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The Experiences of Women in a U.S. Department of Education School Leadership Preparation Cohort Program: A Case Study

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**THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN A U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION COHORT PROGRAM:**

A CASE STUDY

by

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Abstract

THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN A U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION COHORT PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY

**Darra KaTrina Belle
Old Dominion University, 2012
Committee Chairperson: Dr. Karen L. Sanzo**

This study allows the voices of nine educational practitioners participating in a school leadership preparation cohort to be heard. The main unit of analysis was a closed cohort within a university's educational leadership program conducted in partnership with a local school district.

The purpose of this case study was to explore the experiences of women currently and previously enrolled in a school leadership preparation cohort program. This study was conducted with the intent that experiences of the participants will provide insight for other women who aspire to leadership positions who are enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohorts. The goal of this study was to gain an understanding of the experiences of aspiring and established female leaders through their journeys. The case study revealed the participants' perceptions and experiences of the school leadership preparation cohort, how it has impacted their leadership decisions, and the perceived relationship between mentors and mentees. A triangulated protocol employed interviews and review of documents to illuminate the inquiry questions. Outcomes provided understandings about school leadership preparation cohorts through discernment of the experiences and beliefs of the women currently and previously enrolled in this cohort.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my father, Darnell Belle Sr., and grandfather, James Ollie Tuberville. From an early age, they both taught me the value of hard work and the importance of education. Without the support, love, and guidance of these two men, my dissertation would not exist. They both gave me the tenacity to see even the most difficult journey through to the end. I love you deeply and truly miss you both.

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I would like to thank my mother, Crystal, for her unconditional love and support. She always allowed me to recognize my full potential while giving me constant inspiration and advice. She is the true definition of a strong woman. Her never-ending determination has always been an inspiration to me. She has been the driving force in my life to continue my educational pursuits. Thank you for always believing in me and being my biggest fan. I love you, Mom.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Public schools in the United States face many challenges, ranging from poor academic achievement, behavior problems, low teacher satisfaction, struggles with school budgets, and parent involvement to a lack of motivation from both children and families (Szente, 2006; Urick, 2009; Whitaker, 2006). School leaders are responsible for addressing these challenges and making significant improvement to positively impact students. In this current era of high-stakes accountability, school leaders must possess the skills and knowledge to improve. This can be accomplished through high-quality professional training for aspiring and current leaders paired with ongoing collaboration between school districts and universities that prepare aspiring leaders (Boesch, 2009; Griffiths, Stout, & Forsyth, 1998; Hale & Moorman, 2003; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002).

Partnerships make a difference and collaboration between key personnel working in higher education institutions and preK-12 school districts who commit to assuring that new principals have requisite knowledge, skills, and proficiencies for leading contemporary schools is crucial in today's accountability climate (Boesch, 2009; Griffiths et al., 1998; Hale & Moorman, 2003; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002). Through this shared commitment across institutional boundaries, the theory–practice integration of school leadership is strengthened (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). In other words, because “neither districts nor universities can single-handedly provide the breadth of experience needed to adequately develop and

nurture leaders for today's P-12 schools" (Laboratory for Student Success, 2005 p. 72), leadership educators and leadership practitioners must collaborate.

In thriving collaborations, university professors provide a leadership knowledge base and assist with character refinement toward effective school leadership, while practicing administrators guide the socialization of candidates into the community of principal practice during mentored internships (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004, 2006; Capasso & Daresh, 2001; Orr, 2006). Preparation programs delivered through university–district collaborations can thus support career advancement of program graduates, improve the quality and relevance of program content (A. Black & Earnest, 2009; Browne-Ferrigno, 2007; Gutmore, Strobert, & Femicola, 2009), and lessen criticisms of university-based preparation programs by building stronger links between preparation and practice (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Jacobson, 1998; Murphy, 1992; Stein, 2006). Further, the prolonged interaction between professors and practitioners can strengthen the continuum of recruitment, preparation, hiring, and induction of new principals (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Milstein, 1992) and provide mutually beneficial renewal of both universities and schools (Sirotnik & Goodlad, 1988).

Some universities are partnering with various school districts to develop principal preparation cohort programs (Jackson & Kelley 2002). Throughout the past two decades, many administrator preparation programs have evolved into coherent, sequenced curriculums delivered to cohorts of about 20 to 25 students (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000; Kelley & Peterson, 2000). A premise for using cohorts is that keeping students together as a unique group of learners enhances professional learning and skill

development (Norris & Barnett, 1994; Peel, Wallace, Buckner, Wrenn, & Evans, 1998).

Another assertion is the cohort structure provides excellent opportunities for aspiring leaders to learn and practice skills in community building, corporate goal setting, conflict resolution, and culture management (Geltner, 1994; Milstein & Krueger, 1997).

Consequently, the use of cohorts in the educational leadership preparation programs is highly recommended (Milstein & Krueger, 1997; Murphy, 2001).

While cohorts are organizational structures used to deliver instruction fitting to the distinctive learning needs of adults (Barnett & Muse, 1993), very little observed evidence exists about the factors that make cohorts successful. It is important to understand the long-term effects of the cohort experience on aspiring principals' future professional practice (Goldschmid & Berberat, 1989; Muth & Barnett, 2001).

Nontraditional school leaders, such as minorities and women, face particular challenges. These individuals are perhaps not in the same proportions as the educational work force (Stein, 2006). Numerous theories and models have been developed to identify and develop potential leaders and to evaluate leadership effectiveness (Reeves, 2004). These nontraditional school leaders are characterized by particular challenges, which are seldom addressed in the literature (Smith, 2003).

Orr and Barber (2006) assert that men have most often occupied positions in secondary schools and that these positions are often the gateway into higher administrative positions, including the superintendency. In a study of women administrators, Orr and Barber found a significant increase in the number of women administrators over the 20-year time period between 1985 and 2005. Many of these increases have been reversals of positions of leadership traditionally held by males.

Specifically, an increase was noted in the number of women in leadership at the secondary school level, positions traditionally held by male administrators. While the number of women in leadership positions has increased some, it still does not equal the same percentages as males in school leader positions, and there is a present need to study leadership ascension (Orr, 2006).

Within the discourse of educational administration, White males have dominated, creating a discourse in which women are situated differently than men (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). Thus, women have infrequently been placed in positions in which they experience “power over” the masculine bureaucratized context of the school district (Hurty, 1995). Dardaine-Ragguet, Russo, and Harris (1994) stated, “although the number of women principals and central office administrators in urban settings seemingly has increased in recent years, a glass ceiling has been virtually impervious to challenges thereby preventing many qualified females from assuming leadership roles” (p. 6). This glass ceiling specifically refers to women in the superintendency. The number of women in central office positions (i.e., assistant, associate or deputy superintendent) has increased over the last five years from 7% to 29%, but few actually ascend to the superintendency: “Women are close enough to see the superintendent’s job clearly, but only 13% have cracked the barrier” (Schulter & Walker, 2007, p. 11).

There is a shortage of viable and willing candidates, particularly women and minority leaders. Those who prepare school leaders recognize a need for programs to tap diverse pools of potential candidates (Orr, 2006). Preparation programs should be designed to expose such candidates to the challenges of school leadership positions and to assist them in understanding their own particular capacities to lead (Stein, 2006). A

premise for using cohorts is that keeping students together as a unique group of learners enhances professional learning and development (Crow & Glascock, 1995; Norris & Barnett, 1994; Peel et al., 1998). However, most research about educational leadership cohort programs is based solely on anecdotal evidence collected from participants at the close of programs rather than during active participation in the cohort (C. Jones, Ovando, & High, 2009). This study addressed the gap in the literature on leadership preparation by focusing on female participants in a tightly designed federally-funded leadership preparation cohort that is a partnership between a university and a district. The research focuses on the perceptions and experiences of women who actively participated (or are currently participating) in the preparation cohort, thereby adding a significant contribution to existing literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the experiences of women currently and previously enrolled in a school leadership preparation cohort program. In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education's (USDOE) School Leadership Program (SLP) came into existence. The SLP is a federal program that provides grants to support the development, enhancement, or expansion of innovative programs to recruit, train, and mentor school leaders for high-need local educational agencies (LEAs). In 2012, there were 43 grants in the United States. This study focused on one specific preparation cohort program and the women within the cohort. The goal of this study was to gain an understanding of the experiences of aspiring female leaders through their journey as well as through those who have become successful school leaders.

Statement of Focus Areas

In order to identify and examine the effective components of the cohort model used in school leadership programs, this study was guided by three primary focus areas:

1. What are the experiences of women currently/previously enrolled in a school leadership principal preparation cohort program?
2. What are factors that promote and detract from the success of women currently/previously enrolled in a school leadership principal preparation cohort program?
3. How do the group dynamics within a cohort facilitate or impede perceived success of aspiring female leaders?

Possible Limitations

Case studies have limitations. First, we cannot make causal conclusions from case studies, thus we cannot rule out alternative explanations for behaviors. Second, the findings from case studies may not be generalized to other situations because participants will be selected based on purposeful sampling, rather than random sampling. However, every effort will be made to select a variety of women with differing backgrounds. Another possible limitation is researcher bias that must be acknowledged and set aside. The researcher is a female school leader who has held various leadership positions within public schools and aspires to become a principal in the near future.

Operational Definitions

This document includes the use of terms that may be unfamiliar to the reader. As such, the definitions below are offered to clarify both the meanings of these terms and their use in this study.

Cohort. A “group of individuals [who] enter a program at the same time, proceed through all classes and academic requirements together, completing together, thus creating an atmosphere for learning in which a synergy is present and the learners’ effectiveness is increased” (Reynolds & Herbert, 1995, p. 16).

Glass ceiling. An invisible upper limit in corporations and other organizations, above which it is difficult or impossible for women to rise in the ranks.

Good ole boy network. An informal alliance between men in organizations whereby they help each other to the top.

Mentor. A person who has advanced knowledge and experience and is committed to providing upward mobility and support to the career of an aspiring administrator.

Networking. Making connections with other administrators within a school district to promote idea exchange and career advancement.

Nontraditional school leaders. Individuals who are not generally found in positions of school leadership, including minorities and women.

Underrepresentation. Refers to the situation in which significantly fewer persons of a particular group are in a particular job category than might be expected.

Organization of the Study

This qualitative case study is organized into five chapters. After Chapter I, a review of the literature on cohort program designs and women in leadership is presented

in Chapter II. A description of the case study methodology is provided in Chapter III with a rationale for the chosen methodology. The data analysis is reported in Chapter IV, followed by a discussion of the findings, implications, and recommendations in Chapter V. References and appendices are also provided.

Chapter II

Literature Review

In this chapter, I present a review of the literature relevant to the study. I draw primarily from research related to women aspiring to be school administrators, challenges faced in becoming administrators, and the cohort program design. In the review, I specifically explore (a) the underrepresentation of women in school leadership, (b) women aspiring to become administrators, (c) challenges to advancement, (d) strategies to overcome challenges faced, and (e) learning in cohorts. It is important to mention that men are outside of the scope for this study and women are the primary focus.

Underrepresentation of Women in School Leadership

Although the field of education, encompassing more than four million professionals, is dominated by women, fewer than 2,000 women assume administrative leadership capacity roles in American educational institutions (Sherman, Munoz, & Pankake, 2009). According to Mountford and Brunner (2001), research revealing the low numbers of women serving at the highest level of leadership in school districts—whether it be women on school boards, women in the superintendency, or women in school buildings—is alarming, particularly when considering the abundance of women who historically and currently serve as paraprofessionals and teachers in the school system.

One supposition that could speak to the lower number of women versus men in school leadership roles is that leadership preparation does not adequately address women leaders in schools (Danna & Bourisaw, 2006). Danna and Bourisaw (2006) pointed out that theory and research in preparatory program coursework leadership knowledge and understanding is based predominately on men's leadership in school systems. There is a

need to recognize that women leadership styles are different from that of men, to embrace that difference, and to make room for it in the educational leadership arena (Grove & Montgomery, 2007). Women should increase their clinical experience in preparation programs and work to gain access to an excellent support system to produce women leaders who are more socialized to the positions they desire and, consequently, can move into leadership positions and maintain them more successfully (Danna & Bourisaw, 2006).

Leadership preparation programs are designed to provide aspiring leaders with skills, knowledge, and dispositions to become school leaders. With that end in mind, these programs often provide counseling regarding candidate role aspirations and mapping out their career trajectories. Hoff and Mitchell (2008) contended that career planning and career paths are factors that negatively affect women more than men and far fewer women than men had planned to enter administration upon leaving their graduate programs. In an additional study completed by Young and McCleod (2006), not a single woman had planned to enter administration when they initially entered education as a career. This could suggest that women are not receiving career counseling beyond teaching and that gender socialization continues to limit a woman's perspective (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).

A majority of women (73.72%) and nearly half (45.7%) of men reported the existence of a “good ole boy” network (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Hoff and Mitchell (2008) contended that an awareness of the existence of the forces that advantage some and disadvantage others, with no steps taken to challenge or interrupt them, may serve as a disincentive and keep those outside (mostly women) from entering or trying to advance

in leadership. As a result, those who view themselves as outside the network may give up before they even start. This may be attributed to, in part, the perceived level of support provided to men and women in the educational work setting.

Women reported feeling more isolated and receiving fewer support structures than men (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). For example, men indicated receiving more support, with 85% indicating that they have either (or both) a formal or informal network of support. However, Hoff and Mitchell (2008) discovered this was not the case for women, with 97% reporting that they have no formal network and 40% reporting that they have no network at all—formal or informal.

Aspiring Women

For years, women have held the 75% of the teaching positions in the United States (Wiseman, 2009). Education is by and large considered a feminized profession. Men often moved out of positions in teaching because of the low pay and social stigma and into positions of administration, where the pay was better and they could keep close watch over female subordinates. Males, instead of females, have always been the majority in educational administration, with the exception of a period of time around World War II, when many males left to fight in the war. However, when the war was over and the men returned, they once again dominated the realm of educational administration (Mertz, 1998).

Female school leaders are a unique and small group compared to their male counterparts who still dominate the school leadership landscape. Women leaders bring a different perspective about how schools may be more effective (Smulyan, 2000). Throughout the education system in the United States, women have slowly become a

viable force in providing leadership in schools. Many popular and professional writers have argued that women's approach to leading is more nurturing, democratic, and empowering, and this is the way organizations should be led (Mertz, 1998). Women leaders are more assertive and persuasive, have a stronger need to get things done, and are more willing to take risks than male leaders (Daresh, 1997); they are also found to be more empathetic and flexible, as well as stronger in interpersonal skills than their male counterparts, enabling them to read situations accurately and take information in from all sides (Ellinger, 2002). These women leaders are able to bring others around to their point of view because they genuinely understand and care about where others are coming from so that the people they are leading feel better understood, supported, and valued.

Six themes continue to emerge as behaviors consistently associated with well-managed schools in which student achievement is high. Principals of these effective schools (a) emphasize achievement, (b) set instructional strategies, (c) provide an orderly atmosphere, (d) frequently evaluate student progress, (e) coordinate instructional programs, and (f) support teachers (Scheckelhoff, 2007). Women in educational leadership positions tend to be problem solvers, task-oriented, and express high expectations of self and others (Futrell, 2002). Females tend to have strong instructional backgrounds, a focus on curriculum, and a focus on student growth and achievement. Some of the most common attributes used to characterize women leaders are collaborative, caring, courageous, and reflective (Grogan, 1999). They are also noted for sharing power, creating shared visions, and being change agents. These findings do not suggest that men are poor leaders; rather, women are the focus of this proposed study.

For a woman visionary, the challenge is first to be accepted as a leader and, second, to move one's followers into realms of possibility rather than practicality (Enomoto, 2000). However, if a woman has already successfully gained acceptance and credibility as a leader, she is already a visionary and her presence as an administrator is evidence of creating reality from a vision of possibility (Tallerico, 2000). School administrators today face many more complex issues than administrators in the past. In addition to societal issues, there are important policy and regulatory issues (Reyes, 2003). There is pressure for school leaders to provide models of effective schools, while at the same time providing for the educational and emotional needs of the students (Murphy, 2002). In order to accomplish this goal, schools cannot be managed; rather, they must be connected to the community as a whole.

Women often employ creative empowerment strategies that give a picture of effective leadership, and they are emotionally committed to the education of the students, competent in curriculum and instruction, energetic in engaging teachers and parents in decision making, and creative in their collaboration abilities to facilitate needed change (Hurty, 1995). The characteristics most linked to principals are those that are typically linked to women leaders (Ballou & Podgursky, 1995). Effective schools have good leadership (Daresh, 2006). These principals often have clear vision, are knowledgeable about teaching and learning, and are able to protect schools from the kinds of demands that make it difficult for schools to operate on a professional basis (Ballou & Podgursky 1995).

To be effective and produce the necessary results, a transformational leader is required to help move both teachers and students forward both academically and

personally with a love and a desire for future learning. Rosener (1990) noted that women have a tendency to characterize themselves as transformational leaders in which they ascribe their power to personal characteristics like charisma, interpersonal skills, hard work, and personal contacts in getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal. School leaders must change schools into caring, responsible, and knowledge-rich, competent centers of the community where students are free to learn and will learn.

With this in mind, women should be a strong force in transforming our schools. The leadership styles of women customarily can and do create effective schools that are focused on children. Women leaders bring care and concern as well as intelligence into the school community. Shakeshaft (1987) pointed out those women leaders are strong curriculum leaders and promote lifelong learning for themselves and their staff. Women leaders lead with compassion, a sense of family, and a keen appreciation for what is right rather than what is easy.

Many women leaders who are currently in the classroom have decided to join the ranks of this very unique group of administrators who may bring a different perspective to how schools may be more effective. Many colleges and universities have partnered with school divisions and formed educational administration programs. Regrettably, administrative preparation programs are often cited for lack of collaboration between themselves and the schools for which they prepared leaders to enter (Banuelos, 2008). Ignoring the relationship that implicitly existed between the university and schools/districts was one of the main reasons why it was not uncommon for reformers of administrative preparation to argue in favor of alternative venues for leadership education

and against what they saw as isolated training that did little to acknowledge the real-world concerns of schools and schooling (Elmore, 2006). With this in mind, it was difficult to disagree with the belief that

collaboration between school district leaders, university management faculty, and university education faculty can provide unique opportunities for learning. This collaboration will help to ensure that school leadership development efforts . . . will continue to provide rich experiences focused on connections between leadership theory and practice. (Busch, O'Brien, & Spangler, 2005, p. 7)

Connections included encouraging students to discover what their administrative philosophies were, providing research to inform thinking and practices, and promoting new thinking to inform future research. These connections ought to have been more than just side effects; these ought to have been strategic goals of leadership preparation programs. Nevertheless, universities did not always reach out to schools to affiliate the learning conducted in the classroom with the learning done in the field. The same could also be said in the reverse, such that the field did not do enough to affiliate with administrative preparation (Elmore, 2006; Murphy, 2006). Exploration of this avenue of administrative preparation, it seemed, would have gone a long way toward improving leadership preparation as a whole.

