behaving inappropriately. In fact, a common response to women following a s*trong woman* script is for the leader to be referred to as a bitch (Arnold, 2014; Blackmore, 1999; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). However, it is sometimes necessary for women leaders to use directive behaviors when serving in senior leadership positions, especially at secondary schools. When having to choose how to proceed in such situations women have a difficult decision to make. "In short, women can face trade-offs between competence and likability in leadership" (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011. p. 477). Thus, the lack of gender scripts that allow for directive behaviors that could influence the use of power complicates leadership for women leaders.

The Market Discourse of Education and its Effect on Gender Scripts

The United States' recent focus on school accountability has changed the face of education and educational leadership (Jackson, Irby, & Brown, 2011). State and local mandates to improve student achievement, combined with the option of school choice; created a market economy that impacts both teachers and educational leaders alike. A recent study out of the University of California–San Diego, La Jolla stated the following: "The United States' ongoing

struggle to close the achievement gap has resulted in nationwide policies that attempt to improve student outcomes through a mixture of directives, incentives and sanctions" (Daly et al., 2011, p. 171). The most well-known policy that has resulted from this focus on accountability is the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) initiative that was adopted in 2001. The NCLB policy is built on four principles including monitoring student learning, increased parent school choice for students attending Title I schools, flexibility in federal funding provided to states, and increased use of research based teaching strategies (Mosely, Boscardini & Wells, 2014). This focus on accountability, initiated at the national level, is tied to educational dollars, which forces states to heed requirements or risk losing federal money. Reay and Ball (2000) noted, "The major transformation that has taken place in education and other public sector organizations is the introduction of the market form. This has had the effect of legitimizing and encouraging assertive, instrumental and competitive behavior" (p. 147). This change in focus is problematic for feminists and others who promote a collaborative leadership style. Blackmore (1999) agreed when she noted, "Educational restructuring, with its emphasis on efficiency, accountability and outcomes, privileges 'hard' management and entrepreneurial discourses of leadership over less instrumental, more holistic and 'softer', 'feminized' leadership discourses" (p. 3). Thus, the *women's ways of leading* gender script, while heralded in the 1980s and 1990s, is found to be out of place in the competitive market economy of the current educational discourse.

This new market discourse has placed increased attention on both teacher and principal performance. Student achievement is now the hallmark of good leadership. Blackmore (1999) noted that good leadership is now specifically influenced by "discourses that associate masculinity with economic rationality, being strong, making hard decisions" (p. 4). Ironically, she also noted that women leaders often lead the most struggling schools. This means that

women serve as principals of the schools that are under the most scrutiny. As a result, teachers and principals at schools in need of improvement (INI) perceive the threat of sanctions most profoundly. This added stress can result in teachers and educational leaders having a decreased sense of efficacy (Daly et al., 2011). Furthermore, the team building, collaborative behaviors that have been associated with improved teacher morale are often traded for assertive, directive leadership styles as principals strive to make quick improvements in student achievement. Thus, the market economy works against the use of feminine ways of leading. Reay and Ball (2000) argued that, "Democratic forms of management are at risk of becoming associated with inefficiency and inertia in the developing market culture if they appear to stand against, and work in opposition to, market initiatives" (p. 155). Thus, adopting a masculine gender script is necessitated by the mandate for improving school performance as evidenced by student proficiency scores. In the next section I will describe the effects that women leaders experience as a result of using an assertive leadership style that is more closely aligned to a masculine gender script.

Women Leaders: Using a Masculine Script in a Market Discourse

Many women leaders use a more masculine gender script as they attempt to lead their schools to improved performance. Research by Isaac, Kaatz, and Carnes (2012) noted that women who use such agentic characteristics are more successful in male sex-typed roles than women who rely on communal characteristics that are more traditionally feminine. However, whether a woman leader uses a more assertive leadership style because it is a natural fit or she adopts it to quickly improve school performance, women leaders often receive negative reactions from teachers. Kerfoot and Knights (1993) suggested that new forms of strategic masculinity are replacing paternalistic masculinities. This strategic masculinity comes at a price for women

leaders who may feel fragmented between this masculine gender script and the female gender scripts that others expect them to follow. Scott (2003) claimed, "For women, existence in this world requires a separation of self into two sets of consciousness" (p. 82). Thus, even if women prefer to use a more directive approach, the teachers whom they lead may not receive them well, given that women are expected to use a 'softer' approach. Their subordinates will often express more dissatisfaction with women using a directive leadership than when male principals use the same approach. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) pointed out:

> In the same position, men can quickly move into a directive mode, explaining the reason, and most of the 'troops' will fall in behind and follow the leader. The educational workforce simply has been socialized and conditioned to men behaving in a directive manner, but that's not what they expect women to do. (p. 172)

Recent research supports that women are more likely to adopt masculine characteristics when they perceive that their abilities are likely to be judged based on preconceived stereotypes. Additionally, this research notes that when women leaders adopt such masculine behaviors they are viewed less favorable and may struggle obtaining cooperation from subordinates (Von Hippel, Wiryahusuma, Bowden, & Shochet, 2011).

Brunner and Grogan (2007) termed this forced masculine gender script as the *marginal man* (p.44). Thus, the woman leader, while not a male leader, is neither seen as fully feminine in an acceptable way. Marshall (1985) noted that women administrators who do not fit into the normally accepted idea of a woman experience stigma and developed a sense of "spoiled identity" (as cited in Brunner & Grogan, 2007 p.43). However, a growing body of research documents that successful women leaders who have reached high positions describe themselves as more masculine than the women who have not achieved such powerful positions.

Surprisingly, this research shows that these top women leaders do not support the advancement of their more feminine junior colleagues, thus contributing to what has been coined the Queen Bee phenomenon (Faniko, Ellemers, & Derks, 2017). Rather than adopt a more masculine persona, many women leaders attempt to strike a balance between traditionally masculine and feminine characteristics. As a result, women find themselves in an untenable situation. Budworth and Mann (2010) remarked that such consequences are a double-edged sword for women wanting to be successful in leadership positions. Thus, women leaders find themselves in a dilemma between choosing gender scripts that are well received by teachers and gender scripts that may be needed to make school improvements in a timely manner.

Moving Forward: A Need for Blended Gender Scripts

Theorists in the 1980's and 1990's provided much information on essentializing theories that argue for the superiority of women's leadership styles. Recent research notes that men and women leaders should learn from each other's leadership styles. Way and Marques (2013) claim men should learn how to communicate in a more caring manner while women should learn to control their emotions. While such research encourages a blended leadership style it still promotes the stereotype that men need help communicating and that women are too emotional, instead of acknowledging that all men and women likely fall in various places along a spectrum of traditionally masculine and feminine characteristics. Other current studies show that successful men and women leaders often use both masculine and feminine behaviors (Christman & McClellan, 2012). While successful leaders may use behaviors traditionally associated with both genders, research has clearly noted that women's leadership experiences in education are very different from men holding the same position (Marshall, Johnson, & Edwards, 2017). Investigation into exactly what those lived experiences of women are like has been little

explored. By studying women's experiences across different contexts, it may be possible to illuminate some of the experiences which inform the ways in which women perceive their leadership, and also their contribution to leading in socially just ways (Torrance, Fuller, McNae, Roofe, & Anshad, 2017). It is the lived experiences of women leaders, their perception of gender stereotypes and their ability to navigate conflicting expectations that needs additional attention in future research. It is not difficult to understand how women leaders struggle to find their own leadership style. With such a binary view of gender scripts, women struggle with selecting a leadership style that will allow them to respond to leadership needs in a variety of situations. However, some researchers argue that a woman principal's ability to navigate between these two extremes is a key indicator of her success as an educational leader. Sulpizio (2014) claimed, "Women's leadership theory has spent too much time criticizing the masculine nature of organizational life and not enough time promoting women's ability to exist within, and express, multiple ways of being and doing" (as cited in Longman & Madsen, 2014, p. 105). Women leaders should be able to express a full range of emotions and leadership behaviors (Hall, 2002). Connell (1995) agreed when he called for a theory in educational leadership that calls for multiple femininities and masculinities (as cited in Collard & Reynolds, 2005). Such expanded gender scripts would give a broader range of options for women leaders as they strive to lead in an age of increased accountability. Additional research into this topic is needed to fill the gap in the literature that currently exists.

Feminist Standpoint Theoretical Framework

As a woman leader of a large high school, I often wonder why the body of literature used in my leadership coursework did not mention gender as a factor that influences the experience of a leader. Popular theories of leadership such as servant leadership and situational leadership

discuss scenarios of leadership and characteristics of effective and ineffective leaders. However, researchers treat the behaviors and characteristics discussed as universally interchangeable and equally adoptable. I have often experienced frustration when studying such leadership theories because in my time as a leader I have found that teachers do not always respond to women leaders in the same way that they do to men leaders. I have often noted that the authors of such theories are men and, therefore, do not acknowledge gender as a characteristic that may affect leadership dynamics. To illustrate this point, upon scanning the many books I have collected through my fifteen years in education and my eight years in leadership, I selected ten volumes at random (see Appendix F). I looked at each index, when an index was included, and the table of contents when an index was not included. Of the ten leadership books I reviewed, not a single one had an index entry or a chapter title that included the terms gender, male or female. I believe this brief but telling examination of my personal professional development collection illustrates that leadership, at least school leadership and the research used to support much school leadership training, does not take the gender of the school leader into account. Research that is gender blind always leaves me feeling that something is missing. I feel as if the author perhaps does not see me or that the advice in the book may not work for me. As I reviewed the names of the authors of the books I randomly selected I noticed something. Every single book was written by a man. Perhaps this fact explains why I am often left with feeling as though the strategies listed might not work for me. Some would argue that research is research and the gender of the researcher should not matter because research is "value free." However, feminist standpoint theory acknowledges that who conducts the research does, in fact, matter.

Standpoint feminist theory claims, "Because women's lives in almost all societies are different than men's, women hold a different type of knowledge (Kruse & Krumm, 2016, p.29).

The social location of women within the discourse differs from that of men because they have less power. Current research states that standpoint theorists consider all knowledge as socially situated (Mann & Patterson, 2016). Specifically Harding (2004) noted, "The social order looks different from the perspective of our lives and our struggles" (p.3). Standpoint theorists brought our attention to the fact that women had been objects of inquiry by the groups that rule them. Women were seen as subjects but not producers of knowledge (Harding, 2004). Harding pointed out that the interests and concerns that were being researched were not helpful to women. In fact, she claimed, "The disciplines were complicitous with sexist and androcentric agendas of public institutions"(p. 5). Many feminists believe that knowledge is socially situated. This knowledge claim brings to the forefront that the social position of the researcher is, in fact, important. Kruse and Krumm (2016) argued "Literature written from the standpoint of patriarchal privilege often does not accurately describe women's paths to employment in administration (p. 30). Therefore, using feminist standpoint theory as a framework will allow for the voices of the women participants in this study to share unique views about the discourse of secondary educational leadership. Standpoint theorists "map how a social and political disadvantage can be turned into an epistemological, scientific and political advantage" (Harding, 2004, p. 8). This view allows for women's voices to be heard and valued as producers of knowledge. It is not simply the perspective of women as members of a marginalized group that qualifies this study as fitting within the feminist standpoint framework; it is the ability of these women to analyze the power structures that exist within the discourse that influence how they choose to negotiate existing gender scripts. Contemporary standpoint theorists insist that standpoints are achieved through "critical, conscious reflection on the ways in which power structures and resulting social locations influence knowledge production" (Intemann, 2010, p. 785). Kruse and Krumm (2016)

claimed "The perspective from the lives of the less powerful can provide a more objective view than the perspective of the lives of the more powerful" (p. 29). They also noted that all standpoints are partial and that people have multiple standpoints. Thus it is not simply the location of the viewpoint from which a woman principal tells her story, but her unique ability to give insight, into the effects of the patriarchal influences that continue to exist within the discourse that make the resulting knowledge meaningful.

Dorothy Smith originally discussed standpoint theory in 1972 when she questioned research in the field of sociology by pointing out that the conceptual frameworks then available "were predicated on a universe which is occupied by men" (Smith, 1972, p. 22). Smith claimed that the only way of knowing a socially constructed world was from within. Hartsock (2004) reaffirmed the importance of women telling of their experiences by noting that materialist feminists have argued that the experience of women is structurally different from men (p. 36). This supports the need for women leaders to tell of their own experiences. If only men leaders conduct research and relate their experiences then there is a resulting dearth of information to guide women leaders in secondary education. Hartsock (2004) also noted that a standpoint is not simply a bias. It holds the contention that there are "some perspectives on society from which, however well-intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible" (p. 37). Because standpoint theorists place such a degree of importance on "who" conducts the research, they advocate strongly for reflexivity. Standpoint theorists believe that researcher should acknowledge that their own social location may influence the research and their views of other people, which in turn could affect the knowledge produced (Mann & Patterson, 2016). However, if only certain types of knowledge can be produced from certain vantage points it is critical that this knowledge is brought forth. Thus, if women leaders

of secondary schools do not tell of their stories then the nuances that exist in leadership dynamics will not be visible. Therefore, it is important that women educational leaders share their experiences with gender scripts and how they affect their leadership behaviors, or the influence of such gender scripts will not be understood. Using a feminist standpoint theoretical framework for this study will support such knowledge production that should prove uniquely beneficial for women leaders.

