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# Gender Similarities and Differences in Experiences of Public School Administrators

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

Marcia Dee Fawver

December 2014

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Dr. Donald Good

Dr. Aimee Govett

Dr. Pamela Scott

Keywords: Gender, Similarities, Differences, Principals, Experiences

## ABSTRACT

### Gender Similarities and Differences in Experiences of Public School Administrators

by

Marcia Dee Fawver

The purpose of study was to examine similarities and differences in experiences between male and female high school principals and district administrators in addition to similarities and differences in leadership style and skills. This was an in-depth study with participants working in the same district and matched with descriptors such as age, similar position, and time served. Therefore the statement of the problem for the present study is what similarities and differences in experiences exist between male and female high school principals and district administrators in addition to similarities and differences in leadership style and skills.

Two male high school principals, one female high school principal, and one female district supervisor participated. Only top-level administrative positions were considered. The participants were interviewed and asked to take a survey on their leadership skills and their leadership style.

All of the participants had experience as high school teachers with varying levels of teaching experience. There was a fairly small range of assistant principal experience. The participants reported having people who had been an influence in their decision to become administrators and someone who had mentored them.

Barriers did not seem present in obtaining positions for either the male or female participants. Barriers that were listed involved issues that arose in their job such as implementing multiple new programs.

The only real gender issue that was reported by one of the female participants was in the perception of an assertive woman in this position. One male also reported witnessing struggles between a female administrator and female subordinates.

Similarities in experiences, leadership style, and skills were more common than the differences in regards to gender.

## DEDICATION

To two very important men in my life that have gone to be with our Lord. In memory of my baby brother, Kevin Fazio, whose love of life and our Lord and Savior continue to serve as daily reminders of what is important. I cannot even express how much you are missed. In memory of my father-in-law, David Fawver, who taught me so much and was my faithful goat buddy. I hope I've made you proud.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My husband, Darrin: thank you for always supporting me no matter what. I will love you forever.

My family: thank you for always believing in me and never doubting what I can become.

My friends: thank you for your encouragement, your strength, and for always listening to me.

My granddaughter, Hailey: for reminding me how magical life can be.

Dr. Catherine Glascock, Dr. Donald Good, Dr. Aimee Govett, and Dr. Pamela Scott: thank you for your time, dedication, and for being on this journey with me. Thank you for pushing me to be the best I can be.

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds (Psalms 9:1).

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Examination of the similarities and differences of gender is an important aspect of research. This researcher examined the similarities and differences in experiences of top-level administrators in the educational realm. High school principals and district supervisors were the main focus of this study. Issues such as experiences, mentoring, perceptions, barriers, and leadership styles and skills are included in this study.

“A favorite media narrative is that there are male brains and female brains, and never the twain shall meet” (Barnett & Rivers, 2011, p. 23). Barnett and Rivers continue to say that a strong belief in our society is that men’s and women’s brains are supposedly organized early on in different ways, causing men and women to have different careers, levels of ambition, and styles of learning. They argue that babies and children respond equally to people and to objects regardless of the gender. Girls, given a choice, were just as likely to play with such things as cars and the boys with things such as dolls. The authors contend that gender differences are not inherent but rather social expectations. This belief coincides with the definitions provided earlier.

Gender can be seen as the primary basis of human differentiation (Harper & Schoeman, 2003). Writing about or even talking about gender seems to invite controversy (Brownworth, 2013). Adages such as “you throw like a girl” or “stop being such a Nancy” indicate some societal views of females and the controversy it can spark. The belief that the sexes are vastly different with different needs, values, and abilities has been a hallmark throughout the history of women and men in the workplace and the home (Barnett, 2004). Myths about gender differences are internalized and thereby shape behavior not only directly but indirectly through the

expectation that others will penalize behaviors that violate gendered expectations. For example women may feel guilty about working long hours or traveling for work because to do so violates the expectation that their families must come first.

Historically, women have been seen as the weaker sex, that they need protection from the cruelties of the outside world, whereas men have been seen as stronger, more able, and better suited to the rigors of the workplace. Women have also been viewed as being better at taking care of the household and the children (Barnett, 2004).

When the first full census of women workers was taken in 1870, 15% of the female population worked (Walsh, 1997). Between 1890 and 1930, clerical employment grew from 5% to 25% of white female employment, but with pay differences (Wright, 1991). In 1920 the federal government recognized the presence and acknowledged the requirement of women in the American labor force by establishing the Women's Bureau within the Department of Labor. The mandate was to improve women's opportunities for profitable employment. This view was not widely accepted by society (Walsh, 1997).

By 1920, 24% of the employed women were clerical workers and were half of the clerical workforce where the only skills needed were typically typing and stenography. Other feminized occupations included nursing, elementary school teaching, librarian, and shop work (Walsh, 1997).

Bans on women workers were lifted during World War II. Shortages of civilian male labor led to loosening restrictions on female labor (Barnett, 2004). With men off to fight across the seas, women were called to take their place on the production line to not only fill the spots that they had to vacate but to help support the war effort. Not only did men's attitude towards women in the work force have to change, but also women's. After World War II women were

pushed out of the factories to make room for the returning soldiers and the pendulum swung back. The myth that only the mother could provide care to the family was accepted once more (Barnett, 2004).

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed it became more acceptable socially and more desirable economically for married women of any class to work outside the home. This contributed to an older workforce (Walsh, 1997). In the 1970s external pressures from the economy started to dispel the myth of mother staying home (Barnett, 2004). As men's wages began to stagnate, more and more women streamed in to the workplace. They began entering fields previously thought fit only for men. The most dramatic increase in women's labor force participation was among women with very young children. Women were no longer waiting until their children were grown. In addition to economic factors leading to more women in the workforce, female career aspirations, better child-care, and women having fewer children have led to greater numbers of working mothers (Walsh, 1997).

The U.S Bureau of Labor Statistic (2007) reported that since 1950 there have been gains in the civilian labor force participation of women. In 1950 approximately 35% of women participated in the workforce and this percentage had steadily increased to around 58% by 1990.

In 2000 approximately 60% of women participated in the workforce.

In 2012 the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the percentage of women occupying different occupations. These occupations were arranged in categories and subcategories. A table of some of these categories and subcategories is presented in Chapter 2 along with more complete details. The data show women comprise approximately half of the workforce in categories such as management, professional occupations, and service occupations, but are not as highly represented in historically viewed male occupations such as construction, architectural,

engineering, computer, and mathematical occupations. This also includes some higher paying positions such as lawyers, dentists, and chefs. Women are highly represented in jobs such as teachers, librarians, personal care, and paralegals. While the gap seems to be closing in the number of women in the workforce, there seems to be overwhelming evidence that women are still, for the most part, in jobs that have historically and socially been considered female gender specific.

The question of the magnitude of psychological gender differences is more than just an academic concern. There are serious costs of overinflated claims of gender differences (Hyde, 2005). These costs occur in many areas including work, parenting, and relationships even though meta-analysis disconfirms large gender differences. Women have often been stereotyped as caring and nurturing and men as lacking in those areas even in the role of a father. For women the cost in the workplace can be enormous.

Statistical data show an improving but still discrepant number of women in top-level administrative positions in the business, political, and educational realms (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2002; Campbell, 2010; Eckman, 2004; Fulmer, 2010). Although perspectives and perceptions of women have changed over time, there still exists a stereotype that women are not able to serve as well as men in top-level administrative positions (Burns, 2006; Garn & Brown, 2008; Hyde, 2005; Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Wallin & Crippen, 2007). These perceived barriers may be a hindrance to women in obtaining these positions (Conrad & Rosser, 2007; Eckman, 2004).

Two other prevalent themes emerged from the literature. Leadership skills and styles was one theme (Antonaros, 2010; Barbuto, Fritz, & Matkin, 2007; Gilbert, Burnett, & Haar, 2010; Naholi, 2008; Young, Beauchamp, Jackson-Dowd, & Dunnagan, 2010). The other theme was

mentoring experiences (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Holder, 2012; Kinnersley, 2009; Sherman & Pankake, 2008).

### *Statement of the Problem*

The purpose of study was to examine similarities and differences in experiences between male and female high school principals and district administrators in addition to similarities and differences in leadership style and skills. This was an in-depth study with participants working in the same district and matched with descriptors such as age, similar position, and time served. Therefore the statement of the problem for the present study is what similarities and differences in experiences exist between male and female high school principals and district administrators in addition to similarities and differences in leadership style and skills.

### *Research Questions*

#### *Main Research Question*

What similarities and differences exist in the experiences of top-level educational administrators based on gender?

#### *Subquestions*

What similarities and differences exist in leadership skills of administrators based on gender?

What similarities and differences exist in leadership style of administrators based on gender?

### *Significance of the Study*

The study of gender is a well-documented topic (e.g. Bosak & Sczesny, 2008; Conrad & Rosser, 2007; Hyde, 2005; Kimball, 1994; Lowe, 2011; McGovern-Robinett, 2002; Morrison, 2012; Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2008; Woosnam & Williams, 2008). Although the numbers seem to indicate women may be gaining a foothold in the workplace as seen from the data presented by the U.S. Bureau of Statistics (2012), women still seem to be employed in what has been traditionally viewed as more feminine occupations. This limitation for women also seems to exist in the educational realm with top-level administrative positions. Many researchers have cited the discrepancies in the number of leadership positions that are held by women (e.g. Amey et al., 2002; Bosak & Sczesny, 2008; Conrad & Rosser, 2007; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Eckman, 2004; Hollingworth & Dude, 2009; Lowe, 2011; McGovern-Robinett, 2002; Morrison, 2012; Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Woosnam & Williams, 2008). The perspective that women are different from men may serve as a barrier for women obtaining top-level administrative jobs (Hyde, 2005; Kimball, 1994).

There are also stereotypical perceptions that women are not as effective as men in leadership positions, that they do not possess the necessary characteristics to be able to handle such a positions (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008; Boyce & Herd, 2003; Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2006; Garn & Brown, 2008; Holder, 2012; Litmanovitz, 2011; Lowe, 2011; McGovern-Robinett, 2002; Wallin & Crippen, 2007). Family obligations have also been cited as a barrier in women pursuing top-level leadership positions (Conrad & Rosser, 2007; Eckman, 2004; Holder, 2012; Lawless & Fox, 2010; Litmanovitz, 2011). The stigma of women being the principal caregivers seems to be an issue for many women.

Another theme that emerged from the literature is that women and men may differ in their leadership style and leadership skills (Barbuto et al., 2007; Eckman, 2004). Numerous studies have focused on the experiences of women in top-level administrative positions (Garn & Brown, 2008; Gosmire et al., 2010; McGovern-Robinett, 2002, Morrison, 2012, Naholi, 2008; Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Yates, 2005). Women report having many different experiences and some report that there is a definite bias against women in this field and that barriers remain in obtaining these positions and while in these positions (Eckman, 2004, McGovern-Robinett, 2002; Woosnam & Williams).

Mentoring has been an experience that many women in these studies have cited as having a positive impact in their careers (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Naholi, 2008; Sherman et al., 2008). These mentoring experiences seem to differ from those of their male counterparts. An in-depth discussion of these topics is included in Chapter 2.

What has not been well documented is an in-depth look at the experiences of men and women with similarities in things such as age, district, similar positions, and time served in that position and how these experiences differ or do not differ. This information will be valuable for those that are seeking upper-level administrative positions and for possible professional development topics for districts and school leadership programs.

### *Definitions*

There are terms within this study that need to be defined for the context of this study.

Administrator: Principal or district supervisor-director

Conceptual skill: The ability to work with ideas and concepts.

Human skill: The capacity to get along with others.

Leadership skills: Any of three broad types of skills: technical, human, and conceptual.

Leadership style: The degree to which a leader is task oriented or people oriented. There are two major types of leadership behaviors: task directed and relationship directed.

Technical skill: The knowledge about and proficiency in a specific type of work or activity. It includes competences in a specialized area, analytical ability, and the ability to use appropriate tools and techniques.

### *Delimitations, Limitations, and Biases*

Although women have made great strides in gaining a foothold in the workplace as seen from the data presented by U.S. Bureau of Statistics in 2012, women still seem to be employed in what has been traditionally viewed as more feminine appropriate occupations. While the percentage of women in the workforce is increasing, the types of jobs that women hold have a tendency to be lower paying occupations than the males even within the same major fields. There are some fields that women are very lowly represented such as engineering and architecture.

This study was limited to the similarities and differences that exist in the experiences, leadership style and leadership skills between males and female. Therefore, this study did not examine racial issues or cultural issues. Data from only one school district were collected and examined in an attempt to keep external differences to a minimum. Data were not gathered on a national level; rather the study was used to take an in-depth look at a sample of a single school district. Cultural aspects were not considered in this study in order to aid in keeping the study focused on gender. Only the experiences, leadership style, and leadership skills of top-level administrators were examined. These administrators included high school principals, district

supervisors, and district directors. The scope of this study did not include elementary principals because of the imbalance of women who typically hold those positions compared to high school principals. This researcher did not examine the topic of job satisfaction as an experience. These factors helped narrow down the focus of the data being collected and analyzed.

Limitations of this study include the fact that there was a relatively small number of the participants, two females and two males. Because women are not as well represented at those top-level positions, another limitation was in the number of female administrators who are available on which to conduct the research. Another limitation was the inability to match pairs of participants on different levels. Ensuring that the interviews were in-depth and extensive as well as matching males and females on as many criteria as possible aided in combating some of these limitations and outside variables.

Bias can be considered a limitation and the potential for bias to be present was a factor in this study. Personal biases of the researcher can be a large factor and produce results that are invalid, particularly when examining a topic such as gender (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Yin, 2011). The researcher may have personal experience with this topic and may have formed some conclusions already. I have had many experiences in my career that have formed some of my own opinions of women in the workforce and their experiences. Commercials, television shows, and movies can be powerful examples of certain perceived gender roles that can facilitate internal biases. Wallin and Crippen (2007) noted that many of the male superintendents who were being interviewed exhibited discomfort when the question was phrased in relation to gender. Gender issues can be a very strong bias for many women as well as for men (Northouse, 2010).

I have had personal experiences that have formed biases on the topic of gender issues in our society. I was born in the mid-sixties and raised in a small New York dairy town where

many women, including my mother, were stay at home moms. There were not many career women role models. I recall in high school that my female guidance counselor suggested that I take courses in the office manager cluster. These courses taught one how to perform tasks such as how to use carbon copies, how to compose a business letter, etc., all of which are secretarial skills. The guidance counselor's post graduation plan for me was to acquire one of these types of jobs. I was however in regular math courses and was fortunate to have had a female math teacher. She was the only female out of approximately eight mathematics teachers in the school at the time. She changed my view of women in the workforce and sparked in me a desire to teach mathematics at the high school level.

I married young and this dream was put on hold. I worked as a babysitter-house cleaner, as a sales person in a jewelry store, as a secretary at the local telephone company, and as a fitness instructor at our local Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) during my 20s. All of these jobs could be viewed as traditionally female occupations. I then obtained the position of office manager at that same YMCA. Even though I had a bit more authority, it was still in the realm of office work. The director of the YMCA was a male. I then obtained a position at a car dealership as office manager. I was the only female manager out of approximately five managers, and the lowest paid even when I had seniority over other managers. It was an unspoken feeling that they had families to support. It was then that I decided to pursue my dream of teaching mathematics; this would have been in the late 80s. In many of my math courses there were few females enrolled. After graduating I was able to obtain a teaching position at the high school I attended. Thus, my role model in high school was now my mentor. As I worked on my master's degree in secondary education in mathematics there was a marked difference in the number of women in my math courses. The inequities that I had experienced as

an undergraduate student seemed to be dwindling. This may be in part because these math courses were primarily for mathematics teachers. In my position as mathematics teacher, I was paid based on my experience, not my gender.

As I moved from New York to Tennessee, I began to have leadership opportunities in writing curricula, coaching teachers, and serving as mathematics department chair. I currently serve as a teacher coach and evaluator at a school that has adopted the Teacher Advancement Program for teacher professional development and evaluation, and I have also obtained the position of mathematics chair at this school.

These experiences have shaped and formed my opinions and biases of women in the workforce. The topic of gender has been an important subject for me and it was the topic of affective gender issues in mathematics that I chose for my master's thesis.

Another personal bias that I have is not in regards to gender but of providing information without a fear of losing anonymity or of some type of retribution or retaliation. I have been presented with many surveys to complete or interviews to gather different types of data on a county and state level. I hesitate to answer questions either at all or honestly in fear that I will be identified and retribution will occur if my views or opinions are not favorable. I have encountered surveys or have been in situations in interviews in which I am not confident that my anonymity is protected. The questions that are asked, at times, categorized me in such a way that my identity may be deduced. This has played a role in how the interview and reporting process has been structured for this current study. More details are provided in Chapter 3.

To minimize my personal biases in examining data and formulating the results, it was important to have an open mind and not a preconceived notion of what the results would be. Using a recording device to be able to use verbatim accounts or low-inference descriptors will

aid in keeping personal bias to a minimum. It was important to get concrete examples during the interview process to help minimize this bias and to code data carefully. Having the participants review the information and the use of necessary follow-up questions were helpful in preventing bias. In addition to these safeguards I asked a male colleague to look at the data to help ensure my biases in regards to gender were not influencing the integrity of the research.

### *Overview of Study*

Chapter 1 introduces the study by providing a brief introduction to some of the literature in regards to gender and administration. Chapter 1 also provides a history of women in the workforce and some overall gender differences. It provides a statement of the problem, introduces the research questions, describes the significance of the study, and provides the study's delimitations and limitations as well as my personal biases.

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature. Provided is an introduction, a history of women in the workforce, and statistical data of women in administration. Perspectives and perceptions of administrators and gender, obtaining positions in educational administration, background of administrators, leadership styles and skills, experiences of administrators, as well as mentoring experiences is also included in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 provides reasoning on why the qualitative approach was used, data collection methods that include the participants and the interview protocol and the surveys that will be used to collect data. It includes a description of how the data will be analyzed, validity and reliability issues as well as delimitations, limitations, and biases. Ethical considerations are also included in this chapter as well as methods used to protect the identity of the participants. Chapter 4 is a presentation of the data collected from the interviews and the completion of the surveys. Chapter

5 is a summary, discussion of results, conclusions, and recommendations for future practice and research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The study of gender is certainly not a new concept in education and has been the topic of many research studies, articles, and books (e.g. Bosak & Sczensny, 2008; Conrad & Rosser, 2007; McGovern-Robinett, 2002; Morrison, 2012; Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Woosnam & Williams, 2008; Morrison, 2012). Among the many issues of gender in education are women in administrative roles and the experiences they encounter (Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010, Eckman, 2004; Fulmer, 2010) as well as the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions (Conrad & Rosser, 2007; Hollingworth & Dude, 2009; Litmanovitz, 2011; Lowe, 2011).