Cohorts

This study focuses on women who have participated in a cohort-based educational leadership program. Therefore, a review of salient literature related to cohorts is explored in this section. Throughout the past decade, many administrator preparation programs have evolved into coherent, sequenced curriculums delivered to cohorts of about 20 to 25

students (Barnett et al., 2000; Kelley & Peterson, 2000). A premise for using cohorts is that keeping students together as a unique group of learners enhances professional learning and skill development (Norris & Barnett, 1994; Peel et al., 1998). Another assertion is that the cohort structure provides excellent opportunities for aspiring leaders to learn and practice skills in community building, corporate goal setting, conflict resolution, and culture management (Geltner, 1994; Milstein & Krueger, 1997). Consequently, the use of cohorts in educational leadership preparation programs often is highly recommended (Milstein & Krueger, 1997; Murphy, 2001).

The use of an effective cohort model requires program coherence (Dick & Carey, 1990), and faculty must be involved in identifying and implementing critical elements that generate advantageous learning environments for both faculty and students (Barnett et al., 2000; Kelley & Peterson, 2000). The effective use of cohorts in higher education requires collaboration and additional work for faculty (Muth & Barnett, 2001). While cohorts are organizational structures used to deliver instruction fitting to the distinctive learning needs of adults (Barnett & Muse, 1993), very little observed evidence exists about the factors that promote their abilities to be successful in a cohort program and those that detract from their successes. It is important to understand the long-term effects of the cohort experience on aspiring principals' future professional practice (Goldschmid & Berberat, 1989; Muth & Barnett, 2001).

A search of the literature concerning the cohort model design for leadership preparation programs and any possible factors that could promote or detract from the successes of cohort participants was conducted. In order to understand how the cohort

program became widely used in the 1990s and afterward, it is necessary to review the history of preparation programs within the 20th century.

Cohorts Use

The literature speaks to a critical need for mentoring and cohorts (Muller, 2007). There have been national calls for these programs (Levine, 2005). Daresh (1997) stated that training of future school administrators should be done in cohorts and suggested practices to improve leadership preparation. He also proposed that preservice programs should emphasize the development of reflective skills and acquisition of skills for moral and ethical leadership. Great emphasis was placed on teaching and learning processes in schools, opportunities for clinical learning, and experienced administrators to mentor aspiring leaders. Daresh stressed that these were all important components of high-quality leadership programs.

An apparent match between what was required for a quality leadership preparation program and the usage of the cohort model encouraged institutions to adopt this type of program (Hill & Ragland, 1995). Most investigations of cohorts examine what occurs during the course of the academic preparation program; however, there is some evidence that the cohort experience can influence students' professional relationships and practices. Based on the strength of the interpersonal relationships that develop in cohorts, students often maintain professional contacts after completing their university coursework (Hill, 1995; Milstein & Associates, 1993; Milstein & Krueger, 1997).

Ongoing professional support and encouragement occurs as graduates help each other to identify and seek administrative positions and provide a sympathetic ear and

suggestions for leadership behavior in difficult situations once positions are obtained. Many close lifetime friendships are also forged as a result of these intensive interactions (Milstein & Associates, 1993). Furthermore, some reports suggest the cohort experience can directly affect students' leadership practices in the workplace (Basom, Yerkes, Norris, & Barnett, 1996; Norris, Barnett, Basom, & Yerkes, 1997). Although there is speculation that cohort students have experienced empowerment as adult learners and are more aware of the need to practice collaborative leadership as school administrators (Milstein & Associates, 1993), our field needs empirical research documenting the effects of cohorts on our graduates' professional skills and practices (Barnett & Muse, 1993).

Some faculty members teaching cohorts express frustration with this approach. One area of concern is the direct impact cohorts have on faculty members. Oftentimes, cohort students demand more from their instructors than students in a traditional program; they are more likely to challenge conventional instructional approaches and the relevance of the content, often creating tension between faculty and students (Barnett & Muse, 1993). In cases in which programs employ cohorts along with a more conventional instructional grouping approach, conflicts can arise between these two groups of students. Noncohort students often feel like "second-class citizens" when they sense cohort students are provided with learning experiences and resources not available to them (Barnett & Muse, 1993; Hill, 1995). Finally, the cohort approach can increase faculty members' advisement workload and create divisions between faculty who are and are not teaching in the cohort program (Norton, 1995).

Likewise, certain problems can arise for students involved in cohorts. Since cohort members spend a great deal of time together, personal conflicts can emerge.

Because of the close friendships and intimacy that develop in cohorts, students' personal dilemmas such as marital and family problems may become more visible among group members (Barnett & Muse, 1993). In addition, academic competitions among group members and pressure to monitor others in the cohort who are not performing adequately have been reported (Hill, 1995). Furthermore, faculty do not always sense that cohort students are well served, noting problems with increased time demands on students, grade inflation, a few students dominating the group, and a "watering down" of the curriculum because they are exposed to less theory (Norton, 1995).

Cohort Program Design

Current demands for school leaders as well as reported administrator shortages have resulted in the implementation of district-based aspiring leaders programs to promote teacher leaders into school leadership (Goldring & Sims, 2005). Since school leadership has, traditionally, been informed by androcentric perspectives, this study was designed to determine whether these programs are helpful to women aspiring to school leadership positions or whether they are used as another way to reinforce the status quo. The initiation of a new cohort model program would require a new curriculum, including strategies that had not been part of traditional programming.

Licensure. States control the quality of preparation programs by setting requirements for the licensing of school administrators. These conditions influenced the choices that institutions made in the reform of their curricular offerings (McCarthy, 1999). Young (2001) reported discussion among leadership professionals about the relationship between licensing requirements and reform preparation programs. Some concern arose that state licensing exams were directing what courses students would take

rather than by what professors, practicing administrators, and leadership scholarship indicate comprise quality preparation. Additional concern surfaced that without more stringent state licensing requirements, professors might be reluctant to stray from the curriculum that they had taught for years, and this might limit reform initiative.

Standards. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the body through which colleges of education are accredited, developed standards to address knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary to lead today's schools. NCATE is a council of educators created to ensure and raise the quality of preparation for their profession. Attributes such as strategic leadership, instructional leadership, organizational leadership, political and community leadership, and internship were used for accreditation purposes (Wilmore, 2002). Today, NCATE is a coalition of 33 member organizations of teachers, teacher educators, content specialists, and local and state policy makers. All are committed to quality teaching, and together, the coalition represents over 3 million individuals.

Learning in communities. Milstein's (1992) review of the Danforth Program for the Preparation of School Principals suggested "lessons" for other institutions to study. One lesson involved the usage of the cohort approach as a "model of how schools can be turned in adult learning communities" (p. 222). The cohort experience prepared members for eventual creation of communities at school sites by allowing them to experience empowerment and collaborative leadership.

Cohesive, caring learning communities within leadership preparation programs can, in turn, enhance individuals (Basom & Yerkes, 2001). Sergiovanni (1994) preferred to think of schools as communities rather than organizations, with sharing of values,

norms, and beliefs. Kochan (1999) agreed with this concept of community and suggested that through a process of reflection, exploration, and dialogue, collegiality emerges. Cohort learning communities should have teachers from both the students and the faculty, ideally. In addition, leadership preparation programs should seek to collaborate with practitioners from schools in teaching and learning (D. L. Clark, 1996).

Learning in Cohorts

Those aspiring to be principals are currently, or at some point have been, classroom teachers. Learning can be hindered in many cohort preparation programs when faculties are not in tune with the daily happenings within a school building. Levine (2005) felt one of the keys to improving the preparation of school leaders was faculty composition. Levine found, in his research, that among full-time faculty, only 6% have been principals and only 2% have been superintendents. (p. 38). It does a disservice to the students and their schools to have faculty that are only theorists or academics, who have never led a school, as well as having faculty that are entirely made up of adjuncts, thus hearing little of the theory behind leadership (Rusch, 2004). Researchers have felt that strong leadership preparation programs will have a good mix of practitioners and academicians and that programs must move in that direction (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001; Levine, 2005).

School leaders do not always seek out partnerships with university faculty, as they feel a true disconnect and may cite the faculty's lack of understanding of what is actually happening in schools. Murphy (1992) wrote that there was a real "lack of connection to practice" in schools of educational leadership. Students often prefer to learn from those with experience, as they think practitioner-faculty may have a better understanding of the

chaos and confusion of real school leadership. Educating School Leaders, an administrator alumni survey by Levine (2005), illustrates a need for faculty with more experience as practitioners and for more relevant coursework. Murphy explained that “one of the most serious problems with the current cognitive base in school administration programs is the fact that it does not reflect the realities of the workplace, does not provide the kind of experiences or knowledge that practitioners feel they need”(p.178) and is therefore at best, “irrelevant to the jobs that trainees assume” (Mulkeen & Cooper, 1989, p. 84) and, at worst, “dysfunctional in the actual world of practice” (Sergiovanni, 1989, p. 72). In a much more recent study, University Council for Educational Administration’s (2001) *A Thousand Voices from the Firing Line* found that “a central issue in the responses of both principals and superintendents was the need to connect leadership preparation programs to the world of practice” (p. 15). How does one make the preparation program better connected to what is happening in the field?

Murphy and Forsyth (1999) studied preparation programs and generally found weak involvement by practitioners in the planning, design, and delivery of those programs. Mintzberg (2004) cited the better business leadership schools are those with practitioners involved in the facilitation of instruction, while the participants are still involved in their own world of work. Teachers, who are the participants in the academy experience, know the problems in schools, as they experience them every day in their work. They want to learn some of the solutions for better school leadership. Mintzberg felt the connection to real everyday problems is essential to learning and growth for leadership development.

An emerging trend was found in the study of preparation programs: having team instruction where a university faculty member aligns with a practitioner, often a superintendent, in creating and delivering classes. The University of Cincinnati Administrator Development Academy takes that idea to the extreme with an instructional team of all practitioners, with a connection of one university faculty member, in both design and delivery (Zigler, Koschoreck, Allen, & McCafferty, 2004). This is what separates the academy from other cohort-building experiences, in that practitioners facilitate the experiences, the discussions, the simulations, the research project, the school project, and the group work, with an understanding of how leadership really works in schools. It is not always clean and easy as theorists would lead us to believe.

Livingston, Davis, Green, and DeSpain (2001) felt that studies speak of graduate students relating effectiveness in their training to the experiential preparation of the teacher. Experience and practice is an important part of leadership training in the eyes of those students. Academic content becomes meaningful to students if they see how it applies to their own real-world problems and situations. It was also felt that the use of practitioners for instruction increases the preparation program's ability to remain flexible, as it responds to shifting leadership preparation needs (Milstein & Associates, 1993).

Levine (2005) found that faculty involvement in schools in their region is generally low for faculty in schools of education. There is a paradox between schools that emphasize teaching with teaching loads that are too demanding or schools that emphasize research and publication at the expense of working with area schools. The question becomes one of making ties to local school districts and then strengthening those ties through a lot of interaction.

Other researchers have offered some possible solutions, suggesting a more practice-oriented, problem-based approach that is more consistent with the situations new leaders will see in the field (Murphy, 1992). This move to a more professional model, much like Mintzberg (2004) and his innovations for business school leadership training and involves the need to develop structures that create greater ties between universities and schools.

Browne-Ferrigno (2001) conducted a study on practitioner growth during a principal preparation program delivered through a closed cohort. Using multiple data sources collected in real time rather than only at the conclusion of the program, stages of the cohort's transformation emerged. Students reported that the intense, long-term associations with the same learners increased peer interaction and collegial support and created opportunities for developing professional relationships. However, they also reported in their evaluations at the end of the program that issues about group norms and cliquishness that developed during the group's early stages diminished learning opportunities and lingered throughout the program.

Cohort cliquishness and exclusionary practices were found in an action research project about the status of cohorts at an eastern university (Teitel, 1993). Although cohort members in another study (Hatley, Arrendondo, Donaldson, Short & Updike, 1996) described their cohort experiences in overwhelmingly positive terms, several students in this study identified the need to establish group norms and develop peer trust early as a needed change in their cohort program. According to Barnett (2000), interpersonal problems and conflicts among students are two disadvantages of using cohorts in educational administration programs. Since using the cohort model does not ensure a

“true” cohort will develop (Basom, Yerkes, Norris, & Barnett, 1995), careful attention must be given to group processing at the beginning of and throughout a cohort program.

Although learning in cohorts may differ depending on faculty experiences, the relationships that can foster have proven to be immeasurable. Evidence provided by students and faculty members who have participated in cohorts suggests that the long-term association of learners in a cohort fosters interpersonal relationships, supports students’ competence, and creates caring learning climates (Crow & Glascock, 1995; Norris & Barnett, 1994; Peel et al., 1998). Previous studies about group dynamics, participant interaction, personal relationships within cohorts, and group affiliation (Basom et al., 1995; Norris & Barnett, 1994) also show that the culture of a well-functioning cohort increases the level of learning for all participants. However, research about learning in cohorts further indicates that cohort structures both can foster and impede learning.

Using data derived from an analysis of reflective journals, Norris and Barnett (1994) sought evidence of interdependence, group interaction, and purpose in student writing. Analysis indicated that students participating in cohorts reported mutual support and solidarity that increased group interdependence, enabled significant personal growth, enhanced knowledge, and increased contributions to group development through greater individual empowerment.

A further review of the literature about cohorts found anecdotal evidence that students in well-functioning cohort groups reported greater feelings of inclusiveness, more opportunities for collaboration and professional networking, and enhanced academic performance than they did in their previous educational experiences (Basom et

al., 1995). Advantages of using the cohort structure cited by faculty included improved student–faculty relationships and opportunities for professional growth. In a national study of higher-education intuitions using cohorts in their leadership programs, faculty indicated perceiving their role as facilitators who tended to use a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students to assume greater responsibility for their learning (Basom et al., 1995).

Scribner and Donaldson (2001) examined relationships between group dynamics and learning by focusing on a small group of students working on a performance-oriented project within an educational leadership preparation cohort. Findings indicated that group climate and norms, assumed or assigned roles of team members, and communication and problem-solving styles may impede success, depending upon the individuals. Scribner and Donaldson posited that, even in well-functioning cohorts, attention must be paid to the dynamics of small groups (Tipping, Freeman, & Rachlis, 1995).

A number of studies have reported on the benefits of cohorts in enriching members' learning experiences (Barnett & Muse, 1993; Bratlien, Genzer, Hoyle, & Oates, 1992; B. A. Harris, 2006-2007; Lawrence, 2002; Maher, 2001, 2005; Norris & Barnett, 1994; Reynolds & Herbert, 1995; Teitel, 1997; Yerkes et al., 1995). According to Barnett and Muse (1993), cohort students experienced improved academic performance related to enhanced feelings of support and connection, as well as increased exposure to diverse ideas and perspectives. Similarly, Bratlien et al. (1992) noted that among cohort members, camaraderie lent “the support and motivation needed to strive and reach for higher expectations” (p. 87).

Norris and Barnett (1994) cited empirical research on university-setting cohorts, indicating that cohort members developed strong interpersonal affiliations, experienced “a reduced sense of loneliness,” and reported receiving “psychological support from group members” (p. 10). Research by Yerkes et al. (1995) and Teitel (1997) indicated that cohort students and faculty may experience a greater sense of interpersonal connection and belonging and increased collaboration. Barnett and Muse (1993) also cited benefits associated with cohorts deriving from group member affiliations and networking for career opportunities and advancement. Barnett and Caffarella (1992) pointed out that cohorts are excellent venues through which to teach and learn about diversity issues, especially when diversity is purposefully maintained in the group composition.

Similarly, research by McPhail (2000) and Horn (2001) stressed the value of the cohort experience relative to its real world group and interpersonal dynamics and the ability to generalize and transfer cohort experiences into the work setting. Beyond these benefits, Barnett et al. (2000) identified faculty and programmatic cohort advantages, citing increased program delivery efficiency and enrollment management. Specific to graduate program challenges regarding retention and completion, in a study titled *Cohesion or Collusion: Impact of a Cohort Structure on Educational Leadership Doctoral Students*, Hampton Wesson, Oleson Holman, Holman, and Cox (1996) observed cohort benefits in terms of program persistence and completion, particularly in relation to facilitating the dissertation process.

There are many advantages to a cohort-based program. Perhaps the greatest benefit of such a structure is the degree to which it lends itself to the development of a

learning community (Fulmer, 2009). In a properly led cohort program, participants quickly learn much about one another early on and develop a level of trust and sense of positive climate that is unlike traditional university course settings. Participants will engage in many learning activities that require teamwork, followership, and leadership, all necessary understandings for school leaders (Tallerico, 2001). Participants should quickly develop a network of trusted practitioner colleagues on whom they can rely. Ideally, this will include student participants, district administrator practitioner scholars, and university faculty member colleagues.

The cohort experience provides so much more than academic content. It also provides opportunities to network. Participants learn how to surround themselves with people who have different strengths than their own, learn how to discuss sensitive issues, work through group tension, and learn how to create a sense of community with a diverse group of people who may have different value and belief systems. Educational leaders will benefit from using skills learned when negotiating through issues within the cohort. These skills will be useful as each person begins to apply them in their lives in higher education or K-12 settings as committees are formed, colleagues challenge one another, or when placed in a new setting with faculty members who are new to a leader.

Common Career Paths

There are many different career paths that women take prior to becoming an administrator. Many women become administrators unexpectedly and often without a planned goal to ever becoming an administrator (Brown, 2005). The majority of female administrators begin their careers as teachers; often an outside influence sets the administrative career in motion. Shakeshaft (1987) contended that women usually turn to

administration as a result of the urging of someone else in their school district. Those who succeed in getting an administrative position generally obtain a principalship at the elementary school level or a position as curriculum specialist and often remain at that level (Shakeshaft, 1987). Additionally, E. H. Jones and Montenegro (1985) concurred with Shakeshaft that women who are promoted are three times more likely to serve as elementary principals than as secondary principals.