Practical Application of New Knowledge

An important step moving forward will be for leadership programs to train future women principals to help them understand the effects of gender stereotyping and gender scripting that they are likely to encounter. The Women's Leadership Academy (WLA) at the University of San Diego provides an example of such a leadership development program. The WLA acknowledges the gender bias that exists in leadership and includes this topic as part of the discussion within the leadership program. In addition, this program encourages women leaders to resist viewing leadership as a masculine or feminine dichotomy (Sulpizio, 2014). Moving forward, components such as the ones outlined in the WLA program should be included in all educational leadership preparation programs in order to improve the effectiveness and job satisfaction of rising women educational leaders.

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Conclusion

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In this chapter, I conducted a review of relevant literature studying women leaders in the field of education. I discussed factors that influence the development of gender scripts and how those scripts, in turn, affect the leadership behaviors of women principals at the secondary level. I argued that essentializing theories of many feminists, while proving to add value to the contributions of women leaders, limit gender scripts by creating their own universalizing

theories. I discussed how the field of educational leadership views power as a commodity and the use of power as either masculine or feminine. Lastly, I offered an explanation of the ways that the current market discourse of education and the increased focus on accountability may be limiting the availability of gender scripts for women. I argue that women leaders must have access to a wider variety of gender scripts in order to most effectively lead today's schools. In order to accomplish this, additional research into the lived experiences of women leaders in secondary education is required. This feminist qualitative study will be conducted toward that purpose.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

In the previous chapter I established a need for new research about gender scripts in secondary education. I provided a brief history of gender scripts and discussed how they are shaped by masculine discourse. Additionally, I discussed how some feminist views of gender scripts reinforce traditional gender stereotypes that limit the behavioral options of women leaders. I also juxtaposed the masculine and feminine views of power as traditionally defined and analyzed how views of power that are tied to traditional gender scripts can be problematic for women leaders. Furthermore, I explained how the market discourse that exists in education today requires a wide variety of situational responses from leaders, which illustrates a need for blended gender scripts. In conclusion, I discussed how new knowledge gained from this project, or others like it, could be used to benefit future women leaders.

In this chapter I will explain the purpose of my research, provide information on the setting and context, and provide rationale for my decision to use qualitative research. In particular, I will discuss how narrative inquiry, which allows participants to tell their experiences, is an appropriate method for gathering needed data through interviews and will support the feminist standpoint framework used in this project. I will discuss how I will ensure trustworthiness through the following practices: (a) reflexivity; (b) member checking; (c) clarification of researcher bias; and (d) rich, thick description. Finally, I will discuss considerations for potential ethical issues.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this feminist qualitative study is to interview four women principals who lead high schools in the same eastern state in order to analyze how gender scripts affect their experience as leaders in secondary schools. I will examine how these women perceive their leadership and how they manage gender expectations.

Research Questions

1. Among women leaders, what are the perceptions of gender in the workplace relative to their roles as educational leaders?

2. What challenges do women leaders face in their roles as principals?

3. How do they negotiate the prevailing gender scripts regarding women in leadership in education?

4. How have these women coped with or managed challenges related to gender that they have faced as women leaders?

Research Setting and Context

The context of this research study is the setting of public, comprehensive high schools, which includes grades 9-12. Such schools have athletic programs, as well as required content area courses, elective courses, and career technical education (CTE) courses, unless otherwise noted. The specific setting of the interviews depended upon the convenience of the participant's availability.

Qualitative Design Rationale

Qualitative research is a term that describes a variety of research practices and constructing a succinct definition can be difficult. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) offer one definition, not of the term itself, but of those who utilize this method of research. They state,

"qualitative researchers are interested in *understanding the meanings people have constructed*" (p. 15). Because my research study is concerned with obtaining an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of women leaders who work within the patriarchal discourse of educational leadership, it is necessary to interview women who are high school principals in order to learn about their perceptions of how this discourse, and gender scripts in particular, influenced their construction of meaning.

The goal of qualitative research is consistent with a feminist standpoint theory framework because it focuses on the lived experience of women and it takes into account how they construct meaning in their lives. This is an appropriate design for my project because it will allow me to interact with women leaders of secondary schools to understand how they make sense of discourse and their place within that discourse. Qualitative researchers are "interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Part of my research will be to gain an understanding of how women leaders are, or are not, complicit in perpetuating a hegemonic discourse. My research is intended to reveal how women make decisions about behaviors that may appear to accept, reject or negotiate gender scripts that exist in secondary school leadership.

While all qualitative research uses words as data to help interpret how individuals make sense of their experiences, there are varying philosophical perspectives among qualitative research. My research perspective uses feminist standpoint theory, which places priority on the position of the subject and the researcher in relation to a social and historical setting. Such position influences the knowledge created and is influenced by the position and perspective of those involved. However, these truths will be understood to be a reflection of the constructs the

participants have used to make sense of the world and that those constructs are influenced by a discourse that is socially and historically situated.

   Narrative inquiry. Telling stories is how we live our lives. Stories help us to make sense of our surroundings and our position in those surroundings.   Narrative inquiry is a research practice that encourages the interview subjects to relate the experience of their lives through stories that they tell in response to questions that the researcher asks. The hallmark of this type of qualitative research is the use of stories as data, namely personal experience told from first-person accounts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).   Researchers who engage in qualitative research are not interested in gathering the type of information that can be gathered in surveys. These researchers are interested in understanding how people "construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 6). Narrative inquiry provides the researcher opportunity to ask questions that bring to light how and why people construct their particular version of reality.

   Narrative inquiry is a method that works well with feminist standpoint theory.   Narrative inquiry produces data that is consistent with a feminist standpoint view by producing narrative accounts of the participant's experience of reality.   Clandinin and Connelly (2000) noted that narrative inquiry produces a view of reality through "narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities" (p. 17). Narrative inquiry is a method that will be helpful in my project as I attempt to use the experiences of women leaders in secondary schools to understand the gender scripts in secondary school leadership that influence women as they construct their identity and make decisions about leadership behavior.

Telling about experience.

Interviews are used to allow participants to tell about their experiences. However, unlike the feminist researchers of the 1970s and 1980s, I will not use a lens which views "experience as authority" (DeVault & Gross, 2012, p. 209). My view of experience will mirror researchers who view the stories as *true* from the perspective of the participant and not absolute truth (Weedon, 1997). This perspective acknowledges that their version of reality is created by existing discourses that are influenced by both historical and social factors. This view of the nature of women's experience will be important to keep in mind as I analyze data in an attempt to untangle the constructs of the current discourse that support gender scripts that are limiting to women leaders. The experiences reported by these women will be relevant and meaningful when situated within a specific social and historical setting.

Selection of Participants

In order to select participants for this study I will send a questionnaire via email to selected participants. This questionnaire will ask basic information such as the school level at which they served, size of school, location of school, etc. to ensure that the participants meet the criteria for my study. My sampling strategy is purposeful sampling in which participants interviewed meet the criteria of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 294). The criteria for this study are that the participants are women currently serving as principals of comprehensive high schools. This also represents homogenous sampling because I am selecting similar cases in order to describe a subgroup in more depth (Patton, 2002, as cited in Glesne, 2011). I will recruit participants for this study by contacting principals in my county of employment who meet these criteria.

Data Collection

Data collection, for many researchers, simply refers to the methods that they will use for collecting data. However, with narrative inquiry, and the researchers who conduct it, data collection is more nuanced than simply the techniques used to gather information. Researchers who use narrative inquiry know that unless they understand the "narrative threads at work" they may miss the meaning of the "actions, doings and happenings" that make up the data that is collected (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 79). When we hear the term data collection, we are likely to assume that simply means the gathering of participants' responses to the questions we ask. However, it is important to recognize that the process of collecting data is an integral part of data production. Unless the researcher is intentional in minimizing the influence of social factors, the responses received may reflect the bias of the researcher or even the "prevailing social discourse" (Miner, Jayaratne, Pesonen, & Zurbrugg, 2012, p. 252). As a woman leader of a high school, I will be able to use my understanding of nuances to gain meaning from the data that is collected. I will understand the conversation threads and discourse concepts at work. However, given that I am interested in troubling the discourse that influence the availability gender scripts for women leaders, I need to work to ensure that the data collection process minimizes my potential influence on participant answers.

Interviews. I interviewed women leaders of secondary schools to obtain data for this project. Part of the interview was structured; I obtained demographic information and work history information from all participants. In addition, I collected information from each participant regarding the student enrollment of her school, athletic program information, and district size (see appendix A). Given that I was trying to learn information by having participants reflect upon their lived experiences, I had to keep in mind that the experiences described was a

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glossed narrative report of an actual experience. Denzin (1989) pointed out that the value of this method "lies in its user's ability to capture, probe and render understandable problematic experience" (p. 69). In order to best capture the participant's experience, I asked open-ended interview questions to each participant (see Appendix D). This type of data collection is a semi-structured interview. Such an approach is directed by the researcher toward a range of intentions (Glesne, 2011). The interviews were friendly and informal. After gaining permission of the participants, I conducted each interview at a time and location convenient for each participant. In order to assure anonymity, each participant selected a pseudonym. I used audiotape to record the interviews. To prepare for these interviews, I practiced these interview questions with an administrator who works in my county but who was not a participant in this study. After the interviews were transcribed I destroyed the audiotape files to ensure confidentiality.

Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is a concept used in qualitative research to demonstrate that research is credible (Glesne, 2011). A framework for determining the credibility of qualitative research was developed by Guba and Lincoln in the early 1980s (Morse, 2015). Their work on "transferability" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 184) is the focus on developing qualitative studies that have credibility. According to Krefting (1991), two ways of increasing credibility are reflexivity and member checking. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) add to these methods clarification of researcher bias and rich, thick description.

Reflexivity. Taking into account how the researcher's personal history may affect her analysis is important to increasing credibility. "Reflexivity refers to assessment of the influence of the investigators own background, perceptions, and interests on the qualitative research process" (Ruby, 1980, as cited in Krefting, 1991). This was an important concept for me to consider since I had dual roles in this project. First and foremost, I was a researcher. However,

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the fact that I am a woman leader in a secondary school could influence my personal feelings and beliefs about the topic. I needed to be cautious that my personal opinions did not influence my analysis of the data obtained through the interviews with the participants in this study.

Member checking. Another method of improving credibility encouraged by Krefting (1991) is member checking, which involves seeking feedback from participants to see if the recorded data is accurate according to how the participant intended her answers to be interpreted. However, researchers must be careful that their analysis of the participants' responses do not cause harm to the participant. For example, if my analysis of a woman leader's use of an androgynous style of dress is that it causes others to perceive her as more traditionally masculine, this may hurt her perception of herself. Another difficulty with member checks is that informants may have a tendency to internalize the information they have read, which could affect their subsequent responses. To minimize this, it is best not to re-interview a participant on an aspect of the project for which she has conducted a member check to ensure that participant answers are spontaneous and, hopefully, more authentic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, because I wanted to ensure the credibility of this study, it was important for me to check my understanding of the women leaders answers to make certain that what I have recorded reflects the experiences and not my biased interpretation of their responses.

Clarification of researcher bias. It was important during interviews, as well as the data analysis process, that I reflected upon my own subjectivity. Given that I am currently in my sixth year of serving as a high school principal, I have personal experiences and opinions about those experiences that influenced how I view the current discourse in educational leadership. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) discussed the relationship of the researcher to the participants as Insider/Outsider. Using this understanding, I was in a unique position as a researcher as an

"insider" to women leaders of secondary schools. While this position may serve to give me credibility with the participants and may even aid in developing a relationship of trust, I needed to be intentional about not allowing my personal views as an insider to unduly influence my analysis of the data I collect. By admitting my potential bias in this study, I acknowledge that my personal experiences may in some way influence the lens through which I view the data.

Rich, thick description. Rich, thick description was originally coined as a method for increasing transferability of the study results (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016). Rich, thick description will likely include "description of the context, the participants involved, and the activities of interest" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 17). I used a detailed comparative analysis as I looked for themes across the data collected. After I interviewed each participant, I compared the themes that re-occurred and then added themes as they become apparent in subsequent data. After all data was collected, I used rich, thick description to analyze the data and used the theoretical framework identified to explore the commonality of the experiences of these women. I also looked for dissonance in the experiences that these women report. Ultimately, I used the data collected to highlight tensions that exist in the current discourse of leadership at the secondary level.

Consideration of Possible Ethical Issues

Ethical issues were of importance throughout the various stages of the research process. To begin with, because my research involved human subjects, I needed to obtain the Institutional Review Board's consent in order to be able to conduct research as a doctoral student for Appalachian State University. However, even after permission was granted, ethical issues could have become problematic throughout the research process. The issue of anonymity is an important ethical issue that will be relevant to the participants in the study. Because my project

asked participants to reflect upon issues of gender identity, they may have felt discomfort or embarrassment revealing personal information. It was important that I honored this anonymity by using pseudonyms throughout the writing process. In addition, the questions used to address my research topic caused participants to reflect upon, and articulate how others treated them or how they responded to elements within a patriarchal discourse. Sharing such information may not only have caused a degree of embarrassment for personal choices made, such discussion could inadvertently cast a negative light on the participant's colleagues, in particular a participant's supervisors. Such instances highlight the importance of maintaining anonymity for participants.