Also prevalent in literature is perceptions of women in these roles (Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2006; Garn & Brown, 2008; Lawless & Fox, 2010; Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Wallin & Crippen, 2007). Leadership styles and skills in regards to gender have also been widely examined (Antonaros, 2010; Gilbert et al., 2010; Young et al., 2010) as well as a mentoring component of individuals in leadership positions (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Holder, 2012; Sherman & Pankake, 2008). The literature involving these issues is abundant.

#### *General Gender Differences in Our Society*

The American Psychological Association (2013) defines gender as “the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex” (p.2). Similarly is the definition provided by the World Health Organization (2012) that gender is “the socially

constructed roles, behavior, activities and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women” (p. 1). Both of these definitions revolve around the idea of cultural or social differences rather than inherent differences. Society at times has a different definition. “A favorite media narrative is that there are male brains and female brains, and never the twain shall meet” (Barnett & Rivers, 2011, p. 23). Barnett and Rivers (2011) continue to say that a strong belief in our society is that men’s and women’s brains are supposedly organized early on in different ways, causing men and women to have different careers, levels of ambition, and styles of learning. To dispel this myth they argue that babies and children respond equally to people and to objects regardless of the gender. The girls given a choice were just as likely to play with such things as cars and the boys with things such as dolls. They contend that gender differences are not inherent but rather social expectations. This coincides with the definitions provided earlier.

Gender can be seen as the primary basis of human differentiation (Harper & Schoeman, 2003). Writing about or even talking about gender seems to invite controversy (Brownworth, 2013). Adages such as “you throw like a girl” or “stop being such a Nancy” indicate some societal views of females and the controversy it can spark. The belief that the sexes are vastly different with different needs, values, and abilities has been a hallmark throughout the history of women and men in the workplace and the home (Barnett, 2004). Myths about gender differences are internalized and thereby shape behavior not only directly but also indirectly through the expectation that others will penalize behaviors that violate gendered expectations. For example, women may feel guilty about working long hours or traveling for work because to do so violates the expectation that their families must come first.

### *General Perspectives of Males and Females*

Two main theories are evident. One theory holds that males and females are very different and the other is that they are not so different and share many similarities. There are the minimalists, those who argue that the differences between the genders are nonexistent or slight and irrelevant in most contexts. Hyde (2005) offered the similarities hypothesis that holds that males and females are similar on most psychological variables. Results from a review of 46 meta-analyses support this similarities hypothesis. Equal-rights feminists adhere to the similarities model, and conversely there are the maximalists who contend that the genders are different on many dimensions but that the qualities of women are important, significant, and of value.

The mass media and the general public are captivated by findings of gender differences. Gray's (1992) *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus* is premised on enormous psychological differences between women and men. This book has sold over 30 million copies and has been translated into 40 languages. The differences model argues that males and females are vastly different psychologically seems to be a popular notion (Hyde, 2005). Hyde offered the gender similarities hypotheses that holds that males and females are similar on most psychological variables, which refutes the differences model. The author did address that gender differences can vary substantially in magnitude at different ages depending on the context in which they are measured.

“The overinflated claims of gender differences carry substantial costs in areas such as the workplace and relationships” (Hyde, 2005, p. 581). Kimball (1994) wrote that both differences and similarities are socially constructed rather than inherent.

### *Perceptions of Male and Female Administrators*

Perceptions of gender are a major factor facing women in leadership roles. Social role theory provides a paradigm to explain the low numbers of women in leadership positions. It postures that gender differences are derived from societal division of labor between men and women, specifically, from the different norms and expectations generally held (Antonaros, 2010). Gender roles describe expectations about how men and women are likely to behave and also beliefs about how they should behave, including the influence of stereotypes. Gender roles are consensual beliefs about the attributes of women and men and many of these expectations are normative in the sense that they describe qualities or behavioral tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Valentine and Godkin (2000) noted a substantial body of work that suggest that women face social-prompted stereotypes about masculine and feminine traits that undermine their credibility as organizational leaders with women being perceived as overly emotional, sensitive, and indecisive in difficult work situations. Christman and McClellan (2012) found that others' perceptions about women leaders tend to be based on gender stereotypes. Antonaros (2000) also reported that this stereotyping of women leaders is not solely a male phenomenon. Litmanovitz (2011) explains that leadership stereotypes may be a major factor in the gender gap in education. Because men have dominated leadership positions for centuries, societies views of the characteristics of effective leaders often align with characteristics of men. Both men and women equate successful leadership with male-gendered behavior. Women who have internalized the traditional female gender role may be less attracted to leadership roles (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008). The results of their study indicated that women described themselves as less suitable for leadership positions than men. In studying leadership in the military greater experience with

being led by female commanders did not change the men's masculine stereotype of success leaders, and regardless of the level of performance by a woman a masculine stereotype of leaders was retained (Boyce & Herd, 2003). In addition successful female leaders perceived officers as having characteristics commonly associated with both men and women, whereas their less successful counterparts perceived successful military leaders as possessing characteristics, attitudes, and temperaments more commonly ascribed to women in general than to men. Being male and possessing masculine characteristics continue to be associated with positions of leadership in organizations (Dennis & Kunkel, 2004). It appears that people tend to think that women and men should differ especially in those behaviors that are associated with larger sex differences.

Garcia-Retamero and Lopez-Zafra (2006) revealed that work-related projections favored the male candidates for leadership positions and there was an overall prejudice against the female candidate except when she worked in an industry that was congruent with her gender role. Female candidates were predicted to perform worse in an industry that was incongruent with feminine roles. It was also predicted that the female candidates would earn less money regardless of the industry in which they worked. Additional findings indicated that female participants had a stronger tendency than male participants to view the female candidate as less qualified than the male candidate. Garn and Brown (2008) found participants experienced bias coming from both men and women. Holder's 2012 interview with a female superintendent found an unwillingness of communities to accept female leadership. The superintendent spoke of the difficulty of introducing female leadership in a patriarchal community and described the principal of one school as referring to his teachers as "his girls." Conversations with both male and female teachers demonstrated an unwillingness to work with female administrators.

While both men and women can be effective leaders, the difference is attributed more to a perceived congruence between gender and job (Lowe, 2011). When conducting her research on leadership experiences of female principals, the researcher was reminded of a science lesson she had conducted with first graders in which students were asked to draw a scientist. An overwhelming majority drew pictures of men in white coats (McGovern-Robinett, 2002). Female leaders who were interviewed illustrated direct examples when they were reminded that they did not reflect the image of the high school principal held in the minds of others. They cited examples in which they had been ignored, challenged, and asked if they were the “real principal”. The stereotype that women teach and men manage was felt significantly for those three participants. Wallin and Crippen (2007) suggested that the use of the possessive pronoun “my ladies” or “I have female administrators” which were used by male administrators in the study, promotes an objectification of women as positions and the term “lady” often perpetuates particular notions of what is considered to be appropriate behavior and deportment. This phenomenon may help to socially construct the stereotypes of women as weak leaders or the perception that there may be danger in hiring them.

In contrast to the perceptions that women are not suited for administrative positions are perceptions in which they excel in the role of administrator. Burns (2006) revealed that students and teachers who were interviewed felt that gender was irrelevant and that the character of the principal was seen to be the important factor of success. It was even felt that women were generally more committed to the teaching and learning aspect of the principalship. Females were felt to be more socialized and to focus on relationships much more so than men, which were seen as attributes. Female parents who were interviewed felt that the female principal’s nurturing, calm disposition was attributed to her gender and was an asset (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Much of the literature reviewed shows unfavorable perceptions of women as leaders (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008; Christman & McClellan, 2012; Litmanovitz, 2011; Wallin & Crippen, 2007). There was some evidence seen that portrays the perceptions of women as leaders in a positive light (Burns, 2006; Eagly & Karau, 2002).

### *History of Males and Females in the U.S. Workforce*

Historically women have been seen as the weaker sex who need protection from the cruelties of the outside world, whereas men have been seen as stronger, more able, and better suited to the rigors of the workplace (Barnett, 2004). It has also been of contention that women are better at taking care of the household and the children. “The obstacles faced by today’s women in the workplace confirm the adage that history repeats itself” (p. 667).

### *Prior to World War II*

When the first full census of women workers was taken in 1870, 15% of the female population worked. This entailed 1.7 million women who comprised only 14% of the nation’s labor force (Walsh, 1997). In 1920, 8.3 million women formed 20% of the workforce and in 1940 the percentage rose to 25%.

In the late 19th century most females in the workplace were likely to be young and unmarried. The percentage of single women who were gainfully employed was 40.5% in contrast to only 4.6% of married woman being employed. Most likely these married women were of the working class, not middle or upper class (Walsh, 1997). Cultural norms defined by the upper and middle class Americans required married women to stay at home and take care of their families. Before marrying, however, some of these middle and upper class women might

temporarily work in teaching, nursing, or social work, which were deemed as suitable jobs. In 1940 the highest female labor force participation rates were in the age brackets 20-24 and 25-29.

Between 1890 and 1930 clerical employment grew from 5% to 25% of white female employment but with great wage discrimination (Wright, 1991). In 1920 the federal government recognized the presence and acknowledged the requirement of women in the American labor force by establishing the Women's Bureau within the Department of Labor. The mandate was to improve women's opportunities for profitable employment. This view was not widely accepted by society (Walsh, 1997).

By 1920, 24% of the employed women were clerical workers and were half of the clerical workforce. These jobs usually included typing and stenography. Other feminized occupations included nursing, elementary school teaching, librarian, and shop work (Walsh, 1997).

An example of the conflict between family and career is found in the history of women in teaching. Although teaching was one of the few career options open to educated women in the 1900s, it was definitely not a family-friendly occupation. Teaching was one of the most restrictive careers in terms of excluding married women but not married men (Barnett, 2004). The vast majority of those entering the labor market became teachers from about 1900 to 1930 (Barnett, 2004).

### *During World War II*

Bans on women workers were lifted during World War II. Shortages of civilian male labor led to loosening restrictions on female labor (Barnett, 2004). Rosie the Riveter was born and glorified. Marketing was abundant to now convince these women to enter the workforce. Women have always worked outside the home but never before in the numbers or with the same

impact as they did in World War II (National Archives at Atlanta, 2013). With men off to fight across the seas, women were called to take their place on the production line to not only fill the spots that they had to vacate but to help support the war effort. The War Manpower Commission, a Federal Agency established to increase the manufacture of war materials, had the task of recruiting women into employment vital to the war effort. Not only did men's attitude towards women in the work force have to change, but so did women's. This was a major paradigm shift.

### *After World War II*

After World War II women were pushed out of the factories to make room for the returning soldiers and the pendulum swung back. The myth that only the mother could provide care to the family was accepted once more (Barnett, 2004). This allowed employers to fire pregnant women and also kept many women from seeking employment when their children were young (Barnett, 2004). These bans remained in effect in many communities until the late 1950s and even into the 1960s involving pregnancy. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed it became more acceptable socially and more desirable economically for married women of any class to work outside the home. This contributed to an older workforce (Walsh, 1997). In the 1970s external pressures from the economy started to dispel the myth of mother staying home (Barnett, 2004). As men's wages began to stagnate, more and more women streamed in to the workplace. They began entering fields previously thought fit only for men (Barnett, 2004). The most dramatic increase in women's labor force participation was among women with very young children. Women were no longer waiting until their children were grown. In addition to economic factors leading to more women in the workforce, female career aspirations, better child-care, and women having fewer children have led to greater numbers of working mothers (Walsh, 1997).

### *Current Workforce*

The U.S Bureau of Labor Statistic (2007) reported that since 1950 there have been gains in the civilian labor force participation of women. In 1950 approximately 35% of women participated in the workforce and this percentage steadily increased to around 58% by 1990.

In 2000 approximately 60% of women participated in the workforce. Men showed approximately an 88% participation rate in 1950 and this has steadily decreased to about 78% in 1990 and to approximately 75% in the year 2000. In 2005 women's participation rate was around 60% compared to men's 75%. The projected comparison of participation by the U.S. Department of Labor for 2020 is that of 70% for men and 60% for women. This trend shows men's participation in the workforce decreasing while the women's participation has shown an increase in the overall participation percentages.

In 2012 the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the percentage of women occupying different occupations. These occupations were arranged in categories and subcategories. Table 1 reports some of the statistics. Women comprise approximately half of the total population of workers who are 16 years of age and older. In management and professional occupations the same is true. While women are approximately half of this category of jobs, the majority of women managers are seen in food service, education, medical and health service managers, and social and community service managers. There is a low representation of women as construction managers, architectural managers, and engineering managers. In the subcategory of business and financial operations, over half of the workforce is women with many of those jobs being categorized as human resource workers. Males dominate the computer and mathematical occupations and in life, physical, and social science occupations. In the subcategory of legal occupations men hold positions such as lawyers and judges and women as paralegals and legal

*Table 1*  
*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012)*

Employed Persons By Detailed Occupation & Sex		
<i>Job Title</i>	<i>Total Employed (In Thousands)</i>	<i>Percent Women (%)</i>
Total 16 years & older	142,469	47.0
Management & professional	54,043	51.5
Management occupations	16,042	38.6
Construction managers	983	6.4
Education managers	811	64.4
Architectural & engineering managers	120	10.9
Food service	1,085	47.2
Medical & health service managers	585	69.7
Social & community service managers	315	70.5
Business & financial operations	6,636	55.8
Human resource workers	603	71.8
Personal financial advisors	378	31.2
Computer & mathematical occupations	3,816	25.6
Architecture & engineering occupations	2,846	13.7
Life, physical & social science occupations	1,316	45.3
Psychologists	178	72.7
Environmental scientists	105	25.7
Community & social service occupations	2,265	63.8
Legal occupations	1,786	50.4
Lawyers	1,061	31.1
Paralegals & legal assistants	418	85.9
Education, training, & library occupations	8,543	73.6
Preschool & kindergarten teachers	678	98.1
Postsecondary teachers	1,350	48.2
Librarians	181	86.8
Healthcare practitioners & technical	7,977	75.0
Dentists	167	24.2
Occupational therapists	118	94.0
Service occupations	25,459	56.3
Healthcare support occupations	3,496	87.6
Protective service occupations	3,096	20.9
Food preparation & serving occupations	8,018	54.5
Chefs & head cooks	403	21.5
Waiters & waitresses	2,124	71.2
Personal care & service occupations	5,258	77.7

assistants. In education women are almost three fourths of the workforce with subcategories as teachers and librarians. In healthcare many women hold jobs as occupational therapists and a higher percentage of men are seen as dentists. In service occupations women are over half of the workforce but hold smaller numbers in protective service and chefs. Women are also more than three fourths of the personal care and service occupations industry. These data seem to indicate that while the gap seems to be closing in the number of women in the workforce, women are still, for the most part, in jobs that have historically and socially been considered female gender-specific jobs and in many instances in occupations that may not be as high paying as their male counterparts.

#### *Statistical Data of Males and Females in Administration*

Many researchers have cited the discrepancies in the number of leadership positions held by women (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008; Hyndman, 2008; Litmanovitz, 2011; Lowe, 2011; Morrison, 2012). This trend appears in corporate leadership positions as well as in the political scene.

In the United States only 16.4% of corporate officers in the largest companies are women (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008). Similarly remarked by Eagly and Karau (2002), leadership has been predominantly a male prerogative in corporate, political, military, and other sectors of society, and although gains have been made in supervisory and middle management positions, women remain quite rare as elite leaders and top executives. They continue that women constitute 4% of the five highest earning officers in Fortune 500 companies, 0.4% of the chief executive officers, 13% of senators, 14% of congressional representatives, and 10% of state governors. Similar data were cited by Lowe (2010) where fewer than 20 female chief executive officers lead Fortune 500 companies and only 90 of 535 seats available in the 2009 congress were women. This trend

continues to be seen in the business and political arenas where Northouse (2010) notices that even though women are comparable in education, only 3% of CEOs in Fortune 500 companies are women, 15.2% of board seats are held by women in those companies, and only 16.8% of members of congress are women. Female under-representation in higher-level business positions and in higher political positions is evidenced through the literature and is mirrored when examining educational trends.

Although improvements in gender equity have taken place, women continue to be significantly underrepresented in school administrator positions (Litmanovitz, 2011; Scott, 2003). This inequity is particularly evident at the high school principalship and superintendent levels (Conrad & Rosser, 2007). Women comprise 76% of teachers in the United States but are only 50% of school principals, with only 12 out of the 50 largest school districts employing women superintendents, and merely 17 state superintendents or commissioners of education across the country are female. Similarly, Glass and Franceschini (2007) argue that women still lag behind men in gaining leadership positions in education and that even though the majority of teachers are female, just under 22% of school superintendents are female with half of them serving in small or rural districts. Eckman (2004) found that only 237 female high school principals in the 1,560 public high school districts in three states, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin are women.

Although many studies cite the underrepresentation of women in top educational administrative positions, there are some that have found significant increases in the numbers of women in these positions. In contrast, Amey et al. (2002) revealed that women now represent 42% of the responding Chief Academic Officers. Hollingworth and Dude (2009) reported that female assistant principals in Iowa was up from 81 to 197 from 1978 to 2008 and the number of

principals increased from 426 to 721 in that same time frame. The number of Kentucky female principals went from 21% to 48% from 1989 to 2005 (Hyndman, 2008).

The literature shows a definite discrepancy in the number of females holding high-level administrative positions. The literature has revealed some improvements in the last few years, but still seems to show that women are underrepresented in top-level administrative positions in a majority of the literature.

### *Barriers in Obtaining Positions in Administration*

The intent to pursue advancement may be more complicated for women because of perceived barriers such as discrimination in hiring practices, sex role stereotypes, and role conflicts that deter many candidates from pursuing top-level administrative positions (Conrad & Rosser, 2007). In this same study women often considered the time spent away from their children as well as the balance needed between the responsibilities of family and a demanding career. Women may be less willing to make the sacrifices required of leaders than are their male counterparts (Litmanovitz, 2011). Family obligations and roles and responsibilities serve as perhaps the most obvious manifestation of traditional gender socialization (Lawless & Fox, 2010). Similarly when women were interviewed in Holder's research (2012) and asked why they felt that so few women were superintendents, two participants offered that family responsibilities and children might be a cause. The women in this study often waited until their children were grown before pursuing a high school principalship.

Other barriers cited by Conrad and Rosser (2007) included lack of career and family support, adverse working conditions, role conflicts, and the continued existence of the glass ceiling. In one survey, however, three of the female principals said that gender had helped them

secure the position because of the districts' desire for gender balance and an emphasis on collaboration (Gosmire et al., 2010). Hollingworth and Dude (2009) said that one of the side effects of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in hiring top-level administrators is that districts concerned with student achievement turned to the instructional and curriculum leaders in the district to manage the new requirements of the accountability policy, and these positions have typically been filled by women.