Who becomes a principal and what paths do they follow? Interestingly, individuals who are presently superintendents, assistant superintendents, or principals have, on average, higher qualifications than others certified to be leaders and those employed in public schools but not certified to be leaders. Current school leaders have, on average, far more total experience and are less likely to have graduated from lower-ranked colleges than the individuals certified to be leaders but employed in nonleadership positions or other individuals currently employed in public schools. It is also interesting to note that current leaders are substantially less likely to be female than either certified nonpracticing leaders or other public school professionals.

Young and McLeod (2001) found, after surveying 127 female administrators in Iowa and interviewing them, that not one interviewee entered education thinking she would become an administrator. Karstens-Hansen (2002) surveyed 85 women certified for secondary administration in South Dakota. The women in this study typically started by teaching English. The decision to obtain a master's degree in administration was usually made in the first year of teaching. However, most (62%) were more interested in securing the advanced degree than an administrative position. Of women working as

administrators currently, 25% had never sought the job because they were promoted from within the school system, and 22.7% were asked to apply (Karstens-Hansen, 2002).

Adams and Hambright (2004) studied their own female students seeking a master's degree in educational leadership. The researchers were struck by the number of students (45%) who reported that they would never consider becoming an administrator. The same viewpoints held true for the eight California superintendents who shared their experiences in *Eight at the Top* (Johnston et al., 2002). Though district sizes, career paths, and years of experience varied for these California female leaders, none started out to become superintendents. Additionally, 15 female superintendents studied by Garn and Brown (2008) did not begin their teaching careers with administrative goals.

Garn and Brown (2008) also indicated that oftentimes women may not set out initially to become administrators; an experience or an event may change their thinking and start them down an administrative career path. Female administrators in Iowa identified three factors that affected their decision to become an administrator: (a) administrative role models with which these women either did or did not identify, (b) exposure to a nontraditional leadership style, and (c) the influence of endorsement and support they received (Young & McLeod, 2001). The Rand Corporation studied the career paths of female administrators and identified the importance of timing as a major factor in their professional decision making, suggesting that the "greatest barrier to female participation in school administration may exist at the point where an individual decides to switch from teaching to administration" (Gates, 2004, p. 64). Montz and Wanat (2008) found that supervisors' support was evident by the fact that nearly half of female administrators were hired internally.

There are some interesting differences across career paths—both with respect to the attributes of the individuals and the schools where they serve as principals. For example, individuals who served as teachers but not subject administrators or assistant principals became principals at a younger age and were much less likely to have graduated from a less competitive college and more likely to have worked in schools with more highly qualified teachers and better performing students. This results, at least in part, in that this path is more likely in small and suburban schools where there are more highly qualified teachers and better performing students. However, this same pattern occurs urban within urban districts.

The motivations that prompt female educators to become administrators appear to be a commitment to school improvement and dedication to students (Karstens-Hansen 2002). Edson (1995) conducted a 10-year, three-phase longitudinal study of 142 females aspiring to be principals. The first phase of the study provided insight into the dispositions and motivations of these women. Aspiring female school leaders often pushed the limits but believed they had the skills and motivation to make a difference in schools (Edson, 1995). Hill and Ragland (1995) interviewed 34 female administrators who had been selected as outstanding administrators by others in similar positions. This study was a broad sample from 19 states and two provinces and included women from rural, suburban, and urban areas; women of color; as well as women from ages 30 to 60. The respondents' motivation to pursue an administrative position was not because of ego but because of a desire to make positive improvement in schools for students (Hill & Ragland, 1995).

A critical step on the career path of female administrators is securing an administrative position. The second phase of Edson's (1995) research on the career paths of female principals was conducted five years after the female participants had begun their administrative careers. Edson found one third of the participants were principals, one third were in positions that advanced their careers, and one third were in the same position. The female participants who had secured a principal position had done so mainly at the elementary level and held advanced degrees. The women who had not secured a principal position expressed being more realistic about the demands of family and the needs of their own children. At the 10-year mark, 21% of the women were in pre-principal positions, such as an assistant principal; 34% were principals; and 21% had moved into administrative positions beyond the principalship (Edson 1995).

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) examined the career paths of female superintendents. AASA collected six sets of survey data from superintendents over a 30-year time period. Women enter the superintendency later and are older than the average male superintendent with 40% of women between 41-50 years of age, while only 31% of men are between those same ages (Glass, 1992; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Brunner and Grogan (2007) echoed the findings of AASA by reporting that nearly half of the female superintendents (45%) begin their superintendency from within their school district.

The typical professional experiences reported by both male and female superintendents in the AASA surveys include the following: (a) 68% of the superintendents had been central office administrators or district coordinators, (b) 46% had been high school principals, (c) 59% had been high school teachers, (d) 37% spent 6-

10 years in the classroom with an average of 6-7 years, (e) 76% had the first administrative position before 35, and (f) 58% had experience coaching. Women have had a slightly different professional background from men. Female superintendents have fewer years of overall educational experience, but they have more years of classroom teaching experience. Fifty percent of males have five years in the classroom. Sixty percent of females have at least 10 years of teaching experience (Glass, 1992; Glass et al., 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

Montz and Wanat (2008) studied the professional qualifications and career paths of 31 female superintendents in a Midwestern state and found that the career paths of these women were similar to female superintendents in national studies. Of particular interest was their view that more opportunities for female superintendents are made possible due to the declining numbers of male applicants in a rural state.

Literature has shown that many school leaders have taken traditional paths to becoming school leaders, even though their original intent was not to become a school leader (McKerrow, 1998). Men and women have also been known to take diverse paths to school leadership positions. While both sexes have served as teachers, it is noted that men become school leaders at a far greater rate than women (Blount, 1998.) It is imperative to explore some of the challenges faced to advancement.

Challenges to Advancement

Trying to manage family and school responsibilities continues to create challenges for female aspirants seeking the principalship. According to the 1995-2000 Current Population Survey (CPS; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), "Combining parenthood with advancement into management is particularly difficult for women" (p. 23). Data

from the CPS further indicated that there are smaller numbers of women managers with parenting responsibilities than without (Dingell-Maloney Report, 2002). Some young women feel limited and disenfranchised, since society does not offer the necessary support for women to maintain multiple roles with family and career during early adult years (Dingell-Maloney Report, 2002).

The demands of family have a long history as a challenge for females pursuing administrative careers. In interviews conducted by Edson (1995) and Karstens-Hansen (2002), many women reported that they waited for their children to get older before pursuing positions that made heavy demands on their time. As a result, these women generally enter their first administrative position later than men and begin the superintendency even later (Glass et al., 2000). Edson found that five years into their administrative careers women acknowledged the demands of family and their own children.

Extended work hours present a challenge. Karstens-Hansen (2002) found that women seeking principalships reported the long hours as the greatest challenge to the position. Adams and Hambright (2004) surveyed females seeking an administrative degree. The top three reasons that respondents gave for not seeking a job as a principal were “low pay in comparison to the job responsibilities, too much stress, and too great of a time commitment” (Adams & Hambright, 2004, p. 210). Women continue to face external challenges, including lack of support, preparation, role models, and financing to continue administrative study. Hudak (2000) cited in her study that women continue to face obstacles that include sex-role stereotyping, direct prejudice, and discrimination.

Shakeshaft (1982) also described challenges, such as sex role stereotyping, sex discrimination, lack of professional preparation, and family responsibilities.

Another challenge to administrative careers for women has been the inability or unwillingness to move to get a job. In countless homes, men are the sole providers of their families and are more willing to relocate. Mims (1992) explained that among female educational administration graduate students, only 5% were willing to relocate beyond 100 miles for a job, 10% would move out of state, and 36% would not go further than 50 miles. Female administrators reported that they would have advanced professionally more quickly if they would have been willing to move; however, they were unable to do so because of husband and family (Hill & Ragland, 1995). Eighty-eight percent of the female superintendents in the AASA study reported that mobility was an important factor in limiting opportunities (Glass et al., 2000). In a national survey of 390 potential female superintendents, 37% were unwilling to relocate; however, 12% were willing to relocate within the state (McGowan & Miller, 2004).

Shakeshaft (1981) described internal challenges as aspects of socialization, personality, aspiration level, individual beliefs and attitudes, motivation, and self-image. She further contended that internal challenges are used to cover up hidden societal roadblocks to women's advancement. Contrary to Shakeshaft's findings, Patterson (1994) stated that the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is not the result of what previously was considered to be an internal challenge, such as lack of aspiration, but that it is actually as a consequence of an external challenge created by the organizational restrictions faced by women. Shakeshaft and Patterson both emphasized that if educators believe these inequalities toward women occur because of lack of ability or action by

women instead of looking elsewhere for explanations, they will continue to conclude that the victim is at fault (Patterson, 1994; Shakeshaft, 1981).

Logan (1998) reported that the low percentage of women employed in school administration line positions could not be attributed to their lack of aspiration to be a principal. Based upon the number of women who have entered and completed educational administration programs since 1980, lack of aspiration clearly does not appear to be a challenge. According to Creighton and Young (2002), many states have adopted new administrative preparation programs offering fast-track degrees. In addition, preparation programs produce close to 300 graduates in school leadership each year compared to 30 graduates five years earlier. Nevertheless, Olson (2000) concluded that many policy leaders believe that at least some of the causes of the leadership problem stem from the preparation programs that train school administrators.

Wallin (1999) considered the challenges to women in educational administration to be structural and personal. As an example, Wallin reported that structural challenges occur when women work in isolation; as a result of this isolation, there is a lack of networking with other administrators. New administrators especially benefit from networking opportunities. Another structural challenge is the lack of programs that lead to advancement for women in education. Such programs should be aimed at providing opportunities for these women who desire to pursue them.

According to Goeller (1995), although the number of women principals is increasing, there still appears to be a lack of equality in employment between men and women. Challenges still exist for women aspiring to educational leadership positions, particularly at the secondary level in certain demographic areas (Logan & Scollay, 1999).

Gender Equity

There have been a number of theories as to why women still lag behind in administrative roles. Valentin, Maher, Quinne, & Irvin (1999) stated that gender inequality prevents females from realizing their full potential and that such inequality gives males free reign over the world. Schuster (1993) noted that gender discrimination and gender role socialization have affected the lives of women significantly. She argued, “The consciousness of the struggle for gender equity has shaped the expectations and influenced the well-being of educated American women” (p. 2).

Shakeshaft (1989) wrote that the majority of research addressing gender in educational administration is found in the first three stages of the six stages that are essential to the paradigmatic shift. The first stage documents the lack of women in positions of administration. The second stage identifies famous or exceptional women in the history of school administration. The third stage investigates women’s place in schools from the framework of women as disadvantaged or subordinate. In the fourth stage, women are finally studied on their terms, with female perspectives being identified and described. The fifth stage challenges existing theories in educational administration. The sixth stage transforms theory so that one can understand women’s and men’s experiences together.

Wallin (1999) referred to gender discrimination in recruitment and promotion as one reason for women being underrepresented in administration. In her article, *School Leadership of the 90s and Beyond: A Window of Opportunity for Women Educators*, Logan (1998) cited six conditions that exist and have potential for redirecting hiring practices to advance gender equity: (a) school site governance structures emphasizing

local accountability for student achievement have changed the nature of who hires school leaders; (b) essential leadership skills in restructured schools promote collaboration, consensus building, and empowerment of others; (c) increasing number of vacancies and a dwindling applicant pool for positions of principals and superintendent have created high-demand conditions for qualified aspirants, affording women candidates more opportunities; (d) antidiscrimination legislation has fostered a more open environment for hiring women in nontraditional roles and has led more women to enter higher education; (e) women have made up at least half of educational administration program enrollments since the mid-1980s, therefore increasing their numbers in the hiring pool; and (f) an increase in the percentage of women in the educational administration professoriate will result in the availability of more role models and support for women.

Professional Challenges

Two significant professional challenges were talked about in the literature: (a) isolation and loneliness and (b) stressful job conditions, including low salaries. Bush (2006), Holtkamp (2002), and Trujillo-Ball (2003) noted isolation and loneliness can affect female principals in their role. Howard and Mallory (2008) found that professional isolation from their peers was experienced by female principals when they moved to the principalship. Howard and Mallory believed professional isolation has a negative impact on a school principal's performance at work. The participants in Howard and Mallory's study agreed the principalship is a lonely place; there is nobody she can rely on, but the whole school relies on her.

The professional challenges faced by Asian- American principals in Pacis (2005) study were low salaries and job stresses. The salary paid to school principals did not

match their daily heavy work load. In addition, the work of the principals was very stressful. The principals had to assume heavy responsibilities and commit a lot of time to fulfill their role as a principal. The hard part for them was to satisfy parents and community. In addition, Howard and Mallory (2008) mentioned that the principals' busy work schedules and stress affected their health. All the participants agreed that exercise was very important to keep in good health, but it was hard to find time to do it.

Organizational Challenges

Smulyan (2000) noted two organizational challenges in her study of female principals. Since females tend to be generally more cautious than males before accepting a leadership position, Smulyan found that this cautious approach is perceived by the system authorities as less than full commitment to the position. On the other hand, Smulyan found that when pushed, selected candidates often were able to overcome external and internal barriers to the principalship. Some participants in Howard and Mallory's (2008) study indicated that the officials and personnel in central office did not understand and support their job as a school principal.

According to Mertz and McNeely (2007), female principals are no longer as rare as they once were in high school administration; however, the position still remains male-dominated. Cunanan (2004) reported that women were still struggling to achieve the position of secondary principal based upon data from a 1995-2000 follow-up study of educational graduates. The study concluded that female students, based on their own experiences as teachers, viewed the secondary principalship as an unappealing position as a result of power and control issues. On account of their own experiences as teachers, the

participants did not believe they could act as principals; they were not sure they were capable of performing within the role.

Shakeshaft (1981) reported that in 1965, 48% of secondary principals previously had been guidance counselors, and 38% had been elementary school principals. By 1977, Shakeshaft noted the proportion of former guidance counselors had dropped to 18%, whereas 54% of secondary school principals were former assistant principals of high schools and 35% had been athletic directors in middle or high schools. Until the 1970s, the position of counselor had been very instrumental for women wishing to move into administration; however, after the mid- to late-1970s the position of guidance counselor was no longer viewed as a path to administration. By this time, positions such as athletic directors and coaches were viewed as a route to administration because they involved the ability to handle discipline; however, such positions were generally unattainable by women.

Glass (2000) found that 46% of those who held coaching positions and band directorships were enabled to move into administration as a result of their leadership and management experiences. Men typically hold these positions; therefore, Glass concluded that male high school and middle school teachers have more opportunities to move into administration. Napier and Willower (1991, as cited in Hicks, 2000) commented that female high school principals believed they needed to work longer and harder to receive evaluations equal to those of male principals.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges: Mentoring and Networking

The traditional model—in which male candidates for the school leadership positions have been recruited, mentored, and networked—needs to be extended to women

if we are to produce strong, diverse, and gender-balanced role models for the next generation of children (Hammond, Muffs, & Sciascia, 2001). It has been asserted that for women to succeed in acquiring a position in education, mentoring must occur (Whitaker, 2006). Whitaker (2006) found from their research that even male mentors who support females for elementary positions often show a bias against females pursuing secondary administrative positions.

Educational administration is a traditionally male-identified domain (Blount, 1998). While women hold nearly 36% of elementary principal positions, only about 12% of secondary principals and superintendents are women (Futrell, 2002). Ironically, this male-identified domain emerges largely from the pool of classroom teachers even though over 75% are women (Shakeshaft, 1998). One might believe this occurs because men complete state certification requirements for administrative positions in greater numbers than women. This is not the case, however, as most university administrator preparation programs enroll more women than men (Shakeshaft, 1998). At the same time, a nationwide survey by Educational Research Service (1998) indicated that school districts are experiencing difficulty finding qualified candidates to fill principal vacancies. Likewise, Harris, Arnold, Lowery, and Crocker (2000) suggested that the complexities and demands of the principalship frequently influence students in principal preparation programs to not even apply for these positions. This has exacerbated the challenge for administrator preparation programs to focus not only on effectively preparing future principals, whether male or female, but also to find ways to encourage them to assume campus leadership positions (Brown, 2005; Murphy, 2002).

Thus, several organizations, including the Danforth Foundation, University Council for Educational Administration, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals, have established major initiatives to support innovative principal preparation programs that implement models of field-based programs that emphasize the importance of university–school partnerships (Daresh, 1997; Lashway, 1999; Murphy, 2002; M. Young & Petersen, 2002). In 2001, the Educational Leadership Constituent Council guidelines incorporated the NCATE standards for accreditation and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and specifically addressed mentoring in principal preparation programs in Standard 7, which requires that mentors be “provided training to guide the candidate during the intern experience” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002).

Responding to these national calls for mentoring programs, Texas, for example, has outlined mentoring requirements in its state standards (Texas State Board for Educator Certification, 2000). One of the most common field experience models has been assigning mentors to serve as guides to students in educational administration as they integrate theory and practice through the field-based learning process (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh & Playko, 1992; Gardiner et al., 2000; Mullen, 2005; Mullen & Cairns, 2001; Pence, 1995).

Twenty years ago, Kram (1985) outlined two basic mentoring functions: (a) career which involves promotion, visibility, sponsorship, socialization and coaching and (b) psychosocial mentoring, which emphasizes friendship, affirmation, modeling, counseling, and support. Mentoring was identified as critical for men’s advancement in school administrative positions as early as 1978, and research is increasingly emphasizing

the critical importance of mentoring to women seeking leadership positions (Alston, 1999; Gardiner et al., 2000). The purpose of this research study was to explore emerging gender issues between mentors and protégés enrolled in a university principal preparation cohort program.

Benefits of mentoring programs. Studies indicate that mentoring in leadership programs has been mutually beneficial to both the students being mentored as well as their mentors (Ellington, 2002; Gardiner et al., 2000). Protégés develop higher levels of credibility, gain confidence, achieve greater awareness of strengths and deficits, and develop human resource skills and competence in their work. Reyes (2003) found that students who had a direct-line administrator as a mentor were more likely to be placed as an assistant principal after 1 year of successfully completing principal certification requirements. At the same time, mentors identified sharing ideas, helping others grow in the profession, being inspired, and having an opportunity to analyze daily activities as benefits gained from participating in the program (Crocker & Harris, 2002). Another benefit identified by Gardiner et al. (2000) has been the opportunity to look at issues from a different perspective if, for example, a mentor and protégé experience different upbringing, differ in racial–ethnic backgrounds, or differ in gender.