Conclusion

The lack of parity between the number of men and women leaders in secondary education warrants a feminist study on the discourse that perpetuates this reality. In this chapter, I discussed the purpose of my research, provided information on the setting and context, and outlined my rationale for my use of qualitative research. I defended my use of narrative inquiry, which allows participants to tell their experiences, as an appropriate method for gathering needed data through interviews. In addition, I described my efforts to ensure trustworthiness through reflexivity and member checking. In addition, I acknowledged the need to clarify researcher bias and to provide rich, thick description in an effort to ensure credibility. I used the aforementioned practices to encourage participants to consider the influence that gender scripts in secondary educational leadership may have had upon their behaviors.   By considering the experiences of these women, I worked to identify moments where we as women leaders accept, reject, or negotiate available gender scripts, thus affecting the perpetuation of a hegemonic patriarchal discourse.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the experiences of women high school principals. In particular, the research explored gender scripts that may exist within the discourse of high school leadership. The study explored which scripts women high school principals were aware of, which ones were seen as advantages and disadvantages in helping them successfully perform their roles and, subsequently, how they responded to these scripts. Also studied was how the women principals perceived the reaction of others based on their responses to these gender scripts. The criterion used to select participants was purposeful sampling. Four women high school principals who serve in the same school system in an urban school district in an eastern state were selected. All four participants agreed to be interviewed and audio taped as they discussed their experiences with the expectations they perceive to exist for them as women high school principals.

Participant Profiles

Each woman participated in a face-to-face interview where her responses were recorded via a digital recorder. Of the participants in this study two of the participants self-identified as African-American, while the other two participants self-identified as Caucasian. Table 1 includes demographic information for each participant. Each participant is referred to using a pseudonym.

Table 1

Participant Information

Name	Age	Years in Current Position	Number of Years as a Principal	Race
Cris	59	1	16	African-American
Marion	45	2	8	Caucasian
Peyton	46	3	8	Caucasian
Drew	39	2	2	African-American

Each interview was conducted at a time and a location convenient for each participant. None of the participants elected to be interviewed at her school. All participants elected to meet at a coffee house or café. These off-site locations seemed to add to the comfort level of the conversations. Each participant appeared to enjoy participating in the interview and having an opportunity to share her experiences in relation to gender scripts. The interviews lasted between one hour and two hours. A digital recorder was used to record each interview. The audiotapes were transcribed by me. I elected not to take notes during the interviews so that I could focus on the interview. After transcribing the data, I analyzed each interview looking for themes that emerged within each interview. I then looked across all interviews to analyze each participant's responses to these themes in order to draw conclusions about themes across all interview data.

Cris. Cris is an African-American woman who is 59 years of age. She first began her career in education as a high school math teacher. She taught math for nine years and coached

the school's basketball team. She decided to go into administration at the relatively young age of 32 when she was recruited into the districts aspiring leaders program. She lived in a neighboring state and served as a middle school principal before moving to a neighboring state to be near her sister and her niece. She was named principal at a low performing urban high school in one of the larger cities in the state.

Cris said that when she first came to the district in 2003 she was aware of being treated differently as a woman high school principal. At the time there were two other women principals at the high school level and thirteen male principals. The assistant superintendent (her supervisor) was a man. Cris felt strongly that he listened more to the male principals.

I will give you an example we were having a discussion about the use of At-Risk funds. At the time the At Risk funds only went to Title I schools (schools with over 50% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch) and my school was not a Title I school but we were still struggling and could have used the money. I argued that at-risk funds should be used for at-risk students, even the ones that did not attend Title I schools.

Cris reported that there was a complete gender divide over the topic. Women principals, regardless of if their schools would benefit from the change, all agreed that it made sense. However, the men, even if it had benefited their schools, would not go along with the change.

It was completely divided by gender more than reason…and you could plainly see it. I am not sure exactly what it was that they had a problem with but I saw it as not listening to what the females had to say.

Cris noted that it was not just her male assistant superintendent but the male superintendent also did not place as much value on the opinions of women high school principals as he did on the opinion of the men principals. She clearly described her feelings in the following statement:

> You could see it when you expressed your feelings about something that it wasn't taken with as much value. A man could say the exact same thing and it would be the *truth*. The majority of principals were white males. But it was more about the gender piece. I never felt excluded because of race… it was always more about your suggestions as a woman.

Cris said she continued to see this discrimination as she recently reentered the ranks of high school principals. She indicated that not much has changed in the past eight years when she last served as a high school principal. She believes the difference with the way women high school principals are treated has to do with a credibility deficit:

> I will say one thing with being female is that you have to prove you are credible. I don't think men do but women have to earn it. They [teachers] want to make sure we can do the job but with a male he just walks in with it.

Cris brings up an interesting dilemma when discussing the need for and the difficulty with building credibility. This task is made even more daunting as women leaders try to follow the gender script of being a collaborative principal. Cris describes herself as being a collaborative leader:

> The first thing I do is build a team around me and give them the big picture of what the vision is. My biggest strength is pulling people together to get something accomplished and making everybody feel valued and part of the team. I think that is what good leaders do.

However, Cris admits that this is far from easy for a woman high school principal because of their lack of credibility and teachers' unwillingness to jump in and assist a woman high school principal. In her role as an assistant superintendent, Cris remembers seeing teachers jump in to assist male principals…to be one of his team. She says that with women high school principals, teachers behave differently:

As a woman they expect you to have the answer…Like, you so good? You should have all the answers. But a man can come in and say "I want you all to get together and solve the problem" and they will do it. As a woman you have to get in there beside them and guide the process. If a man said, "We've got this problem and it needs to be fixed." They will get to their corners and solve the problem. With a man they assume he has credibility and is a good delegator. With a woman it is like she doesn't know how to fix it and that is why she is asking us to fix it.

In the above quote, Cris indicates that teachers quickly respond to male principals. They don't question, they just get to work eager to please him. When women principals attempt to delegate, teachers are not as eager to please. They question the ability of a woman principal. This speaks the patriarchal influence that continues to exist in the discourse of secondary leadership, where men are presumed to have power and to be the natural leaders and women have to prove that they are worthy of their place as a leader.

Cris also discussed the pressures that she feels go along with being a woman high school principal. In her opinion the expectations placed on women principals are higher than those placed on men. "I think that sometimes we are held to a higher standard. I think that sometimes there are things that a male principal can do that would be overlooked but if a female does it we

are held to a higher standard." Cris believes this has to do with the fact that women are supposed to know curriculum. "They think that we can turn things around. I think we are expected not to make mistakes. We are expected to know it, to do it and to do it right the first time."

Chris described her frustration with the expectations placed on women to "get things done" and the criticisms that come when we vary from the script of being a nurturer. Here Chris discussed a script that she believes that women have of being efficient. She added that she thinks that there is more pressure on women leaders to follow an efficiency script. However, her frustration comes with the fact that in order to be efficient and get things done you cannot always be nurturing, which is a competing script. Supervisors expect women principals to get things done quickly but teachers expect women leaders to be nurturing. "They expect us to be nurturing and a soft type….not to be hard nosed. If a woman is direct they see it as a flaw, where if a man is direct it is not a flaw." Cris quickly admitted that a woman principal cannot always be nurturing in this role and get results. She talked about how the expectations around being nurturing and building relationships can sometimes make things difficult when the situation calls for directness.

> I think there is a script that we can build relationships. It doesn't matter if the male principal gets along with everyone but it matters if a woman does. That is an unknown script that is expected of us out there. We have to be on point at all times. When people come to you they expect you to know the answer. But at the same time they want you to nurture them and be a great coach.

However, it appears to be a fine line that women high school principals are expected to walk because Cris noted that while women are expected to be nurturing, they can easily be seen as too emotional. Whereas showing emotion seems to work in favor of male

principals, in Cris' opinion, it is a disadvantage for women high school principals. "We are expected not to cry because that is a weakness. So that is a hidden script. Teachers are always looking to see your facial expressions. You can't show your emotions. Poker face. Don't get angry or raise your voice." When questioned about if a male principal is allowed to show emotion. Cris said people think it is good when men show emotion. The irony of this seemed to frustrate her.

It's like oh look, he is so sensitive, so sensitive. And then you cry and it's like she is so weak. He is so caring, look at him. And you cry and they are like look at that crybaby. She better get her emotions together or they are going to eat her alive. That's what they would say. And they are looking to see a tear. They are like did you see her cry? With a man they are like oh that is so sweet. He got so wrapped up in that.

Cris went on to say that she does not think the same combination of behaviors is expected of male principals from those they lead. When discussing supervisors' expectations of women high school principals, Cris commented that the expectation of being a "soft type" continues. "There is script where we are not supposed to push too hard. Comply, follow the rules and don't ask too many questions." When asked if she thought this was different for men she said, "Absolutely!"

A man will buck the system in a heartbeat. Buck and not get any consequences for doing it. But you do that as a female you get that you are a bitch that you are always asking questions that don't make sense. You are antagonizing, you are negative, and you are trying to poke holes in everything. But a man can say something and it is like…OK.

When asked how she copes with this Cris said, "As a woman principal you pick your battles." She believes men don't have to pick their battles. "They have the platform and it is

almost expected for them to question." Cris went on to say that women simply don't have the luxury of questioning everything. She said that women have to be selective about the issues they question so that they don't get a reputation of being a bitch because then "you make your own life miserable."

Cris stated that expectations for women high school principals exist even for issues as personal as how one dresses. She reflected that the previous male superintendent was specific in that everyone should be professionally dressed when presenting to the board. She stated that with the current superintendent it is more of a guessing game as far as her specific expectations but Cris still feels the expectation for women is to be professionally dressed in all meetings.

> They expect a woman to be professionally dressed and your appearance is
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> important because we are expected to look tidy and professional. I think there is a
>
> particular look they are looking for. If a woman were to go in with dreads she
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> would not be seen as a professional…to be seen as professional you have to go in
>
> there with your hair looking good.

Cris discussed the expectation of teachers on the way a woman high school principal dresses. She said that a male principal can be in the building looking like he "just came back from the beach" but a woman would be talked about by teachers if she were to dress casually.

With difficulty that existing scripts can cause for women high school principals, when asked what advice she would give to an aspiring woman high school principal Cris said, "Go in there knowing that you have the skills to be a high school principal and you have just as much right as a man. It will be a hard road and it will take you time to build your credibility but don't give up the fight."

Marion. Marion is a principal who recently moved to her current school district. She is a Caucasian female who is 45 years old. She has been in her current position as a high school principal at a mid-sized high school for less than one year. She served as an assistant principal at her high school for two years prior to applying for the principalship. However, before moving to her current district she served as principal at a middle school and two high schools in a county close to the eastern coast. She has been married to her husband for 12 years. She has two stepdaughters and one step-grandchild.

When asked to recall a time in which she felt gendered in her current role she quickly recalled a scenario from her current principalship:

> After working in a school as an AP, the principal position became open and
> after obtaining that position I went to speak with the principal who was
> retiring with 29 years of service. I inquired about whom in the district did
> he call as a thought partner about trends in our school or other issues. He paused
> and then he said, "Well for you ….I would call Lisa Bennett." That really took me
> back because Lisa is a principal at a school that is much more urban and has many
> more dynamics that we really don't have to deal with. After pausing and reflecting
> on that I had to feel like that he told me to choose Lisa, not because our schools
> were similar because they are not, but because she is a female. In fact, she is one
> of the few women in a high school principal position in our district.

Marion went on to say how his suggestion irritated her because it felt as if he was suggesting that the fact that Lisa was a woman was more important than connecting her with a principal of a like school. Marion felt that if she had been a male principal asking the same question he would have suggested a colleague based on the needs of running the school and not simply gender.

When questioned about if she felt that other male high school principals had similar views of women high school principals, Marion indicated that she definitely saw a difference in whose opinions seemed to matter during high school principal meetings.

> There are four or five power brokers in the room and they are all men. One of the four is much more subdued. I have called him on occasion and he has been supportive. But it is really interesting when you walk into the room and notice the seating arrangement. I am one of those people where if there are 16 people in a meeting and you are the 16th person to come into the room you take the 16th seat, wherever it is located. But that is not the mentality sometimes in there because this last month one of the principals took a chair and relocated it so he could be in the back there with the other power brokers.

Here Marion is actually referring to a male principal moving a chair from one side of the table to sit at the other end of the table next to the other power brokers. When questioned about what she meant by the term "power broker," Marion indicated that a power broker "does not have any more power than anyone else in the room; it's more a perception of how important they think they are." Marion goes on to explain how her actions are different. "I am very proud of my school and want to celebrate every opportunity that I can. However, at the same time, I am not going to be pompous when I am doing it." Marion compares the power broker's actions by stating that they celebrate their schools in a way that seems targeted at highlighting them and their leadership skills instead of describing the success in a way that genuinely spotlights the school and those who work there.