Eckman (2004) studied both males and females and described the influence that the “good old boys” club had on their career. Six males described the way the club had helped them become principals. They described a system of phone calls and contacts that aided them in finding their positions. The females had not received phone calls about openings and four of the females described hiring practices that favored male applicants. Having young children at home delayed the careers of five females, while having young children at home inspired four males to seek administrative positions (Eckman, 2004). Sherman et al. (2008) found that a balance of work and family continues to serve as a barrier to women who wish to advance in educational leadership. A similar phenomenon occurred in a willingness to relocate for a top-level administrative position. Sixty-six percent of unmarried women (those who had never married, had divorced, or were widowed) were willing to move as compared to 46% of married women. This was not true for the men in the study where 61% of the unmarried men indicated a willingness to move and 57.9% of the married men were still willing to move (Eckman, 2004). When women were asked to cite the reasons they believed they were hired for administrative positions, the top three reasons were: they were the best qualified for the position, they had potential leadership qualities, and they were effective managers. Sampson and Davenport found that many participants did not feel that stereotypical perceptions of women had impacted their

ability to obtain or lead as school superintendents, but many felt that the “good old boy” system was alive and well. Sampson and Davenport (2010) had reports of search firms that did not include many women. Women seemed similarly disadvantaged in findings from Miller, Washington, and Fiene (2006) where it was stated, “a patriarchal system prevails in educational administration” (p. 221). Dominant male administrative models create attitudinal and institutional barriers for women seeking leadership positions. While the number of women in leadership preparation programs is increasing, only a fraction of superintendency positions have been filled by women compared to the greater number of women in central office positions (Sherman et al., 2008). This speaks to the types of positions that women may be able to obtain.

Respondents in McGovern-Robinett's study (2002) mentioned they were less often mentored and encouraged to take the next step to the principalship level. Instead, they were seemingly expected to appreciate their positions in lower level administration. Yates (2005), reported that when participants were asked if they thought there was a glass ceiling for women's advancement in educational administration, four said that they did not believe there was a glass ceiling, another four said they had not seen evidence of a glass ceiling, and 11 said there was a glass ceiling, but that times were changing. The participants noted that there was a prevailing attitude that men are stronger and can handle more challenging situations and that this could act as a barrier in obtaining an administrative position.

Reasons elicited for wanting an administrative position were often different for males and females. In surveys and interviews of high school principals, males were cited as wanting more money, whereas females just happened into the position. None of the females in this study had planned on being administrators (Eckman, 2004). Because of the small number of high school

principals and superintendents who are women, these positions may seem unattainable to women (Conrad & Rosser, 2007).

When examining the previous employment of top-level administrators some themes emerged. Males and females began their careers as teachers before becoming high school principals, but the males moved out more quickly (Eckman, 2004). Also in the same study the males were predominantly coaches in their careers whereas the women were not. Two of the females had completed their doctorates while no male had.

Morrison's (2012) participants reported that the number one reason they believed women were acquiring top-level positions in education administration was so they could make positive change in the education for young people. Woosnam and Williams (2008) noticed a pervasive theme regarding the career paths of their women participants was that they felt as if they had taken the road less traveled and that they overcame obstacles in order to achieve their current positions and used those obstacles as motivation.

### *Leadership Style and Skills*

There have been many conflicting views on how men and women differ or do not differ in leadership styles and skills. The traditional view is that men use stronger more traditionally male dominated traits (Eckman, 2004). Eckman examined both males and females and five of the eight males responded with terms related to athletics, coaching, and power. A majority of the females described using a leadership type they perceived was different from that of their male counterparts. It was perceived the women were more concerned with interpersonal relationships. This theme was also evident in findings from a cultural study that indicated males are more aggressive and competitive and less gentle, tender minded, and concerned with home and family

than females. Barbuto et al. (2007), however, found that women in their study were rated as using significantly more pressure tactics than were men. Antonaros (2010) found that no significant differences existed for leadership style between men and women and that the women in the study possessed a broad range of qualities that represent effective leaders.

Burns (2006) in a case study found that the principal (“Violet”) who was examined was perceived to be a very effective leader by the group members. It was perceived that Violet had a superior ability to build and maintain relationships. She was commended for her authentic nature, her ability to handle confrontation and crisis, her capacity to nurture a vision, and her dedication to her duty as a role model. It was felt in general that women were generally more committed to the teaching and learning aspect of the principalship and that females were socialized to focus on relationships much more so than men. She herself saw her role as principal as one who could facilitate the connections necessary between staff, students, and parents to bring about the best educational experiences possible for the children. Violet admitted that she did not believe she perceived her role in the same way as did the male principals with whom she had worked in the past. She felt her dedication to relationships differed from the managerial focus she saw in her previous male colleagues. This phenomenon seems to build women as the all around good leader as stated in the first paragraph as women being good overall effective leaders in their skills and styles.

Similarly Campbell et al. (2010) found that multiple skills were listed as helpful to these women in leadership positions. Skills included business skills, an ability to see the big picture, consistency, content knowledge, and entrepreneurial skills. The ones cited as being the most essential were those of people skills and communication skills. This was echoed from 6 out of 14 female superintendents who expressed that effective communication was a necessary skill

(Holder, 2012). Nogay and Beebe (2008) found that teachers perceived female principals as more effective at supervising and evaluating instruction than male principals and as being more effective at coordinating curriculum than male principals. They also indicated that females were more effective in maintaining visibility and providing incentives for teachers and in promoting professional development than male principals. Not only do many women bring strong backgrounds in learning and instruction to the table, but they tend to possess the leadership style typically needed to initiate and lead reform efforts (Conrad & Rosser, 2007). The role of school administrator was previously that of a manager who focused on the daily logistical tasks involved in running a school. Today's school leaders are expected to be visionary, empowering and motivating teachers to provide outstanding instruction that results in student success. Holder's (2012) participants felt that leadership characteristics were the same for males and females. One participant attributed any differences in male and female leaders to natural variations in personalities rather than the possession of different leadership characteristics. They felt the difference was in how their leadership was perceived and accepted in regards to gender. In a study that was repeated after a 15-year period, Morrison (2012) indicated a shift where women and men share equality with power, sensitivity, and were both considered being people oriented. Women were asked to compare their attributes to men and indicated that they were as androgynous as their male counterparts. This was not the case in the first study.

Northouse (2010) stated that a striking difference between male and female leadership was that females tended to lead in a democratic manner seeking input from followers. It was reported that male supervisors often evaluated women who led in a directive or masculine style poorly. Similarly, Lowe (2011) remarked that the concern is that women may have internalized or attempted to imitate these male models of leadership and thus bypassed what may be a more

effective style of leadership. This may indicate that women have adapted a democratic style of leading in order to overcome this double standard. This may have created a situation where the democratic or transformational leadership style benefited these female leaders. As more women join the ranks of effective leaders, questions regarding their differences and effectiveness continue to influence decision making. While evidence supports claims that women are generally more democratic in their approaches to leadership, the reality is that both men and women can be collaborative leaders, which has been found to produce favorable evaluations.

Also of importance is the prioritization of responsibilities that men and women bring to the table. It has been observed that women have a different set of priorities including interpersonal sensitivities that is a more democratic style of leadership. Another difference participants remarked on was that leaders must know who they are and what they believe in (Holder, 2012). They must have their own sense of mission and vision. Irby and Brown (2004) remarked that certain attitudes and leadership behaviors specifically attributed to female leaders are particularly effective in building leadership capacity, developing community, and bringing about the type of systemic change necessary to transform an educational organization. Transformational leadership seeks to draw out the best in others. Female leaders tend to accomplish this goal by seeking collaboration and motivating others to follow in ways that are personally and professionally beneficial. Women have generally been associated with this type of leadership because they are more interested in transforming a person's feeling of self-interest into what works best for the organization (Lowe, 2011). Men generally engage in behaviors that could best be described as transactional leadership, patterns of behavior involving series of exchanges based on rewards and punishments. Subordinates view transformational leaders as more effective within the organization as well as contributing more positively to the company

than transactional leaders. Young et al. (2010) concluded that females adopt transformational leadership styles more often than men. Lowe further remarked that women tend to facilitate and encourage interaction among subordinates while men tend to focus on traits such as objectives and goal setting. Women's leadership is more effective in contemporary society, and women were found to lead in a more interpersonally oriented and less task-oriented manner than men in organizational studies (Northouse, 2010). This was echoed by Sczesny (2003) where women reported that they possess more person-oriented skills than men did in a self-evaluation. In a study of female high school principals McGovern-Robinett (2002) found alternative constructions of leadership that define strength on different terms and include an ability to develop others, a knack for listening and a collaborative work ethic.

Naholi's (2008) findings indicate that female leadership was uniquely relationship oriented and that female leaders worked at a more relaxed pace with details in mind and did not have the target of the big pictures as a priority. Their leadership styles tended to be more humanitarian and on the relationship philosophy than were the leadership styles of their male counterparts; however, this study was only conducted with female participants. In contrast to not having the big picture in mind was Nogay and Beebe's 2008 work where teachers indicated that they perceived female principals at better at framing the school's goals than male principals. Wallin and Crippen (2007) reported that women were viewed as more thoughtful about how to achieve the visions and the potential unintended consequence of its application. Men were viewed more as being aggressive, quick, and often thoughtless in the process of implementing their vision.

The demand of school leadership requires skills in motivating both teachers and students to produce improved student performance. When asked if there were differences in the qualities

that males and females in leadership positions possessed, most of the participants said that there were no differences. Many cited differences but cited personality as the prevailing reason for differences rather than gender. The leadership characteristics that were regarded as the most important were communication skills, having a caring attitude, honesty, integrity, having a vision, people skills, intelligence, organizational skills, a sense of humor, and creating a safe work environment (Yates, 2005).

### *Experiences of Administrators*

Many studies have involved the experiences of administrators, particularly those of female administrators with some variation in reportings (Eckman, 2004; Gosmire et al., 2010; McGovern-Robinett, 2002; Morrison, 2012; Naholi, 2008; Sampson & Davenport, 2010). These experiences range from barriers experienced, to how females are treated, to mentoring experiences.

Morrison (2012) remarks that female participants reported that balancing family and career remained a barrier for women in this replicated study. Sixty-one percent in this study indicated that balancing family and career had been a major obstacle, whereas in Naholi's (2008) participants felt that female leaders combined work and family and managed the two fairly well. The participants in Naholi's study continued to say that the impediments or barriers regarding their upward movement included things such as salaries that were lower than their male colleagues, stereotyped thinking within the community with biases against females, sexual discrimination, and a lack of role models. This perception of barriers is evident in Woosnam and Williams (2008) who reported many of the women in the study indicated that they faced gender

related issues where they worked including sexual harassment and discrimination, pay inequity, paternalistic behaviors from superiors, and professional stifling.

Eckman (2004) found that participants recognized that the club (good ole boys) continued to operate in ways that disadvantaged them as high school principals. They described meetings where, as the only female present, they were expected to take the minutes. They also reported being aware of conversations that changed as they approached their male colleagues. In another study (Garn & Brown, 2008) one superintendent described her relationship with a male principal as being apprehensive on his part in regards to working for a female.

Some women superintendents (Wallin & Crippen, 2007) discussed the discourse revolved around the awkwardness of working with males who did not know how to socialize with female superintendents. These participants reported a fear of asking for support due to worries that they would be laughed at. They felt a pressure to take on masculine characteristics so as to be perceived as being effective and they felt a lack of networking between and isolation from other female superintendents. This same type of perception is evident in McGovern-Robinett's 2002 study where participants discussed instances of different treatment and spoke openly about their exclusion from internal networks that were used by their male high school principals.

Superintendents in Texas reported there were barriers and challenges to overcome as well. Three of the principals encountered unaccepting male staff and one encountered unaccepting female staff (Sampson & Davenport, 2010). Many respondents in this same study did not feel that stereotypical perceptions of women had impacted their ability to obtain or lead as a school superintendent.

Another dilemma that seemed to face female superintendents was that they felt as if they had to work harder than their male counterparts (Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Yates, 2005).

Other participants indicated that there were barriers specific to them as women and they needed to invest more time and effort than male superintendents (Gosmire et al., 2010). Female high school principals in McGovern-Robinett's study (2002) reported they had to rely on themselves more and had to demonstrate over and over again their competence and leadership skills.

On a positive note, some top-level administrators felt they had been provided an opportunity to work in many different positions with many different programs. They felt they had been encouraged by others (Sampson & Davenport, 2010).

### *Mentoring Experiences*

Mentoring has been a prevalent topic of discussion in the literature. Mentoring has been defined as: "the process whereby a more experienced individual provides counsel, guidance, and assistance to another person, serves an essential function in helping younger or newer employees to develop leadership skills and advance within the organization" (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011, p. 17). Similarly is the definition provided by Mertz (2004) "in that the most popular definitions are those that focus on the career advancement or professional development of a protégé by someone in a position of authority within the professional context" (p. 541). Krathwohl and Smith (2005) said that networking could be a major source of information and encouragement for women who are new to administration or who are pursuing leadership positions. They said it was an integral part of women's mentoring experiences. Mentors provided two types of activities, one that focused on career functions and the other enhancing a sense of competence, confidence, effectiveness, and esteem.

There are two forms of mentoring, formal mentoring and informal mentoring. Many formal mentoring programs are developed by organizations for the purposes of recruitment,

retention, and succession planning (Kinnersley, 2009). Mentors are usually assigned and may be a supervisor. Informal mentoring relationships are more likely to incorporate a strong psychosocial function because the relationship develops through mutual selection. Often there a similarity of personality or leadership style leads to open communication and a supportive atmosphere (Kinnersley, 2009). Yates (2005) found that many mentoring relationships developed naturally through one person wanting to help another and by taking that person under his or her wing to help him or her grow. Antonaros (2010) remarked that men and women employ similar criteria in the decision to seek a mentor and that the primary driver included obtaining psychosocial support, acceptance, having a confidant, being trusted, and developing and maintaining a friendship. Antonaros further remarked that women were more likely to be mentored by women. One participant in Christman and McClellan (2008) reported the need to discuss difficult situations with other women. In other literature the reports differed slightly. Naholi (2008) found that female leaders were more likely to mentor other women, but men often mentored women. Garn and Brown (2008) found that the gender of the mentor was not a significant issue and Kinnersley (2009) reported no statistical difference in the perceived effectiveness of the mentoring relationship between mentees who had male mentors and those who had female mentors.

In much of the research women directly responded about how important they felt some sort of mentoring relationship was to their success. Sherman et al. (2008) reported that all of the women interviewed were able to identify influences in their early and current lives in the form of family members or close friends who served as sources of inspiration or supporters of their success. They responded that certain individuals had been mentors. Many of these respondents remarked that the mentors were principals who had encouraged them to seek leadership roles and

served as inspiration. Top-level directors in Tennessee schools were interviewed (Yates, 2005), and these women talked about being mentored by previous superintendents and parents or other professionals who had helped them achieve personal and professional success along the way. Eckman (2004) interviewed principals where they similarly described situations in which they received support from their husbands, parents, or other relatives and acknowledged the importance of that support. Gosmire, Morrison, and Van Osdel (2010) similarly had described how all of their principal and superintendent participants felt they benefited from some type of support system. These mentors included supervisors, friends, and family.

In addition to the research indicating that women who were successful in their fields had support or mentoring experiences that helped them, Woosnam and Williams (2008) found that most of the women discussed their relationships with one another as important for their continued success. It is important for women superintendents to develop strong professional relationships and to make time to actively network with other superintendents as well as to build relationships within the community (Sampson & Davenport, 2010). Participants in Garn and Brown's 2008 study identified a professional mentor who they believed played a role in their accession to the superintendency. Some mentors were identified as formal and others as informal. Kinnersley (2009) found that mentoring is important for women to achieve success. Female leaders recommended finding a mentor as a tool for advancement. Similarly Sampson and Davenport (2010) reported that encouragement and mentorship by their superintendent was the number one reason that the respondents gave for pursuing the career path of the superintendency. It was this encouragement from supportive superintendents who served as mentors that was key to their success in obtaining the position. The gender of the superintendents seemed unimportant to these women. Female administrators believed that

mentoring relationships were important for women in higher education administration (Kinnersley, 2009). They felt that their mentoring relationships had prepared them for leadership (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2010).

The majority of women represented in both studies indicated that mentoring and providing support systems to women are crucial in acquiring and retaining positions in top-level administration (Morrison, 2012). Women administrators believed that mentoring relationships had prepared them for leadership in higher education administration and that mentoring relationships were important for women in higher education administration (Kinnersley, 2009).

The literature has also examined a lack of mentoring or role models for female school administrators. In addition to being isolated from male-dominated networks that sponsor, mentor, and primarily develop other males as leaders, participants in the 2002 study by McGovern-Robinett felt that a lack of mentorship and development for women aspiring to or working in educational leadership positions was significant. They went on to explain that a lack of mentoring was even more prevalent when they served as assistant principals. The lack of women mentors and role models available to women aspiring to leadership advancement in education, particularly in upper level administration, became evident (Sherman et al., 2008). Women spoke about a lack of women role models and the lack of other women to rely on as supportive networks once in leadership positions.

A major factor that distinguished successful relationships from unsuccessful or irrelevant ones was the failure of the mentor and mentee to share a common perspective about mentoring and what should occur during mentoring (Mertz, 2004). There was no statistically significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of the mentoring relationship between those that were in a formal mentoring relationship and those that were in an informal relationship (Kinnersley,

2009). Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) revealed that mentees whose mentors were of higher rank perceived that their mentors provided more career-development functions than did mentees whose mentor was of the same or lower rank. Males had more of a tendency to characterize their experience with mentoring as being informal and most often in the form of job opportunities.

Advice from upper-level administrators included creating a network and finding a mentor (Campbell et al., 2010). Almost two thirds of the respondents had a mentor in Dunbar and Kinnersley 2011 findings. Generally the mentor worked at the same institution and was of a higher rank than the mentee. The mentees in an informal relationship perceived their mentors provided more career mentoring functions than did those in a formal relationship.

Women have much to contribute to the leadership of our institutions. Their talents and abilities should be used and women need mentors to show them the way and to help them succeed (Kinnersley, 2009).

### *Chapter Summary*

The literature has many emerging and differing themes in examining gender issues in top administrative or leadership positions. Although women seem to be making strides in the general labor force as far as participation numbers, they still seem to be in occupations that are traditionally seen as female occupations and many of these jobs are lower paying jobs. This is also evident in the numbers of positions held by women in top-level administrative positions. There seems to be gender biases and perceptions of women in society as a whole that carries over to the role of administrator. Female administrators seem to have experiences that are different from those of their male counterparts. The “good ole boys club” still seems to be

thriving and may be disadvantageous to women looking to secure an administrative position and even after a position is acquired.