Roles and activities of effective mentors. The roles and activities of mentors are varied, based primarily on the mentoring environment, as well as the needs and styles of the mentors and protégés. Lincoln (1999) suggested that mentor–protégé relationships have a wide range of roles that ultimately lead to collegiality and collaboration very much like that of a friendship. Additionally, Southworth (1995) recommended several activities for mentors to assist protégés, including considering and reconsidering recent events and

issues and facilitating the rehearsal of ideas, plans, and strategies with opportunities for protégés to try them out with a colleague whose opinion they trust.

Mentoring is most effective when mentors provide a regularly scheduled time to meet, give immediate feedback, and are available to the protégé (L. Jones, Reid, & Bevins, 1997; Monsour, 1998). In this way, mentors emphasize that the learning process involves two-way communication, rather than the “one-way process implicit in the apprenticeship/pedagogic discourses” (L. Jones et al., p. 259). This two-way communication is built on a foundation of trust, a major factor in the mentor experience, so much so that trust is the pivotal concept on which the mentor–protégé relationship will or will not flourish (Norris & MacGillivray, 1995).

Selection of mentors. Malone (2001) concurred that not all persons make fitting mentors and that even the most accomplished mentor can fail to bond with a protégé. In addition, race and gender issues can further complicate the formation of the relationship. Woman-to-woman mentoring can be exceedingly invaluable to administrative advancement. The woman-to-woman mentoring model can also result in a network system for women but does not destroy the structural barriers.

Matching the student with the right mentor is a critical component of a successful mentor program (Cordeiro & Smith-Sloan, 1995; Daresh, 1995; Geismar, Morris, & Lieberman, 2000; Mullen, 2005; Southworth, 1995). Factors that influence a mentor’s selection of a protégé include (a) personality indicators, such as good interpersonal skills, confidence, and dependability and (b) the level of the protégé’s motivation and competence (Ellinger, 2002). However, despite the significant role played by the mentor and the characteristics needed for success, most mentors are selected either by

convenience, happenstance, or by the protégé (Shelton & Herman, 1993). Consequently, assigned pairing of mentor and protégé does not guarantee success. Too often, a supervisor may be more than qualified but, for a variety of reasons, may not facilitate opportunities to meet the needs of a protégé (Gardiner et al., 2000). Southworth (1995) even suggested that the pairing of protégés and mentors is “problematic hazardous and challenging” (p. 23). Frequently, successful relationships grow out of a mutual selection process; to be effective, both parties must want to participate in the mentoring program. Mentoring cannot be legislated or forced (Lagowski & Vick, 1995).

Difficulties and tensions naturally occur in mentoring relationships due to differences in gender, ethnicity, leadership style, opinion, and communication style. For example, Gardiner et al. (2000) described several instances where conflicts arose due to gender differences and underscored the importance of how these occurrences are handled. They noted that males may handle issues differently than females or there may exist a feeling that a female is more sensitive and, therefore, will “handle things more thoughtfully than a man” (p.45). Wilson, Pereira, and Valentine (2002) also noted that women may prefer female mentors because they feel they can relate best to them. On the other hand, some women have reported that being paired with male mentors brings familiarity to the male power structure, which may impact career success (R. A. Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000; Dreher & Chargois, 1998). Occasionally, men and women are perceived to have different styles in interacting with others, thus forcing the protégé to communicate in a different manner. For this reason, women often prefer women mentors and men often prefer men, but it does not necessarily follow that same-gender matching is more effective. Similarly, the assumption that mentors should be older than the protégé

does not always hold true. Often, older protégés benefit from being paired with younger mentors (Daresh, 1995; Playko, 1995).

Prior to 1988, there were few female principals available to mentor aspiring female principals because only 2% of principals were women. However, today over 40% of all principals are women, thus reflecting a major change. Many of these women are new to the principalship and have limited administrative experience, however. Consequently, many are in need of experienced mentor relationships themselves (Malone, 2001).

Typically, same-sex mentoring relationships occur more frequently than cross-gender pairings (Kalbfleisch, 2000). Hurley and Fagenson-Eland (1996) pointed out that cross-gender mentoring relationships are rare due to perceptions, as well as actual experiences, of sexual harassment. Building on the seminal work of Kram (1985) regarding cross-gender mentoring, Feist-Price (1994) and Thomas (2001) noted categories of cross-gender complexities that included being subject to greater public scrutiny and suspicion, peer resentment, and a potential lack of appropriate role modeling.

Swodoba and Millar (1996) wrote about a correlation between networking and mentoring: “The sharing of information, the benefits of mutual support, the potential for sponsorship and guidance are all features common to both networking and mentoring” (p. 8). Pounder (1987) opined that networking and mentoring could each be a distinctive approach to lessen the loneliness and confusion women in educational leadership often encounter. McGinty (1995) reported that men tended to network for success and women networked to form friendships and further contended that although women are as capable

as men to perform managerial jobs, they are given the opportunity because they do not network effectively. Networking is universally viewed as a means of obtaining employment. Women, therefore, must develop networking connections and turn them into mentor relationships.

Although there have been marked increases over the last few decades in the numbers of women in administration, they are still largely underrepresented relative to their numbers in the teaching force. The sex-segregated hierarchy in the education profession has been perpetuated by informal selection and socialization processes for administration (Stockard & Johnson, 1981). One example is sponsorship whereby individuals who are already in leadership, sponsor and encourage new recruits (Miklos, 1998; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1999). In addition, women sometimes lack the information and training that would provide stepping stones to administration because they do not have the networks and mentors available to many male aspirants (Biklen, 1980; Edson, 1988; Fauth, 1984; Miklos, 1998). Given this lack of role models and encouragement, women generally need extra encouragement and support to become principals (Smulyan, 2000). Many women who do become principals point out that they were “pushed” into the role by mentors (Ozga, 1993; Pavan, 1991).

As university principal preparation programs seek better alignment with the job of school leadership through mentor programs, in order to effectively influence protégés, mentors must be proficient in much more than simply providing support to meet the needs of protégés. Crocker and Harris (2002) suggested that the mentor’s personal and professional skills and knowledge impact a mentor’s ability to serve effectively. Due to the diverse and complex nature of the mentor’s role and the wide range of knowledge and

skills needed to be effective, there is a definite need for administrator preparation programs to establish mentor programs that provide training for mentors and protégés (Ganser, 1999; S. Harris & Crocker, 2003; Head, 1992; Mullen, 2005; Rowley, 1999).

Many school districts are also offering principal preparation cohorts as an opportunity to provide mentoring and training to those aspiring to become leaders. Besides affecting academic performance, students' interpersonal relationships can be influenced by the cohort experience. Individual support and encouragement result from the intense interpersonal associations that develop among cohort members, which can positively affect students' social relations (Norton, 1995), isolation reduction and affiliation (Hill, 1995), belonging and social bonding (Hill, 1995), and advocacy (Milstein & Krueger, 1997). Besides individual support, a collective sense of accomplishment can be created as cohort members develop common purpose cohesion and community (Murphy, 1993). Perhaps Murphy (1993) summarized the impact of cohorts' best by proclaiming "the cohort structure promotes the development of community, contributes to enhanced academic rigor, and personalizes an otherwise anonymous set of experiences for students" (p. 8).

Summary

This chapter described the challenges faced by women who aspire to be school leaders. Specifically, there was an exploration of women aspiring to become school leaders, the challenges to advancement, the strategies needed to overcome challenges faced, and advantages and disadvantages to learning in cohorts.

Women are enrolling in increasing numbers compared to their male counterparts in educational administration programs. Those women who seek to break through the

proverbial “glass ceiling” can benefit from participation in a leadership program. Such programs are designed to provide women with the negotiation, networking, and organization skills needed to succeed as leaders. Newspaper articles and magazines feature successful female leaders more now than ever before. These women serve as role models to inspire other women to follow in their professional wake.

The new millennium offers promise for female school leadership candidates to maintain the momentum of the 21st century for women educators to gain professional advancements. What women who aspire to serve as school leaders must do now is to view current problems from the perspective of the female principal’s desk. Identifying problems and allowing the voices of women who aspire to be school leaders to be heard is an important component in the process of increasing opportunities for women who seek advancement and to achieve success.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women currently and previously enrolled in one school leadership preparation cohort program. This study was conducted with the intent that participants would share their experiences in this school leadership preparation program cohort for other women who aspire to leadership positions and who are enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohorts. The goal of this study was to gain an understanding of the experiences of aspiring and established female leaders.

This study was guided by three primary research questions:

1. What are the experiences of women currently/previously enrolled in a school leadership principal preparation cohort program?
2. What are factors that promote and detract from the success of women currently/previously enrolled in a school leadership principal preparation cohort programs?
3. How do the group dynamics within a cohort facilitate or impede perceived success of aspiring female leaders?

Methodology Overview

A case study design was utilized. Case studies are “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ of a case or multiple cases over time through detail, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). Stake (1995) explained that cases are investigated because we are interested in them for both their uniqueness and commonality. We would like to hear their stories. We may have

reservations about some things the people tell us, just as they will question some of the things we will tell about them. But we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn. The multiple-case study design or collective-case study investigates several cases to gain insight into a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2002; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003).

Case Selection: SLP

When conducting a case study, the participants need to have experienced the phenomenon under investigation and be willing to share their experiences (Creswell, 2006; Patton, 2002). This study explored the experiences of aspiring and current female school leaders who have participated in a cohort-based school leadership program in a grant-funded USDE SLP. The USDE SLP has been in existence since 2002 and is a federal program that provides grants to support the development, enhancement, or expansion of innovative programs to recruit, train, and mentor school leaders for high-need LEAs.

The USDE Secretary for Education, Arne Duncan has set an ambitious goal of turning around the nation's 5,000 lowest-achieving schools over the next five years, as part of a broader strategy to reduce the dropout rate, improve the high school graduation rate, and increase the number of students who graduate prepared for success in college and their careers. School leaders are a major driver of school improvement and teacher quality and second only to teachers in their impact on student achievement (Peterson, 2009). A strong leader can have a positive impact on teachers' instructional practice and on the learning outcomes of hundreds of students. In school "turnaround" models and

instructional programs, a consistently recognized determinant of success is not only the quality of the model or program but the school leader's ability to implement the model or program effectively (Stake, 2006).

Despite their importance, school leaders are often denied the autonomy, resources, or support they need to implement models and programs and lead their schools effectively. To recruit and retain highly talented school leaders to serve in underperforming schools, district leaders must remove obstacles and give these individuals real flexibility over money, time, operations, and staffing to enable them to lead their schools.

In the past, the SLP has funded projects that have focused on creating alternative pathways for principal certification or licensure and providing professional development to improve the skills of existing principals in schools in high-need LEAs. The Secretary encouraged applicants to look beyond preparation pathways and to promote district conditions that support these school leaders in leading and turning around the persistently lowest achieving schools in the participating LEAs. In addition, the Secretary encouraged applications for projects that will collect and use data to determine the effect of these school leaders on student learning in the schools in which they serve and for continuous program improvement.

In 2012, there were 43 SLP grant projects under way throughout the United States. Although the grantees represent a diverse set of rural, suburban, and urban schools, they all have common features: an unrelenting commitment to program rigor and quality, a clear vision of strong school leadership, a cohort structure that encourages candidates to support one another throughout their careers, and a culture of continuous

improvement. While there is not extensive data supporting their effectiveness, they do appear to have some promise for success. It was my hope to gain insight into the lived experiences of the women that participate in these pioneering cohort programs.

Participants for this proposed case study were solicited from a school leadership preparation cohort program in an urban area in the western part of the United States with a large Spanish-speaking population (see Appendix A). In order to gain multiple perspectives on women's experiences throughout the school leadership preparation cohort program, this study used purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 1998). To achieve this, women who were currently and have previously been enrolled in the school leadership preparation cohort program were recruited to participate. The women were selected based on two dimensions: those currently enrolled and those who completed the program and successfully obtained school leadership positions. These two dimensions allowed for a wide range of experiences on the phenomenon of this school leadership preparation cohort program.

The cohort program is a partnership between a school district and neighboring university. Participants are selected through a highly competitive application process. Once selected, participants are given the opportunity to complete a full-time internship within an elementary or secondary school building, while completing various leadership courses. This unique set-up affords participants the opportunity to engage in real-time conversations with their professors, mentors, and peers. While the program does not target women, women were selected due to previous research that confirms that women tend to be the minority within the school leadership arena.

Participant Profiles

Participants for this study were nine women: four currently enrolled and five previously enrolled in the same SLP grant. The director of the program randomly selected about 30 names of both previous and current students. Participants were then randomly selected based upon their willingness to volunteer for the study. Out of the names given, nine agreed to assist. All nine participants were assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Demographic information about the participants was collected utilizing a questionnaire administered at the individual interview. Participants' profiles were created for a detailed description of the group used for this study (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Participant	Profile
Emily (Previous Participant) (Elementary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 30 to 39 years old, female, Other • Undergraduate major: Bilingual Education • 11 years of experience in educational field • ESL Specialist and Assistant Principal were occupations held before becoming a principal. • Leadership role on intentional school culture committee.
Martha (Previous Participant) (Central Office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 years old, female, White • Undergraduate major: Special Education • 20 plus years of experience in educational field • Field Manager for a teacher residency program
Mary (Current Participant) (Elementary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 30 to 39 years old, female, White • Undergraduate major: Psychology and Physiology • 11 years of experience in education • Spent 4 years in law enforcement prior to pursuing a career in education. • Principal of representation overseeing development and design of new performance evaluations of principals.
Carol (Previous Participant) (Elementary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 years old, female, White • Undergraduate major: Elementary Education and psychology • 21 years of experience in education • National Educational Consultant
Paula (Current Participant) (Elementary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 30 and 39 years old, female, White • Undergraduate major: Psychology and Spanish • 10 years of experience in education; held a central office position

Participant	Profile
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • previously • No time for any leadership activities outside of the internship and SLP
Tracy (Previous Participant) (Middle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 40 and 49 years old, female, Black • Undergraduate major: Psychology • 12 years of experience in education • Serves as administrative liaison for district committee
Kelly (Current Participant) (Elementary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 20 and 29 years old, female, Other • Undergraduate major: Psychology • 10 years of experience in education
Cindy (Current Participant) (High)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 30 and 39 years old, female, White • Undergraduate major: Psychology • 13 years of experience in education
Amanda (Previous Participant) (Central Office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 30 and 39 years old, female, Hispanic • Undergraduate major: Psychology • 9 years of experience in education

Participant Backgrounds

Before the interviews began, four women previously enrolled in this SLP program and five women currently enrolled in this SLP shared their personal stories with the researcher. The information included age; educational level, which includes current work setting and subject areas in which they received their bachelor degrees; number of years in education, if applicable; years in previous occupation any leadership activities they have participated in; and why they were interested in becoming a school leader.

Age. Most female school leaders do not enter school leadership until late 40s or early 50s (Doud & Keller, 1998). The average age of those previously enrolled in the SLP who were interviewed was 41 years and the average age of those currently enrolled who were interviewed was 32 years. Martha was an exception to the rule, entering school leadership at 60 years old. Martha discussed the relevance of her age in pursuing school leadership and enrolling in an SLP: "I, at one point . . . thought my age would be an obstacle."

Educational level. Of the nine females interviewed, five currently worked in an elementary setting, two were central office personnel, one was in a middle school setting, and one was in a high school setting. Six of the participants majored in psychology, one in bilingual education, one in elementary education, and one in special education. Two participants had doctoral degrees, and seven participants had master's degrees. When discussing their educational levels, one female noted that even though she knows that this SLP will provide her with a wealth of opportunity, she felt it was essential for her to obtain a doctoral degree in order to set herself apart from her colleagues.

Number of years in education. When discussing total years in education, the researcher found that two of the nine participants interviewed had spent more than 20 years in education. They both were previously enrolled in the program. One participant noted that she took 15 years off to raise kids before deciding to return to the field of education. Six participants had been in education for 10 or more years and one participant for less than 10 years. Only one participant had spent time in a previous occupation that was nonrelated to education; she spent 4 years in the field of law enforcement before deciding to enter a career switcher program.

Data Collection

The data sources for this study consisted of individual interviews that lasted between 30 and 45 minutes each, and document reviews, which included philosophy of teaching statements, questionnaires, listings of core beliefs and values, and resumes. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were asked to email the researcher documents that reflected their beliefs, values and aspirations throughout the school leadership program. All interviews were recorded for later transcription.

All participants voluntarily participated in an individual interview. The interview was conducted via telephone at a time of their choice. The interview sought to address three primary research questions: What are the experiences of women currently/previously enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohort programs, what are factors that promote and detract from the success of women currently/previously enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohort programs, and how do the group dynamics within a cohort facilitate or impede perceived success of the aspiring female leaders (see Appendix B).

After each interview was complete, participants were asked to email documents from their school leadership preparation programs that demonstrated or gave an example of their overall experience in a SLP program. Follow-up emails were sent to participants as a reminder. Five participants provided documents from their school leadership preparation program. All five provided a philosophy of education statement, a list of their core values and beliefs, and a sample resume.

Measures to Ensure Participant Confidentiality and Safety

Before the study began, the Institutional Review Board at Old Dominion University was given a proposal to review and grant approval. Participants were given informed consent forms at the beginning of the interview (see Appendix C).

Demographic and background information was collected through a questionnaire for the purpose of creating participant profiles (see Appendix D). To ensure the confidentiality of participants, they were assigned pseudonyms, which were used on all documents, transcripts, and demographic forms. Recordings were destroyed after they had been

reviewed for accuracy. Participants were assured of confidentiality throughout the process. Participants were given the option to receive results of the study upon request.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began after the completion of the first two interviews. The data were transcribed by the researcher. In order to ensure accuracy, the researcher immersed herself in the data, establishing emerging codes and themes. The researcher searched for keywords, phrases, themes, and patterns in data sets. With each transcript, coding began anew so that each data set was understood separately before integrating it into the whole. Upon completion of all individual interviews, initial codes and themes were established and the researcher determined that the data were saturated and that no new information had emerged that did not fit the established codes and themes.