Marion continued her discussion of the high school principal meeting by saying that she is often quiet during these meetings because of these power brokers. "I refrain from saying a lot

of what I would want to say because they are going to overpower whatever you say to get their point across." Marion feels that there are alternatives to expressing one's opinion other than the tactics used by these male principals. "There are ways that you can approach your point and your rationale which does not always mean you need to have to be the loudest voice in the room and show frustration that someone does not agree with you."

When asked about credibility Marion just smiled. Then she added that because she is new to the district, people assume that she is new to administration. She says that it is one of the reasons that she does not comment much in high school principals meetings. "They don't realize that I have been a high school principal at now three different high schools. I have been a middle school principal and a chief curriculum officer. So, I just sort of sit there in amusement."

When I pressed Marion further regarding why she felt that her opinion didn't matter to these power brokers she noted that it was more about watching them together. She referred to their boisterous behavior and the fact that they always had to sit together and they always had to have something to say on every topic. Marion noted that one of the most opinionated of the power brokers had only been a high school principal for one year. This is another example of where feminist theory would help us understand this dynamic as men feeling entitled to their position and their opinion while women have to earn a place to have the same level of credibility.

Back in her building Marion does not have the same credibility issues because her staff knows her level of experience. She also feels that it was helpful to serve in her building as an assistant principal so people got to see her work ethic first hand. She described herself as the assistant principal who was at most of the functions. Perhaps that is why is seems that Marion has a good working relationship with her faculty. When asked about her leadership style she described herself as a collaborative consensus builder:

I think it is my responsibility to create the vision and to clearly articulate what the

end product needs to be and then what I tend to do is…I somewhat know my

strengths and weaknesses. I will typically take another administrator who has

strength in the area that we need and we do a lot of things as an administrative

team. But then we will form a committee. And then there are sometimes where I

will completely step away and leave it in the hands of the committee because I am

trying to build leadership opportunities. Then when they come up with a solution

and a plan, I have to remember that it may be different than what I would have

come up with. But if it is a solid plan and accomplishes the goals then we

celebrate it.

Marion went on to say that she has learned to lead in this way. Earlier in her career she was

more directive. She now describes herself as more willing to lay the foundation and back up and

let the team work on it. If they produce an idea that seems to cover the various angles needed

then she is more willing to give it a try, even if the plan differs from what she would have

created. This collaborative style seems to work best in Marion's opinion because she believes it

is difficult for a woman to be direct. When a woman behaves in a direct fashion Marion does not

believe it is well received:

I would say that in leadership roles people have the perception that you are a bitch

just because you are a woman in that role. Where a man can stand up and say the

exact same thing and it is acceptable. And so that for me…I don't want to say that

I have become numb to it, but I am more aware of it. And I have learned how to

temper my emotions more.

Marion reflected on her experiences over the years and admitted that in her first several years as a high school principal she internalized a great deal. As time has gone on she has learned that certain scripts are just part of the job and she just deals with it in a more matter of fact attitude. She makes the decisions that she needs to for students and sometimes that may mean people perceive her as a bitch. She does not dwell on that perception as much as she did as a new principal.

When asked to discuss expectations placed on women high school principals, Marion feels that there are definitely different expectations placed on women. She indicated that in her district, as well as in the other districts where she has served as a high school principal, women are expected to understand curriculum at a higher level than male principals. "Women principals are more curriculum minded and focused and don't just know the talk. We have expectations. Many of my male counterparts know the lingo but if you press them on how to make it happen they can't tell you." Marion also states that while there are expectations that women will do some things well, like managing curriculum issues and dealing with relationships better than men, there are other issues that people assume women cannot do. Marion says that managing athletics is a supposed weakness for women high school principals in every district in which she has worked. "Often at the high school level the perception is that it is all about athletics and it is not possible to be a woman and balance instruction with athletics. I see that as a challenge to prove people wrong."

Marion also noted that people expect women to be good at building relationships, which is usually seen as a good thing, but people also are wary that women are too emotional. Marion has a fairly even temperament so that has not worked out to be a personal issue for her but she is very much aware that being too emotional is a stereotype that women have to overcome. When

her current principalship became open and she was serving as an assistant principal, she had a male teacher share his opinion:

> I really hope that you will apply for this [principal] position. And I asked him why and he said 'you are level headed and most women are not, they are very emotional. But throughout this year you have proven yourself to be reflective and you listen and then you make the best decision possible. So I really hope that you would apply.' I thought that was interesting from a teacher's standpoint that his perspective was that women in administration are too emotional.

Marion said that she notices that one of things that women high school principals have in common is how we choose to present ourselves through our appearance at central office meetings:

> At high school principals' meetings you mostly see power suits. If you think about it when you look at our joint principals' meetings it is not true for elementary and middle school principals, but if you are a woman principal of a traditional high school if you put us in a room with male principals we are going to show up in a suit.

When Marion was asked about what advice she would give an aspiring woman principal she said,

> You have to be aware that currently this is still the most male dominated level. You have to know that even if you don't speak your mind in a meeting you cannot second-guess yourself based on what the power brokers have said. You have to be comfortable with yourself and know what your vision is.

Peyton. Peyton is currently serving her third year as a principal of a traditional high school. Previously she served as the principal of a middle school for five years and prior to that as an assistant principal at a non-traditional high school. Peyton is not married nor does she have children. She started her career in education as a high school English teacher and also coached basketball. When asked about feeling gendered in her role as principal she said she felt it from her first principalship. When describing the group of parents that were critical of her in her first principalship she described them as: "They were wealthy and privileged and certainly felt they should be respected for their positions and that sort of thing. I think that I was aware that they maybe gave me a little bit harder time than my male predecessor." She felt that being a woman worked against her in this situation. "Had I been the male in the suit and tie I would not have been held to the same standard as I was." When I asked Peyton for an example of why she felt she was treated differently because she was a woman, she referenced a group of mothers that would demand to meet with her and give what was basically an evaluation of her performance. They would later expect follow up meetings where they would give her an evaluation of her performance. She noted that several people who were aware of the situation said that the group of women would never have attempted that with a male leader.

Peyton discussed the lack of credibility she felt she had a woman and the difficultly she had with having to overcome the lack of credibility and with displaying gender scripts expected of women principals. "I was constantly having to prove myself and I think presence had a lot to do with it. So I had to be the leader, but be more engaging in some way…soft…friendly. And there were times when I was described as not approachable, not soft."

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The struggle between a lack of credibility and building a collaborative environment where people can work together is a familiar one to Peyton. She discussed her experience as serving as a basketball coach and coaching teams to success:

> So I think that we [our administrative team] do have issues with what is respect
> and what does that look like… what does trust look like, and I don't know if that
> is because I am a woman or because of the dynamics of the group. And I don't
> want to be the person who says; because I am the principal you will do this. But I
> am learning that people don't respond unless you do that.

Peyton clearly articulated the struggle between needing to be a leader who can develop high functioning teams but at the same time being conflicted about how to appear confident without being directive, trying to be collaborative while maintaining credibility. Since Peyton comes from a coaching background she tended to reflect upon issues using a coaching metaphor:

> You are creating a plan, you are doing a little bit of teaching, but
> when they get out on the court it is their performance, not
> yours and that doesn't always work when you have folks who are openly
> resistant or openly defiant. Or undermining because they don't want that
> coaching, they don't want to be a part of that and you can't cut them. Well I
> guess you could but…

It was interesting when questioned about any advantages that she felt might exist for women as high school principals. She laughed and said, "I don't know… you can bust into the girl's bathroom if needed to break up a fight?" Then on a more serious note she said, "I just can't think of any advantages to being a woman high school principal." Listing her perceived advantages to being a male high school principal came more easily. "It seems like there are

things that you don't have to worry about when you are a male principal. There is an inherent

respect, and maybe it's even the white male principal, just that somehow it is easier." Peyton felt

there are definite disadvantages to being a woman high school principal. "People look at you as

less strong or less capable than you are. Or their expectations are for you to be womanly,

nurturing, if that does not happen there is a disconnect."

Peyton was very aware of expectations placed on women high school principals that she

does not believe are placed on male high school principals. These expectations often make

knowing how to proceed and interact with those you lead difficult. When asked to clarify those

expectations Peyton stated the following:

> I think one is around professionalism. So because of my role, people expect me to
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> be poised, confident, have answers and sort of be strong as opposed to being
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> vulnerable. I think I own that. I think I am OK with that. The sort of female role
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> of nurturer, emotional, attentive to other people and their feelings, I think that is
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> an expectation and I have to work at that. I feel like I need to do it and I can force
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> it, but it is not (emphasis on not) natural and so it is not a habit for me either. I
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> don't know that me practicing that is going to make it come anymore naturally for
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> me because it just doesn't. Not in that role. I mean outside of that role with
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> people that I care about, I don't have a problem with that.

Peyton explained that she does not have a problem caring about people that she chooses to be

close to in her personal life but it is different at school. She admitted that there are just too many

people in a high school setting to develop that depth of feeling for on a daily basis. She said she

is just not equipped to deal with that level of emotional intimacy in a work relationship.

Peyton admits that this is an ongoing struggle for her. To realize that a huge expectation for being a woman high school principal is to be nurturing and, at the same time, to realize that this is simply not something that comes naturally. While Peyton seemed to "wish" that being nurturing came more naturally for her, given that she believes it is a gender script that is not going away and being more caring could help her as she continues in her career, she does not always believe that being nurturing is the best response in every scenario, regardless of if she is dealing with students or teachers. "I am not sure that [being that emotional] is what is best in every situation either. We talk specifically about this bless your heart syndrome where you care about kids so much that you fail to serve them... you don't make them better people because of it. And so I don't own that one."

Likewise, there are other gender scripts that Peyton is aware of that she is honest about not having any intention of complying with. When asked about expectations that exist around a woman high school principal's appearance, she displayed an attitude of non-conformity:

> I am all about sweat pants and coaches shirts and I absolutely feel judged for that
> all the time. And I don't know that people really (emphasis on the word really)
> care but if I would allow myself to make the choice to appear more professional
> in my dress then that might impact people. They would either respect me more…I
> don't know if trust is the word, but I might not have to work so hard if I would
> just put on a suit. And I don't mean work so hard in terms of getting stuff done
> but work so hard in terms of proving things to people, but I am not willing to do
> that every day.

Peyton mentioned that when she was a principal at the middle school level she did not feel that same expectation around appearance. She said that at the middle school level she didn't feel that

kids make judgments based on a principal's appearance. "They respected you because of the way you interacted with them. They didn't care about what you were wearing, so that was different." According to Peyton, the expectation for professionalism and a particular appearance is increased at the high school level and it seems to be an expectation from students and parents. Peyton mentioned that when meeting with her student government representatives that she was told that she needed to work on her image. She felt certain this was due to her unwillingness to conform to expectations regarding the way she dresses.

Another topic that seemed meaningful to Peyton was the lack of support from teachers and assistant principals in their willingness to help and support her and her vision. She has worked with and for other male principals where she said the situation was much different. She joked that she thinks that the support they have from their faculty and staff is one of the reasons she says that male principals seem less stressed:

> So we sit around and talk about the male principals, and what we perceive them as
> having to do as opposed to what we have to do…It just feels different. So I kind
> of operate under the assumption that they have people to do their stuff and I don't
> have people to do mine. They have people to take care of them.

In reflecting on her time as an assistant principal with a male principal, Peyton remarks how much his secretary would take care of him. She said she just took care of his "stuff":

> He was approachable and soft in a way but he still had somebody to do that for
> him and I guess I just don't think it comes naturally to the people around me to
> assume that role and maybe that is because I am a woman but also I don't feel
> comfortable asking them to because I can do it myself.

However, it does not appear to just be her secretary that Peyton feels is not as supportive as she

has seen other secretaries be under male principals, it is also her female assistant principals that

she has the most difficulty with. While she does not categorize any of her assistant principals as

extremely hard workers, she seems to have the most difficulty with her women assistant

principals with regard to compliance and negative attitudes. When asked if she feels that any of

these issues are because she is a woman leader she said she sees a connection and she believes

there is a connection between the expectations placed on women leaders, combined with the lack

of support they have that results in additional job-related stress for women high school

principals.

> I just think the struggle is real for a female principal. So if you watch male
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> principals whether it is the one that I worked under or if it is non-school
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> settings, like principal meetings, that sort of thing, I don't ever see the sort of
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> stress or torment. I don't ever see that on male faces and I do see it on female
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> faces.

Drew. Drew is in the second year of her first principalship. She is currently the principal

of a non-traditional magnet school that serves students in grades 6-12. This career technical

education magnet houses a middle school and a high school. The middle school serves

approximately 100 students in grades 6-8 and 250 students in grades 9-12. Before becoming

principal of her current school, Drew served as an assistant principal for one year at a traditional

high school and prior to that she served as an assistant principal at a middle school for three

years. Drew is a 39-year-old African American female who is married and has two children.

When asked about a situation where she felt gendered in her role as a woman high school

principal, Drew shared an experience from a recent recruitment fair:

Well, there is always like if you are at a recruitment event, like the magnet fair

and the people will direct their questions toward the male. So like this time it

was Michael Nixon, our career coach. And then they [parents] direct their

questions toward him and assumed that I am the teacher.

Drew explains that it is frustrating when people overlook her and assume that the male teacher is

the principal. She shares that it even happens at school when parents come into the school.