There also seems to be differing views on the similarities and differences in things such as leadership skills and styles often with a perception that men have traits that are better suited for administrative positions. Mentoring experiences seem to differ between men and women and serve different purposes.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Prevalent issues in the literature show differences between men and women educational top-level administrators. One issue is that of women being under-represented in top-level administrative positions (Amey et al., 2002; Conrad & Rosser, 2007; Lowe, 2011). Although women have made gains in the labor force, there still seems to be discrepancies in women in top-level administrative positions. The definition of gender released by the American Psychological Association (2013) is the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. There is a common belief in our society that males and females are different (Barnett & Rivers, 2011; Hyde, 2005; Kimball, 1994). These perceptions may be a major factor facing women in leadership positions (Antonaros, 2010; Bosak & Sczesny, 2008; Christman & McClellan, 2012). Stereotypes are often encountered and serve as barriers to women seeking administrative careers and as barriers once they are in top-level administrative positions (Conrad & Rosser, 2007; Eckman, 2004; Holder, 2012; Lawless & Fox, 2010; Litmanovitz, 2011). The literature shows some differences in leadership styles and skills as well (Antonaros, 2010; Barbuto, 2007; Campbell et al., 2010).

Also evident in the literature is the differences of males and females experiences once they have a top-level administrative career (Garn & Brown, 2008; Gosmire et al., 2010; Morrison, 2012; Naholi, 2008; Woosnam & Williams, 2008; Yates, 2005). There also seems to be differences in the experiences of mentoring and the importance and function of the mentoring (Antonaros, 2010; Christman & McClellan, 2008; Kinnersley, 2011; Naholi, 2008; Yates, 2005).

Therefore, the statement of the problem for the present study is what similarities and differences in experiences exist between male and female high school principals and district administrators in addition to similarities and differences in leadership style and skills. This was an in-depth study with participants working in the same district and matched by descriptors such as age, similar position, and time served.

The scope of the study included high school principals and supervisors in a single public school district. This study was significant in that it gives an in-depth look at the similarities and differences between male and female top-level administrators. This information will be valuable for those that are seeking upper-level administrative positions and for possible professional development topics for districts and school leadership programs. It is important to understand how male and female experiences are different as well as how they are the same so that we can understand leadership and better prepare leaders for their administrative careers.

### *Research Questions*

#### *Main Research Question*

What similarities and differences exist in the experiences of top-level educational administrators based on gender?

#### *Subquestions*

What similarities and differences exist in leadership skills of administrators based on gender?

What similarities and differences exist in leadership style of administrators based on gender?

### *Qualitative Approach*

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) argue that qualitative research is as systematic as quantitative research, but emphasizes that qualitative research gathers data on naturally occurring phenomena and that it is a detailed description of the phenomenon being studied. Yin (2011) describes qualitative research as representing the views and perspectives of the participants. He further describes it as events and ideas emerge they can represent the meanings given to real-life events by the people who live them and not the values, preconceptions, or meanings held by researchers. Similar to Yin's are McMillan and Schumacher's (2010) key characteristics of qualitative research. The key characteristics are described as the study of behavior as it occurs or occurred naturally, consideration of situational factors, collection of data directly from the source, detailed narratives that provide in-depth understanding of behavior, and a focus on why and how behavior occurs. Generalizations are induced from synthesizing gathered information and attention is focused on participants' understanding and meanings. Qualitative research is important because "individuals not only give meanings to their own actions, they also give meaning to the actions of others" (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 17). A qualitative research design was chosen for this study as a way to collect views and experiences of the participants directly. It will provide for a rich interpretation of the data that will examine the issues in-depth and provide a more personal and intimate knowledge of the topic.

Besides gathering data about the participants that are relevant to the study, such as age, position, and background, in-depth interviews were conducted. Along with the interviews, the participants were asked to complete a survey on leadership styles and a survey on leadership skills taken from Northouse (2010).

## *Data Collection*

### *Researcher's Role*

The researcher's role was that of a collector in the way of the leadership style and leadership skills surveys and the data of the participants in regards to age, administrative role, number of years in service, and background. The researcher served as the interviewer, which is providing the bulk of data. The researcher was responsible for analyzing the data once the interviews had been transcribed.

### *Participants*

The participants were two males and two females and were either high school principals or district supervisors-directors. Because in-depth interviews were conducted, the sample size needed to be of a manageable size to allow for rich descriptions and in-depth analysis. The participants were matched by as many of the following criteria as possible: age, number of years of experience, and job title. The participants were selected from all the possible high school principals and supervisors in a single school district. Yin (2011) holds that you should deliberately interview some people you suspect might hold different views related to your topic to avoid bias. This was accomplished by interviewing both males and females and also administrators of different ages and years of experience.

Purposeful sampling was used as suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2010). Various high school principals and supervisors were contacted by email to ask for their voluntary participation in this study. Of those who were willing to participate, the participants were selected to meet the above criteria of matching males and females and getting differing ages and experience levels.

### *Interview Protocol*

Once the participants were located and agreed to take part in the study, the data collection process began. The interviews were guided rather than structured and were in-depth, lasting about 1 hour. In-depth interviews use open response questions to obtain data on participants' meanings and how individuals conceive of their world and how they explain or make sense of the important events in their lives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The interview questions were not strictly scripted and I used probes and follow-up questions throughout the interview process to gain rich data (Yin, 2011). The researcher avoided asking multiple questions that are embedded in the same sentence or asking multiple questions on top of each other to ensure that participants were able to give their own account.

Other important considerations when conducting interviews were to make sure to keep the interview conversational and not interrogative (Yin, 2011). Establishing trust, being genuine, maintaining eye contact, and conveying through phrasing and voice tone that the researcher hears and connects with the person is also important to make participants feel at ease. It required intense listening and a systematic effort to really hear and understand what people are telling you.

The interviews were conducted in the participants' office so as to get a feel for their personality and to help put them at ease when responding to the interview questions. The interview protocol guide is in Appendix A. A recording device was used to collect the data and give more verbatim and accurate accounts. Audio recording ensures completeness of the verbal interaction and provides material for reliability checks (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The need for a recording device, however, does not eliminate the need for taking notes to help reformulate questions and probes and to record nonverbal communication. Using a recording device may markedly influence a situation or create an artificial one (Kratwohl & Smith, 2005).

An important piece of a successful interview was making the participants feel comfortable to be candid with their responses with the tape recorder being used. This was accomplished by creating that atmosphere of trust and ensuring that their names will not be used in any form when reporting the data.

### *Surveys*

Two surveys were given to the participants prior to the interviews. Both surveys are taken from Northouse (2010). Both use a Likert Scale as follows: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Often and 5 = Always. The first survey, composed of 20 items, was a style questionnaire and is designed to measure two major types of leadership behaviors: task oriented and relationship oriented. The score one receives for task oriented refers to the degree to which one helps others by defining their roles and letting them know what is expected of them. This factor describes tendencies to be task directed toward others when in a leadership position. The score for the relationship oriented questions is a measure of the degree to which one tries to make subordinates feel comfortable with themselves, each other, and the group itself. It represents a measure of how people oriented the leader is. The focus is on what leaders do rather than who leaders are (Northouse, 2010).

The second survey was a skills inventory designed to measure three broad types of leadership skills: technical, human, and conceptual (Northouse, 2010). Technical skill is knowledge about and proficiency in a specific type of work or activities. It includes analytical ability and the ability to use appropriate tools and techniques. Human skill is knowledge about and the ability to work with people. It is the ability that helps a leader work effectively with subordinates, peers, and superiors to accomplish the organization's goals. Human skills allow a

leader to assist group members in working cooperatively as a group to achieve common goals. Conceptual skills are the ability to work with ideas and concepts. A leader who has conceptual skill is comfortable talking about the ideas that shape an organization and the intricacies involved (Northouse, 2010). This skills inventory is designed to give one a sense of what his or her leadership skills are in regards to those three categories. The Likert Scale is as follows: 1 = Not True, 2 = Seldom True, 3 = Occasionally True, 4 = Somewhat True, and 5 = Very True.

### *Data Analysis*

The information collected from the interviews was transcribed. It was then studied to get an overall understanding of the data. A goal for data analysis is to acknowledge that multiple interpretations may exist and steps are taken to prevent a researcher from inadvertently imposing his or her personal interpretation (Yin, 2011).

The analysis of nonverbal communication is the study of body motion called kinesics. The recording of facial expressions, gestures, and movements can be triangulated with verbal data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Notes taken from the interview process about nonverbal communication were added to the transcribed notes as sidebars.

Open coding is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data. It is the process by which concepts are drawn from data and are identified and developed in terms of their properties and dimensions. Code notes were written in the margins of the transcription sheets. These were then closely examined for similarities and differences (O'Donoghue, 2007). The major categories are background, leadership style, leadership skills, mentoring, barriers, and job satisfaction. Categories were then divided into subcategories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The subcategories were developed as the data

were analyzed. Data coding begins by identifying small pieces of data that stand-alone. A code is a name or phrase that is used to provide meaning to the segment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Patterns are then examined and the researcher will identify broader patterns and make constant comparisons (Yin, 2011).

### *Validity and Reliability*

Validity in qualitative research refers to the degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Yin's (2011) definition of validity is similar: a valid study is one that has properly collected and interpreted its data so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world that was studied. Validity answers the question; do researchers actually observe what they think they see? To enhance validity a number of things can take place. A multi-method strategy can be used that allows for triangulation in data collection and data analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Pyrczak, 2008). For this study the multiple strategies included the interviews, the surveys, and the notation of nonverbal communication along with the skills survey and the style survey. Participant language can be either verbatim accounts or low-inference descriptors that are close to verbatim accounts (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Both of these strategies were used when reporting on the data. The use of a recording device was used as well as having the participants check the data for accuracy (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Pyrczak, 2008). In addition to this, I had a male examine the data to help control personal biases.

Another important aspect of conducting qualitative research is that of reliability. Obtaining reliable results in this particular case can be accomplished by conducting interviews in a consistent manner (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Conducting the interviews in person, in

the participant's office, and keeping tone of voice and body language the same in all interviews can accomplish this. Reliability was also fostered by the use of audiotaping the interviews and then listening to the recordings a number of times. One additional reliability tool that was used was doing any follow-up questioning with the participants as needed to clarify any unclear information.

### *Ethical Considerations*

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) ascertain that in gaining permission most researchers give participants assurances of confidentiality and anonymity and describe the intended use of the data. They also suggest using code names to ensure confidentiality. These strategies were employed and a code was used with all the data that were collected and reported. Using these strategies and gaining the trust of the participants helped in obtaining accurate data where the participants were more likely to offer up their true beliefs.

The research was conducted in the district in which I am employed. It was my responsibility to keep the information confidential. In the reporting of the findings, fake names were assigned to the participants. The participants cannot be matched or reported in such a way as to be able to deduce their identity. They were matched on their overall title: high school principal or district supervisor-director. They were matched by age of under 40 and over 40 and their years of experience will range from under 10 to over 10 years of experience in their present position. It was my responsibility to protect the identities of the participants and to gain their confidence that their responses are strictly confidential. This allowed the participants to feel free to discuss their experiences openly and honestly and to aid in the validity and reliability of the study.

### *Chapter Summary*

This research was designed to examine similarities and differences in the experiences of male and female top-level administrators. Topics explored included mentoring, leadership style, leadership skills, job satisfaction, background, and barriers encountered.

A qualitative approach was used with the main data gathered through in-depth interviews. Data were also gathered through the use of two surveys (Northouse, 2010). There were two male and two female participants who were either high school principals or supervisors in a single district. Procedures were in place to support the validity and reliability of the study.

The interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed. Data analysis included coding the information and sorting information into categories and subcategories using the interview guide as a starting point. Participants were provided a consent form that provides information about confidentiality and describes what the research is about.

This study was significant in that it gives an in depth look at the similarities and differences in males and females in top-level administration. This information may be valuable for those seeking upper-level administrative positions and what that experience may be like. It may also provide for some insight into the differences and similarities of men and women in these top-level positions that may be useful for many different types of venues such as business. It may serve as a valuable tool in possible professional development topics for school districts and school leadership programs as well.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### *Introduction*

In collecting data for this research the main objective was to discover what similarities and differences exist in the experiences of male and female top-level administrators. Subobjectives included similarities and differences in leadership skills of those administrators and in their leadership skills and styles. Twenty-five high school principals and district supervisors were invited to participate in the project. Three high school principals and one district supervisor agreed to participate in the interviews and in the leadership skills and leadership style surveys. Two male and one female participant were high school principals. The other female participant was a district supervisor. The original plan was to interview and survey six male and six female top-level administrators and to match them on as many of the following criteria as possible: job title, age, number of years experience, and size of school if the administrator was a high school principal all within a single school district.

#### *Participants*

Both male participants were under the age of 40 and both females were over the age of 50. Male 1 was the principal of a rural high school with student enrollment between 800-1,000 students. Male 2 was the principal of an urban high school with approximately the same number of students. Female 1 was a district supervisor who had previously been a high school principal of a rural school with under 1,000 students enrolled and was new to the district supervisor

position. Female 2 was the principal of a high school that was neither urban nor rural with over 1,000 students enrolled.

### *Surveys*

Two surveys were given to the participants (Northouse, 2010). One survey was to assess their leadership skills and the other to assess their leadership style. The skills survey measured skills in three different categories: technical, human, and conceptual skills. Technical skill measures things such as enjoying the details of how things work, fascination with technical things, making things work, following directions, completing things that have been assigned to you, and understanding how to do the basic things required. Human skill measures things such as adapting ideas to people's needs, being able to understand others is the most important part of your work, that your main concern is to have a supportive communication climate, understanding the social fabric of the organization being important, getting all parties working together, and being concerned with how your decisions affect the lives of others. Conceptual skill is the degree to which one enjoys working with abstract ideas, seeing the big picture, being intrigued by complex organizational problems, enjoying working out strategies for the organization's growth, creating a mission statement rewarding work, and thinking about organization values and philosophy. The style survey measured the level the participant was task oriented or style relationship oriented (see Table 2 for scores). Task style is the degree to which you help others by defining their roles and letting them know what is expected of them. The relationship portion measures the degree to which you try to make subordinates feel comfortable with themselves, each other, and the group itself.

Table 2 shows the scores for each participant in each category. Male 1's highest score was in conceptual skill. Looking at his leadership style, he scored high on task style and high on relationship style. Male 2 scored evenly across the board on the three types of skills. Human skill and conceptual skill were tied and technical skill fell just below those two categories. Male 2 in the style survey scored moderately low on task style and moderately high on relationship style.

Female 1's highest score was in human skill and in conceptual skill. Technical skill was slightly lower. In regards to leadership style, Female 1 scored very high on task style and high in relationship style. Female 2's highest score was in human skill with conceptual skill right below that. Technical skill was the lowest score of the three. Female 2 scored moderately high in task style and moderately high in relationship style.

*Table 2  
Skill and Style Surveys*

Taken from Northouse (2010)				
	Male 1	Male 2	Female 1	Female 2
Conceptual Skill	24	21	27	28
Technical Skill	20	20	24	23
Human Skill	19	21	27	29
Task Style	40	34	48	39
Relationship Style	44	37	44	38

The female participants scored higher in conceptual skill than the male participants and slightly higher in technical skill. The major difference in the leadership skills is in the human component where both females scored higher than their male counterparts. In leadership style Male 1 and Female 1 had similar scores and scored higher in both task style and relationship

style than Male 2 and Female 2. Male 2 and Female 2 also had similar scores to each other in both components.

### *Background*

Male 1 started college in a major other than education with no intention of becoming a teacher. He taught at a middle school for a while and decided to make the change to teach high school. Male 1 taught high school for approximately 13 years. He earned his master's degree in education administration and 8 months later he was appointed to an administrative assistant position. He earned his Ed.S. degree and was an assistant principal at two other high schools. He was an assistant principal for approximately 5 1/2 years with the last 2 years being a curriculum principal, and this is his first year as a high school principal. He knew very early on in his teaching career that he wanted to go into administration. Male 2 was a high school teacher for 9 years total split between two different high schools and was a football coach. He earned his Ed.S. degree in administration for the pay raise that it provided. He was an assistant principal for 3 1/2 years at three different high schools and is now in his second year as principal at his high school. Both had relatively short assistant principal positions before being named as principals in the district. Male 2 said he thought he was going to continue to teach and coach at his last teaching position until he retired.

Female 1 went to college specifically to be a high school teacher. She started teaching the day after she graduated and taught for 7 years out of the district at a high school and then took a break from teaching when she had her first child. While she was out of teaching she earned her master's degree in curriculum and instruction for the purpose of getting a raise in pay. She later earned her Ed.S. degree in administration, still without wanting to go into

administration. She taught for a total of 23 years. She accepted many teacher leadership roles in her school. She was assistant principal for 2 years at the last high school she was teaching at and then was named principal at that same school. She was principal there for over 10 years and then was named as a supervisor. Female 2 received her bachelor's degree in political science and then later got her master's degree in public administration and her Ed.S. degree in public administration. She relocated and found no jobs in her current line of work and a friend of hers talked her into becoming a substitute teacher. She wound up loving teaching. She taught middle school for 4 years and realized she needed to be in a high school. She participated in many teacher leadership roles and when she exhausted leadership roles, she earned her Ed.S. degree. She became an assistant principal in the same school she had been teaching and after 10 months she became the curriculum principal.

Male 2 and Female 1 went to college to become teachers and the other two did not intend to become teachers. Male 1 and Female 2 earned their administrative degree with the intention of becoming administrators, the other two did not. Male 1 taught for approximately 13 years and served about 5 1/2 years as assistant principal, Male 2 taught for approximately 9 years and 3 1/2 years as assistant principal. Female 1 taught the longest with over 20 years in the classroom and 2 years as assistant principal. Female 2 had the longest assistant principal experience and the shortest teaching experience.

### *Influences*

When asked what inspired them or influenced them to want to become administrators, Male 1 responded, "There was an inspiration, but a negative inspiration. I thought, these people are doing things that don't have a clear vision or are immoral or unethical. I thought I could do a

better job.” Male 2 commented, “I didn’t feel like I could be in the classroom forever without the coaching piece, so I was kind of thinking about, what else is out there for me.” He also commented that there were people in administration that encouraged him to go into administration, “I talked to some people and I figured most folks would go you are crazy why would you want to be an administrator, but most said yes, you should really do that, you would do a good job with that.” He also said how his wife was set from the beginning to be an administrator and that he was doing it initially for a pay bump, and he got a position before she did.

Female 1 had no intention of becoming an administrator, “All I ever wanted to do is teach...I will say this, I think this was the Lord’s plan for my life, He knows way better than I do.” She went on to talk about what appealed to her about an administrative position:

This sounds a lot worse than I mean for it to sound, I saw lots of people in the position that weren’t making the right decisions, they weren’t leading the school in a way that it could be led. They weren’t having an impact. One thing I want to do and one thing I saw was a challenge in this job is, I want to leave this place better than I found it. There is so much work to do and so many ways to impact it and I felt like I could do that.

Female 2 similarly commented on the teaching aspect of education, “Well I just immediately connected with teaching. I think that is in me cause I love to tell people how to do things. I want things to be better for them.” Female 2 also had a strong female role model who encouraged her.