In a qualitative case study design methodology, it is essential to ensure trustworthiness regarding the research investigation. Guba and Lincoln (1985) described four components a researcher should use to verify the integrity of the research analysis: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To ensure credibility of this research design, the researcher employed a triangulation methodology, a multilayered approach involving the use of a critical incident technique individual interview, and document review versus a one-way avenue of inquiry. Additionally, the researcher's appendices provide access to protocols, forms, and interview procedures that were used throughout the analyses, identifying the paper trail of procedures for the investigation that supports the issue of transferability. Furthermore, dependability and confirmability were verified through member checking with the study participants for accuracy in addition to investigative analytical procedures and the dissertation itself.

Document analysis was ongoing throughout the process. The documents from the participants came in different intervals and were collected and coded by the researcher. Most of the same themes and codes found during the individual interviews emerged in document review data sets as well. In this chapter, those findings are presented. The qualitative researcher seeks to compile the patterns and relationships into meaningful categories and themes (Patton, 2002). Interview findings were consistent with the literature and were grouped into several thematic categories. The remaining portion of this chapter focuses on participant backgrounds and the themes that emerged from an analysis of the data collected for the study. These categories included career aspirations, mentoring, networking, cohort experiences, and advice.

Summary

Skillful leadership is essential to the success of schools (Patton, 2002). The task of effective school leadership requires adequate training and experience. This study purposely sought to discover the involvements of women currently and previously enrolled in a school leadership preparation cohort program. It was the researcher's intent that involvements of the participants will provide insight for other women who aspire to leadership positions enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohorts. Gaining an understanding of the experiences of aspiring female leaders as well as those who have become successful school leaders was the researcher's ultimate goal.

The participants were selected from a SLP cohort principal preparation program in the western part of the United States. Initially, contact was made with those responsible for managing the SLP within the LEA. Once consent was given, participants

were contacted via email and phone to solicit their participation in the study. After the participants agreed, individual interviews were scheduled.

Three focus areas were used to guide this study: What are the experiences of women currently/previously enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohort programs? What are factors that promote and detract from the success of women currently/previously enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohort programs? How do the group dynamics within a cohort facilitate or impede perceived success of the aspiring female leaders? Findings are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter IV

Analysis of Results

The researcher explored the experiences of women currently and previously enrolled in a school leadership preparation cohort program. It is the intent of the researcher that the experiences of the participants will provide insight for other women who aspire to leadership positions enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohorts. This chapter presents findings that were guided by three primary research questions: What are the experiences of women currently/previously enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohort programs? What are factors that promote and detract from the success of women currently/previously enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohort programs? How do the group dynamics within a cohort facilitate or impede perceived success of the aspiring female leaders? Qualitative methodology was used in examining these questions. Interview findings were consistent with the literature and were grouped into several thematic categories that addressed the primary research questions. These categories include leadership, cohort experience, mentoring, networking, factors of promotion and detraction, differences in women and men, and advice.

Leadership

Fullan (2006) stated, "The role of the school leader has become dramatically more complex, overloaded, and unclear over the past decade" (p. 144). Indeed, the role of the school leader has been in a state of transition, progressing from an instructional leader or master teacher to the transactional leader and, most recently, to the role of transformational leader. The job of a school leader extends beyond a regular school day (Boatman, 2007).

Leadership roles. The role of a school leader covers many different areas, including leadership, teacher evaluation, and discipline. Being an effective leader is hard work and time consuming (Peterson, 2009). Leaders must wear many hats and concentrate on their abilities to set goals and to raise school performance (Fullan, 2000). While exploring experiences of women in the cohort program, each participant was asked about any leadership roles they may have held. Those who completed the cohort program were all employed as administrators and all held positions on district committees or played a significant role in leadership activities other than their day-to-day activities. The majority admitted to seeking out these leadership roles. They felt as if it was their way of giving back to the program and district. Three of the four currently enrolled admitted that their current programs and obligations prevented them from doing much that was not part of the SLP program or their internship. One of the participants had heavy involvement in leadership activities as she was a national consultant for elementary schools.

One participant also shared what taking a leadership role meant to her. Paula commented:

Taking a leadership position means several things. A leader must have a vision of the future for the organization and its members. A leader must be able to express his or her vision clearly and in a compelling manner so that others are engaged by it. A leader has to make a commitment to his or her vision, to the organization, and to the members of the organization. A leader can't be committed one day and uninterested the next. People will judge a leader by his or her commitment, and will commit themselves no more than the leader does. A leader assumes a considerable amount of responsibility not just for the mission that he or she urges

others to accept, nor just for the organization he or she heads, but for his or her followers, their lives and efforts, as well.

Similar thoughts on leadership roles emerged within the document reviews.

Participants provided copies of their philosophy of education statements. The overarching goal among the participants was their desire to be visionary leaders. One participant defined a visionary leader as “the builder of a new dawn who works with imagination, insight and boldness.” Another mentioned, “there is a profound interconnectedness between the leader and the whole, and a true visionary leader serves the good of the whole.”

A school leader is vital in leading the process of creating the shared vision for the school. In identifying standards for school leaders, the ISLLC has identified six standards. Standard 1 states that a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community. With vision established, it is the job of leaders to lead the entire learning community and to nurture that shared vision of the school by ensuring that the vision is at the forefront (Peterson, 2009).

Making a difference. The most common theme to emerge was that all nine participants referred to wanting to make a difference as a leader within schools. The theme related directly to the interview question requiring participants to ponder on why they were interested in becoming a leader. In discussing making a difference, most participants noted the desire to inspire and make an impact. Carol commented:

Well I went back to school and got my doctorate and thought I wanted to be a college professor in undergraduate education and as I was in my program teaching courses, I realized that it wasn't for me. So I came back into the school system. Last year I was a teacher effectiveness coach which was a brand new position in the district and I was in two schools, two of the lowest performing schools in the district and I really saw how the administration/leadership made such a huge impact on the ability of the staff to function well, do their job as well as for students to achieve. Then I remembered back to my own teaching experience and recognized that I had a really good principal and that was one of the reasons why I felt so happy with my work and feel satisfied with my work. This made me realize that leadership might be a direction that I could take as a career so I decided to pursue leadership in schools rather than a coaching position. I wanted to take it a little bit further. I realized that a position such as this could make a tremendous difference not only in my life, but the life of many children.

The literature about leadership frequently distinguishes between managers and leaders by stating that a manager does things right and a leader does the right things (Lambert, 2006). Additionally, a leader is characterized as the vision holder, the keeper of the dream, or the person who has a vision of the purpose of the organization. Lambert (2006) believed that leaders are the ones who "manage the dream" (p. 46). Leaders have not only a vision but the skills to communicate that vision to others, to develop a "shared covenant" (Sergiovanni, 1990, p. 216). They invite and encourage others to participate in determining and developing the vision. "All leaders have the capacity to create a compelling vision, one that takes people to a new place, and the ability to translate that

vision into reality” (Lambert, 2006, p. 46). In *Leadership Is an Art* (1989), De Pree wrote, “the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two the leader is a servant” (p. 9). Leaders become servants to the vision; they work at providing whatever is needed to make the vision a reality. They gather the resources, both human and material, to bring the vision to reality. By doing so, they truly make a difference within the school culture.

Amanda remarked:

The key to making a difference in the life of a child is the golden rule. Do unto the child as you would have another do unto you. Arrogance leads adults to assume they have the right to control and shape a child. The heart and mind of a child belongs to no one but him or herself. Only the child may decide who will influence them. Children are naturally curious, open to experiences and ideas, and searching to discover truths about themselves, those around them and their environment. They need mentors, not puppeteers to assist them. Each child has individual strengths and interests. It is important to make a difference for the child, not to make a different child. It is their life story, we are to help them write, not book two of our own.

Making a difference in the lives of children also emerged in the review of documents.

One participant wrote, “the purpose of education is to enable students to become successful in their lives. Leaders need to consider what is important to students and make learning meaningful in the lives.”

Participants further mentioned they realized that a change was needed. For example, Martha stated,

I know that something needs to change in education and I see people around me that are really hardworking and well-intentioned, yet we are not closing the achievement gap and so I wanted to learn more about what that was all about. I wanted to learn how to analyze data and figure out how to improve practice.

Of the participants who referred to making a difference, many emphasized the need or desire to be positive role models and provide equal education. Paula commented, “I strive to be a positive role model as well as put in place systems and structures that help alleviate the overwhelming stress.” Emily specified, “My belief system is centered around equity and ensuring that it doesn’t matter where my son goes or any other child goes, that they are still receiving equal education.” Other participants demonstrating concern for wanting to make a difference made similar statements. Participants particularly referred to being able to look at their staff, schools, and data and see how they all fit together to assist with the common goal of serving students and success rates.

These women felt as though changes needed to be made and wanted to make a difference by becoming school leaders. Tracy wanted to learn what it meant to close the achievement gap and how to improve practices. Mary knew that in order to best serve students, it required her obtaining a leadership position in a school building, where she is at the forefront. A strong emphasis was also placed on the inner rewards received from making a difference in the lives of youth, as exemplified by Tracy: “The reward of making an impact on someone’s life. If you can read, it is because a teacher helped you. If you have ever gone to a trusted or favorite teacher for advice, you know their influence has helped shape your life.”

Leaders play a vital and multifaceted role in setting the direction for schools that are positive and productive workplaces for teachers and vibrant learning environments for children (Peterson, 2005). Growing consensus on the attributes of effective school leaders shows that successful leaders influence student achievement through two important pathways—the support and development of effective teachers and the implementation of effective organizational processes that will leave a lasting impression on students' lives (Elmore, 2006).

In summary, the desire to inspire, implement change, to be a role model, and to ensure students are receiving equal education emerged as facets of making a difference as leaders. Participants believed that all of these facets presented an effective model for becoming a leader. Effective leadership is the key to the success of an organization. Carol also mentioned that “without leaders, an organization is like a ship lost at sea.”

Cohort Experience

Barnett and Muse (1993) contended the common reason many students in educational leadership programs choose to participate as a cohort is their preference for working collaboratively with other educators to obtain the additional skills and knowledge needed to become successful school leaders. Each woman was asked to describe her experiences with the SLP program. All of the participants agreed it was important to know where you are in life and where you want to be in life. They all felt that it was essential to share those thoughts collaboratively and take time to reflect upon the aspirations that are set forth as this will impact the overall experience.

In a comprehensive look at women's career aspirations, Schreiber (2005) contended that women's career choices must be understood in the context of current

social norms and beliefs about women's capabilities and acceptable roles. Hawkins (1999) reported that for women administrators the traditional roles of mother, wife, and homemaker still weighed considerably in their everyday lives, and although many women have support, such as a partner or spouse, pursuing career goals can be very difficult in comparison with the norm established by their male counterparts.

In 1928, 1.6% of all superintendents in the United States were women (Shakeshaft, 1989). The gains of women in the superintendency in the next 80 years have been minimal. Most studies before 1998 report that males constitute more than 90% of all superintendent positions. In 2008, 12% of public school superintendents in the United States were women (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999).

When asked to describe their career aspirations, four of the participants indicated the principalship as their career path. Two of the participants stated that they were content in their current positions as principals. The remaining participants all aspired to obtain positions in central administration, possibly as instructional superintendents or executive directors.

Several participants stated, "they are exactly where they want to be and need to be." Carol commented as follows:

I am really dreaming about creating a new model for schools. I am kind of frustrated with the 20th-century model of education and really would like to recreate that and thinking about what schooling should look like in the 21st century. Don't really know if that is a possibility but if I can't recreate and recentralize schools then I would like to have a collaborative learning environment in all schools where teachers are learning, networking, and

collaborating with others in the schools. I have this vision of what a school can be now to meet the technology needs of learners in the 21st century. I would really like to lead a school to achievement that is not performing or I could also see myself utilizing my Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction and lead instruction in a central office position. I do believe as a principal, I would have a bigger impact and I would be able to stay grounded and be in the schools. I love being in the schools right now rather than being removed, but I can see central office as a future aspiration.

The career aspirations of these women helped to increase the validity of the data for this study. The experiences of these women gave different perspectives of career aspirations. Futrell (2002) found that women in educational leadership positions tend to be problem solvers, task-oriented, and express high expectations of self and others. Females tend to have strong instructional backgrounds, a focus on curriculum, and a focus on student growth and achievement.

Some felt as though they had not quite figured out their path. Paula stated, I am not sure I have figured that out. My heart lies in the work around Special Education primarily and equity, but I know that sometimes the biggest impact that can be made on children is the work that you are doing directly with a child.

Many felt like they are torn between remaining in a school building and pursuing a central office position. Tracy shared, “I go back and forth between wanting to be at the central office level and having a more systemic approach down on to buildings.” Most of the participants also recognized that in order to really impact children, sometimes you have to be that role model and you have to have a relationship with that child directly,

which means you need to be at the building level. While they all shared their viewpoint on aspirations, the majority of the participants also acknowledged that there is the potential of facing challenges, on their path to leadership.

School leaders at all levels deal with a lack of respect for authority and sometimes violence. The challenges present problems for women appointed to traditional male roles. Among the challenges women school administrators face in today's times are differing expectations from those with whom they work, a feminine orientation to life, and leadership qualities that differ from those of men (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).

Five participants identified challenges they will most likely have to overcome, whereas, one participant stated, "It was pretty easy." Another stated, "I have been truly fortunate" and could not identify any real challenges. The first challenge illustrated the premise of not finding the right job to match the participants' skill sets. Carol indicated:

Definitely there are many, many, challenges. The challenge of finding the right position that matches my skill set, the SLP programs sets us up for leading schools in a new way, it is a reform type of program, it experiential and I would not be happy settling for just a regular old school. I really would want to lead a school that uses new and alternative methods in reaching goals and so that of course in a regular education system there are many barriers to that prevent you from doing things in an alternative way and because people often fall back into what they are familiar with or comfortable with. I think there a lot of barriers to that but, that is what I would like to do so it is worth the fight, it is worth the challenge.

Being an effective building manager used to be good enough. For the past century, school leaders mostly were expected to comply with district-level edicts, address personnel issues, order supplies, balance program budgets, keep hallways and playgrounds safe, put out fires that threatened tranquil public relations, and make sure that busing and meal services were operating smoothly, and principals still need to do all those things. But now they must do more. It is essential for a leader to develop skill sets that match the culture of the school (S. Black, 2008).

A secondary concern centered on the inability of the participant to be bilingual, especially on the secondary level. This concern aligned with the literature that mentions challenges still exist for women aspiring to educational leadership positions, particularly at the secondary level in certain demographic areas, Logan and Scollay (1999). Mary reasoned:

Probably one of the challenges I initially saw is that I am not bilingual administrator although I work in a school environment that is 60% English language learners, I work in the Southwest part of the school district, which is primarily Hispanic-Latino population, so my initial thought is that it would be a really big challenge for me to get the position especially in the Southwest area, but I have addressed those challenges by my ability to connect culturally with my parents and my students. My Spanish has improved, but I think that was probably my biggest challenge, knowing that I couldn't initially talk with my families at where they needed me to be but other than that I don't see any additional challenges that I will face in continuing my task as a school leader.

The challenge for parents, policy makers, and school leaders is to sort through the competing claims about bilingual education and to implement the very best programs for their students based on solid evidence. The number of bilingual school programs has doubled within the last decade (Krashen, 2009). The need for qualified bilingual leaders is even greater (Lezotte, 2008).

Policy decisions about bilingual education are complicated by the reality that practice rarely matches educational theory. The effectiveness of bilingual education approaches is influenced by the availability of qualified staff, the use of appropriate assessment techniques, integration with other social and academic school programs, and long-term administrative and public support. Many school districts that commit to bilingual education grapple with the severe national shortage of qualified school leaders (National Association for Bilingual Education, 2008). Inadequate professional development for aspiring leaders compounds the impact of the bilingual school leader shortage. Tracy reiterated this challenge:

I believe my biggest challenge will be not being a bilingual administrator. There are parts of the district that have a heavy population of Hispanic students and having bilingual skills is a must. I worry that when I complete the program, that the only positions that may be open would be those that require bilingual skills. Even though I know the program does its best to match up skill sets that is still a concern of mine. Although the participants all have aspirations, being the right fit at the right time, and having the advantage of being bilingual, appears to be potential challenges that could be faced by many.

When asked about factors that promote and detract from the success of these women in the SLP cohort program, mentoring was overwhelmingly mentioned as a factor that promoted success. Mentoring was then divided into the following themes: benefits to mentoring and mentoring relationships. The researcher asked each woman if she (a) had a mentor who is assisted or assisted them throughout the cohort experience, if so, is it formal or informal, and (b) is the mentor provided through the district or university?

Mentoring

More recent research on cohorts of aspiring leaders provides support for the development of role socialization through mentoring during clinical practice. This research contends that the shaping of a school leader really begins before formal training of the aspiring leader and needs to continue after completion of a preparation program. Leaders need to become school leaders with continued support through the novice years. Mentors can provide them with support and information and offer constructive feedback. Mentors who are committed to fostering novice and aspiring leaders are valued for their contributions to the field of leadership and respected for the guidance they provide to the next generation of school leaders. (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2005).

Benefits to mentoring. First, the researcher discussed the cohort's formal mentoring program. Studies indicate that mentoring in leadership programs has been mutually beneficial to both the students being mentored as well as their mentors (Ellington, 2002; Gardiner et al., 2000). Protégés develop higher levels of credibility, gain confidence, achieve greater awareness of strengths and deficits, and develop human resource skills and competence in their work. Martha talked about having two fantastic mentors:

I have my placement with my internship; I have a principal that was enrolled in the SLP a couple of years ago and also have the assistant superintendent of the district that was assigned through the university. They both are very attentive to my needs and ensure that I am successful in all areas of the program.

When the researcher asked Emily about formal mentoring programs, she replied, “As my first bout as a principal I did not have a mentor, now I have a formal mentor, assigned to me by the university, that supports me as a principal.”

Several participants described their mentoring relationships. Paula declared the following:

We have two mentors on both levels. One is my formal mentor, my principal that I am actually working beside. They spend time reflecting with us and asking us probing questions, someone whom you can bounce questions off of. I’m fortunate enough where I work at an elementary school and have an assistant principal there also, so he also serves as a formal mentor for me. At the college level, we also have a mentor, who I actually haven’t received any support from at this point, but I do know he is there if I need him.