"Parents come to the school and ask me if they can speak with the principal, even though my

name tag says principal. I don't know if that is necessarily a gender issue or an age issue."

Given that Drew is a relatively new administrator she understands that her age could be part of

the issue where people assume she is not in charge. However, even within her faculty, who

know she is the principal, she feels like she has to work hard to build credibility and that being a

woman may have a negative impact on her ability to establish credibility quickly.

This theme of lacking credibility resurfaced with Drew when she was discussing her

leadership style. Drew sees herself as a collaborative leader. However, the lack of credibility

that she feels exists because she is a woman makes that leadership style difficult:

So, my leadership style is more collaborative. I often ask a question so

that I can get other people's input. But what I am noticing is that some

people take that to mean that I don't have an answer, that I don't have a

suggestion. So I have to clarify before I ask for feedback. I will

say, I have my own opinion but I would like to hear your reflection on it. So it is

kind of a double-edged sword.

Drew said that her leadership style where she involves others in decision making created an

interesting situation on her leadership team. "On my leadership team there is one male and

starting last year, my first year, he took on the role of being my coach." When I asked Drew if she had asked him to take on that role she replied, "No!" She went on to describe this strange interaction:

> It was the oddest dynamic. He asked to schedule a meeting with me after school. And I didn't know what it was so I was like Ok I want to hear your concerns. And he was like "Ok, so here is what you need to do to be a good leader." So, I humor him for a little bit because I want to see where this is going. And he is like, you have to have a plan for this and this concern and it kind of got to be a bit much and I was like well OK, well thank you for helping me to get adjusted. Is there anything you would like me to do for you to help make your workload better? And he said, "No, I am just here to support you." So then that person took on the role of creating my agendas for our leadership meetings.

When I asked Drew if creating the agenda was something that she asked this person to do she said, "No! And soon it became that he would create the agenda and included a place that says 'Principal Comments'.

Drew said at that point it was too much. It was like she was sitting at the head of the table but he was running the meeting and giving her time to comment. When I asked her how she responded to that situation she said, "I reclaimed that role. I understand he was trying to help me. But I think he was trying to help me because he didn't feel like I would know what to do." Drew shared her frustration with this assumption. "Even though I have been an assistant principal and have completed all my training I am not qualified? I haven't addressed this with him because I didn't know how to."

Drew seemed aware that this man was assuming that she did not know what she was doing because she is a woman. She added that she did not believe he would ever have interacted in the same fashion with a male principal. This gives further evidence that the patriarchal discourse of educational leadership still promotes that men have power and women do not. This example evidences that even a male teacher feels he has the right to question a female principal and assume that she would need his guidance.

When asked about how much support she feels like she has from her staff, Drew admitted that she notices a lack of support from several key members of her staff. The first staff member that she mentioned was her lead secretary. She also mentioned that she believes the tension that she experiences with her lead secretary has to do with the fact that she is a woman. In discussing these difficulties with her supervisor she learned that her secretary had worked well with the male predecessor but that she has had difficulties with every female principal who has ever worked there. Drew says that, in general, at every school where she has ever worked she has seen that the faculty supports a male principal more than a female principal. She is not sure if that is just because they expect a woman to be able to take on more of the details than a man but it seems consistent in the schools where she has worked:

So like with other male principals that I have worked with there are people

coming to them all the time and saying, "Can I help you with this?" or "Would

you like me to do that?" But with me I don't see it quite as much, people

volunteering to do things. People are just like "Well, I guess you can take care of

it." And then I don't know if it is a gender thing or just my personality.

The reoccurring theme of faculty and staff not supporting women principals is perhaps an outcome of a discourse that favors men being in power. Male principals have inherent credibility

and are, perhaps, more powerful and important than women principals. This may be connected to why faculty and staff do not necessarily feel compelled to help women principals.

Although Drew feels a lack of support, she still tries to take a collaborative approach because she believes that is a sign of good leadership. "I think I started with the impression with what we have learned in research that it is good to get everybody together because everyone has different expertise. It is what we have been trained over the years to be able to do."

Drew tries to stay true to this collaborative approach but she admits that it is a struggle with her current leadership team. She states that she has a leadership team and an instructional team and that ideally she would be able to delegate the majority of items to individuals on those teams but she says they are "not quite where they can take it and run with it." She would love to be able to create the vision and allow the team to take ownership of producing the plans and the product. However, she says most of the time "it is me laying out the plans for them to execute." It is obvious that Drew is really trying to lead with a collaborative leadership style but she is frustrated by the lack of buy-in from some of the team members. She noted that one member of the team never volunteers to take on any responsibilities. When Drew asked her about it the woman became very defensive and told Drew, "If you need me to do something then you should just ask me to do it." Drew stated:

> Of course at crunch time there are times when I feel like this particular item may
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> fit best within your job description so I would ask you take it. But if it is just an
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> activity that anybody can do then I try to give people an opportunity to volunteer.

While she strives to lead by collaborating with others, she has a difficult time accepting the product of a collaborative effort if she thinks it is subpar. "My personality, and it is kind of a flaw, is that if it is going to have my name on it I really want it to be a quality product. I

sometimes find myself having to go back so that it is more of a polished product." I asked her

how she handles responding to a team that submits a product that she does not want to accept in

the proposed form and how do people typically react to her corrections. "Some people get

offended because you turn it over and ask them to do it and then you have a conversation and ask

them to edit." Drew went on to discuss the difficulties of learning different personalities and

getting a team to work together.

When I asked her about the advantages or disadvantages of being a woman high school

principal she said that being a woman at her particular school might help her to seem more

approachable to many of the parents since a majority of the families at her school are led by

single-parent homes where the mother is the parental influence. However, the disadvantage is

the lack of support that women principals seem to have and the increased stress those women

principals seem to be under. When discussing how male principals seem less stressed she said,

"I don't know how they do it. I even saw a principal at the last principal meeting, and while I am

struggling trying to take notes and answer emails, he is playing solitaire. And that particular

male principal is at large schools." Drew went on to contemplate that perhaps because he is at

large schools he may have more people to whom he can delegate. However, upon further

reflection she said she really just thinks that male principals get more support and are, therefore,

less stressed. "From my experiences people bend over backward to make sure the male

principals get what they need."

Feminist theory would explain the male principal playing solitaire as an example of male

privilege. It is clear that a discourse that supports such behavior of male leaders is a result of

patriarchal influence. Drew was not playing solitaire, not only because she was too busy but she

admits that she would never do that at a meeting where she is supposed be getting important

information for her school. The male principal's behavior seems to indicate that he felt he was above having to pay attention at the meeting.

When commenting on other disadvantages that she sees of being a woman high school principal, she noted that women have to overcome the stereotype that they are too emotional. "The male principals are seen as more matter of fact. They are like this is what you need to do and there is no emotion in it. Even though I try to look mainly at the facts, the emotion is still part of it." Drew goes on to say that women principals have to be careful so that they are not seen as too emotional or that is considered a negative quality. Feminist theory supports that women are seen as the weaker sex. Drew's example illustrates that women principals are keenly aware that in the discourse of secondary leadership, that perception continues to exist.

Drew shared that she believes there is a specific gender script for women principals regarding appearances. She feels that women are expected to dress very professionally and that sometimes even when she wears heels she feels that some people may feel she is not "down to business." As a result, she finds herself not wearing heels as often because she feels that wearing them may make others see her as less of a serious professional. Her frustration with this assumption is evident:

> They [heels] are not something that are going to hinder my performance. The job
> is still going to get done regardless. But instead of seeing it as an asset, like I can
> wear heels and still get the job done, it is seen as a negative. I mean I have kicked
> them off if I needed to catch up with a kid but I still got the job done.

Drew is also careful when selecting her clothes so that they are conservative to make sure that people are looking at her and not her figure. "I feel like if I dress too cute people will feel like I am not about business, that I have some other motive." When asked how that makes her feel she

said it is "demeaning." Her emotion was evident around this topic. "I want people to see the hard work I put into this job. I mean it is hard work!" Drew insisted that she did not want people to be able to downplay her work based on what she is wearing. However, she was very clear that she believes that could easily happen to women high school principals. While male principals may have to think about dress to a degree, feminism would explain how women must place a much higher priority on dress because we live in a culture where women continue to be judged by their appearances much more than men.

When asked what advice she would give to a woman who aspires to be a high school principal she said to ask for help when you need it. "Even though it may be easier for the male principals to get that support, we are left to our own devices to find that support." In addition to asking for support she said learn to delegate. She admits that this is something that she still struggles with and that she wishes she had come into this position with a better ability to delegate.

Themes from the Research

The following nine themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews and were common among all four participants. The themes are as follows: 1) expectation to be nurturing; 2) avoidance of appearing too emotional; 3) expectations around appearance; 4) higher expectations for women principals; 5) feeling voiceless with male colleagues; 6) expectation to collaborate; 7) lack of credibility; 8) lack of support among faculty and staff; 9) a lack of support from female faculty and staff.

Table 2

Themes from the Research

Expectation to be Nurturing	Feeling Voiceless among Male Colleagues
Avoidance of Appearing too Emotional	Expectation to Collaborate
Expectations around Appearance	Lack of Credibility
Higher Expectations for Women Principals	Lack of Support from Faculty and Staff
Lack of Support from Female Faculty and Staff	

Women Leaders Feel Gendered in their Role as Principal

The first question of the interview asked each of the participants if she could think of a time where she felt gendered in her role as principal. All four participants could easily think of a situation in which she felt gendered in her role as a high school principal. Cris could go back to her first years in her current school system where she said she discussed topics at high school principals' meetings that she felt were divided by gender. With one particular example she said, "It was completely divided by gender and you could plainly see it. I am not sure what it was that they had a problem with but I saw it as not listening to what the females had to say." Marion could recall an example within the past year. She said that when she was appointed to her most recent principalship and she asked the outgoing principal for the name of the principal he used as a "thought partner" to help him with issues that came up at school, he suggested that she connect with one of the few women high school principals in the district, even though their schools were not similar. Marion went on to say how his suggestion irritated her because it felt as if he was

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suggesting that the fact the principal he named was a woman was more important than connecting her with a principal of a like school where their day-to-day issues would be similar. Peyton said she felt gendered from the moment of her first principalship and she believes that some of the struggles she had with that initial parent group would not have been as difficult if she had been a man. She stated, "Had I been the male in the suit and tie I would not have been held to the same standard as I was." Drew complained of feeling overlooked by parents who assumed she was not the principal and would approach the male teacher who accompanied her at a recent school recruitment fair. She said the assumption that she is not the principal happens even in her own building. "Parents come to the school and ask me if they can speak with the principal, even though my name tag says principal."

Women Leaders are Expected to be Nurturing

A theme that is consistent in much educational leadership research is that women principals are expected to be nurturing. Cris said, "They expect us to be nurturing and a soft type… not to be hard nosed." Cris felt that male principals do not necessarily have such an expectation placed on them. "If a woman is direct they see it as a flaw." Similarly, Marion noted that people expect women to be "good at building relationships." Drew mentioned that the expectation that as a woman she will be nurturing may allow her to seem more approachable to many of the parents since a majority of the families at her school are led by single-parent homes where the mother is the main parental influence. Peyton discussed the expectation of being nurturing in much detail because it is an expectation that she continues to struggle with. She describes the expectation as, "The female role of nurturer, emotional, attentive to other people and their feelings, I think that is an expectation and I have to work at that. I feel like I need to do it and I can force it, but it is not (emphasis on not) natural and so it is not a habit for me either."

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Peyton believes that practicing being more nurturing will not necessarily make it more comfortable, but she admits that the expectation is not likely changing.

Women Leaders Must Avoid being too Emotional

Ironically, just as all participants were aware of the expectation that they should be nurturing, all four were cognizant of the fact that being seen as too emotional would be a distinct disadvantage. Drew stated that overcoming the stereotype of being emotional is one of the main disadvantages of being a woman high school principal. "The male principals are seen as matter of fact. They are like this is what you need to do and there is no emotion in it. Even though I try to look at the facts, the emotions are part of it." Drew went on to say that women principals have to be careful so that they are not seen as too emotional or that is considered a negative quality. Cris was also adamant about the fact that this stereotype is a disadvantage for women high school principals and it is very much different for male principals.

When discussing women and men showing emotion Cris said that when women show emption it is seen as a liability while for men it is seen as a positive characteristic because it make them a more caring leader. Cris said being too emotional is seen as a weakness in women. In relation to how others view women leaders who show emotion, Cris imitated their comments, "She better get her emotions together or they are going to eat her alive." Ironically, for Marion, her even-keeled personality and lack of emotion has helped her be seen as a good fit for her current role. In fact, a teacher encouraged her to apply for her current position because she was unlike most women in that she was not too emotional. However, Marion noted that as a woman high school principal if you are too direct and do not show some soft emotion you can also get a negative reputation. "I would say that in high school leadership roles people have the perception that you are a bitch just because you are a woman in that role." Peyton, while not overly

emotional from a nurturing perspective, is aware that women cannot show too much emotion because if we do we can be seen as weak. She stated, "So because of my role, people expect me to be poised, confident, have answers and sort of be strong as opposed to being vulnerable." All four participants discussed how showing emotions is an area where women principals have to negotiate the balance between showing enough emotion to be seen as nurturing but not so much emotion that they are seen as weak. In addition, all were aware that showing too much upset or directness quickly leads to the "bitch" label. Cris reported that even asking too many questions can be seen as negative and earn a woman the reputation of being antagonistic and a bitch.