Male 1 and Female 1 both commented on having negative examples and feeling as if they could do a better job. Male 2 and Female 2 discussed having people encourage them to become administrators. Both females talked about the teaching aspect of education and only Male 1 had any clear vision of wanting to become an administrator from early on.

### *Typical Day*

Male 1 tries to start his day by talking to students and teachers until the 8:30 bell rings. He also tries to get out and see kids all four passing periods. He usually has at least a couple of times a day when he needs to get into classrooms for instructional rounds. He is also in planning meetings of some sort for at least an hour or two. He also commented “and I keep up with a whole lot of email.” He tries to walk to most areas of the campus once a day just to be seen and gives written feedback for classroom visits. He spoke to the point that a lot of the stuff he does as an administrator is reactionary. “You find it out at that moment and it needs to be taken care of.” He commented that there are many times when he gets caught in a situation socially where he’s not able to get anything done and has no bearing on anything, but that to walk away would be perceived negatively so you do the right thing socially. When Male 2 was asked about a typical day his response was, “Um, the words typical day don’t really always fit the administrator role. You start with a planned out day.” He gave the day of the interview as an example. He started with some bus duty then walked around for a while trying to talk with some teachers. He tries to get out and pops his head into some classrooms and say good morning to people. He had an administrative meeting that lasted a good long while, about 2 hours. The administrative team goes over some things such as nuts and bolts of reworking ISS and whatever other issue of the week. “After that, what was I doing, worked on the endless stream of emails. They just never stop, email after email after email. Everyone wants a decision from you and what’s your input, what’s your thoughts. It’s always a lot of constant decisions that you have to make and that gets taxing on you.” He also worked on updating the data loop and then dealt with an altercation involving a special education student. He also had an evaluation and another observation and helped the curriculum principal with some evaluation questions. He said there

are usually supervisory duties with teachers or some type of classroom observation whether it's a formal walk-through or not and then a lot of constant decisions. He mentioned again the battle of the incessive barrage of emails. He also discussed the weight and stress of the job. "Like literally a heavy position of pressure and strain and stress knowing that 750 kids and 125 staff members, whatever they end up doing falls on me. The decisions I make have a widespread impact." He went on to say, "Balancing the thing that you have a kid's education which leads to enormous opportunity for their future or missed opportunity, that you are dealing with someone's livelihood and the decisions you are making affect them and their family and their well-being."

When Female 1 was asked about a typical day, she spoke in broad generalities because of her lack of time in her new position. "We meet a lot. My calendar is full every week." She mentioned not having a lot of control over her calendar. She expressed that she didn't think she could be as productive as she'd like because she was chained to a meeting. She went on to say, "However, part of my job is to visit the 14 schools that I supervise at least once a month. That's what I like the best, the days when I am able to get out to the schools and hear the bells ring and see the kids scurry and see teachers in a panic, that's the part I like best." Female 2 described her day the day of the interview and said it was a typical day. "I come in and this morning I got my radio. I know I didn't check my email because when I finally came back in here I had 55 emails." She went and did an observation on a teacher and popped into an SLC meeting, which is a Small Learning Community set up in the school. She sat in that collaboration for about 30 minutes and then debriefed with the assistant principal who was overseeing and running that meeting and mentored him for about 30 minutes. She made it back to her office about 11:00 and set down and started looking at emails. She then planned for an instructional support team meeting and then dealt with a fight in the cafeteria. She had a meeting with three of her assistant principals

on various issues they were having and then got some records for an attorney who had been subpoenaed on a child. “Since I got back here at 11:00, I haven’t been able to get back out. When Female 2 was asked if the job was what she expected, she replied, “I remember that my first week in administration. I worked with a man...he had been an assistant principal. He said I want to tell you one thing. You are going to be shocked by your colleagues. At the time she did not understand what he meant, but she said she found out real quickly why she was going to be shocked. “My best friend who I had taught with, she couldn’t turn anything in on time.” She further commented, “Once you move out of the classroom into any other job, you move over to the dark side. That was really difficult to be suddenly in a supervisory position with people who I had taught side by side with.” At the end of the interview, I asked her if there was anything else she would like to add, she responded:

No, just I love this job, it’s very difficult. Some days I love it some days I hate it, but I recognize the importance of it and how many lives I’m impacting. Not just children’s lives but families and the community and sometimes late at night, I kind of think, oh my God, I’ve got too much responsibility, this is kind of scary, all these people are depending on me, but I don’t feel that during the day, just when it’s quiet and you grasp just how many people are depending on you. There’s a lot of weight with this position. The weight of the position is immense. You are concerned that your students are getting the very best from their teachers you’re concerned that your teachers are not being pushed too far, too fast. All the decisions that you make impact a lot of different people so that is a very heavy weight to carry.

All three of the principals mentioned the barrage of emails and also trying to get into classrooms and out on campus. Male 1 and Female 2 discussed the weight of the job. All four participants had some sort of experience with disruptions of some sort or being tied up in meetings.

## *Barriers*

The participants were asked about barriers in getting to their position or while at their position. Male 1 responded, “For me the biggest barrier was really kind of my own behavior some times. I can be very matter of fact and very businesslike to a fault. I always joke that I have a little bit of Rain Man complex in me that I get so oriented on a task that I put aside some of the social stuff. He continued to say that he’s not ever going to make an emotional decision, but he forgets that not everybody is the same way and that’s been something I’ve worked really hard on. “Five years ago, I was always sure that I was right.” He went on to say, “I’ll say that I was considered for jobs that I didn’t get because there was that question about is he self-aware.”

Male 2 said he was lucky and blessed along the way. He got a position on his first try and said that was hard for a lot of people, “The hardest part is getting in. Once you get into the club it’s easier to work your way through.” He commented that going on an administrative team that started form scratch had helped him. They had wiped everybody out and wanted to build. “There wasn’t a certain pigeonhole that they were trying to find.” He also commented that he was going to a school that not a lot of people wanted to be at and he felt he held some credibility in the community. “It didn’t hurt that I was a former coach in a football heavy environment.”

He described coming out of the leadership academy as being the obstacle or barrier for him. He didn’t get one principal position that he had applied for. When asked what he felt might hinder his ability to be success, his response was multiple and conflicting initiatives. “That’s just kind of the theme of what’s going on right now, the level of reform in the state of Tennessee and the county. I don’t know what it is we do well. We do a whole lot. Everything we do is good, my concern is that we are doing too much that we are not doing anything well.”

When Female 1 was asked about barriers her response was, “I don’t think in terms of barriers.” She told me about how her supervisor had asked her what obstacles do you face in your job? “I am sure I could have said a lot of things. ... maybe I am naïve, I guess I am. I choose to look at things in a positive way. I told him I don’t have any barriers. I’ve got great teachers, I’ve got great kids, I live in a great community, people think we are doing what’s right for kids, what’s a barrier about that?” She went on to say:

Now if I really wanted to dwell on it I could say I have a lot of kids that don’t go to college and I have a whole lot of parents that aren’t doing their job, and I have a whole lot of kids that aren’t working as hard as they should, but I choose to look at it from the perspective that it is our job to get them where they need to be. I have never felt like I have had a barrier that has kept me from being or doing what I need to do. The barriers that I see, and again this is very prejudice...the barriers I see is there is not equity in this county.

She ended this portion with, “As far as personally, I have found myself in the position where I wanted to be.” Female 2 described how there were a few jobs that she had applied for and didn’t get but her strategy was to let the people who needed to know that I was very interested in being a principal. Speaking to a principalship that was being established 4 months after moving to the county, “I applied for that knowing darn good and well I wouldn’t get it because I had only been here 4 months. They didn’t know anything about me. I was one of five people they interviewed and it got my name on the radar and that was my goal. When addressing barriers for high school principals in general she responded:

There are a lot of barriers. The principalship is...how it has been traditionally been structured is not a viable model for what we are trying to do today. Some of the biggest barriers I have is time. Time to lead instead of manage. Now I spend way more time managing the school and implementing programs and those kinds of things. We have so many new programs that come at us: common core, student progress monitoring, PLCs, SLCs, instructional rounds. They just crank it out. When you are implementing something in a school, you can’t just hear about it today and implement it tomorrow.

Male 1 named himself to be a barrier but otherwise there were no real barriers spoken about in getting positions. Male 2 and Female 2 expressed that programs and initiatives that were issued were a big barrier in their doing their jobs.

### *Gender Issues*

One other area that was addressed in the interviews was that of advantages or disadvantages of being a male or female in these top-level administrative positions or in getting to this position. Male 1 commented, “I would not consider myself naïve at all, but this is something that I might be kind of naïve about. I mean, I think there was a time when most administrators were going to be Caucasian males, I think that’s probably not the case. In the end, I think you do what you do and you work.” He said the key is to make yourself an important cog in the workings of the school, to make yourself an expert on something. “I don’t think it matters about gender, I don’t think it matters about race.” He went on to say, “...given two equal applicants, if they were exactly equal, you are going to want to add diversity to a staff. That makes sense. But given two unequal applicants, I’m always going to take the better one. Everyone is focused much more on results.” On the same questions Male 2 responded, “I’ll say I’ve seen female principals struggle with strong female teachers.” He told of a story of a female principal who didn’t make it through the year at a school that was controlled by female department heads. He went on to say, “I think sometimes we fight the old coach mentality. We gotta make sure that we are not old school principal, that it’s always a man, a guy who has a lot of keys and doesn’t know anything about instruction.” Male 2 said the shift in education from principals being more than just a manager has helped change how gender is viewed.

You look at who’s coming in and who is being awarded schools. You can no longer be that athletic director. I think for a female it is hard, you don’t see a

single female athletic director in Knox County, at times you've seen one, but you still have some gender bias in that. Usually your special ed principal is usually a female. Females get pulled into the curriculum spot a lot. I think that AD piece comes from the coaching. I think we have made huge strides, I think we still have huge strides to go.

Female 1's response to "Do you think there are advantages or disadvantages because you are a woman was, "That's a loaded question." She commented, "I think women pay way more attention to detail. If you tell me I'm in charge of graduation, I'm going to have a perfect graduation. ..I have paid attention to detail. I think women pay more attention to detail in every regard. As far as this county, I don't think they pay so much attention to whether you are male or female. Female 2 was asked the same question and her response was, "I think there has been one disadvantage I have faced in being a woman and being an assertive woman or a woman being in a leadership role. I can exhibit my assertiveness or my authority or positional authority and I can be perceived as a [witch], where a man would be wow such a strong leader." She went on to express an opinion about who she would rather work with:

I would much rather work with men. I love to see women in strong positions and I love to see women being successful and empowered and assertive, but I would prefer working with men because of the emotionalness of women. Women, well they can't let things go. With a man you can be very direct with and you can sort of tell it like it is and that's fine, ok just give me the facts and go.

Male 1 said there were not advantages or disadvantages to being a male or female.

Female 2 said being a specific gender does not help or hurt being hired in the county. Male 2 and Female 2 both commented on the struggles that women administrators might face when working with other women. Female 2 mentioned the differences in perception of male and female administrators when both are assertive.

## *Mentors*

Male 1 commented, “The mentors that stand out the most, and I can think of one or two, are the ones that didn’t just say you did a really good job, it was when people said this was good, this is what you need to work on now.” He went on to give traits of mentors that he looked up to. “The mentors that I look up to have been good communicators, have delegated, like the best leaders don’t do everything, they ask other people to do things and that’s been a big one for me because, and we’ve talked about this just a minute ago, there was a time I wanted to do everything and that’s a really good thing, but it’s also good when you grow other people to do it too.” He later commented that people rarely see their own flaws. Male 2 discussed how there were a couple people who he felt were in his corner and encouraged him and he felt that may have helped him in acquiring his administrative positions. When asked if there had been one or two people who really have served as a strong mentor he responded, “Yea, the guy who sat in this chair before me.” He had been his official mentor and even after that time period he remained his mentor. “[He] is a great mentor and he’s always been very supportive of me.”

Female 1 also mentioned have a mentor who had made an impact on her. When asked the question, do you think that is important to you, she responded, “I don’t know if it’s important to your career or just that you know that you have support out there? That you have somebody to talk to that isn’t going to evaluate you or pays you or whatever else. I think it is important to have those sounding boards.” She also commented on her capacity as a mentor, “I can say this, one thing I have done over all these years in education, I have mentored more assistant principals and more leadership fellows and they would tell me, we are sending them to you because you are so well grounded, when they get done with you they are ready to be a principal of a school.” Female 2 also said she had a few people who had influenced her.

I can think of a couple of people along the way, one of my, when I first started teaching middle school, the principal who hired me was a woman, a very strong woman, who saw something in me. She's now a superintendent of a very large school district. I'm very much like her I recognize now. We thought she was really hard on us and really pushed us, but I grew so much as a result of that.

She continued, "We became friends after I went on to the high school. She went on to some other district jobs. She was then asked if it was helpful knowing she was out there, her response was, "Yes, I've got a lot of female friends who are doing well." She was a mentor and there was another man I worked with. I really admired him and his style, so I think I've kind of picked up things that I see people do."

All the participants had mentors they felt had helped them in their career. Male 1 addressed the importance of the mentors being specific in their feedback while Male 2 talked about the encouragement piece of it. Female 1 said having a sounding board and having someone to talk to was important, and Female 2 spoke to the role model aspect of the mentoring.

### *Social Networking*

The main question for this section was whether or not the participants thought social networking played an important role in obtaining a position or being successful in the position. Male 1's response, "Personally I don't believe it plays a role in getting a job. Bottom line, I'm going to hire the best person I can for the job. Whether it be a teacher or an administrator. I really try to think about not really what this person is but what they can be. I try to look at the capacity, how much can they grow. I think sometimes it maybe helps to have your name out there, your face. I think that once you are in the structure, once you are an administrator, it's more how you act." Later in the interview Male 1 also commented that 15 years ago when the stakes weren't as high for what you were trying to accomplish, the social networking probably

mattered more. “I know that the social networking and maybe gender and race played a bigger part in it. I don’t think they do now.” Male 2 spoke about not having any colleagues in the building. He talked about having to sometimes shield his assistants about things he may be frustrated at having to do and the fact that he supervises them. He did say, “I can talk to another principal. I think it is very important to us in [this county] because there are 14 of us and a natural connect, but at the same time it is very difficult.” He continued, “That helps but at the same time if I say this issue is killing me, to them it might not be a big deal because they don’t understand the context it means to [this school] and I don’t know what it means to [another school].” He did talk about the hardest part is getting in. “Once you get into the club it’s easier to work your way through.”

Female 1’s response to the same question was, “Networking is important, but I am not going to depend or rely on other people solely because you can get yourself in a mess that way. I don’t want someone to lead me astray. I’m going to be very careful whom I choose to listen to and I’m not going to let networking become so social that we are friendly, not professional.” She did say that she occasionally networked with principals in other counties whose schools were similar to the school of which she is the principal. She did not discuss networking as a means to getting the position. In the interview with Female 2, this topic was approached as a follow-up question to barriers in getting the position and she had mentioned about getting your name known. She was asked if she thought there was a networking type of thing that needs to go on to get your foot in the door. Her response, “In any organization, if you have aspirations and your goal is to continue moving up or have more responsibility or more challenge.” She had also commented in a different part of the interview, “You have to get yourself in the right positions and people need to know who you are I think.”

On the topic of social networking, Male 1 said there wasn't social networking in getting the job but felt there might have been 15 years ago. Male 2 spoke more to having support once in the job and did comment that the hardest part was getting in. Female 1 said networking was important once in the job in the scope of helping each other out and Female 2 did not mention social networking but getting yourself in the right position.

### *Personal Traits*

The participants were asked what personal traits helped them in being successful as an administrator. Male 1 responded that things came naturally to him, "I'm task oriented, I can see the big picture and I'm a very strategic thinker." He later commented, "It's good to be confident but at the same time you have to be reflective." Male 2 responded that he tries to be high energy and genuine. "I feel that trying to be positive and stay on the bright side of things that if I cast a negative light onto something then that's the way the school is going to take that."

Female 1 said that she was detail oriented, "I am a planner, plan, plan, plan, plan, plan. And I am not a procrastinator; I will do what needs to be done." Female 1 also referred to her mother, "Oh, she was this strong woman and buddy what she said went and you didn't mess with her and she was the one that taught me how to be everything I am". Female 2 commented that she just immediately connected with teaching. She commented, "I think that is in me cause I love to tell people how to do things or then to teach them or show them how to do something else and I constantly want things to be better for everybody and anybody who will listen to me. I want things to be better for them." Female 2 also said that she was a visionary, "I can see where I want to go, I know where I want to go, and I can see it and not lose sight of it." She also commented that she was very organized and a control freak. Additionally she said, "I have very

high expectations for myself. I'm harder on myself than anybody else, but I have to temper that down a lot of times and know, cause I'll push people, cause I want them to be so good at what they do, but sometimes I push a little too hard."

Male 1 listed being task oriented but also able to see the big picture as personal traits that help him, while Male 2 spoke to being able to stay positive and be high energy and genuine. Female 1 also mentioned being detail oriented and also being a strong person. Female 2 said her traits were being a visionary, liked telling people what to do, and having high expectations for herself and others.

### *Leadership Skills*

There was some overlap between leadership skills and personal traits. For this section the participants were asked which skills they thought they possessed that helped them be successful in their positions. Male 1 responded, "I think I'm a good communicator, I wouldn't call me a charismatic one, but I can communicate clearly, multiple manners. I can write well, I can speak in a way that people get." He said that a lot of stuff that happens is reactionary. In response to a follow up question, what other things as a principal go on that you need to deal with, Male 1 responded, "You find it out at that moment and it needs to be taken care of, so you have to prioritize that and find out what's an immediate thing and what's a thing you can work with some other time." In that same portion of the interview he also elaborated:

There are a lot of times in the day where I get caught in a situation socially where I'm not able to get anything done and talking about something that really has no bearing on anything, but to walk away at that moment would be perceived negatively so you kind of sit there and suffer through it a little bit because that is the right thing to do socially and its what relationships need.

He said that you have to have the knowledge of what good teaching is and the ability to be objective and look at data. “I think that’s all you can ask for is to know what it is you are supposed to do and then put as many resources into doing that as possible.” Male 2 said that connecting with people was important. “I think those things allow you to when you got something you have to push on others, even a mandate, it’s a little easier to take when I try to be genuine.” He continued, “I’ve got to find a way and take those initiatives and make them palpable and positive to the staff. If I don’t, it’s not going to happen.” Male 2 also said that relationship piece was extremely important.

Folks see that you are not going to BS them and you are going to give them what they need and that goes a long way with folks. Folks will value you. It’s important to read a person and kind of find out what do they need. Do they need me to solve their problem for them, do they need an answer right away, do they need to just be heard, or do they need to just come in and throw up. That takes time to figure out how different people are, the ability to read people.

He also tries to use cognitive coaching in helping his staff and use skills he has learned from other people: “You need to have people that you work for give you space to make mistakes.” He spoke in length about taking the skills of various people that he had worked for and trying to use those skills as an administrator.