Mentoring expert John Daresh (2004) cautioned people should not view the practice as a panacea that will solve the problems facing school leaders. Rather, mentoring is meant to be one weapon in an arsenal of activities that could assist people who take on the challenges of trying to make a difference in schools (Daresh, 2004). A previous participant, Mary, answered:

Yes, I did have a mentor when I was in the program. Through the university, I had a formal mentor, who we’ll call Sallie, who mentored me through my internship

and then I had a mentor my first year as a principal. Sallie has continued to be my mentor, you know when I have things come up, I go to her and I think it's extremely important that any new principal or administrator has somebody that they can turn to, initially for any sort of things they have come up.

Mentoring relationships. Next, the researcher discussed informal mentoring with each interviewee. Each participant reported having an informal mentor at one time or another and many still maintain those relationships. Most mentors described principals, central office administrators, or college professors as their mentors. Martha shared, "Since I have been in the educational field for so many years, I have initiated many informal mentoring relationships. They all assisted me throughout my cohort experience." When asked about informal mentoring relationships, Paula declared:

I have enough friends and several colleagues that are principals and/ or AP's who mentor me simultaneously. I don't think that is the norm, but because I worked in central office, and I worked under instructional superintendents and I have worked in over 12 schools, I developed very close relationships with principals through that experience. I think that has leveraged my opportunity to have more mentors and more support systems around me.

Setting up and sustaining a mentoring program requires creating and managing complex relationships (Murphy, 2006). To be effective, mentoring relationships must be authentic, meaning that a mentor is credible and qualified to comment on performance and the protégé is willing and able to accept the mentor's feedback and incorporate it into his or her practice (Scott, 2009). Other participants echoed the importance of having a mentoring relationship. Carol answered: "I also have the people that are in my school that

are showing me how to become a leader informally and are also of the same mindset and so they are excellent mentors.” Kelly stated,

I have some additional people in the district that I turn to that were SLP candidates and I definitely utilize them when I am struggling or having a difficult time with a situation or just need to bounce some ideas off of someone. Mentoring definitely needs to exist.

Participants’ philosophy statements reflected the importance of mentoring and being mentored. One participant stated, “Mentoring is an integral part of being a leader.” Another statement included, “Without mentoring, great leadership does not exist.” These discussions and document reviews on mentoring corresponded with the literature, which declares that one of the most common field experience models has been assigning mentors to serve as guides to students in educational administration as they integrate theory and practice through the field-based learning process (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh & Playko, 1992; Gardiner et al., 2000; Mullen, 2005; Mullen & Cairns, 2001; Pence, 1995).

Networking

Networking also emerged as a factor that promotes the success of these women in the SLP cohort program. Countless women do not have a true understanding of what it means to network (Sherman, 2005). To women networking often means speaking with other women, greeting each other at events and deliberating the current issues; however according to the literature (Evans, 2001), a man’s networking may be extremely different. Evans (2001) defined networking as the forming of business connections and contracts through informal social meetings. Playing golf, attending sporting events, and going to

dinner is how many view networking (J. Davis, 2007). Literature has also defined networking as the act of exchanging information with people who can help you professionally (J. Davis, 2007). The women interviewed in this study held a very different perception of networking. Like men, they saw the importance of using all opportunities to network, whether it is meeting for a working lunch, attending a recital, or going to an extracurricular activity at the school. Two themes emerged during the interviews, the high level of esteem the program has within the district and the leverage and support networking provides.

High level of prestige. Several participants praised the high level of esteem that the SLP program has within the school district. Mary noted that the program gave her opportunities to network. The participant answered, “I was in the program and I think the program has a certain amount of esteem within the district.

Mary continued, “I also think that being a graduate of the program, is a door opener as well as informal and formal times when all program members come together.” Similarly, Paula shared: “It has given me the opportunity to network between other novice leaders that are in my cohort.” Other participants expressed similar thoughts. Amanda responded: “It has also provided me opportunities because the title ‘being a cohort member’ has as a loud presence and a high level of esteem in the school system, the previous graduates, tends to embrace the novice members.”

One participant shared how she uses her networking attempts all the time, at every opportunity presented:

I use my networking attempts all the time. If I have a resident who needs to see exemplary practice in a certain area, I may call one of my cohort friends to see if

they can visit their school if they are a principal or an AP. The program has such a high level of esteem, that I have called upon my cohort friends to help me get interviews and jobs for cohorts that are graduating and that are ready to become teachers of record. When I have a problem of practice, I have probably a dozen of people I can pick up the phone and call and say can you be a thought partner with me. I use my cohort members constantly.

Evidence provided by students and faculty members who have participated in cohorts, suggests that the long-term association of learners in a cohort fosters interpersonal relationships, supports students' competence and creates caring learning climates (Crow & Glascock, 1995 and Peel 1998).

Leverage of support. Although learning in cohorts may differ depending on faculty experiences, the relationships that can foster between peers can prove to be immeasurable. Many of the women interviewed agreed that networking also provided a leverage of support. Paula stated: "Networking in this cohort program has provided me enormous leverage. The connections that I have made and will continue make will be priceless as I continue with my leadership career." Amanda observed, "The networking that can occur outside of the mentoring relationships is phenomenal and provides such a fantastic leverage and a great support system." Both responses illustrated the power and importance of networking. Surprisingly, none of the participants saw the cohort as actually becoming competitive, as they sought jobs in the same division.

Brown (2005) believed that cohort students experienced improved academic performance related to enhanced feelings of support and connection, as well as increased exposure to diverse ideas and perspectives. Although learning in cohorts may differ

depending on faculty experiences, the relationships that can foster have proven to be immeasurable (Murphy, 2007). Nevertheless, while participants had various levels of networking, each woman seemed to clutch the significance of networking and being proactive in endorsing oneself for leadership opportunities.

Factors of Promotion and Detraction

Each interviewee was asked to share some factors they believed either promoted or detracted from their success in the cohort program. Overwhelmingly, four themes materialized. The women praised the design of the program, the multilayered experience they received, and the preparation they received to be resilient in the face of adversity. The few women who stated a factor of detraction, all stated time commitment.

Program design. All of the participants agreed that the design of the SLP program was remarkable. Kochan (1999) agreed with this concept of community and suggested that through a process of reflection, exploration, dialogue, and collegiality emerge. Murphy and Forsyth (1999) studied preparation programs and generally found weak involvement by practitioners in the planning, design, and delivery of those programs. Kelly shared: “If it wasn’t for the program and its unique design, I would not be where I am today. I would not be a 3-year principal at this point. I know that for a fact.” All agreed that program was masterfully designed. Martha expressed these sentiments:

Everyone should have the opportunity to go through such a wonderful program. I know that there are many SLP programs out there, but how many are actually structured in this manner is the question. The focus of the program is truly on building great and exceptional leaders. The program is designed to promote a

collaborative rather than competitive environment. The design promotes and supports my growth and truly fosters a collaborative and trusting environment. All of the women interviewed hold graduate degrees and feel that the SLP program is no comparison to any of their previous programs in regards to the design and delivery. Paula echoed: “I have completed both undergraduate and graduate level programs in the past, and I think this is the only program that solidifies our work and our strengths and gives us our own sense of ownership and voice in the district.”

Multilayered experience. This theme coincides with the existing literature. Livingston et al. (2001) believed that graduate students relating effectiveness in their training to the experiential preparation of the teacher is vital. Academic content becomes meaningful to students if they see how it applies to their own real-world problems and situations. The use of practitioners for instruction increases the preparation program’s ability “to remain flexible, as it responds to shifting leadership preparation needs” (Milstein & Associates, 1993, p. 47).

Paula summed up this idea:

I know there can’t be another program like this that provides the opportunities for people to positively affect our district in every way. Being able to attend classes and then place into practice the concepts and theories instantaneously is amazing.

Other participants presented similar thoughts. Martha stated:

The one thing that I believe makes this program so successful, is the multilayer approach. That is the opportunity to take what I learn in the classroom, apply these ideas and theories in my full-time internship. Taking the theory and putting it into practice immediately, was the greatest asset of the program.

Murphy (1992) explained, “one of the most serious problems with the current cognitive base in school administration programs is the fact that it does not reflect the realities of the workplace”(p.24), “does not provide the kind of experiences or knowledge that practitioners feel they need” (Muth, 1989, p. 7) and is, therefore, at best, “irrelevant to the jobs that trainees assume” (Mulkeen & Cooper, 1989, p. 4) and, at worst “dysfunctional in the actual world of practice” (Sergiovanni, 1989, p. 57). The interviewees’ feelings were contrary to the literature. Paula shared, “It is nothing like my master’s degree program, we took classes up front, and then we were thrown to the wolves.” She elaborated:

Whereas now, we have classes simultaneously and we are in the building each and every day and we have these opportunities to come back each week and reflect on what we are doing, learn from each other’s experience and continuously apply them day in and day out.

Mary similarly perceived, “Although, a certain lesson may be planned for our class session, our instructors remain flexible and allow us to discuss any topics that may be pressing or urgent at the moment.”

Prepared to be resilient. In leadership terms, resilience is the ability to adapt in the face of multiple changes while continuing to persevere toward strategic goals (Fennell, 2008). School leaders must build their resilience and they must also help their staff become more resilient. Leaders of today face numerous challenges on a daily basis within schools. Of the nine participants, five referenced the idea of being prepared for challenges and having the ability to recover from or adjust easily to change. Kelly shared:

The program allowed me to learn a lot about myself. Week after week, the professors and my fellow colleagues always offered the right information at the right time. Yes, we had material and lessons to cover, but it was more important to hear the issues on our minds and the ones that we face on a daily basis. The program teaches you how to be a resilient leader.

Although it is impossible to train leaders for all challenges that may be presented to them, such as poor academic achievement, behavior problem, and lack of parental involvement, it is important to have cohort members look at themselves as a person and not just the mechanics of being a leader. Amanda stated: “The program teaches you to be resilient and prepared for any difficulty or hardships you may face. It also brings a lot of richness to the leadership experience.” Mary echoed this sentiment:

It is really well designed, especially since I am a very concrete person. The beauty is the ambiguity that comes along with leadership. The program helps you to become a resilient leader and to not give up in the face of adversity.

Document reviews revealed even further what participants believe about resiliency. “A true leader is resilient, they don’t just bounce back, but they bounce forward.” “Good leaders lead with open eyes and pays attention recognizing both opportunities and harbingers of disasters.”

Time commitment. Some studies have suggested that the lack of women in leadership positions is owed to how much time is involved (Shakeshaft, 1987; Wallin, 1999). Trying to manage between family and school responsibilities continue to create challenges for female aspirants seeking the principalship. Amanda reported:

The program is intense! It can also be very demanding. Though the design is fabulous, you have to be dedicated and make a time commitment of a 40-45 hour work week and 20-25 hours of class work each week. I must say it prepares you for the world of administration and being a school leader. The job of a school leader is never done and takes much time commitment.

Extended work hours present a challenge. Karstens-Hansen (2002) found that women seeking principalships reported the long hours as the greatest challenge to the position. Paula shared: "The experience of leaving your family behind and trying to be a mother, family person and then the other things that come with having a leadership position can certainly be detracting." Tracy stated, "The program was a lot of work and time consuming, and I was not prepared for that. I quickly adapted, but the time commitment can be detracting for some."

The demands of family have a long history as a challenge for females pursuing administrative careers. In interviews conducted by Edson (1995) and Karstens-Hansen (2002), many women reported that they waited for their children to get older before pursuing positions that made heavy demands on their time. One participant actually acknowledged that she stayed at home with her children and pursued school leadership once they were older.

In many families, women are expected to maintain traditional family roles independent of existing or new job responsibilities. When females obtain or seek positions as educational leaders, it is not easy to balance their work and family obligations (Coleman, 2001, 2005; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2008; Moreau, Osgood, & Halsall, 2007; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008).

Women Versus Men

There have been a number of theories as to why women still lag behind in administrative roles. Valentin et al. (1999) stated that gender inequality prevents females from realizing their full potential and that such inequality gives males free reign over the world. Schuster (1993) noted gender discrimination and gender role socialization have affected the lives of women significantly. She argued, “The consciousness of the struggle for gender equity has shaped the expectations and influenced the well-being of educated American women” (p. 5).

When asked if they felt that being a female impacted their progress while being in the cohort, seven participants agreed that it did not. Many participants stated that they felt the program addresses and looks at people as a whole, not just male and female, but as leaders. Amanda shared, “It depends on what environment you are in as to where gender could have more of an impact upon you.”

Wallin (1999) referred to gender discrimination in recruitment and promotion as one reason for women being underrepresented in administration. All of the women interviewed denied any discrimination due to gender. Cindy shared:

Yes, there is an application process to enter the program, regardless if you are male or female. There are plenty of men who apply that may never make it in. It is about the person as a leader, not the gender.

Each interviewee was asked if gender ever comes up in discussions with colleagues. All nine of the women said that the discussion of gender has never surfaced with women or men alike. Again, the program is designed to develop leaders, regardless of gender. After pondering on this question, Mary decided, “I have never heard any

conversations regarding gender, but I will be certain to listen carefully and see if any such conversations evolve.”

Advice

All participants were asked what advice they would give to other women who aspire to become school leaders who are contemplating enrolling in an SLP program similar to this one. The main ideas set forth included balance between professional and personal life and having values and beliefs that you can remain true to.

Balancing act. Balance of work and home life can be a significant source of stress, depending on the personal and professional responsibilities a person may have. Loehrer and Schwartz (2003) defined work–life balance as being fully engaged. Leaders must be physically energized, emotionally connected, mentally focused, and spiritually aligned with a purpose beyond their immediate self-interest. Full engagement begins with a feeling of eagerness to get to work in the morning, equally happy to return home in the evening, and capable of setting clear boundaries between the two. When asked about advice and being involved in the SLP program, the notion of performing a balancing act emerged. Martha gave very reasonable advice:

I think the advice that I would give them would to be realistic about the commitment that you are taking on. I am firm believer that women can do anything they want but I also feel that there are different seasons in our life for things and I saw women in my cohorts that were young mothers, newly married, pregnant, kind of all ends of the spectrum and they struggled with balance, and I was really lucky because I was at a time in my life that I could really devote the time, the thought, and the energy to the program and I think we all have to make

choices and I think you really do have to realistic about if you are going to do something like this, you are going to spending 20 or 30 hours a week studying in addition to the 40 hour or 50 hour work week that you are putting in. I just think if you walk into it with open eyes you are much better prepared for how stressful it can be.

The comments of some of the participants indicate the complex nature of role commitment. They reported that there was a relationship between their role as a school leader and their role commitment. The women who had been leaders for over 2 years felt that the longer they served as leaders, the more they knew what was important in their lives, and the easier it became to choose family and friends over work. When they had first become school leaders, they felt that they had to prove themselves and consequently would choose work first.

As the interviews continued, the sentiments were parallel. Mary shared: “I remember my mentor, who works in central office, telling me to make sure that I find balance in my life. She said that your family comes first. I would give anyone aspiring to enter a SLP program the same advice.” Paula shared:

I think for me, there are other ways to impact children as a teacher or as a mentor or as a school counselor. So if you don’t think you can do that work, or do justice to the work, while still taking care of your personal life, then it is not worth making that shift. If you can navigate the balancing act, then by all means it is worth it.

Brewer (2009) suggested that family–work balance is a process, not a static achievement. It is important to make the big decisions, selecting careers and jobs, timing

children, and allocating roles and responsibilities that will provide the opportunity for balance. The real task of balance takes place on a weekly and daily basis, even from hour to hour.

One participant compared being in a cohort SLP program to being in a circus act:

I would compare it to a circus juggler. It is important that they have balance to maintain their act and to keep the crowds happy. Same is true with this program. You must have balance in order to keep those in your professional and personal life satisfied. You want to make sure that you have time to devote to everyone involved.

One participant who served as administrator in another district, shared:

Fortunately, as a prior administrator, I knew what to expect when I entered the program. If I had to think back, I would suggest that you make a list of your priorities and make sure that you have personal obligations, that you have the support of family and friends to balance your responsibilities.

The overall idea is to throw oneself into the task at hand whether tackling a challenge at work, facilitating a group project, spending time with family, or having fun. Full engagement implies a fundamental shift in the way we live our lives in order to strive for balance between work and home (Loeber & Schwartz, 2003). Carol stated:

You are going to have to grapple with this balance issue of being a mother or being a wife or in my case being a single mother, as well as dealing with the work that takes place at school. You have to know yourself well enough before getting into that role to know if you are really able to dedicate what you want to this work, as well as am I really able to dedicate what I need to my family and to my

child. It's important to have those lines drawn in the sand before you get into leadership, because if you don't either you neglect your family, which is super negative or can't provide enough time to the work at school which means you can't provide enough time to the other children. So it is a balancing act and one is no less important than the other, they are both very critical and very important.

Cindy summed up this theme:

You must go into the program with the understanding that this is not all about you, but that you have students' lives at stake. When you can find that happy medium and balance in your life, then there is no doubt that you will be successful.

Know your values and beliefs. The theme of knowing value and beliefs seamlessly aligned with the literature. Sergiovanni (1992, 1994) preferred to think of schools as communities rather than organizations, with sharing of values, norms, and beliefs. Mary shared her thoughts:

I would give them the advice to know exactly what their core values and beliefs are because that is more impactful than anything else. If you can't state that and understand that, it doesn't matter who you are or where you come from or what program you are doing. You need to know what you believe and how you're going to do that and how you are going to make a change. You're never going to go away from your core values and beliefs.

The school leader's core values and beliefs about learning as well as its 21st-century learning expectations should shape the culture and determine the priorities of the school, serving as the guiding force behind decision making related to the school's curriculum,

instruction, assessment, policies, and procedures (Scheckelhoff, 2007). Carol elaborated as follows:

I would tell them if you want to pursue leadership position, pursue this cohort. So it is an amazing experience and I highly recommend it to anyone that is thinking about leadership because it is also changes your thinking about how to become a leader and it really makes you consider your values and beliefs about education and why do you want what you want and all of the things when it is tied to your heart and what you believe to be true, it helps you question those things.

As part of the document review process upon the completion of the interview, a few of the participants emailed the researcher a listing of core values and beliefs. The listings expressed the need to never go away from your core values and beliefs, all of which coincided with what the participants mentioned in their interviews. Core values included rigor and relevance in both the instruction and assessment of students. Values also included the invitation of different points of view from stakeholders, parents, and community members. Beliefs included each student learning and all employees having a role and responsibility in student success. Overall, the beliefs and values provided the cornerstone for ensuring that each student was delivered a quality education each and every day.