Women Leaders have Expectations Placed on them Regarding their Appearance

Another theme that is consistent in educational research from the past three decades is that there is an expectation regarding how women high school principals are expected to present themselves through their appearance. Cris, who has been in educational leadership the longest [16 years], said she has seen very little change in this expectation. "They expect a woman to be professionally dressed and your appearance is important because we are expected to look tidy and professional." Cris also mentioned that as an African-American woman she did not think that if she went in with dreadlocks that she would not have been taken seriously. Marion commented on the fact that almost all the women principals of high schools consistently wear suits. "It is not true for elementary and middle school principals, but if you are a principal of a traditional high school if you put us in a room with male principals we are going to show up in a suit." Drew commented on the fact that she felt that all the hard work she does to be effective in her role would not be acknowledged if she did not dress in a professional manner. "I feel like if I dress too cute people will feel like I am not about business, that I have some other motive." Drew said she felt that for a woman high school principal it would be very easy for the way she

dresses to become the topic of conversation instead of how hard she works or how well she does her job. This is a clear example of how patriarchy continues to influence the discourse of secondary educational leadership that the way a woman dresses could have such an impact on how others perceive their effectiveness as a leader. Peyton was the only woman principal who simply refused to follow the gender scripts around appearances. "I am all about sweat pants and coach's shirts and I absolutely feel judged for that all the time." Peyton said that at the middle school level this expectation was not as intense but at the high school level she feels it very strongly but she refuses to follow this script. "I might not have to work so hard if I would just put on a suit. I don't mean work so hard in terms of getting stuff done but work so hard in terms of proving things to people." Peyton is very aware of the expectation and the price she may be paying for not following the script. However, she says, "I am just not willing to do that every day."

Women Leaders often Feel Voiceless

All four participants referred to feeling voiceless in some way with regard to the male high school principals. Peyton admitted that she is much less likely to enter into a conversation with a male principal than a woman principal. "If I talk to a male principal then I would likely be asking him what he would do and I would sort of defer to let him tell me what he wants to tell me rather than give him advice." Drew also said that she does not really feel like she can talk genuinely to the male principals in the level meetings because they don't seem to have any issues to talk about because they have everything under control. "I even saw a principal at the last principal meeting and while I am struggling trying to take notes and answer emails and he is playing solitaire." Cris stated that she has noticed for a long time that the opinions of male principals seem to somehow count more. "You could see it when you expressed your feelings

about something that it wasn't taken with as much value. A man could say the exact same thing and it be the *truth*." Marion went so far as to refer to several of the male principals as "power brokers," She said, "In reality they don't have any more power than anyone else in the room, it is more of a perception of how important they think they are." However, Marion admitted that the way they behave in meetings causes her not to participate as much as she could, or perhaps should, given that this is her fourth principalship. "I refrain from saying a lot of what I would want to say because they are going to overpower whatever you say to get their point across."

Women Leaders are Expected to Lead Collaboratively

In much of educational leadership literature women are portrayed as collaborative leaders. The four participants in this study each discussed the expectation that women high school principals be collaborative leaders. Drew described herself as a collaborative leader and says that she has been trained that collaboration is a goal for good leaders. "I think I started with the impression with what we have learned in research that it is good to get everybody together because everyone has different expertise." Cris said that being a collaborator is one of her main strengths as a leader. "My biggest strength is pulling people together to get something accomplished and making everybody feel valued and part of the team. I think that is what good leaders do." Peyton also attempts to collaborate instead of being directive. "So, I came from a coaching background where you are trying to get people to be better and to motivate people in a different way instead of giving them a directive." Marion said that she has learned to be more collaborative after starting out her career as more directive. Speaking of her team she mentioned that if they produce an idea that seems to cover the various angles needed then she is more willing to give it a try even if the plan differs from what she would have created. When asked why she has changed her behavior, Marion stated that she believes it is more difficult for a

woman to be direct. When a woman principal behaves in a direct fashion Marion does not believe it is well received.

Women Leaders Experience a Lack of Credibility

While each of the four participants were aware of, and attempt to, be collaborative with teachers and colleagues, all four also indicated that a lack of credibility makes doing so difficult. Marion said that because she is new to the district that people assume that she is new to administration. She said that it is one of the reasons that she does not comment much in high school principal meetings. Peyton also discussed the difficulty that a lack of credibility can cause with building teams that are collaborative and high functioning. From her experience Peyton said, "I was constantly having to prove myself." She also discussed the difficulty in getting team member to buy-in to the vision. Drew stated that because she is a woman she feels like when she brings a problem of practice to her leadership team that they assume she doesn't have an opinion. "Some people take that to mean that I don't have an answer, that I don't have a suggestion." Drew ended up clarifying that she has an opinion on the matter but she was interested in hearing their opinion as well. Cris perhaps states the situation with the most vehemence.

"As a woman you have to get in there beside them and guide the process. If a man said, we've got this problem and it needs to be fixed. They will get to their corners and solve the problem. With a man they assume he has credibility and is a good delegator. With a woman it's like she doesn't know how to fix it and that is why she is asking us to fix it."

Women Leaders Experience High Expectations with Less Support

There was consistency among the four participants that there are higher expectations for women high school principals and that they have to meet these expectations with less support than male high school principals. Drew noted:

> With male principals that I have worked with there are people coming
>
> to them all the time and saying "Can I help you with this?" or "Would you like
>
> me to do that?" But with me I don't see it quite as much, people volunteering to
>
> do things. People are just like "Well I guess you can take care of it."

Cris agreed that things are far from easy for a woman high school principal because teachers don't jump in and assist a woman high school principal. Cris recounted seeing teachers jump in to assist male principals….to be one of "his team." She said that with women high school principals, teachers behave differently. Peyton agreed, "So I kind of operate under the assumption that they [male principals] have people to do their stuff and I don't have people to do mine. They have people to take care of them." Peyton could give examples from her current situation, her past principalship, and her experience as an assistant principal under a male principal that illustrated a lack of support for female principals while male principals seemed to never be in short supply of people willing to support them in their endeavors. Peyton succinctly summed it up with the following statement, "I just think the struggle is real for a female principal."

Women Leaders Experience Lack of Support from Female Faculty and Staff

Drew mentioned that her lead secretary does not support her. Interestingly, she knows from others that have worked at her school through several leadership changes noted that this secretary got along with the male principals but with every woman principal she has found

reasons not to support them. Similarly, Cris noted that of her administrative team that it is the female assistant principal that gives her the most trouble and whom she trusts the least. Marion told of similar experiences with a female assistant principal who would say disparaging things behind her back. In Marion's opinion it boiled down to jealously. Regardless of the reason, it was a common theme from these women principals that securing the loyalty and support of female faculty and staff is often difficult.

Summary

The literature shows that there are certain gender scripts that continue to exist for women leaders in secondary education. This research further supports that women high school principals continue to feel the weight of expectations regarding their appearances with pressure to dress professionally (Tooms, Lugg & Bogotch, 2010). Similarly, the expectations to be nurturing, build relationships and lead collaboratively have not changed (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). However, the results of this study reveal nuanced effects of those scripts that are less well known. Working collaboratively may still be an expectation but the lack of credibility that women principals feel makes collaborating more difficult because people assume they are asking for help because they don't know what they are doing. The expectation of building relationships and meeting high expectations continue to be scripts that women leaders must follow but the fact that these women feel less support from faculty and staff makes meeting those expectations difficult. Combine this lack of support with feeling voiceless among the many male high school principals and it adds to the stress of an already demanding job. Hearing the effects of these combined factors creates a picture of a reality that is uniquely described by women principals. This is supported by feminist standpoint theory that acknowledges the stories shared by these

participants create meaningful knowledge that would not be accessible except through the retelling of their lived experiences.

In this chapter, the participant profiles for this study were introduced and their narratives shared.   The analysis of their narratives and resulting emergent themes were discussed by looking for commonalities among the participants' experiences. Chapter 5 will include a discussion the themes identified in relation to feminist standpoint theory. In addition the implications and limitations of this study will be addressed, as well as recommendations.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of women high school principals. Specifically, the research explored the various gender scripts that continue to exist in secondary educational leadership. This study used the framework of feminist standpoint theory, which allows these women to share experiences from their position as women leaders in secondary settings. This chapter will include an analysis of the study results and the connections with feminist standpoint theory. Also included will be the limitations of this study, as well as a recommendation for future research.

Research Questions

The research questions that I used to guide this study are as listed below. The resulting data and its analysis are the basis for this chapter and will be referenced in the conclusion and implication sections of this chapter.

1. Among women leaders, what are the perceptions of gender in the workplace relative to their roles as educational leaders?

2. What challenges do women leaders face in their roles as principals?

3. How do they negotiate the prevailing gender scripts regarding women in leadership in education?

4. How do women cope with or manage challenges related to gender?

Perceptions and Challenges of Women Leaders

Through this study the participant data was analyzed to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of women high school leaders. The summary of this analysis was organized in response to the guiding research questions. The first two questions, among women leaders, what

are the perceptions of gender in the workplace relative to their roles as educational leaders and what challenges do women leaders face in their roles as principals can be explored through the women's perception of gender scripts that exist. The results of this study have revealed multiple gender scripts in the discourse of secondary educational leadership. There are scripts that a woman leader needs to follow to be successful in leading faculty and staff, such as the nurturing leader, the collaborative leader and the professionally dressed leader. In addition, there are scripts that are encouraged among colleagues, such as the acquiescent leader. While the aforementioned scripts may help female leaders to fit into others' expectations, there are issues that exist, such as a perceived lack of credibility or a push to raise test scores that make following such scripts difficult. Furthermore, there are scripts that women leaders want to steer clear of such as the bitch and the troublemaker to avoid making their leadership experience more difficult. Such unflattering prescriptive and descriptive norms combine to make leadership difficult for women (Caleo & Heilman, 2013). The following scripts set expectations for women leaders that were perceived by each of the four participants.

A woman leader must be professionally dressed. As a high school principal women are "operating in a context where they are not 'suppose' to be" (Coleman, 2005, p. 12). Several participants commented on the importance of ensuring they took special care to look the part of a credible and powerful leader. Cris insisted, "They expect a woman to be professionally dressed and your appearance is important because we are expected to look tidy and professional." Cris also mentioned that as an African-American woman she did not think that if she went in with dreadlocks that she would be taken seriously. Marion commented on the fact that almost all the women principals of high schools consistently wear suits. "It is not true for elementary and middle school principals, but if you are a principal of a traditional high school, if you put us in a

room with male principals we are going to show up in a suit." Drew commented on the fact that

she felt that all the hard work she does to be effective in her role would not be acknowledged if

she did not dress in a professional manner. "I feel like if I dress too cute people will feel like I

am not about business, that I have some other motive." Drew said she felt that for a woman high

school principal it would be very easy for the way she dresses to become the topic of

conversation instead of how hard she works or how well she does her job. It was evident among

all participants that each was aware that there were expectations around the way she dresses as a

high school principal.

       A woman leader must be a nurturing leader. A gender script that appeared throughout

this study is that of the nurturing leader. This expectation is consistent with the essentializing

scripts promoted through the "women's ways of leading" dialogue argued by feminists in the

1980's and 1990's (Gilligan, 1982; Hartsock, 1990). Cris said, "They expect us to be nurturing

and a soft type….not to be hard nosed." Similarly, Marion noted that people expect women to be

"good at building relationships." Drew mentioned that the expectation that as a woman she will

be nurturing may allow her to seem more approachable to many of the parents since a majority

of the families at her school are led by single-parent homes where the mother is the main

parental influence. Peyton discussed the expectation of being nurturing in much detail because

it is an expectation that she continues to struggle with. She describes the expectation as, "The

female role of nurturer, emotional, attentive to other people and their feelings, I think that is an

expectation and I have to work at that." All four participants were aware that they were expected

to appear nurturing and even Peyton, for whom it does not come naturally, sees a need to

cultivate her ability to appear nurturing.

A woman leader must be a collaborative leader. In much of educational leadership literature women are portrayed as collaborative leaders (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). The four participants in this study each discussed the expectation that women high school principals be collaborative leaders. Drew describes herself as a collaborative leader because she has been trained that collaboration is a goal for good leaders. Cris said that being a collaborator is one of her main strengths as a leader. "My biggest strength is pulling people together to get something accomplished and making everybody feel valued and part of the team. I think that is what good leaders do." Peyton also attempted to collaborate instead of being directive. As she stated, "I came from a coaching background where you are trying to get people to be better and to motivate people in a different way instead of giving them a directive." Marion learned to be more collaborative after starting out her career as more directive. Now she describes herself as "collaborative consensus builder". Each participant, regardless of how she arrived at the destination, decided that being collaborative is an important characteristic to portray as a woman high school principal.