I worked with a lady who is very, very organized, very much a taskmaster. I try to take a piece of that because I want to be organized, I will get organized but I don’t stay organized. I try to emulate some of the stuff she did. I learned a lot working for different football coaches as well, a lot about leadership. That translates a lot over. I find myself making an evaluation schedule based on the format that a coach used for a practice schedule. I have those skills because of the way he did.

He also spoke about being a “three device guy” in trying to stay organized. “I have a phone, an ipad, and then a computer, so I try and multitask as much as I can.” Male 2 also talked about having to handle the stress of the job. “Balancing the thing that you have a kid’s education which leads to enormous opportunity for their future or missed opportunity, that you are dealing

with someone's livelihood and the decisions you are making affect them and their family and their well-being." The last two things that Male 2 spoke to were about technology and decision making.

I think in today's day and age you have to be able to manage technology to balance all the things, emails, and documents. For me trying to stay organized is something I struggle with, managing your time, being able to really keep a calendar and function by that. I think you got to be able to make decisions quickly but also thoughtfully. Sometimes I don't, Sometimes I make decisions quickly but not thoughtful, sometimes I sit on them too long when a quick decision would have been better. That's just trial and error. A lot of decisions are situational. Your first instinct is I have to do something right now, you really don't.

Female 1 at one point in the interview said, "I believe I have, whatever skills I have, fit right in to this kind of work." She said a necessary skill is you have to be able to convince people to do what you want them to do. "I have a way of doing that; I don't know where it came from. I think it stems from encouragement, I think it is a skill to encourage people, cause it's really hard to encourage your laziest teacher, it's really hard to encourage somebody that's not doing their job." Another skill she said was important, "If you are going to be a true instructional leader, you have to be a teacher at heart." Other things that Female 1 said were important,

You have got to know everything. You always got to be willing to learn more. There can never be a time when you say, I've figured it all out, I've arrived. I don't have to do anything else. You have to constantly be seeking more information. I think you have to have some common sense, you have to think practically. What downtown does is give us theory, what we have to do is take that theory and implement.

She continued by saying another skill that she had was knowing when to take a risk.

A calculated risk, every risk I took I didn't just jump off the bridge. I would research, I would ponder, I would talk to people, I would make sure that I had all the information I needed if we were going to go ahead in this way. I think that is a skill too because a lot of administrators make very impulsive decisions that bite them later.

She said she had the ability to see the big picture in a lot of things. “I think I have the ability to see all of the parts and how they fit in the whole. To really be able to understand the nuances involved in all that. I can see where the pitfalls are going to happen, that comes from experiences that come from me making a lot of mistakes along the way. I wasn’t born knowing how to do that.” She had mentioned previously in the interview that she was also able to focus on details. Female 2 said that she had learned most of the skills she needed to do the job. She indicated it was important to be able to read the people who are working for you. “One of the hardest things when I came into this job, I knew not one single person, so you don’t know who the players are and if you are getting manipulated.” She commented that she was a visionary and she could see where she wanted to go. “I know where I want to go and I can see it and not lose sight of it.” She also said she was very organized.

Both Male 2 and Female 2 said a skill they had that helped them was being organized. Similarly, Female 1 mentioned paying attention to detail. Male 1 mentioned communication and being able to prioritize along with having knowledge of good teaching. Both female participants mentioned about seeing a big picture/ being a visionary. Female 1 mentioned being able to take calculated risks as a skill. All but Male 1 mentioned some sort of skill that involved the people they work with. Male 2 mentioned the skill of being able to connect with people and be a coach, Female 1 mentioned the skill of being able to encourage people, and Female 2 mentioned being able to read people.

### *Leadership Style*

Male 1 mentioned there was a time when he wanted to do everything and said that was a good thing but added:

It's also good when you grow other people to do it too, to grow. When I look at our TAP leadership team, I think how can I help them grow. When I look at my administrators, I think what's next for them. I can help them achieve their goals, because if I'm doing that, if we are growing people appropriately, that makes [this county] better, but it also makes us better as a school and I think that goes down to the classroom teachers.

Male 1 spoke about the social aspect of his leadership style,

The things that I've had to work at are the social aspects. You have to remember education is a people business. The cliché that you hear again and again is people don't care what you know until they know that you care. I get that, that's totally true and that's not true for me. Being aware that that's not true for me but it is true for other people has been a really big deal.

Male 1 also described how he likes to have meetings with people to talk about value added, "I think that there is one thing I want, it's a culture that people understand that when results come in we are going to talk about them." Male 2's leadership style seems to be based on the connection with people. "I try to be positive and I try to connect with people." When asked what he felt influenced his leadership style his response was:

I think the people I've worked for. The more numbers of leaders that you can work for, the better off you are or work with because you see different ways of doing things. If you only work for one principal, that's your belief of what a principal should be good or bad, that is your role model as a principal. As a teacher I've worked for four different principals, I'd like to think I take a little bit of each of them. Especially my first few months on the job as an assistant principal. I'd think about my last principal, I'd tell myself WWCD, what would Chuck do?

He also commented on how to help his staff, "Give people space and I've got a couple folks working with me who are learning and new. She'll say, "What do I do?" It's easy for me to say do this, this, and this but she doesn't grow through that, so I try to do the whole what are you thinking about. You need to have people that you work for give you space to make mistakes."

He mentioned about learning a lot about leadership style and skills working for different football coaches. When speaking about what a typical day looked like he had said, "I think it's important

that we go out and try to be that face of the school and have some energy. Male 2 spoke about building leaders, “We have done a great job of building leaders over the last 5 to 6 years. We’ve had tons and tons of folks go on to promotions which is awesome.”

Female 1 said that leadership style is who you are. “You cannot be this kind of principal and this kind of person. Your style is who you are as a person. You have to be who you are for people to know they can trust you and be genuine.” She mentioned her mentor being a powerful influence on her leadership style. “If he were still principal I would still be his assistant today and I would be proud of that. He’s the one who told me you can suspend a kid with a smile on your face just as easily as you can screaming at him. He is the one who told me people have to be able to predict your behavior. He told me those things and I haven’t forgotten those things.” In speaking to her new position, “How I want to impact here is to help leaders of schools realize the power they have to change the life of students. If I can impact two or three or four or five schools, then I’ve accomplished something.” She commented that it was never about her, “it was about the power of what a whole team can do if they are working towards the same goal.”

Female 2 said she was a visionary as mentioned earlier. She noted, “I like the notion of continuous improvement and that can be good or it can be bad. I’m always wanting things to get better. Some people don’t like change, which is most people. It’s uncomfortable changing and it’s uncomfortable leading change, but I love that, that discomfort as long as I can keep that vision.” She mentioned having high expectations for herself, “I’m harder on myself than anybody else, but I have to temper that down a lot of times and know, cause I’ll push people, cause I want them to be so good at what they do, but sometimes I push a little too hard.” She said the principal who had hired her when she first started teaching middle school influenced her leadership style. She also mentioned another man she worked with, “He was a principal and then

he became chief financial officer in the school system and I really admired him and his style, so I think I've kind of picked up things that I see people do.” She also mentioned that she had a lot of nonexamples along the way.

All four participants mentioned wanting to grow their staff. Both male participants mentioned the social aspect or connecting with people. Male 1 was data driven in his leadership style. Male 2 mentioned having a positive attitude while Female 1 felt your leadership style was just who you are as a person. Female 2 said that being a visionary was part of her leadership style as well as having high expectations for her and her staff. All the participants except for Male 1 mentioned role models they had encountered in their career had influenced their leadership style.

### *Chapter Summary*

In this research the participants were two male and one female high school principals and the other female was a first-year district supervisor who had previously been a high school principal. The results of the leadership style and the leadership skills surveys were included as well as the background of the participants.

This chapter is a discussion of the administrators' experiences in different areas. The first topic was things that had influenced them to get into administration or influenced them in their jobs as administrators. The participants were also asked to describe a typical day. This also led to some information that was presented in leadership style and skills. Experiences or issues that have served as barriers were presented next with thoughts on gender issues following. The next topic of discussion in this chapter was mentoring experiences the participants had or continue to have followed by the topic of social networking.

The next section gives the findings on the personal traits the participants felt they had. The last two sections were the participants' leadership style and their leadership skills. At times throughout the interviews there were many questions that solicited responses from the participants that fell into one or more of the topics listed.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Summary*

The purpose of this study was to examine the similarities and differences of experiences of top-level administrators that included two male high school principals, one female high school principal, and one female district supervisor who had been a high school principal and had just begun her job as a supervisor. The intent was to match males and females based on criteria such as age, size school in which they worked, number of years of experience, and job title. Due to the small number of participants who agreed to take part in the research this was not possible.

This chapter is a discussion of the findings as presented in Chapter 4 as follows: the background of the participants, influences, their description of a typical day, barriers they had encountered, gender issues, mentoring experiences, social networking, personal traits they felt they had, leadership skills, and then leadership style.

#### *Conclusions*

##### *Background*

Male 1 and Female 2 had no intention of going into education. Male 2 and Female 1 went to college to prepare for careers in education. They all taught at the high school level with Male 1 and Female 2 having done a small amount of time teaching at the middle school level. Female 1 taught the longest at 23 years. Male 2 was the only participant who had also coached during his teaching years. Male 1 was the only participant to know at an early stage of his career that he wanted to go into administration. Female 2 earned her administrative degree knowing

she wanted to go in to administration while Male 2 and Female 2 pursued their degrees to increase their pay. All the participants were assistant principals at a high school for a relatively short amount of time. Female 2 was the shortest at 10 months, Female 1 was an assistant principal for 2 years and the males were assistant principals for 3 1/2 years (Male 1) and 5 1/2 years (Male 2).

Although there are some differences in the background of the participants, they all were teachers at the high school level at one time. Similarly, Eckman (2004) found that males and females began their careers as teachers before coming high school principals Eckman (2004) also stated that they males moved out more quickly. This is not evident with these four participants. One of each gender had administration in their sights when they pursued their degree and the other set did not. In the same study by Eckman (2004) the males were predominantly coaches in their careers whereas the women were not. Out of the four participants, only one was a coach who was a male.

### *Influences*

When the participants were asked what inspired them or influenced them to want to become administrators they all responded having someone in some way influence them. Male 1's influence was a negative one, as noted on page 60. Female 1 also had similar thoughts, as noted on page 61 where she felt some administrators were not having an impact and she felt she could do a better job. Male 2 knew he couldn't be in the classroom forever without the coaching piece and was wondering what else was out there for him and had people in other administrative positions that encouraged him, as noted on pages 60 and 61. Female 2's influence came from

that connection to teaching and the encouragement from a strong female role model as documented on page 61.

Two of the participants had seen negative examples and two of the participants had positive examples. There was a male and female participant for each of these. The positive examples and role models was documented in Chapter 2 where in the study by Sherman et al. (2008) many of the respondents remarked that the mentors were principals who had encouraged them to seek leadership roles and served as inspiration. This study was conducted with female participants only.

### *Typical Day*

There were many similarities in the participants' descriptions of a typical day. One similarity was evaluation of teachers or principals in the case of the district supervisor. Male 1 spoke of instructional rounds as noted on page 61, Male 2 mentioned popping into classrooms and formal and informal observations as noted on page 62. Female 2 mentioned observations on as noted on page 63, and Female 1 mentioned visiting the high schools in the district and working with the teachers. All four participants mentioned meetings they had to be a part of or conduct. Female 1 mentioned that her calendar was full of meetings and she seemed to be bothered that she did not have control over her calendar. All of the principals mentioned the amount of emails they get. Male 1's comment was "and I keep up with a whole lot of email." Similarly Male 2 commented, "...worked on the endless stream of emails. They just never stop, email after email after email." Female 1 had a similar comment about her 55 emails when she finally got back to her office. Another similarity was in being out on campus by Male 1 as noted on pages 61 about being out and talking to students and teachers as noted on page 62, by Male 2

as noted on page 62 and with bus duty and talking to teachers also. This was also evident in Female 1's commentary where she said she had not been able to get back out of her office since about 11:30 that day. Female 1 commented it was visiting the high schools that she liked the best.

There were some similarities that showed for some of the participants but not all. Male 2 and Female 2 both mentioned having to deal with altercations between students. There was also a commonality with Male 1 and Male 2. This was in regards to decision making and how a lot of stuff is reactionary. Male 2 commented that there were constant decisions to be made. Male 2 and Female 2 mentioned the weight of the job and how many people were depending on them and the impact they could have. This was noted on pages 62 and 63 for Male 1 and page 64 for Female 2.

The only difference that really came out in this section of the typical day as noted on page 64 for Female 2. She spoke about the difficulty of dealing with colleagues as an administrator where she had once been a teacher. She spoke about moving to the dark side.

There was no literature that was reviewed that spoke to this topic of what a typical day looked like but one that is related. Holder (2012) observed that women have a different set of priorities including interpersonal sensitivities. This was not evident in this portion of the research as all the participants commented it was important to be out of their office and interacting with the staff and students. Each typical day was similar to the next for each with slight variations for the district supervisor.

## *Barriers*

The description of barriers was not as similar as the descriptions of the typical day. Male 1 named himself as his biggest barrier as noted on page 65. Male 2 said he had no barriers in getting a job and felt he had some credibility in the community from his coaching experience. Male 2 did say that once you are in it's easier to work your way through. Female 1 said she didn't think in terms of barriers.

The similarity in the topic of barriers seemed to stem from external factors. Female 1 spoke to the lack of equity in the county. Two of the four participants spoke to the amount of new programs or initiatives being a barrier to their job as noted on pages 65 and page 66. Female 2 wanted more time to lead instead of manage and said this was how the principalship was structured.

Barriers that were given by the participants do not match the barriers described in the literature. Neither female revealed an overall prejudice against them as found by Garcia-Retamero and Lopez-Zafra (2006). None of the participants described barriers in obtaining the position. Conrad and Rosser (2007) mentioned the intent to pursue advancement may be more complicated for women because of perceived barriers such as discrimination in hiring practices, sex role stereotypes, and role conflicts that deter many candidates from pursuing top-level administrative positions. Similarly, Sherman et al. (2008) found that dominant male administrative models create attitudinal and institutional barriers for women seeking leadership positions. None of the participants cited balancing family and career as a barrier as found by Morrison (2012). None of the barriers given by the participants seemed gender related but were factors from within or external factors that were common to both male and female participants.

## *Gender Issues*

The participants were asked about the advantages or disadvantages of being a male or female in these top-level administrative positions or in getting the position. Three of the four participants remarked there were no issues in regards to being female and getting a position, although when Female 1 was asked the question, her response was, “That’s a loaded question.” This may indicate unwillingness for participants to share negative aspects. Male 2 did comment that sometimes we fight the old coach mentality and that care must be taken to make sure we are not going back to that old school principal – the guy with a ton of keys and knows nothing about instruction. Male 2 also commented about the Athletic Director position and that there are no females currently in that position in the county, as noted on page 67. While both men and women can be effective leaders, the difference is attributed more to a perceived congruence between gender and job (Lowe, 2011). Male 2’s most powerful statement was, “I think we have made huge strides, I think we still have huge strides to go.” His comment suggests that there may still be some inequities in woman getting top-level administrative positions. In contrast to the perceptions that women are not sited for administrative positions are perceptions in which they excel in the role of administrator. Burns (2006) revealed that students and teachers who were interviewed said that gender was irrelevant and that the character of the principal was seen to be the important factor of success.

The other thread that appeared in this section was once people are in the top-level position. Two participants addressed this to some extent. Male 2 discussed how he has seen female principals struggle with strong female teachers. Female 2 commented similarly that she would much rather work with men. This is noted on page 68. She said it was due to the emotionalness of women and the inability for women to let things go. She said she could be

more direct with a man. Her view mimics Christman and McClellan (2012) findings where women are perceived as overly emotional and sensitive and that stereotyping of women leaders is not solely a male phenomenon (Antonaros, 2000).

Female 2 also discussed the perception of women as leaders as noted on page 68 where she felt that when she shows her assertiveness she can be seen as a [witch] but if a man is the same way he is labeled a strong leader. This theme is evidenced in the literature. Gender roles describe expectations about how men and women are likely to behave and also about how they should behave (Antonaros, 2010).

### *Mentors*

All four participants had one or two people who served as mentors or role models. Male 1 said the ones that stood out the most were the ones that gave specific feedback. He also said those mentors were good communicators and were able to delegate, which was something he has worked on. Male 2 also said he had a couple people in his corner who encouraged him. Male 2 said they had helped him acquire his position. One mentor in particular was one who had been formally assigned to him but even after that assignment period he remained a mentor in his career and was a supportive factor. Female 1 also had a mentor, a male mentor. Conversely from Male 2, she commented that having a mentor was not important for your career but just to have that support. Someone to talk to who isn't going to evaluate you. She also mentioned how she has served as a mentor with many people. Female 2 also had a couple people. One was a male and one was a female. The female mentor is a superintendent and they continue to keep in touch. The other mentor was one where she admired his leadership style and she has picked up things from both people and used them in her career.

The findings from the data on mentoring seem to match what was found in the literature. Mentoring was defined by Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) as “the process whereby a more experienced individual provides counsel, guidance, and assistance to another person, serves an essential function in helping younger or newer employees to develop leadership skills and advance within the organization.” (p. 17). For all four participants the counsel, guidance, and helping to develop leadership skills seem to be present. For Male 2 advancing within the organization also was in play. Kinnersley (2009) found that mentors are usually assigned and may be a supervisor. This was true in the case of Male 2 only. The other three participants seem to fall under what Yates (2005) found that many mentoring relationships developed naturally through one person wanting to help another.

Antonaros (2010) remarked that women were more likely to be mentored by women but both female participants had male mentors. Female 2 did however have a female mentor/role model who had an impact on her. The females having male mentors and one female mentor is supported by Naholi’s (2008) research in that female leaders were more likely to mentor other women, but men often mentored women. Garn and Brown (2008) found that the gender of the mentor was not a significant issue and Kinnersley (2009) reported no statistical relationship between mentees who had male mentors and those who had female mentors.

Mentoring does not seem to be an important aspect for just the females but also for the males. Antonaros (2010) remarked that men and women employ similar criteria in the decision to seek a mentor. McGovern-Robinett (2002) stated that a lack of mentorship and development for women aspiring to or working in educational leadership positions was significant, this was not the case for the two female participants.

### *Social Networking*

The main question for social networking was whether or not the participants thought social networking played an important role in obtaining a position or being successful in the position. Social networking is not a reference to things such as Facebook or Twitter but a network of people. None of the four participants felt that social networking was important to get a job. Male 1 and Female 2 had similar views in that it was about getting your name out there and being in the right position. Male 1 spoke to his hiring practices and said he will always hire the best person for the job regardless of gender or race. He said maybe social networking was important to obtain a leadership position 15 years ago.