Paula continued:

My advice to other women would be, number one, know what your value set is and what your priorities are in life because with the role of a leader you have to be so in line with your values and you also have to know really clear, what your priorities are.

Tracy echoed:

Set goals for yourself and stick to them. It takes a special person to be a leader.

Everyone is not born a leader and even after training, everyone is not an effective leader. Make sure you know what you believe in and know your values and make sure that leadership is for you.

Emily summed up the theme of beliefs and values, saying, “Although the program is developed upon core values and beliefs, it is important that your personal and professional beliefs are aligned.”

Summary

The goal of this study was to explore the experiences of those currently and previously enrolled in a school leadership preparation cohort program. This study was conducted with the intent that experiences of the participants will provide insight for other women who aspire to leadership positions enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohorts. The findings provided an exploration of nine women from one district about their experiences of being enrolled in a school leadership preparation cohort program. These findings were informed through the use of individual interviews and document reviews. Data analysis occurred throughout the process, allowing the researcher to determine if new information and questions were needed. Each interview was transcribed and analyzed separately so as to view each data set as new and not allow any preconceived notions to be formed. The researcher continuously coded until five categories and numerous themes emerged. The categories that explained the experiences of these women included (a) leadership, (b) cohort experiences, (c) mentoring, (d) networking, (e) factors, and (f) advice.

All of the women who were previously enrolled were involved in leadership roles outside of their job capacity, while many of the women currently enrolled honestly could not find the time to handle additional leadership roles. One theme in particular emerged within this category, making a difference through leadership. When asked why they chose the field of educational leadership, all participants indicated that it was to make a difference, whether they made a difference within a school building directly with students or if it was through a position within central office that guided instructional practices.

Cohort experiences highlighted the career aspirations of the participants, which represented the theme of why leadership was a chosen path for these women. They expressed that they all have spent numerous years in the field of education and wanted to make a difference. Some recounted the experiences they had as teachers and the exemplary examples of leaders they saw in their principals and wanted to model them. Some expressed a desire to inspire and influence the lives of as many children as possible and knew that leadership was the path they needed to take.

Mentoring was divided into the following themes: benefits of mentoring and mentoring relationships. The researcher asked each woman if she (a) had a mentor who is assisted or assisted them throughout the cohort experience, if so, is it formal or informal, and (b) is the mentor provided through the district or university. Participants are assigned a mentor at both the building and university level. The university-level mentors range from full-time university staff to central office administrators within the school district.

The programs high level of esteem and the leverage and support that are obtained from networking emerged as themes. Many cohort members previously held central

office positions and were afforded opportunities to make networking connections and maintain these relationships throughout their educational endeavors.

The women described some factors they felt contributed to their success. Three overarching themes emerged: the design of the program, the multilayer approach that is used throughout instruction, and the resilience that is taught throughout the cohort experience. All participants had completed at least a master's degree and some a doctoral degree, and all agreed that they had never experienced anything like this SLP program. The program is designed so that participants can participate in a full-time internship while completing the program. The multilayer approach that is used is appreciated by all. Being able to discuss theories and best practices in class and then apply them instantly on the job the next day is amazing. The cohort program is tailored not only to the needs of the school district but also to the needs of the participants. The program also teaches strategies and best practice for dealing with adversity and any obstacles that may be faced. It was agreed upon that the program, overall, builds resilient leaders.

Advice was given to those aspiring to become leaders and contemplating enrolling in a SLP program. Maintaining balance and preserving your values and beliefs were listed as essential and were echoed throughout all interviews. Some women are mothers and wives, balancing personal and professional lives. The advice given was to make sure that you understand the time commitment involved and be willing to dedicate time and effort without neglecting your responsibilities. The program is built upon certain values and beliefs of a leader, and it is important to understand those core values and to be assured that you have aligned yourself.

Chapter V

Discussion

Recruiting quality candidates to the role of the school leader continues to be a vexing and persistent problem for our nation's public schools (Tirozzi & Ferrandino, 2005). By many estimates, the quality of candidate pools is low, and current strategies to reverse the trend have not been entirely successful (Levine, 2005). While many have speculated about the source of this alarming condition and experimented with alternative programs intended to attract candidates, there is a descending spiral in the number and quality of candidates for school leadership positions, particularly in some of our nation's urban and rural settings with the highest needs (Roza, 2003).

Unfortunately, some programs that prepare school leaders have not kept pace with the many changes in education and school leadership over the years. Poor preparation for the rigors of the job may explain why one in three principals leaves their positions voluntarily (S. H. Davis, 1997). This lapse has created another obstacle to ensuring a pool of qualified candidates for school leadership (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Levine, 2005). Regrettably, Levine (2005) noted many current leadership preparation models are antiquated and impractical; thus, it is not surprising that few of the nation's school leaders feel prepared to take on the responsibilities of transforming schools and managing continuous school improvement.

The findings of this study shed light on the potential for school leadership preparation programs to adequately support the needs of aspiring leaders and to counter the "antiquated and impractical" model that critics such as Levine (2005) have disparaged. The women interviewed in this study lauded the structure of their program, especially the opportunity to complete a full-time internship. Traditionally, students learn strategies and

leadership techniques in a classroom setting over the course of their program and complete short internships at the end of the program. This model allows for creativity and allows the cohort members to discuss real-time issues and apply theory to daily practice in schools.

A number of studies have reported on the benefits of cohorts enriching members' learning experiences (Barnett & Muse, 1993; Bratlien et al., 1992; B. A. Harris, 2006-2007; Lawrence, 2002; Maher, 2001, 2005; Norris & Barnett, 1994; Reynolds & Herbert, 1995; Teitel, 1997; Yerkes et al., 1995). According to Barnett and Muse (1993), cohort students experienced improved academic performance related to enhanced feelings of support and connection, as well as increased exposure to diverse ideas and perspectives. Similarly, Bratlien et al. (1992) noted that among cohort members, camaraderie lent "the support and motivation needed to strive and reach for higher expectations" (p. 87). The cohort experience provides much more than academic content. Students in cohorts have increased opportunities to network. Additionally, participants learn how to surround themselves with people who have different strengths than their own, learn how to discuss sensitive issues, work through group tension, and learn how to create a sense of community with a diverse group of people who may have different values and belief systems.

The mentoring and networking opportunities made available to the women in this study were perceived as being excellent. Participants expressed the benefits of having support from both previous and current members of the program. Having mentors on the school and university level proved to be invaluable resources. All participants agreed that being a member of the cohort gave them added exposure to diverse ideas and

perspectives. Many expressed that by being a member of the cohort, they were held at a higher level of esteem within their school district. Educational leaders will benefit from using skills learned when negotiating through issues within the cohort. These skills will be useful as each person begins to apply them in his or her life in higher education or K-12 settings as committees are formed, colleagues challenge one another, or when placed in a new setting with faculty members who are new to a leader.

It has been well documented that at a time when public school leaders are retiring in record numbers, there is a shrinking pool of candidates waiting in line to replace them for a range of reasons (Mitgang, 2003; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1998; Tirozzi & Ferrandino, 2005). Although it has been confirmed that the number of potential female candidates far exceeds the number of available school leadership positions, it is not surprising that these women proceed with caution, especially when faced with the realities of the terms and conditions of today's school leadership roles (Lankford, O'Connell, & Wyckoff, 2003). As a result, the more dire voices in the field of education fear that school leaders are tantamount to an endangered species. If this trend continues, there is no doubt that the educational system will greatly suffer from the lack of quality principals who have the ability to significantly affect the success and effectiveness of the schools they lead. Interestingly, the women in this study were eager to enter school leadership roles. The realities of the job did not instill fear because all these women felt thoroughly prepared and supported to face the many challenges that come with being a leader in the public schools.

Countless researchers have attempted to quantify the specific characteristics of effective school principals. However, "no magic formula; no replicable pattern or

checklist of attributes” (S. H. Davis, 1998, p. 7) has been confirmed (Goldberg, 2001).

Yet, previous research has indicated the presence of a similar combination of leadership, personality, and gender-related characteristics that contribute to the effectiveness of school principals in varied situations. Aside from possessing extensive knowledge of teaching and learning, effective school leaders, in particular women, tend to possess certain leadership characteristics that include communication, interpersonal, organization, time management, and problem-solving and decision-making skills. In the current study, the participants reported on many of these characteristics. They spoke on the importance of those interpersonal skills and building relationships, especially with students. They recognized that in order to really impact children, being a role model is essential.

In addition, women tend to be characterized by certain personality traits, including high levels of caring, kindness, compassion, optimism, enthusiasm, creativity, tolerance, thoughtfulness, sensitivity, patience, humor, and efficiency. Women tend to possess a combination of both feminine and masculine characteristics, which include social, influential, relationship-building, and communication skills. The women in this study placed a strong emphasis on the inner rewards received from making a difference in the lives of youth. All participants in this study believed that facets such as kindness, compassion, creativity, patience, and optimism presented an effective model for becoming a successful school leader. This concluding chapter reviews the research problem, research questions, methodology, and findings of investigation. In addition, a summation of the results, including recommendations and suggestions for future research, is included.

Restatement of the Problem

With the national shortage of school leaders and the roles of school leaders in unrest, institutions of higher learning are continuing to prepare aspiring leaders for future schools by using a variety of established techniques. Many leadership preparation programs commonly group potential school administrators into cohorts (Wiseman, 2009). The literature highlighted cohorts as organizational structures used to deliver instruction fitting to the distinctive learning needs of adults (Muse, 2002); yet, very little observed evidence exists about the experiences of these adults, particularly women. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women currently and previously enrolled in a school leadership preparation cohort program. By exploring the experiences of aspiring female leaders through their journey as well as those who have become successful school leaders, this study sought to examine the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of women currently/previously enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohort programs?
2. What are factors that promote and detract from the success of women currently/previously enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohort programs?
3. How do the group dynamics within a cohort facilitate or impede perceived success of the aspiring female leaders?

Review of the Methodology

The researcher employed qualitative methods and triangulation of data through the use of interviews and document reviews (Patton, 2002). The researcher interviewed nine women, four who were previously enrolled and five who are currently enrolled in

this school leadership preparation cohort program. In order to ensure accuracy, the researcher immersed herself in the data, establishing emerging codes and themes. The researcher searched for keywords, phrases, themes, and patterns in data sets. With each transcript, coding began anew so that each data set was understood separately before integrating it into the whole. Upon completion of all individual interviews, initial codes and themes were established and the researcher determined that the data were saturated and that no new information had emerged that did not fit the established codes and themes.

Summary of Findings

The literature highlighted that while the number of female school leaders has consistently increased (M. D. Young & Fuller, 2007), their voices tend to be absent from the discourse about school leadership. As a result, preparation programs continue to be informed by a male-based perspective. A few researchers have focused on female administrators at the central office and high school levels only. Thus, this study explored all female school leaders, regardless of level. This study involved the investigation and a report of the experiences of nine women in one particular cohort. This case study analysis focused on hearing the voices of these women and examining content related to the research focus areas in an effort to discern the perceptions and conceptualization of school leadership preparation programs.

Taking on leadership roles is essential for a variety of reasons. Most obviously, having developed a shared culture among staff gives staff a large degree of autonomy, which is appreciated and allows them to develop professionally (Wiseman, 2009). Leslie Dillon, in *The Leaders Digest*, said, “being forward looking, envisioning exciting

possibilities and enlisting others in a shared view of the future is an attribute that most distinguishes leaders from non-leaders” (p. 41). The women who were previously enrolled all held positions on either district committees or played a significant role in leadership activities other than their day-to-day activities. Three of the four currently enrolled admitted that their current programs and obligations prevented them from doing much that was not part of the SLP program or their internship.

When asked about leadership, one common theme emerged throughout the interviews and document reviews. All nine participants referred to wanting to make a difference. The theme related directly to the interview question requiring participants to ponder on why they were interested in becoming a leader. In discussing making a difference, most participants noted the desire to inspire and make an impact. Leaders are indeed honest, visionary, intelligent, and competent, yet everyday leadership requires being inspiring (Boesch, 2009).

Of the participants who referred to making a difference, many emphasized the need or desire to be positive role models and provide equal education. The participants particularly referred to being able to look at their staff, schools, and data and see how they all fit together to assist with the common goal of serving students and success rates. These women felt changes need to be made and wanted to make a difference by becoming school leaders.

The results of the study enriched insight and understanding of the experiences of women currently or previously enrolled in school leadership preparation cohort programs. Each participant was asked to describe her career aspirations. Each participant discussed the importance of knowing where you are and where you want to be. They all

felt that it was essential to share those thoughts collaboratively and take time to reflect upon the aspirations you set forth. In the literature, some of the most common attributes used to characterize women leaders are collaborative, caring, courageous, and reflective (Scheckelhoff, 2007). This in turn supports the notion that as female administrators develop, their leadership actions are characterized by “working with teachers, students, parents and community members” (Fennell, 2008, p. 97).

While five of the participants identified challenges that they will most likely have to overcome, two participants felt that their cohort experience was pretty easy and that they had been truly fortunate throughout their experience. Some of the challenges identified were not finding the right match to their particular skill sets and not being bilingual in a heavily Hispanic-populated area.

The career aspirations of these women helped to increase the validity of the data for this study. The experiences of these women gave different perspectives of career aspirations. Futrell (2002) found that women in educational leadership positions tend to be problem solvers and task-oriented and express high expectations of self and others. Females tend to have strong instructional backgrounds, a focus on curriculum, and a focus on student growth and achievement. While they all shared their viewpoint on aspirations, the majority of the participants also acknowledged that there is the potential of facing challenges on their path to leadership.

It seems unconscionable that we support mentoring for teachers and yet often ignore principals. New leaders need training and support to help develop skills appropriate for their instructional roles. Many beginning assistant principals and principals complete preparatory programs without participating in internships that allow

for practice in the daily work of leading teachers toward improved student achievement (Daresh, 2006).

As Levine (2005) and others have pointed out, many of the graduate programs do not adequately prepare principals. This means that many active leaders literally learn on the job, and they sink or swim based on how adept they are in meeting a diverse range of challenges. Mentoring is a logical approach to making the jobs more tenable and, thus, potentially more attractive to latent leaders. While information on mentoring emerged from our interviews, it is important to note that it confirms the findings of S. Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) who strongly advocated the use of cohorts and mentors to help active leaders succeed in their positions.

Mentoring was overwhelmingly mentioned as a factor that promoted the success of the participants. Findings from this study revealed that all of the women had the experience of being formally mentored while enrolled in the SLP. The findings in this regard are unique in that they are not consistent with the literature that has reported that many women who aspire to obtain educational administrator positions, do not have experience with formal mentoring programs (Sherman, Muñoz, & Pankake, 2008). Studies have indicated that mentoring in leadership programs has been mutually beneficial to both the students being mentored as well as their mentors (Schulter & Walker, 2008).

When referring to mentoring, two themes emerged throughout the interviews—benefits to mentoring and the mentoring relationship. One participant, who held a principalship previously in another state, noted that during her first principalship she did not have a mentor; however, while completing the SLP program, she was given a faculty

member from the university to serve as her mentor. Most of the women described having their building principal, as well as a faculty member from the partnering university, serve as mentors. All participants stressed the importance of having a mentor for support.

Professional networking is critical for school leaders. Networking has emerged in the literature as one of the major needs in attracting and retaining quality school leaders. Advice and insights gathered from veteran administrators on how to support the next generation of educational administrators identified networking as a key recommendation for leadership development (Michael & Young, 2006). In general, men have traditionally been more successful than women in establishing and maintaining professional connections. For women leaders, networking challenges are associated with absence of access, issues of gender bias, and challenges with life balance.

Women in leadership positions have limited access to networks or are excluded from informal interaction networks (Urlick, 2009). This creates problems for women leaders because these networks provide a variety of essential resources that are critical for job success and career advancement. These networks also provide benefits such as friendship, mentoring opportunities, and social support (Noel-Batiste, 2009). When women have limited access to interaction networks, multiple disadvantages occur, including restricted knowledge of what is going on in their field or organization and limited opportunities to form alliances, which can be associated with the “glass ceiling” experienced by many women leaders (Noel-Batiste, 2009; Urlick, 2009).

Sherman (2005) described the fact that countless women do not have a true understanding of what it means to network. While women are networking within the educational setting, their definitions of networking vary as well as their perception of its

importance. The women interviewed in this study held a very different perception of networking. While discussing networking, two themes surfaced: (a) the high level of esteem to which this SLP is held to, due to the tight coupling of this site and (b) the leverage of support that has emerged throughout the networking system.

One previous participant noted how she uses her networking attempts on a daily basis. If she needs advice or a favor, she calls one of her previous cohort members for assistance. She referred to the cohort as “family.” Many felt that the district held the SLP program name in high esteem, and being able to say that you were affiliated opened doors that may have otherwise remained closed. One participant noted that being a cohort member had a loud presence and a high level of esteem because previous graduates tend to embrace the novice members.

Although learning in cohorts may differ depending on faculty experiences, the relationships that can foster have proven immeasurable (Banuelos, 2008). While each participant had various levels of networking opportunities, each woman seemed to grasp the significance of networking and being proactive in endorsing oneself for leadership opportunities. One participant stated that the connections she made are phenomenal and will prove to be priceless as she progresses through her administrative career.

When discussing the factors they believed promoted or detracted from their success, four factors became visible. All nine of the women commended the design of the SLP program, the multilayer experience they received, and the preparation they received to be resilient in the face of adversity. All of the participants agreed that the design of the program was remarkable and masterfully designed. All of the women interviewed hold graduate degrees and felt that the SLP program was no comparison to any of their

previous programs in regards to the design and delivery. One participant mentioned that she had completed both undergraduate- and graduate-level programs in the past and felt this was the only program that solidifies her work and her strengths. The only detraction was time commitment.

One participant expressed amazement in being able attend classes and then practice the concepts and theories instantaneously on the job. Other participants presented similar thoughts, stating that the one thing that they believe makes this program so successful is the multilayer approach. They enjoy having the opportunity to take what is learned in the classroom and apply the ideas and theories in their full-time internship. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB; 2005) supported this premise, indicating intern field placements should provide opportunities to work with diverse students, teachers, parents, and communities. The literature has further supported the internship structure. SREB (2006), for example, indicated that some of the core components of getting the internship right anchor internship activities in real-world problems principals face, provide for appropriate structure and support of learning experiences, and ensure quality guidance and supervision. All participants agreed that taking the theory and putting it into practice immediately was the greatest asset of the program.