A woman leader is expected to be an acquiescent leader. All four participants referred to feeling voiceless in some way with regard to their male colleagues. This feeling of not having a say harkens all the way back to the dutiful daughter scripts that emerged during WWII where women were expected to listen and do what was best for men. Women during this time were expected to take a backseat by putting their own desires second to the men around them (Hattery, 2001). It is evident through the stories that these participants shared that this expectation still exists today. Peyton admitted that she is much less likely to enter into a conversation with a male principal than a woman principal. "If I talk to a male principal then I would likely be asking him what he would do and I would sort of defer to let him tell me what he wants to tell me rather than

give him advice." Drew also says that she does not really feel like she can talk genuinely to the male principals in the level meetings because they don't seem to have any issues to talk about because they have everything under control. Cris noticed for a long time that the opinions of male principals seem to somehow count more than those of a woman high school principal. "You could see it when you expressed your feelings about something that it wasn't taken with as much value." Marion goes so far as to refer to several of the male principals as power brokers. By power brokers Marion explained "So in reality they do not have any more power than anyone else in the room; it is more of a perception of how important they think they are."   However, Marion admits that the way males behave in meetings causes her not to participate as much as she could, or perhaps should, given that this is her fourth principalship. "I refrain from saying a lot of what I would want to say because they are going to overpower whatever you say to get their point across."   Feminist standpoint theory would support this reported difference in the communication of men and women high school principals. Kruse and Krumm (2016) stated that "The social groups to which we belong shape what we know and how we communicate" (p. 29). Taking this statement into account explains the differences in the way some women may communicate. Peyton stated that if she is talking to male principals she is "deferring" to him for his opinion, while Marion juxtaposes the boisterous behavior of the male principals to her more quiet disposition.

A woman leader may be seen as a crybaby. Drew goes on to say that women principals have to be careful so that they are not seen as too emotional or that is considered a negative quality. Cris was also adamant about the fact that this stereotype is a disadvantage for women high school principals and that it is very much different for male principals. These comments are consistent with the literature that found that when women leaders show too much emotion it can

endanger the effectiveness of their leadership (St. Pierre, 2000; Young & Skrla, 2003). When discussing women and men showing emotion Cris said, "It's like oh look, he is so sensitive, so sensitive. And then you cry and its like she is so weak. He is so caring, look at him. And you cry and they are like look at that crybaby." Cris says being too emotional is seen as a weakness in women. In relation to how others view women leaders who show emotion, Cris imitated their comments, "She better get her emotions together or they are going to eat her alive." It is a tightrope walk that these women must perform between being emotional enough without being seen as weak.

A woman leader may be seen as a bitch. Cris noted "If a woman is direct they see it as a flaw." Cris also noted that a woman could even earn the reputation for being a bitch by asking too many pointed questions at principal meetings. Marion stated that as a woman high school principal if you are too direct and do not show some soft emotion you can also get a negative reputation. "I would say that in high school leadership roles people have the perception that you are a bitch just because you are a woman in that role." Marion also stated that sometimes people assume you are a bitch when you make a decision that you are not willing to change because you believe that it is a decision that is in the best interest of children. Feminist standpoint theory allows Marion to reflect on where she is situated socially in the discourse of secondary educational leadership and make the observation that by simply being a woman high school principal, women may start out having to overcome the script of the bitch simply because they have made it to the role of a high school principal.

A woman leader may be seen as a troublemaker. Akin to the bitch gender script is the troublemaker. This is a script that women can earn among colleagues and supervisors if they question the status quo too frequently. Cris described her perceived responses from male

principals when she asks too many questions. "You are antagonizing, you are negative, and you are trying to poke holes in everything. But a man can say something and it is like…OK." Feminist standpoint theory would elucidate Cris' perception of being perceived as a troublemaker by pointing out that people who belong to "groups with more social power have their views validated more than those in marginalized groups" (Kruse & Krumm, 2016, p. 30). Because Cris is a woman and not part of the dominant group, her opinion is not validated but seen as causing trouble. When asked how she copes with this Cris said, "As a woman principal you pick your battles." She believes men don't have to pick their battles. "They have the platform and it is almost expected for them to question." Cris goes on to say that women simply don't have the luxury of questioning everything.

Managing Challenges and Negotiating Gender Scripts

In answering the remaining research questions, how do women leaders negotiate the prevailing gender scripts regarding women in leadership in education and how do women cope with or manage challenges related to gender, the following behaviors emerged from this study:

Women leaders accept gender scripts. There were many examples of these women leaders accepting gender scripts. For example, Cris and Drew each described themselves as collaborative leaders. Cris described her natural leadership style as collaborative and Drew said she had been trained to lead collaboratively. Both expressed the belief that collaborating is what "good leaders" do.

Additionally, three of the four leaders accepted the expectation to dress professionally. While Cris acknowledged awareness that she could not "wear dreads" and be seen as professional her attitude was one of acceptance. Drew, while feeling that it was "demeaning" to be judged by the way she dresses, admitted to wearing heels less frequently so that people do not

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second guess her level of professionalism. Marion seemed very self-aware of this script when she admitted that if she was going to attend a meeting that she, along with almost every other woman high school principal, wears a power suit.

Women leaders reject gender scripts. While there were several examples of accepting gender scripts, there were fewer examples of direct rejection of gender scripts. Peyton is the only participant who simply refuses to follow a gender script. Peyton acknowledges that she is aware that women high school principals are expected to dress "professionally." She is aware that this is an expectation at principal meetings and as she leads at her school, however, she is not willing to follow this script. She shared that her preference for dress is sweatpants and coach's shirts. She is aware that people expect her to dress more professionally, however, she stated, "but I am not willing to do that every day." Peyton is aware of the expectation to dress professionally, and she owns her decision to reject this script, but she also reports "feeling judged all the time."

Women leaders negotiate gender scripts. The most common lived experience described by these women high school principals is negotiating gender scripts. Marion expressed her compromise with the collaborative script by admitting that she has moved from a more directive leadership style to that of a "collaborative consensus builder." She remains separate and somewhat above the group but she gives them permission to come up with solutions that she will support. Similarly, Peyton admits that being nurturing does not come naturally but she attempts to be as nurturing as she can because she knows it will help her be more effective as a leader. Likewise, Cris seems genuinely frustrated that what women say is not taken with as much value and that men are given a platform to question. Yet, her concluding remarks are that women have to "pick their battles" or

they make their life "miserable." Negotiating the gender scripts that exist seems to be the most common path that the four participants described.

Revisiting the Conceptual Framework

Feminist theory can help us understand how patriarchy functions and how its effect on a discourse can create negative environments for women. Many of the situations depicted by the participants in this study are prime examples of a discourse that works to benefit male principals. In *Feminism is for Everybody*, bell hooks describes her time at Stanford University compared to her previous year at a women's college. She stated, "Females spoke less, took less initiative, and often when they spoke you could hardly hear them. Their voices lacked strength and confidence" (hooks, 2015, p.13). This scenario is similar to one described by Marion who keeps her opinion to herself or the experience related by Cris who stated that the opinion of women principals are not valued as much as those of male principals. Similarly, feminism helps us make sense of why when men are in a group that they can be expected to stick together (p. 15). A perfect example is Marion's description of the power brokers and how they will rearrange the chairs in order to ensure that they sit together. Additionally, feminist theory can help us understand why women communicate with men in particular ways. Peyton said that she is much less likely to talk to male principals but when she does she is more likely to communicate with them in a way that defers to their knowledge or experience. Feminism teaches us that as women we have been taught to think of ourselves as inferior to men (hooks, 2015, p. 14). Hence it feels natural for Peyton to defer to the male principals. Feminism helps us understand and brings into question how the discourse of educational leadership that perpetuates such situations is one that continues to be influenced by patriarchy.

Of particular use to this study is the framework of feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theorists believe that knowledge is socially situated (Mann & Patterson, 2016). From that perspective, it becomes critical that women tell their own stories because they will have knowledge that others in different socially situated positions will not have. However, it is not simply sharing a perspective that others do not have that makes feminist standpoint theory valuable. It is the ability that these women have to analyze the power structures that exist within the discourse that motivate or compel their actions as they interact with gender scripts. These power structures may appear invisible to an outsider but because these women occupy a marginalized space within the discourse they are able to describe the pressures, expectations and other nuances of forced compliance that may exist. Through the interviews of these four women it became evident that many of the long-standing gender scripts that have existed for women in educational leadership continue to exist today. All four participants could quickly recall instances in which gender was salient in their recounting or understanding of their roles. Only through women reflecting on their lived experiences can we have access to what feeling gendered means to them. Standpoint theory allows for this analysis and production of knowledge because standpoint theory is more than just a person's perspective because of where he or she is socially situated. Intemann (2010) commented that contemporary standpoint theorists concur, "standpoints are said to be achieved through a critical, conscious reflection on the ways in which power structures and resulting social locations influence knowledge production" (p. 785). Therefore, it is not just the perspectives of these women regarding their behaviors that is meaningful but their reflection and analysis as to the power structures within the discourse that influence their behaviors.

An example of such an analysis is evident as the participants reflected upon their leadership style. Each participant described hers and how that style fit into the familiar gender script of being a collaborative leader (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Each woman described herself as collaborative. Through allowing her to tell her story from her personal perspective, we learn why each decided to lead collaboratively. Cris and Peyton said that they consider themselves to be collaborative by nature, but Drew added that she "has been trained to be collaborative." Marion, on the other hand, has also had to learn to be collaborative because "when women are directive it is not well received." If we simply surveyed these women on their behaviors we may have ended up with data showing that all four women act collaboratively; however, through their lived experiences, we learn that there are scripts that exist, whether in formal leadership training or informal expectations within the discourse, that affirm the script that women should behave collaboratively.

The curious aspect of gender scripts is that they are not necessarily formal expectations. Unless we use a framework like feminist standpoint theory that allows women, who occupy a different, less powerful space within the discourse, to reflect on their experiences and their perceptions, we will not be made aware of expectations that may exist for women leaders in secondary leadership today. For example, the stories told by the participants support the literature that states that there is an expectation that women high school principals dress professionally and in a modest fashion (Seo & Huang, 2017). Thus we learn that the professionally dressed leader script continues to exist. Women are judged on their appearances and how they dress implies levels of competence that are not similarly applied to men. While there is no written rule that states that it is acceptable for male high school principals to wear khakis and coaching gear and not for women to dress in a similar fashion, the fact that three of

the four participants in this study ensured that they dress professionally supports the continued existence of the script. Perhaps most importantly, is the fact that one of the women principals who refuses to follow the script for professional dress reports feeling "constantly judged." Thus because of the less powerful position that women occupy in the discourse of secondary leadership, details such as the way they dress have potential to cast them and their ability to lead effectively into a negative light.

This same principal expressed difficulty in negotiating the gender script of being the nurturing leader when it is not something that comes naturally to her in that environment. She attempted to meet the expectation but knows that it is something that she will continue to struggle with because no matter how much she practices being a nurturing leader it is simply not who she is. Mann and Patterson (2016) noted, "The social order looks different from the perspective of our lives and our struggles" (p. 3). Only through allowing this woman principal to reflect on her experience with this script are we privy to the struggle she experiences in attempting to lead in a manner that is not natural or comfortable to her.

Harding (2004) pointed out that women are typically seen as subjects to be studied; however, in feminist standpoint theory they are the producers of knowledge. As producers of knowledge, women can address issues that are salient to them. As Harding also noted, because women have not been the producers of knowledge, their concerns have often not been addressed. Such concerns are evident in the narratives of the participants in this study. For example, the fact that women are expected to act collaboratively is noted in current literature (Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993). However, the fact that they feel disadvantaged to do so due to a perceived lack of credibility is

brought to light through their analysis of their lived experiences. Hartsock stated that a standpoint "carries with it a contention that there are some perspectives in society from which, however well-intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible, " as cited in Harding (2004, p. 37). Thus, as well intentioned as a male researcher may be, because he occupies a different social space in the discourse he would not be able to speak from a personal perspective of what it is like to sense that others see you as less credible due to your gender.

Dorothy Smith (1972), an early standpoint theorist, noticed that sociology historically was conducted from a white, heterosexual, and middle-class male point of view. Such research produces knowledge that benefits that group and alienates other groups. Therefore, if women share their experiences from their own lives, we are not only more likely to gain information that would otherwise be unknown, but we will create knowledge that offers different ways of viewing the world that benefits women. The participants in this study illustrated this phenomenon. All four participants shared knowledge of common gender scripts such as the collaborative leader, the nurturing leader, and the professionally dressed leader. However, all four participants shared experiences around lesser-known gender scripts, such as being the crybaby, the troublemaker and the bitch. Similarly, all four participants believed that as women leaders they are perceived as having less credibility and experience less faculty support than their male counterparts, thus complicating their ability to successfully follow expected scripts.

A common perception among all four participants is feeling like they do not have a voice among their male colleagues. While there are certainly no rules prohibiting women principals from speaking out and sharing their opinion, it is the nuances that exist within the discourse that cause women high school principals to feel like they are not welcome to contribute to a

conversation and/or feeing like they are not heard when they elect to speak up. Thus the gender

script of the acquiescent leader emerges. Regardless of if it is the "power brokers" that Marion

discussed or feeling unheard or undervalued from the superintendent as Cris noted, the discourse

includes rules for engagement that produce the effects discussed by these women. Harding

(2004) stated that you can turn disadvantage into an epistemological and even political

advantage. If these women high school principals feel unheard or voiceless in the current

discourse of secondary educational leadership, then feminist standpoint theory gives them an

opportunity through which they can share their narratives and create knowledge that may benefit

their women colleagues.