The other aspect of social networking was once you are in the position. Male 2 spoke to not having colleagues in the building or colleagues who could relate to the issues that were present in his school. Female 1 said that it was important to network with other principals who had similar school settings but cautioned to be careful whom you listen to.

These findings were quite different from what was found in the literature. Eckman (2004) studied both males and females and described the influence that the “good old boys” club had on their career. Six males described the way the club had helped them become principals. They described a system of phone calls and contacts that aided them in finding their positions. The females did not have the same experience in this study.

Social networking seemed to be limited to having another principal in a similar situation to talk to and serve as a sounding board. It did not seem to be present in obtaining top-level positions.

### *Personal Traits*

What the participants viewed as personality traits differed greatly with a few commonalities between some of them. Male 1 said he viewed himself as being task oriented, being able to see the big picture, being a strategic thinking and being confident but reflective. He said things came naturally to him. Male 2 commented differently in that he considered himself to be high energy and genuine. Female 1 said she considered herself to be detail oriented and a strong woman who does not procrastinate. Female 2 remarked that she was a control freak who loved to tell people how to do things and teach people. She also said she was organized and had high expectations and she wants things to be better for everybody. She labeled herself as a visionary who knew where she wanted to go and not lose sight of it.

Three of the participants listed organized or detail-task oriented as being personality traits. Male 1 and Female 2 mentioned being able to see the big picture. For Female 2 this was in the visionary statement, as noted on page 72. Male 2's comments seemed highly different than the other participants' comments. While Male 1 viewed himself to be confident, Female 1 being strong, and Female 2 being a control freak, while Male 2 viewed himself to be genuine.

Gender roles are consensual beliefs about the attributes of women and men and many of these expectations are normative in the sense that they describe qualities or behavioral tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This is contradictory to what the participants reported about themselves. Female 1 reported herself as being strong and Female 2 as being a control freak. The males also do not seem to perfectly fit the traditional male traits as Male 1 view that he was reflective and Male 2 that he tried to be genuine. Historically women have been seen as the weaker sex who need protection from the cruelties of the outside world, whereas men have been seen as stronger, more able, and better suited to the rigors of the

workplace (Barnett, 2004). Nothing that the two women reported would give any indication that this was true.

### *Leadership Skills*

Data to identify leadership skills as viewed by the participants were gathered in two ways: the leadership skills survey (Northouse, 2010) and the interviews with the participants. The skill survey measured technical skill, human skill, and conceptual skill as outlined in Chapter 4. The females outscored the males in every category with the widest gap being in human skill followed by conceptual skill and then technical skill. The female participants scored similarly for each category of skill as did the males. Conceptual skill included things such as the degree on enjoys working with abstract ideas and seeing the big picture and working out strategies. Technical skill included enjoying the details of how things work, fascination with technical things, making things work and competing things. Human skill included adapting ideas to people's needs and being able to understand others in addition to understanding the social fabric of the organization.

Only Male 1 mentioned being a good communicator. Both females mentioning being visionary or seeing the big picture, that can be viewed on pages 75 and 76. Male 2 and Female 2 both mentioned being organized and Male 2 went on to include multi-tasking. Male 1 mentioned prioritizing which is closely related. Male 2 also listed being objective and looking at data. Both males discussed decision making. Male 2's discussion was about the difference between having to make quick decisions and thoughtful decisions, that can be viewed on page 74. Male 1 discussed about responding to a lot of stuff that was reactionary.

Other miscellaneous skills that came out were handling the stress of the job by Male 2 as noted on page 74 and being able to use technology. Female 1 mentioned having to have common sense and think practically and also being able to take theory and implement it. She also talked about the skill of being able to take a calculated risk. She also said you had to be a teacher at heart, as noted on page 75. She continued that you have to know everything and be willing to learn more.

The next group of skills that are discussed are relationship skills. All four of the participants gave some sort of description about relationships with people. Male 2's perspective was a more positive note. He said it was important to connect with people. He said the relationship piece was important and giving folks what they needed, as noted on page 74. He said it was important to take time to figure out how different people are, to have the ability to read people, and to give people space to make mistakes. The other three participants also mentioned a relationship piece but with a slightly different twist. Male 1 described situations in which you get caught up with someone and you socially get stuck, it's something you must suffer through because that's what relationships need. Female 1's take on the relationship piece had to do with having the skill to convince people to do what you want them to do. She said it stemmed from encouragement. "I think it is a skill to encourage people, cause it's really hard to encourage your laziest teacher, it's hard to encourage somebody that's not doing their job." Female 2 said it was a skill to be able to read the people that are working for you in part to know if you are getting manipulated.

In Burn's (2006) study he found that in general that women were generally more committed to the teaching and learning aspect of the principalship and that females were socialized to focus on relationships much more than men. This was not evident with these four

participants. They all had a relationship piece listed as a skill, but Male 2's reflection seems to fit this piece more than the other three participants. Some of the skills that were at part of Campbell et al. (2010) research listed multiple skills that would be helpful to women in leadership positions. These included business skills, an ability to see the big picture, consistency, content knowledge, and entrepreneurial skills. In addition to those that were essential were people skills and communication skills. Most of these skills were listed by the participants by both the male and female participants. Although there were not many skills that were listed multiple times besides a relationship piece, many of the skills that the participants listed were also revealed in the literature and do not seem to be gender specific. Holder's (2012) participants felt that leadership characteristics were the same for males and females. One participant attributed any differences in male and female leaders to natural variations in personalities rather than the possession of different leadership characteristics.

### *Leadership Style*

There was some overlap in the topics of personality traits, leadership skills, and leadership style. The data for leadership style were gathered in the same way as the data for leadership skills. Examining the style survey results, the females scored higher in task style and the males and females were about even in relationship style scores. Task style was the degree you help others by defining their roles and letting them know what is expected of them and the relationship portion included the degree to which you try to make subordinates feel comfortable with themselves, each other, and the group. The scores for task style were the most different. Female 1 scored the highest with Male 1 with the next highest score and then Female 2 followed by Male 2. In the relationship style category the male mean score was almost identical to the

female mean score. Male 1 and Female 2 had the highest scores and they were identical. Male 2 and Female 1's scores differed by one. There is no evidence of a pattern based on gender.

This section also contained a relationship piece or dealing with staff. Male 1 said it was good when you grow other people, as did Male 2. Female 2 grows people by pushing them but said at times she pushes too hard. Male 1 said he had to work on the social aspects, as viewed on page 76. He talked about how when test results come in they are going to be discussed. Male 2 talked again about the connection with people and how he learned a lot about leadership from different football coaches.

Female 2 mentioned being a visionary as she had for the skills section. The description that stood out for this section was from Female 1 who said that your leadership style is who you are. "You cannot be this kind of principal and this kind of person. Your style is who you are as a person."

One type of style that seemed to emerge was of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership seeks to draw out the best in others (Lowe, 2011). This seemed to be somewhat reflected in three of the four participants. Male 1 also hinted at transactional leadership which shows patterns of behavior involving series of exchanges based on rewards and punishment.

### *Recommendations*

#### *Recommendations for Practice*

Because this study was so small, there are no implications for practical application. This could serve as a starting point for board members and people who may aspire to the

superintendency to examine some of the similarities and differences found in gender. This study could also be of value in examining challenges principals may be facing in their positions.

### *Recommendations for Further Research*

One obvious recommendation for further research would be to conduct a similar study on a larger scale. In this study the age of the males was about a decade younger than the age of the females. This was also reflected in their experience of being a principal. The males were either in their first or second year as a principal. A recommendation could be studying the similarities and differences with age and experience with some of these topics. A wide range of research should be conducted about the effectiveness of implementing multiple programs and initiatives and the impact that it has on the principals and staff at the school level. Another recommendation for further research would be to compare what principals view as their leadership skills and style and how others view their leadership skills and styles.

### *Chapter Summary*

The study examined different experiences as well as the participant's description of their leadership skills and style as well as two surveys that measured different aspects of leadership skills and style. There were similarities and differences for each topic but due to the small number of participants it is impossible to ascertain whether these difference are attributed to gender or to other factors.

The backgrounds of the top-level administrators held similarities in that they were all high school teachers with varying levels of teaching experience but within a fairly small range of assistant principal experience. All of the participants had some person or persons serve as either

a positive or negative influence in their decision to become an administrator. No gender division was evident with what their influences were or whether it was positive or negative.

Similarities were evident for all four participants descriptions of a typical day. All the participants mentioned being in classrooms and having to deal with many emails or be involved in meetings. One male and one female mentioned the weight of the job. No gender differences seemed present.

None of the participants mentioned any real barriers in getting their positions. Another similarity in the topic of barriers stemmed from external factors such as lack of equity in the county and the amount of new programs. This was contrary to what was seen in the literature. In regards to gender issues one male and one female participant discussed the difficulty that occurs at times with female leaders and female subordinates. This does correlate to what was found in the literature. Female 2 also mentioned the perception she feels is present when she shows her assertiveness.

All four participants mentioned having mentors or role models and this is in line with some of the literature, the gender of the mentor did not seem to be important. Male 2 was the only one who said that having people in his corner helped him get his position. Along with this thought is the social networking aspect. There were similarities in that no one said social networking was important in getting their positions. This is the opposite of the report of the “good old boys club” mentality in the literature.

There were similarities and differences in personal traits, leadership skills, and leadership style, but none that can be attributed to gender. Most felt they were organized or visionary. All the participants talked about the relational piece of their positions with slight twists on them. Male 2 seemed to be the outlier in his views about relationships with his staff.

The study has little to offer for implications for practice because of the size of it but implications for possible further research. It seems from the data that were collected that there are more similarities than what previous research has shown and more similarities than differences.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL CHECKLIST

Pseudonym \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Checklist

- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact by email
- \_\_\_\_\_ Follow up email giving details along with consent and the surveys
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get interview date set \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Interview
- \_\_\_\_\_ Style Survey \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Skill Survey \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Send Thank you note
- \_\_\_\_\_ Transcribe interview
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete first read of the data
- \_\_\_\_\_ Email copy of transcript
- \_\_\_\_\_ Received transcript corrections
- \_\_\_\_\_ Code data

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Describe a typical day in your job.
2. As you reflect back on your career, at what point did you decide to become an administrator?
3. What do you think are the issues that contributed to your desire to become an administrator?
4. Walk me through your professional career.
5. Describe any barriers that you have encountered along the way and since you have had this position?
6. What personal traits do you feel help in your success as an administrator?
7. What skills, abilities and knowledge are most important to being successful in your position?
8. What do you believe has influenced your leadership style? Give examples.
9. What issues do you feel hindered or promoted your ability to be a successful leader?  
Give examples
10. What types of social networking, mentoring, or coaching have you received that directly relates to your position?
11. Do you think there have been any advantages or disadvantages to you obtaining or doing this job because you are a women/man?

## APPENDIX C

### PARTICIPANT LETTER

August \_\_, 2013

Dear Participant:

My name is Marcia Fawver, and I am a graduate student at East Tennessee State University. I am working on my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. In order to finish my studies, I need to complete a dissertation project. The name of my research study is Gender Similarities and Differences in Experiences of Public School Administrators.

The purpose of this study is to collect information on the experiences of female and male administrators in top-level administrative positions. I would like to conduct face-to-face interviews that should last approximately 45 minutes to an hour and have you complete two short surveys that should take about 10 minutes each to complete. You will be asked questions about your experiences as an administrator. The surveys are an 18-item skills inventory and a 20-item style questionnaire. The interviews will be audio taped in order to maintain reliability in the presentation of the data. The audiotapes will be kept confidential and will be destroyed after the recording of the information. This study may provide benefit by providing more information about the similarities and differences of female and male administrators.

This method is completely anonymous and confidential. In other words, there will be no way to connect your name with your responses. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the ETSU IRB have access to the study records.

Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. You may refuse to participate. You can quit at any time. If you do not want to fill out the surveys or participate in the interviews, it will not affect you in any way. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits or treatment to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected” because it is a required element. There are no alternative procedures except to choose not to participate in the study.

If you have any research-related questions or problems, you may contact me, Marcia Fawver, at (865) 414-2935. I am working on this project together under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Glascock. You may reach her at (423) 306-0349. Also, the chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at East Tennessee State University is available at (423) 439-6054 if you have questions about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

Please respond by September \_\_, 2013 (two weeks from today) on whether or not you wish to participate in this study.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marcia Fawver

## APPENDIX D

### SKILLS INVENTORY

Instructions: Read each item carefully and decide whether the item describes you as a person. Indicate your response to each item by circling one of the five numbers to the right of each item. All responses are voluntary.

Key: 1 = Not true    2 = Seldom true    3 = Occasionally true    4 = Somewhat true    5 = Very true

1. I enjoy getting into the details of how things work. 1 2 3 4 5
2. As a rule, adapting ideas to people's needs is easy for me. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I enjoy working with abstract ideas. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Technical things fascinate me. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Being able to understand others is the most important part of my work. 1 2 3 4 5
6. Seeing the big picture comes easy for me. 1 2 3 4 5
7. One of my skills is being good at making things work. 1 2 3 4 5
8. My main concern is to have a supportive communication climate. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I am intrigued by complex organizational problems. 1 2 3 4 5
10. Following directions and filling out forms comes easily for me. 1 2 3 4 5
11. Understanding the social fabric of the organization is important to me. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I would enjoy working out strategies for my organization's growth. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I am good at completing the things I've been assigned to do. 1 2 3 4 5
14. Getting all parties to work together is a challenge I enjoy. 1 2 3 4 5
15. Creating a mission statement is rewarding work. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I understand how to do the basic things required of me. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I am concerned with how my decisions affect the lives of others. 1 2 3 4 5
18. Thinking about organizational values and philosophy appeals to me. 1 2 3 4 5

Survey taken from:

Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership: theory and practice* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. p. 64.

## APPENDIX E

### STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Read each item carefully and think about how often you engage in the described behavior. Indicate your response to each item by circling one of the five numbers to the right of each item.

All responses are voluntary.

Key: 1 = Never 2 = Seldom 3 = Occasionally 4 = Often 5 = Always

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Tells group members what they are supposed to do.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Acts friendly with members of the group.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Sets standards of performance for group members.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Helps others in the group feel comfortable.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Makes suggestions about how to solve problems.         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Responds favorable to suggestions made by others.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Makes his or her perspective clear to others.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Treats others fairly.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Develops a plan of action for the group.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Behaves in a predictable manner toward group members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Defines role responsibilities for each group member.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Communicates actively with group members.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Clarifies his or her own role within the group.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Shows concern for the well being of others.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Provides a plan for how the work is to be done.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Shows flexibility in making decisions.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Provides criteria for what is expected of the group.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Discloses thoughts and feelings to group members.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Encourages group members to do high-quality work.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Helps group members get along with each other.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Survey taken from:

Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership: theory and practice* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Pg. 85.

## APPENDIX F

### TRANSCRIPTS

Female Number 1

*Can you walk me through your professional career, your background?*

I graduated from ... in ... with a BS in secondary education.... I graduated from college one day and starting teaching the next. I taught for 7 years at ... in ... County then I had my first child, while I was out of school with him I got my masters in Curriculum and Instruction, little did I know how much I would need that later. I only did it then for a pay raise, as you know how that works. And then in ... I got my Ed.S. in administration and supervision, never thinking that I would be a principal, again that was a fluke in that I had won two courses at UT and I didn't want to waste those. I looked at the principals I had and thought surely if they can do this I can. So I got my Ed.S. I didn't even apply for a principal's job for several years because I loved being in the classroom. So bottom line I taught ... for 23 years, during that time I served on lots of leadership roles. I was the chairman of the SACS committee; I was the department chair in ... over 15 teachers, I did all kinds of things, sponsored cheerleaders, National Honor Society, all kinds of stuff. I decided that until I really got tired of teaching or wanted to do something else, I'd just stay where I was because I loved teaching. And then an opening came at ... I thought ok I'll apply. I got the job. All those 23 years of teaching gave me lots of experience that I could apply to being an assistant principal. I was assistant principal for two years. My youngest son graduated from high school in 2001. The next fall I became principal at .... And so from ..... I was principal at ....

*So let me we recap. So intentionally you never set out to become an administrator?*

All I ever wanted to do is teach. I can say this, even as an administrator, I still was a teacher. Maybe I was teaching adults but I was still a teacher. I will say this. I think this was the Lord's plan for my life, He knows way better than I do. All these things and positions He had put me in were just preparing me to be a principal and I was for certain the whole time I was in that spot this is where I supposed to be. When this job came open the superintendent tracked me down to ... where I was on vacation. It was like a pack of dogs were after me and he said I want you to be principal at ..... I said yes, because I just felt like that's what I needed to do. For my assistant principal position I wasn't even interviewed. The principal that was here, he had taught my husband and he had been principal for my sons and I knew him on a variety of levels. So I had come to him that summer to say,...if an ... position ever becomes open at... High School would you consider me? He said sure I would. In about two weeks I got a phone call that said ...has retired from assistant principal, I'm going to recommend you for that job. Never an interview. Not the first question. I believe that, stupidly enough, I believe I have, whatever skills I have, fit right in to this kind of work.

*Contributing to you want to be an administrator, what appealed to you?*

This sounds a lot worse than I mean for it to sound, I saw lots of people in the position that weren't making the right decisions, they weren't leading the school in a way that it could be led. They weren't having an impact. One thing I want to do and one thing I saw was a challenge in this job is, I want to leave this place better than I found it. There is so much work to do and so

many ways to impact it and I felt like I could do that. Like I'm the oldest of four children, I have bossed people around all my life. My brother says he lives for me to tell him what to do. I just think that I have a grasp of the big picture but I also have a grasp on how to make things happen so that the details aren't let go, if that makes sense.

So looking at your position now, what would a typical day look like? I'm going to speak in broad generalities because I have only done this work since July 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup>. We meet a lot. My calendar is full every week. And it's one of those things that I don't have a lot of control over that calendar so I am in meetings all the time. So I don't think I can be as productive as I'd like to be because I am chained to a meeting. However, part of my job is to visit the 14 schools that I supervise at least once a month. That's what I like the best, the days when I am able to get out to the schools and hear the bells ring and see the kids scurry and see teachers in a panic, that's the part I like the best.

*Do you think you will be able to have as big of an impact in this position as you did as a principal?*

That's a loaded question. I don't mean to sound full of myself, but I'm just real proud of the work I did while I was at .... I think yes I think I can have an impact. I don't know if it will be the same, because working with schools of every different kind. How I want to impact here is help leaders of schools realize the power they have to change the life of students. That's what I want to do. As a matter of fact, when the superintendent called me and offered me this job, I said ok I know you well enough to know you have a plan, what is it exactly you want me to do in this position. He said I want you to do exactly what you did at ...High School all over this county. And so the only real connection I have with the schools is through the principals, if I'm going to have an impact it is going to be an impact on them. Those 14 people that I work most closely with. And if I can impact two or three or four or five of those schools, then I've accomplished something. Now that may never come back to well look what ... did, but I'm ok with that, it was never about ... anyway. It was about the power of what a whole team can do if they are working towards the same goal.