Extended work hours presented a challenge to some. One participant shared that the experience of leaving your family behind and trying to be a mother, family person, and then the other things that come with having a leadership position can certainly be detracting. In 2009, Howell's study of obstacles to female leadership drew upon her own experiences. She noted that family and child-raising responsibilities still affect women more than they do men. Men with families do not seem to experience the conflict

between career and family as severely as women, but that may be changing. In addition, the lack of women in leadership positions creates a less-than-supportive culture for women attempting to climb the corporate ladder. Another participant felt that the program was a lot of work and time consuming, and she was not prepared for that. Although she quickly adapted, the time commitment can be a detraction for some.

The literature has pointed out that more men serve as assistant principals than do women (Danna & Bourisaw, 2006), which provides a predominately male job pool for promotion from assistant principal to principal. In addition, it provides male assistant principals with the leadership experience needed at the entry level and denies women equity of entry and access (Danna & Bourisaw, 2006). Participants were asked if being a female impacted their progress while enrolled in the cohort program. The response overwhelmingly showed that in this one particular program, leaders were built, regardless of gender. The participants admitted that they never had conversations about gender with their colleagues.

All study participants agreed that balance between professional and personal life and having values and beliefs that you can remain true to were the best advice that could be given to other women who aspire to become school leaders and are contemplating enrolling in an SLP program similar to this one. The participants described the importance of having balance and being realistic about the commitment they are taking on. All participants agreed that women can do anything they want, but they also felt that there are different seasons in life. Everyone agreed that it is not all about oneself; it is about the students' lives you have at stake. Sergiovanni (1994) preferred to think of

schools as communities rather than organizations, with sharing of values, norms, and beliefs. The theme of knowing value and beliefs seamlessly aligned with the literature.

Implications for Educational Leaders

Some educational leaders struggle to manage all of the roles and responsibilities associated with the organizational and instructional leadership expected of them on a daily and annual basis. It is important for leaders to set personal limits in order to find a balance between work and home. For each leader, this balance may look very different, but it is critical that leaders find some balance despite the tendency for technology to infiltrate their personal lives with work-related business. A leader's balance between home and work also models for staff the importance of taking care of one's self in order to be a most effective educator for students. Time seems to be a scarce commodity for leaders, but finding ways in which leaders can delegate tasks to other individuals or groups could help alleviate some of the scheduling conflicts that arise, helping principals invest in the more holistic workings of the school. Delegation may be difficult for female principals, who are especially concerned about wanting to appear competent and in charge at the beginnings of their careers.

Relationships between school leaders and other school community members to whom tasks and responsibilities might be delegated are important to consider, as well as the impact of specific tasks on individual professional roles. However, examples of tasks and responsibilities that could be delegated include classroom observations, supervision duties, staff development, planning parent involvement activities, test coordination, and monitoring student attendance.

Leaders often do not have the opportunity to talk about their work in schools because they are too busy and work in isolation. Participants in this study verbalized their gratitude for having a chance to talk about their work with someone else who understands the role. Networking tools for female leaders could help increase self-reflection as well as decrease feelings of isolation. Furthermore, the relatively short time taken for conducting interviews required for this research led to increased knowledge sharing among participants. People often share knowledge with others who are similar to themselves. In this case, aspiring female leaders are more likely to share knowledge with female principals (Rogers, 1995). This knowledge sharing and networking can lead to more support for these beginning principals, which could potentially lead to less burn-out and more effective practices.

A critical implication for female leaders specifically is the acknowledgement that significant energy is spent by this group on managing others' perceptions of their abilities and leadership skills. Presentation of self is particularly important to this group in terms of dress, work hours, quality of work produced, and responsiveness to requests, mood, and stress levels. While they did not express feelings of marginalization when discussing their work, the females who participated in this study are hyper-vigilant about avoiding situations that might make them appear as if they are doing a lesser job than others who are older, more experienced, or male. These women not only want to set high expectations in making a name for themselves, but also in upholding the reputation of the cohort program. It is easy to see how competition could be unintentionally fostered within this group if support and collaboration are not emphasized within a school system.

This study supports the implication for practice in the area of improvement at the university level. Leadership preparation programs play a key role in the success of a school leader. All aspiring leaders who want to go into educational leadership must go through a formal college-level master's program before taking their state certification test. The program's effectiveness in preparing school leaders plays a critical role in determining the type of leader they will become and whether they will be successful, especially in their early development. University programs need to align what is offered to what is needed.

Additionally, the data from this study found that preparation could positively and directly impact thinking and practice, particularly when the preparation was strategically designed with attention to collaboration, balancing the integration of theory and practice, providing opportunities to safely implement learning, and an emphasis on reflection to produce personalization of the knowledge. There was much that could be taken away from these data as they related to future preparation of school administrators as well as future research on preparation.

The findings from this study suggested that the features that had the greatest impact on thinking and practices were those that allowed the participants to learn from each other as well as from a variety of other key people from the university and from the field. Taking this into account would mean that the students would naturally be exposed to a balanced curriculum of both theory and practice. Additionally, seeking a way to create an experience for practicing principals that had some of the features of the internship like being able to test learning on the job with a mentor, a process that was strongly endorsed by the participants, would also be worthy of consideration.

In fact, the internship was noted as a powerful learning opportunity. The overwhelming praise of the experience for the participants, all of whom participated in a full-time internship, was clear. As both former students of administration and as practicing school leaders, the participants in this study championed for the continuation of a full-time internship mandate during formal preparation.

School Leadership Graduate Programs

School leadership programs often focus on specific aspects of school leadership in isolation, never exposing students to the realities of the daily responsibilities that they will face once in a principal position. Principals, therefore, may enter a position underprepared for the challenges they will face as school leaders. Three especially important practical aspects of school leadership that are critical for preparing 21st-century educational leaders include legal and political knowledge, technological competence, and sociocultural awareness. Also important is training principals regarding the roles of other key school staff. A more thorough understanding of key personnel's job descriptions can help principals delegate specific responsibilities effectively. Educational leadership professors are encouraged to incorporate more practical, holistic experiences for principals in training. This study contributes to existing literature and can be used to inform aspiring principals in a practical fashion.

This study recognized the importance of one particular preparation program incorporating certain elements to better prepare aspiring leaders to work as instructional leaders. While there is still much debate within the educational community over the best way to grow aspiring principals, the literature has identified certain elements that should be included in a successful principal preparation program: quality mentoring, cohort

grouping, networking, and meaningful coursework. Of these elements, participants in this study perceived that their preparation program included all of these elements. It is imperative that principal/leadership preparation faculty provide aspiring principals with meaningful opportunities to fulfill the new role of instructional leader. In order to effectively do this, faculty must stay connected to the day-to-day complexity of schools.

This study clearly supports a cooperative partnership between school districts, universities, and state departments of education to prepare aspiring leaders to effectively serve as instructional leaders, which in return will have a positive effect on student achievement. When principals were placed on center stage 10 years ago when No Child Left Behind was passed, many districts asked universities to partner with them in an effort to marry coursework and reality-based experiences (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

There is much to be learned from the cohort model in this study. In the future, districts and universities together can recruit, train, place, and mentor aspiring school principals. As a school administrator and researcher, it would be fascinating to explore other cohort models funded under the USDOE and see if there are similar techniques and tactics that are being implemented throughout. In return, schools will be led by effective principals who can recognize and support good instruction and increase student achievement.

Limitations

A number of important limitations need to be acknowledged and addressed regarding this study. These limitations, which highlight the weaknesses of this study and offer suggestions regarding the appropriateness of generalizing the findings to other

people and situations, will be beneficial to researchers wishing to conduct a similar study or to replicate this study (Creswell, 2005).

The first limitation of this research was the researcher selected only one of the 43 SLP program hubs in the United States. The opinions of the women interviewed only shed light into one SLP program. Another limitation was the researcher purposefully selected these interviewees because they met the criteria needed for the study and they responded to the email the researcher sent asking for participants. Finally, the researcher encountered difficulty with regard to the response for document review entries. Although more than half of the women interviewed returned documents for review, if more documents had been submitted, more themes may have potentially emerged. Additional documents for review would have allowed the researcher to capture the experiences of these women, requiring an acknowledgment that while their experiences do not reflect all cohort participants, it is indeed reflective of the characteristics and influences that frame many who are enrolled in school principal preparation cohorts. In fact, a focus group or writing prompt could have been used for further illustration.

Recommendations for Future Research

As Shakeshaft (1999) noted, there has been insufficient research on female principals, the pathways women take to administration, and perceptions. Even less research has been done about women enrolled in school leadership preparation program cohorts, particularly those SLPs funded by the USDOE. This study has raised several areas of concern in need of further investigation.

One recommendation for future consideration would be a qualitative study on SLP program designs to help determine which type of program is most beneficial to

women. Many women mentioned the challenge of time management and being confident in knowing your values and beliefs before enrolling in a SLP. Research can be conducted to investigate the experiences of women in a SLP program that does not have the strong mentoring and networking connection that exist in this particular study. Given the opportunity to complete a full-time internship was highly rated by all participants. As federal funding is continuously monitored, an additional recommendation would be to conduct a follow-up study on how many SLP programs offer full-time internships and to determine the benefits to including them throughout all SLP programs. Another recommendation would be to conduct this investigation to include the perceptions of men or perhaps a particular age or racial group regarding their perception of leadership preparation. These studies could provide some beneficial data that could be used to determine if the type of preparation program completed determines the type of school where these participants are placed.

If one is truly looking for exceptional leaders to take on the challenges of school leadership, finding those who are passionate and deeply motivated about making a difference is essential. They are out there in the candidate pool, often in our own schools and districts, eager to share their dreams for a brighter future and just eager to talk about how they would make that future come into fruition. This researcher did and now we know that the line that separates latent from active has little to do with money or time, and everything to do with a vision to make the educational system a better place for years to come. The implications of these research findings can be applied to aspiring school leaders and those currently working in public school settings but also to the larger educational leadership community.

Conclusion

The women interviewed for this study provided insight for other women who aspire to leadership positions enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohorts by sharing their individual experiences. Additionally, these women found success through their formal mentoring and networking connections. All participants agreed that enrolling in a cohort requires making a time commitment. Possible solutions would be to find balance between personal and professional lives and to know your values and beliefs.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women currently and previously enrolled in a school leadership preparation cohort program—specifically to provide insight to those aspiring leaders. Why would these women give up the security of tenure and seniority and take the potentially career-threatening risk of stepping into a new role, particularly at a time when the issue of accountability hovers over one's future? Are they crazy? No. Courageous? Yes, in a way. What most distinguished these fine women from an equally impressive group? It had more to do with a feeling that some described as a calling, a mission, or a deeply felt belief in taking on the challenges of school leadership in hopes of making a positive impact on the lives of children and, literally, changing the world.

The themes identified in this study need to be addressed not only by school districts but also by partnering universities that are preparing these women to enter the field of educational administration. Both must begin to develop and sponsor networking opportunities for women in school leadership programs. What women who aspire to serve as school administrators must do now is view current problems from the perspective of the female principal's desk. Identifying problems and allowing the voices

of women who aspire to be school administrators be heard is an important component in the process of increasing opportunities for women who seek advancement and to achieve success.

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Appendix A

Invitation Letter

Dear Prospective Participant,

I would like to invite you to participate in the dissertation study entitled: *The Experiences of Women in a U.S. Department of Education School Leadership Preparation Cohort Program: A Case Study*. This study will be conducted with the intent that experiences of the participants will provide insight for other women who aspire to leadership positions enrolled in school leadership principal preparation cohorts. The goal of this study is to gain an understanding of the experiences of aspiring female leaders through their journey as well as those who have become successful school leaders. You were identified as a possible participant of this study based on your current/previous enrollment in a School Leadership Preparation (SLP) Cohort Program. With your help, the answers to the interview questions will allow for the voices of women to be heard regarding their personal experiences in a SLP.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Please be assured your responses will be held strictly in confidence and will not be identified by name in the final report. Your responses will be audio-taped and kept by the researcher in a strictly confidential place. Your responses will not be available to any unauthorized individual. If I use your responses to open-ended questions in my writing, your confidentiality will be preserved. Your name will not be used in the study document and I will only use quotes that would not reveal your identity. All tapes and files will be destroyed once the analysis is complete.

If you have decided to participate in this study, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time. You have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason. If you do not email me that you do not want to participate, I will contact you to further arrange a time for the interview and to answer any questions you may have. If you have decided not to participate in this study, please accept my apologies and respond via e-mail so that I may remove you from the sampling pool.

Thank you for your time and attention. If you are willing to take part in this study, please feel free to contact me at dbell013@odu.edu or by phone at 757-644-8700. Upon agreement, you will be emailed a letter of consent, which must be signed prior to continuing forward with the interview. You are welcomed to contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding this project.

Sincerely,

Darra K. Belle
 Doctoral Candidate
 Educational Foundations and Leadership
 Darden College of Education
 Old Dominion University
 Norfolk, VA

Karen Sanzo, Ed.D.
 Assistant Professor
 Educational Foundations and Leadership
 Darden College of Education
 Old Dominion University
 Norfolk, VA

Appendix B

Interview Protocol for Current Participants

Interviewer: Thank you for your participation in this study. Do you have any questions before we begin?

- I. **Personal History**
 - a. Tell me why you are interested in becoming a school leader.
 - b. When did you first realize you wanted to be in a formal leadership position?

- II. **Career Aspirations**

Now, let's talk about your career aspirations.

 - a. Could you please describe your career aspirations?
 - b. Do you see any challenges that may hinder you from becoming a school leader? If so, how will you handle these challenges?

- III. **Mentoring/Networking**

Most people feel that mentoring and networking is important, let me capture your viewpoint.

 - a. Do you have a mentor that assists you throughout your cohort experience? Are they faculty within your school district, or the university?
 - b. How was the mentoring relationship initiated?
 - c. Do you feel that the School Leadership Program gives you an opportunity to network?
 - d. How do you utilize networking in your attempts of becoming a school leader?

- IV. **Cohort Experience**
 - a. Share with me some factors that you believe promote and detract from the success of women currently enrolled in cohorts.
 - b. How do the group dynamics within a cohort facilitate or impede perceived success?
 - c. Share me some of your experiences overall, while being enrolled in this cohort program.

- V. **Women**
 - a. Do you feel being a female has impacted your progress, either positively or negatively, in the cohort?

- b. Does the issue of gender and women come up in discussion with you and your cohort colleagues?
- c. What advice would you give to other women who aspire to become school leaders that are contemplating enrolling in a SLP?

Interview Protocol for Previous Participants

Interviewer: Thank you for your participation in this study. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I. Personal History

- a. Tell me why you were interested in becoming a school leader.
- b. When did you first realize you wanted to be in a formal leadership position?

II. Career Aspirations

Now, let's talk about your career aspirations.

- a. Could you please describe your career aspirations?
- b. Do you see any challenges that may have hindered you from becoming a school leader? If so, how did you handle these challenges?

III. Mentoring/Networking

Most people feel that mentoring and networking is important, let me capture your viewpoint.

- a. Did you have a mentor that assisted you throughout your cohort experience? Were they faculty within your school district, or the university?
- b. How was the mentoring relationship initiated?
- c. Do you feel that the School Leadership Program gave you an opportunity to network?
- d. How did you utilize networking in your attempts of becoming a school leader?

IV. Cohort Experience

- a. Share with me some factors that you believe promoted and detracted from the success of women previously enrolled in cohorts.
- b. How did the group dynamics within a cohort facilitate or impede perceived success?
- c. Share me some of your experiences overall, while being enrolled in this cohort program.

V. Women

- a. Do you feel being a female impacted your progress, either positively or negatively, while in the cohort?**
- b. Did the issue of gender and women come up in discussion with you and your cohort colleagues?**
- c. What advice would you give to other women who aspire to become school leaders that are contemplating enrolling in a SLP?**

Appendix C

Informed Consent Document

PROJECT TITLE: The Experiences of Women in a U.S. Department of Education School Leadership Preparation Cohort Program: A Case Study.

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES. The study of the experiences of women currently/previously enrolled in a U.S. Department of Education School Leadership Preparation (SLP) Cohort Program will be conducted by phone and/or Skype.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

The primary investigator will be Darra Belle, a Doctoral Candidate, in the Educational Leadership program, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership, Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia. The project will be supervised by Dr. Karen Sanzo, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership, Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

The purpose of this proposed case study is to explore the experiences of those currently and previously enrolled in a school leadership preparation cohort program

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study that examines the experiences of women currently/previously enrolled in SLP programs. This research is qualitative in nature, rather than experimental. If you decide to participate, then your participation involves an interview that will last approximately 45 minutes via phone or Skype, your choice. In addition, you will be asked to provide documents pertaining to the SLP cohort program that will assist with the study.

EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA

You should have completed the Demographic Sheet. To the best of your knowledge, you should not have withdrawn the information that would keep you from participating in this study.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

RISKS: No risks to participants are anticipated.

BENEFITS: The main benefit to you for participating in this study is gaining personal knowledge about how you think the SLP cohort program will or has aided you in your career aspirations. No direct benefits to participants are anticipated.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researchers are unable to give you any payment for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained about you in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations and publications, but the researcher will not identify you.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study -- at any time. The researchers reserve the right to withdraw your participation in this study, at any time, if they observe potential problems with your continued participation.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm or illness arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Darra Belle, 757-644-8700 or dbell013@odu.edu the responsible primary investigator, or Dr. Karen Sanzo, the responsible supervisor at 757-683-6698, or Dr. David Swain the current IRB chair at 757-683-6028 at Old Dominion University, who will be glad to review the matter with you.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Darra Belle, the responsible primary investigator: 757-644-8700; dbell013@odu.edu

Dr. Karen Sanzo, the responsible supervisor: 757-683-6698 ; ksanzo@odu.edu

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. David Swain, the current IRB chair, at 757-683-6028, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research, at 757-683-3460.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

--	--

Subject's Printed Name and Signature

Date:

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

--	--

Investigator's Printed Name and Signature

Date:

Appendix D

Participant Demographic Questionnaire

Age: under 30 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 and above

Race/Ethnicity: Black/African Asian Hispanic/Latino Native American
 White/European Multiethnic Other not specified: _____

Current work setting:

_____ High School _____ Middle School _____ Elementary School

_____ Other not specified

Major in undergraduate school:

Years of service in education:

If applicable, years of service in previous occupation

(s): _____

Please list any leadership activities you have participated

in: _____

Please provide any additional information you would like us to know about you:

Thank You!