Implications

One of the most important reasons that research is performed is to provide knowledge

that can be useful in improving the living or working conditions of others. From the results of

this study, knowledge about the lived experiences of four women high school principals has been

analyzed. From this analysis the emergent themes have provided information that could improve

the working condition of women high school principals. Colleges who provide principal training

programs should include discussion of gendered leadership stereotypes and scripts. The

awareness that such scripts continue to exist needs to be part of the dialogue used in principal

preparation programs. An understanding of such scripts and how the acceptance, rejection or

negotiation of these scripts could provide support that may ease some of the stress that

accompanies a first year principal. A knowledge of such expectations related to gender may also

help women high school principals to identify when they are making decisions because it is what

is expected of them versus when they are making decisions that they feel are the best decision for

the situation. In addition, a mentor program that connects new women high school principals

with other women high school principals could provide a support system those women principals could rely on. Being a high school principal is a lonely job. Only having male colleagues in which to confide limits women's ability to find needed support. If a woman high school principal is having a question about how to negotiate a particular gender script then it would be most helpful if she had a woman mentor in which to confide.

Additionally, if superintendents had a better understanding of the stress that often results from a woman high school principal's ability to accept, reject or negotiate gender scripts, he or she may be able to make decisions on how to better support these women principals. For example, frequently principals are put into place without a change being made to who serves as assistant principals. Often one of the assistant principals will have been granted an interview for the principal position and kept in place to serve on the administrative team after not getting the job. Understanding that women principals often feel they come in with less credibility and support than their male counterparts, the scenario just described further complicates the struggles that the new woman principal must endure. Setting our women high school principals up for success is critical. Understanding how gender scripts complicate the leadership experience of women high school principals may help superintendents better support their women high school principals.

Limitations of This Study

This study was conducted in a single county in an urban school district in an eastern state. The results of this study may not be generalizable to a different group in a different part of the United States or other countries. Additionally, the number of participants was kept to four due to the depth of the interviews and the resulting data. The benefit of this type of this study is that it allowed for rich, thick description to emerge in the resulting data. Two of the participants self-

identified as Caucasian, while the other two self-identified as African-American. While the subject of race organically emerged in one interview, there were no questions asking about expectations or scripts that may exist around issues of race. Additionally the fact that I, as the researcher, am Caucasian, may have pushed racial issues to the background of the conversation. Therefore, this study does not assume that issues of race do not also impact the lived experiences of women high school principals who are African-American and may complicate and overlap with expectations around gender. As noted earlier, individuals have multiple standpoints. The fact that this study limited questions to exploring the standpoint of gender, other standpoints, which may influence the lived experiences of these women were not explored. For example, marital status, sexual orientation and parenthood were not a consideration for participation in this study. It is acknowledged that all of these factors may influence how a woman high school leader interacts with the gender scripts that exist within the current discourse of educational leadership. Also, as a woman high school principal that works in the same school district as the participants, it is possible that the relationship that I have with each of these participants may have influenced their reactions during the interview process. It is also possible that because I am an insider that my personal perception of the questions may have influenced my analysis of the interview data.

Recommendations for Future Research

In 1999 Blackmore lamented that the study of educational leadership was really just a study of male principals. Although she noted a need for more research on women leaders in education, the study into gender issues was slow to occur. In 2003 Young and Skrla noted that more research on women leaders needed to be conducted. However, additional studies on women as educational leaders remained sparse. A focus on women's leadership styles in the

1980s and 1990s by researchers such as Gilligan, Hartsock and Noddings produced a body of research that promoted the idea that women operate from an "ethics of care" mentality, which then causes them to behave in a more democratic and collaborative fashion. While this research pointed out some of the benefits of female leadership, it further solidified the idea of women's "ways of leading" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). In many ways this research reinforced existing stereotypes, gender scripts and models of effective leadership that have been shaped by a patriarchal discourse. Because of a lack of additional research these scripts have remained. In 2011 it was noted that the descriptors of leaders remain primarily male descriptors (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011).

Additional research needs to be conducted so that the leadership discourse begins to include a description of female leaders working as effective leaders as they navigate or even reject the narrow scripts defined by "women's ways of leading." What is more, research needs to be conducted to explore women negotiating these scripts without attaching the "bitch" label to their behavior. The fact that this derogatory term was mentioned by a number of the participants in the study speaks to the reality that a positive script for an assertive or direct woman leader does not exist within the current leadership discourse. Additional research exploring women following a variety of scripts would prove helpful in establishing scripts that are not as limiting as those currently available.

Stereotyping still exists in educational leadership and poses significant problems for women leaders as they strive to lead effectively (Maseko & Proches, 2013; Nguyen, 2013). Only through additional research that places such harmful practices at the center of the dialogue of educational leadership, can we hope to make changes. New research that focuses on the lived experiences of women high school principals would prove helpful. Compared to the influx of

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research in the 1980s and 1990s there has been a dearth of new research focusing on gender issues in educational leadership. Newscomb and Mansfield (2014) complained that there is still insufficient research about women leaders in education. This study pointed to a variance among Caucasian women and their ability to reject the gender script by wearing sweatpants and a black woman's conclusion that if she wore dreadlocks to work she would not been seen as professional.

Future research could explore how race and gender layer expectations in ways that further limit minority women from the ability to negotiate or reject scripts. This new research would be most helpful if women are able to tell their own stories. Feminist standpoint theory, while not a new theory, allows for women's voices, and their analysis of the power structures that exist, to be heard in a way that other types of research do not. For comparison purposes it would also be helpful to gain an understanding of how male principals perceive these same issues. New knowledge about how each gender perceives his or her lived experience could provide useful information as we work to create an environment where leaders are not limited by gender scripts and stereotypes.

While this study focused on a few women principals working in an urban school district, additional research using women leaders in rural districts could provide meaningful information. Additionally, a longitudinal study of women high school principals could also provide knowledge regarding how the lived experiences of women leaders change as they become more experienced leaders. Additionally, a post structural analysis of the research findings may give insight into how to address the emergent themes resulting from this research. For example, what does credibility mean? How does being credible or not being credible show up in daily leadership scenarios? Similarly, within the discourse of secondary educational leadership, what

is support? Not only how is it defined from a practical sense but also how do women principals perceive support? Such new knowledge would prove helpful in determining how to better support women leaders in education.

Postlude

When I first began my doctoral work I was an assistant principal aspiring to one day become a superintendent. I started my career in administration relatively late at the age of 39, when I obtained my first position as an administrator as an assistant principal at a middle school. As a brand new assistant principal, even thinking about the road to becoming a superintendent seemed daunting. I wanted to know what to do and how to get there. At the time our district had a male superintendent and I did not personally even know a female superintendent. However, there was a female assistant superintendent and I worked to get to know her. We developed a good working relationship and she mentored me along the way. She was very supportive in promoting me to my first principalship, after serving as an assistant principal for only two and a half years. Once I became a principal of a small high school, she was very supportive and continued to mentor me. She was always honest with me, even when she had to give me tough feedback. I remember when I was an assistant principal wanting so badly to get my first principal position, I asked her if she thought it would be a better decision to apply for an elementary principalship since there were so many more elementary schools than there were middle or high schools. She quickly responded, "No, you need to stay in secondary leadership. If you took on an elementary school you would scare the teachers." That comment struck me as strange at the time. I am not a large or imposing person, nor do I raise my voice. Only through serving as a principal at two different high schools do I understand what she meant. My direct leadership style is sometimes a hurdle for me to overcome with teachers but leading at a high

school, the most masculinized level of educational leadership; it causes me less of a problem than it would at the elementary level where women are held more tightly to the script of being soft and nurturing. I am thankful to her for that advice.

While I have experienced success as a high school principal I am aware of the gender scripts that exist. I am aware of how I am expected to respond and how I am perceived when I don't respond as expected. While I assumed that other women high school principals in my district experienced similar situations, I was genuinely surprised when conducting my research at how many situations these women encountered. The number of struggles and the amount of pressure that these scripts cause my colleagues surprised even me. I am not sure that prior to the interview that these women had conceptualized the expected behaviors as gender scripts, but once they were given the language they readily told their stories with passion and insight. This study has served to reaffirm my belief that the discourse of secondary educational leadership does not include gender scripts that allow for a variety of leadership behaviors for women. In a work world of increasing accountability, I believe it is imperative that more research is conducted so that women who serve in these highly masculinized roles have the tools and supports that they need to lead effectively.

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Appendix A

Demographic Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather information to ensure diversity among the participants in

the study. It will also be used to ensure that all participants included meet the criteria of the

intentional sampling needed for this project. Please complete the following questions.

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Race/Ethnicity:

4. Current position/title:

5. Please identify the school level that you currently lead. If you are retired, please list the

school level/s where you served as a principal.

6. Please indicate the number of years that you have served in your current position.

7. Please indicate the enrollment of your school.

8. Does your school have an athletic program?

9. What is the size of your school district?

Appendix B

Lay Summary

I invite you to participate in a research study about women in secondary educational leadership and how they are affected by stereotypes that continue to exist and limit their behaviors. I am conducting this research as a requirement for my doctorate in Educational Leadership at Appalachian State University. I am attempting to secure participants that meet my criteria: female, serving or have served, as a principal at the high school level.

I am inviting you to participate because you are a woman who meets these criteria. I believe that your experience as a woman leader at the high school level will help me better understand how women leaders perceive such stereotypes and their influence on women and the choices they make as educational leaders. The benefits to you in participating in this study are that it may help you develop an awareness of stereotypes and their influence on your behavior. Additionally, you might enjoy having the opportunity to share your story and participating in a qualitative research study. Your participation could help me and others better understand how women leaders at the high school level operate within a masculine discourse. There is a slight risk associated with this study in that, as a participant, you may feel self-conscious as you describe your experience as a leader and how you have reacted to gender stereotypes during your time in leadership. Your participation in this study will be confidential. During the study, I will use a pseudonym, which you can choose. I would like your permission to record our interviews with a digital recorder and take notes on my laptop. The digital audio files and notes will be kept on my computer, which is password protected. The purpose of this study is to better understand the conditions that exist that promote gender stereotypes in secondary leadership and to gain an understanding of how women leaders respond to them. I will conduct a two-hour interview with

you. The interview will be conducted at your office or another location of your choice. This interview will be scheduled at your convenience. You have the freedom to decide whether or not to participate in this study. You may withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in this study, it will have no impact on your relationship with me.

Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

I agree to participate as an interviewee in this research project on women leaders in education and the influence of gender stereotypes on their performance. This study is to be conducted by Leslie Alexander, a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at Appalachian State University, and is scheduled for fall of 2017. I understand that my comments will be recorded, transcribed, and used for a dissertation with the possibility that as a participant I may feel self-conscious about my reaction to gender stereotypes and how they may or may not have impacted my performance as a woman leader of a high school. I also know that this study may have future publication. The interview is planned to take two hours. I give Leslie Alexander ownership of the audio files and transcripts from the interview(s) she conducts with me and I understand that these audio files and transcripts will be kept in a secure location. I understand that quotations from the audio files and/or transcripts may be published with identifying details altered to protect my privacy. It is possible that this study may lead Leslie Alexander to conduct future studies in which she will refer back to the findings from this project. I understand that I will receive no compensation for participating in interviews. I realize that participating in this study is voluntary and I can end it at any time without consequence. I also understand that if I have questions about this research project, I can contact Leslie Alexander at (336) 462-7283 or laalexander@wsfcs.k12.nc.us, or get in touch with Appalachian State University's Office of Research Protections at (828) 262-7981 or irb@appstate.edu.

_____ Name of Interviewer (printed)

_____ Signature of Interviewer

_____ Name of Interviewee (printed)

_____ Signature of Interviewee

_____ Date(s) of Interview(s)

Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. Describe an experience you have had as a woman leader that made you aware of being 'gendered' in this role.

2. How do you react to the expectations of others related to your gender?

3. How do you interact with others when you need to accomplish a goal? At what times do you feel that being a woman is an asset? A liability?

4. What are your strengths as a leader? What areas do you wish to improve upon?

5. What are the advantages of being a woman principal? What are the disadvantages?

6. What advice would you give to an aspiring woman leader who wants to serve as a leader at the high school level?

Appendix E

Reference List of Leadership Literature Reviewed

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Vita

Leslie Atcher Alexander was born in Elizabethtown, Kentucky to Linda and Melvin Atcher. She graduated from Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1995 and was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. After teaching for several years, she entered the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to obtain a Masters degree in Library Science. She continued teaching while she attended High Point University to add an Administrator License to her certification. In 2009 she entered a doctoral program with Appalachian State University and was awarded her Educational Specialist degree in 2011. She then continued the doctoral program at Appalachian State University to earn her doctorate in Educational Leadership.

Ms. Alexander is currently a high school principal and lives in Winston-Salem with her husband and youngest a daughter. Leslie and Cantey Alexander have four additional daughters who have graduated or are currently in college.