*Looking at your career, can you recall any barriers that you have encountered along the way to getting your position or since you've been in your position?*

I don't think in terms of barriers. Last year my supervisor said, what obstacles do you face in your job? I am sure I could have said a lot of things. Instead I chose to look at things, maybe I am naive, I guess I am. I choose to look at things in a positive way. I told him I don't have any barriers. I've got great teachers, I've got great kids, I live in a great community, people think we are doing what's right for kids, what's a barrier about that? Now, if I really wanted to dwell on it I could say I have a lot of kids that don't go to college and I have a whole lot of parents that aren't doing their job, and I have a whole lot of kids that aren't working as hard as they should, but I choose to look at it from the perspective that it is our job to get them where they need to be. I have never felt like I have had a barrier that has kept me from being or doing what I need to do. The barriers that I see, and again this is very prejudice because ...High School is my heart. The barriers I see is there is not equity in this county. I think ... High School students should have every opportunity that every other kid does and they don't have. And it's unfair but it's that way because the parents aren't standing up for their kids and demanding what everybody else has. Then we are doing what everybody else is with less, that's what disturbs me. As far as personally, I have found myself in the position where I wanted to be.

*What personal traits you have help you be successful?*

I am a really hard worker, nobody is going to outwork me, I'm going to work until the cows come home, until I am satisfied with what is happening. So when I expect my people to work hard, they're not going to work any harder than I do, so I think that work ethic and that was my mother. I am very determined. I am very competitive. I don't want anybody to do better than I do. I don't mean just mean me, my school, my teachers, my whatever, I want to win. I think I am very good at building relationships with people. I tell myself all the time I don't like people but I do, I like mean kids, and good kids, I like all of them and I want to see people reach their potential. I want to take that little first year teacher that cries all the time and make her a good teacher. I want to build capacity in other people.

*Now, instead of just you personally, what skills or abilities do you think are important?*

You have to be able to convince people to do what you want them to do. I have a way of doing that; I don't know where it came from. I think it stems from encouragement, I think it is a skill to encourage people, cause it's really hard to encourage your laziest teacher, it's really hard to encourage somebody that's not doing their job. If we all do our job, we are going to be ok. I spend a lot of time and energy and it takes skill to know when to encourage somebody. I'm sure I've missed out on some opportunity, but I really was conscience about doing that.

*When you say when to encourage somebody, do you think there is a time when it is appropriate and a time when it is not going to help?*

It's always appropriate. I just think we miss a lot of opportunities. I am a very detail oriented person; I am a planner, plan, plan, plan, plan, plan. And I am not a procrastinator; I will do what needs to be done.

*Knowledge, what do you think is important for an administrator to know?*

You have got to know everything. You always got to be willing to learn more. There can never be a time when you can say, I've figured it all out, I've arrived, I don't have to do anything else, you have to constantly be seeking more information. That's why I love teaching, because I love to learn. I think you have to have some common sense, you have to think practically. What downtown does is give us theory, what we have to do is take that theory and implement. Now another skill that I have is that I know when to take a risk. A calculated risk, every risk I took I didn't just jump off the bridge, I would research I would ponder, I would talk to people, I would make sure that I had all the information I needed if we were going to go ahead in this way. I think that is a skill too, because a lot of administrators make very impulsive decisions that bite them later. I tried not to do that.

*What has influenced your leadership style?*

First of all, I think your style is who you are. You cannot be this kind of principal and this kind of person. Your style is who you are as a person, you can't, you have to be who you are for people to know they can trust you and be genuine, but I had some really good people that came before me that taught me a lot. ... was wonderful. If he were still principal I would still be his assistant today and I would be proud of that. He's the one who told me you can suspend I kid with a smile on your face just as easily as you can screaming at him. That is absolutely true. He is the one who told me people have to be able to predict your behavior. He told me those things

and I haven't forgotten those things. People could predict what I could. I think I have had some really good examples even the principals like the one at South Doyle who I knew good do a good job. She was a hard worker and she set a great example of what work ethic was for me. I have been fortunate throughout my career to have some really strong people in my life that really showed me how things how ought to be done. Start with my mother, oh she was this strong woman and buddy what she said went and you didn't mess with her. And she was the one that would, taught me how to be everything I am.

*Do you think a lot of these attributes parallel with being a teacher?*

If you are going to be a true instructional leader you have to be a teacher at heart.

Do you think that has changed in the last ten years or so? That direction.

Yes, absolutely. I think it has had to with all this accountability.

Do you think there is stuff that either externally or internally or both have hindered or promoted your ability to be a successful leader?

I can say that my husband, although he hasn't taught me to be leader per say, if he hadn't been as supportive as he was, if he hadn't been willing to help with the boys, if he hadn't been willing to push me to go to school and to pay for it, if he hadn't encouraged me all these years, I couldn't be where I am. Of course you know it helped him too, so it was a partnership, but I really think that having him be so supportive encouraged me to continue to do what I could do.

*The social networking/mentoring, how big of an impact do you think ... he made on you and were there others like him?*

Networking is important, but I am not going to depend or rely on other people solely because you can get yourself in a mess that way. I don't want to let someone lead me astray. I'm going to be very careful who I choose to listen to and I'm not going to let networking become so social that we are friendly, not professional. But now that is really difficult, there are those that are real chummy, I never let myself get caught up as one of the click and as a matter of fact one of the people downtown said I went to the superintendent and told him you needed this job because you were not part of the click and you would not let the click determine your decisions. I am very friendly to all but I am very careful who I listen to or who I let influence me. I was much more concerned in doing what is best for my school. If I am going to be networking I am going to be finding a rural school in smaller counties around that are more like..., the principal; there and I would help each other when it came time for our five year accreditation and all those kinds of things because our schools were more similar then any school in this county. For that reason I, although they were my friends, and we talked about things professional, I don't think I would network with like a... or a .... or one of those.

*Mr..., do you still have contact?*

He will still visit me and sit in my office, well how is everything going?

*He is still serving as a coach/mentor to you. Do you think that is important to you?*

I don't know if it's important to your career or just that you know that you have support out there. That you have somebody to talk to that isn't going to evaluate you or pays you or whatever else. I think it is important to have those sounding boards. I can say this, one thing I have done over all these years in education, I have mentored more assistant principals and more leadership

fellows and they would tell me, we are sending them to you because you are so well grounded, when they get done with you they are ready to be a principal of a school.

*Do you think there are advantages or disadvantages because you are a woman?*

That's a loaded question. I think women pay way more attention to detail. If you tell me I'm in charge of graduation, I'm going to have a perfect graduation. I'm not going to have beach balls going around and I'm not going to have cowbells because I have paid attention to detail. I think women pay more attention to detail in every regard. As far as this county, I don't think they pay so much attention to whether you are male or female.

*Do you think that has changed just recently?*

Oh yes, because, there are still more male principals than women, I don't know how I feel about that. I like to think that I deserved to be where I was at that time. Although we have seen in Knox County how there have been some people who have risen to principalships and not made wise decisions and then things have happen. I don't know if I consider that an advantage or disadvantage. I think I've worked hard to be where I was in each place I ended and I always tried to do what was the fair and honorable thing to do. My motivation was always what to do what was best with the students that were in my charge and I because I let that guide me that's why I progressed. But remember I said earlier on I am very naïve, but I just feel like I got what I was supposed to get because that was the plan the Lord had for me.

*Is there anything else you would like to share with me?*

I can't think of anything other than I love my job. This one I haven't come to that conclusion yet, but it's early.

Female Number 2

*Can we start with how old you are?*

56

*Can you walk me through your professional career, schooling, degrees and different jobs you've had?*

I got my BA in ... from ... then I got my master from ... then my Ed.S. from ... Here's the way my career has transitioned. I worked as a systems analyst at ... and had no intention whatsoever of going in to education – none. Wasn't even sure I liked kids, I knew I loved my own. I didn't know I cared about anybody else's. And then we moved to ... where there were no ..., what I was doing in .... And so I didn't work for maybe two or three years and then a friend of mine said who was a math teacher, you ought to come in and sub. I said why on earth would I want to do that. She kept pestering about it and I finally did and from the very minute that I walked in I loved it. I loved teaching, I loved everything about it. And so I did an interim position for a woman that was on maternity leave. So that's how I got started in education. I was 32 I think when I started. And so I immediately got a full time job, I finished out that maternity leave and the principal said, we have an opening, I'd like to hire you so I said ok. I taught middle school for four years, knew I was a duck out of water in middle school and that I really needed to be in high school. I just knew that and so I went from middle school to high school and taught .... It was a very high performing high school, a top 100 school in Florida and taught for three years and we had a new principal come in who after about a year said to me you need to be in administration and I went well I would like a change. Cause I would start teaching and then I would become team leader and then become department chair. So I kept exhausting all the leadership roles. So that's when I got my Ed.S. He actually hired me to be an assistant principal. I did discipline like a typical assistant principal and after ten months he said, you don't need to be doing discipline, you need to be doing curriculum. So it threw me into the APC job, the assistant principal for curriculum, which there in... it was the principal and then the APC and then the assistants. So I learned how to be a curriculum principal. I did that and I left ... to move up here, because my family is from here. ... hired me to me an assistant principal. Then I went to ... I was recruited to do the redesign there. Anyway, so that's been my career and I was there five years and then became principal here and in large part because of my urban experience, suburban experience. We have a diverse population. This is the one school in Knox County that has it all.

*Had you been thinking about any of these positions at all?*

Not at all. I had some really good people that saw things in me that I didn't see in myself. I would have never imagined, imagined in my wildest dreams that I would be a high school principal. Not ever when I was going to college or even getting my master's degree.

*My next question: what issues do you think contributed to your desire to be a principal?*

Well I just immediately connected with teaching. I think that that is in me cause I love to tell people how to do things, or then to teach them or show them how to do something else and I constantly want things to be better for everybody and anybody who will listen to me. I want things to be better for them.

*Do you enjoy that part of being a principal? Do you still see yourself in that teacher role with your staff?*

Oh yes. I learn from working with people. I learn from people everyday.

*A typical day, what does a typical day look like for you?*

Well, I'll just give you my day today. It was a typical day. I come in and this morning I got my radio. I know I didn't check my email, because when I finally came back in here, I had 55 emails. I went and did an observation on a teacher. I did an environment observation. I popped into an SLC meeting.

*Is that a small learning community?*

Yes. I sat in on that collaboration for about 30 minutes and then I debriefed with the assistant principal who was overseeing and running that meeting. He's sort of struggling with the SLC concept. I mentored him for about 30 minutes. Taught and mentored. Then from that I found my way back here about 11:00 I guess it was. I set down and started looking at emails. Then I planned, started planning my instructional support team meeting that's going to happen on Tuesday morning. We had a brief fight over in the cafeteria, went over for that then I came back and met with three of my assistant principals about some various issues they were having. I got together some records for an attorney, records that had been subpoenaed on a child. And talked to that parent and what else have I done today. Since I got back here at 11:00, I haven't been able to get back out.

*Was it what you expected, when you went into administration, was it the same as the picture you had in your head?*

I remember that my first week in administration. I worked with a man Mr. ... he had been an assistant principal. He was a career assistant principal. He said I want to tell you one thing. He said you are going to be shocked by your colleagues. I'm like what? He said give it two weeks and come back here and we'll talk. What does he mean I'm going to be shocked by my colleagues? I found out real quickly why I was going to be shocked. My best friend who I had taught with, she couldn't turn anything in on time. You are going to be shocked at the professionalism and at what happens. I was working in the same school that I taught at. It's not good. Once you move out of the classroom into any other job, you move over to the dark side. That was really difficult to be suddenly in a supervisory position with people who I had taught side by side with. I would not encourage that anywhere.

*Can you think of any barriers that you have encountered along the way?*

Of either getting a job or once in a role. Anything that has ever presented a barrier to you being able to do the job you want to do.

I applied for this position and applied for the position at the... high school. I didn't want it. I got down to two finalists and then ..., I applied and was one of two finalists there. I really didn't want it either cause I didn't want to be in... or ... because I'm really not a technology engineering math person. But it was a strategy on my part to let the people who needed to know that I was very interested in being a principal. I will tell you I did that when I moved here from .... I had been here four months and ... principalship was being established. I applied for that knowing darn good and well I wouldn't get it because I had only been here four months. They

didn't know anything about me. I was one of five people that they interviewed and it got my name on the radar and that was my goal. I was very established in .... You have to get yourself in the right positions and people need to know who you are I think. And what you can do.

*Do you think there are any barriers for high school principals in general?*

There are a lot of barriers. The principalship is... how it has been traditionally been structured is not a viable model for what we are trying to do today. Some of the biggest barrier I have is time. Time to lead instead of manage. Now I spend way more time managing the school. And implementing programs and those kinds of things. We have so many new programs that come at us: common core, student progress monitoring, PLCs, SLCs instructional rounds. They just crank it out. When you are implementing something in a school. You can't just hear about today and implement it tomorrow. So I think the whole structure of how the principalship is structured is going to have to revisited. I delegate everything to my assistant principals practically everything but I still have, because I'm responsible for it. I do a lot of stuff with the community and that was something I didn't realize as principal how much you have to deal with the outside community, especially at a school like this.

*Looking at personal traits, what personal traits do you feel you have that help you being successful as an administrator?*

I think I'm visionary. I can see where I want to go, I know where I want to go and I can see it and not lose sight of it. I'm very organized I think.

*Do you think that has really helped you?*

Oh my God yes, because you can't do this if you aren't.

I like the notion of continuous improvement and that can be good or it can be bad. I'm always wanting things to get better. Some people who don't like change, which is most people. It's uncomfortable changing and it's uncomfortable leading change, but I love that, that discomfort as long as I can keep that vision.

*What skills or abilities do you have or don't have?*

I have the ability to see the big picture in a lot of things, not just in what I do but I think I have the ability to see all of the parts and how they fit in the whole. To really be able to understand the nuances involved in all that.

I can see where the pitfalls are going to happen, that comes from experiences that come from me making a lot of mistakes along the way. I wasn't born knowing how to do that.

*Do you think most of the skills you have as a principal you've learned from all of your experiences?*

Yea, I think most of the skills I've learned.

I'm also a control freak.

*Do you think that helps you?*

It helps me and hurts me. Because I have really, and my own children will tell you this, I have very high expectations for myself, I'm harder on myself than anybody else, but I have to temper

that down a lot of times and know, cause I'll push people, cause I want them to be so good at what they do, but sometimes I push a little too hard.

*Do you think there is anything that has influenced your style as a leader? Have there been people that have influenced it, or experiences that have influenced your style?*

Yes, there have been people who have influenced it. I can think of a couple of people along the way, one of my, when I first started teaching middle school, the principal who hired me was a woman, a very strong woman, who saw something in me. She's now a superintendent of a very large school district in .... She, I'm very much like her I recognize now. I was a teacher under her. We thought she was really hard on us and really pushed us, but I grew so much as a result of that.

*Were you able to see that while it was happening or not until after you were out?*

After, after yea. I appreciate her a lot more now than I did then. I think that's the way it is for all of us.

*Do you still keep in contact with that mentor?*

Um hum.

Is it more of a friendship or is she still serving as a mentor capacity.

We became friends after I went on to the high school. She went on to some other district jobs. She was a mentor and there was another man I worked with. He was a principal and then he became chief financial officer in the school system and I really admired him and his style. So I think I've kind of picked up things that I see people do.

*Have there been any counter examples? Have you ever worked for somebody and said that's something I know I don't want to do as a principal?*

I won't name names, but I've had a lot of non-examples along the way.

Let's go back to that woman in ... Are you guys able to support each other?

I don't talk to her that often. She's a year older than me. When I got my principalship here I emailed her and told her what she had meant to me. When she got her superintendency I told her how proud I was of her.

*Is it helpful knowing she's out there?*

Yes, I've got a lot of female friends who are doing well.

*You talked about getting your name known. Do you think that there's a networking type of thing that needs to go on to get your foot in the door?*

In any organization, if you have aspirations and your goal is to continue moving up or have more responsibility or more challenge. For me that's kind of how it worked for me. I get bored doing the same thing, and so I was always looking for a challenge. That's how I got into leadership roles. I was looking for a challenge.

*Were you volunteering for these things?*

Some things I would volunteer for, some things I would get tapped for. Like Ms. Banner you would be a great team leader, why don't you be the department chair.

*Looking at being a woman, do you think there are advantages or disadvantages to you being a woman? Getting a job or while in this job?*

I think there has been one disadvantage I have faced in being a woman, and being an assertive woman, or a woman being in a leadership role. I can exhibit my assertiveness or my authority or positional authority and I can be perceived as a bitch, where a man would be wow such a strong leader. I would much rather work with men. I love to see women in strong positions and I love to see women being successful and empowered and assertive, but I would prefer working with men because of the emotionless of women. Women, well they can't let things go. With a man you can be very direct with and you can sort of tell it like it is and that's fine, ok, just give me the facts and go.

*Do you think it's important to know your teachers and be able to differentiate how you deal with people?*

Yes, because it is all about people and if you don't know how to read your people or don't know their personality traits are. One of the hardest things when I came into this job, I knew not one single person, so you don't know who the players are and if you are getting manipulated.

*Is there anything else you'd like to add?*

No, just I love this job, it's very difficult. Some days I love it some days I hate it, but I recognize that importance of it and how many lives I'm impacting. Not just children's lives but families and the community and sometimes late at night, I kind of think Oh my God, I've got too much responsibility, this is kind of scary, all these people are depending on me and but I don't feel that during the day, just when it's quiet and you grasp just how many people are depending on you. There's a lot of weight with this positions. The weight of the position is immense. You are concerned that your students are getting the very best from their teachers, you're concerned that your teachers are not being pushed too far, too fast. All the decision that you make impact a lot of different people so that is a very heavy weight to carry.

Male Number 1

*Let's start with, could you describe a typical day in your job?*

Um, I come in and try to talk to students and teachers until the 8:30 bell and then I make sure that I'm caught up on if I had things to do during the day. Before I get to school, I've checked my calendar for the day and checked my schedule, but I always try to get out and see kids all four passing periods. Then usually I have at least a couple of times a day where I need to get into classrooms with our instructional rounds, so I try to do that. And I keep up with a whole lot of email. Generally I'm in planning meetings of some sort for at least an hour or two a day.

*Can I ask you a question about when you are out in hall what is the primary purpose that you see?*

This is the first year in this school and I think people who know me, in truth I am a very business oriented person, but I've made it a point to make sure that isn't the perception of me publically cause I think that can be a little cold. I really just try to talk to the kids and I have a belief that the more you talk to kids; the less they get in trouble in general. Even if it's just hey, don't cuss in the hallway how are you doing today. Usually I'll try to get into a couple of rooms a day. If I do many more than that I'm going to be in less then what I give written feedback for. Sometimes I just want to peak in the rooms, but I try to have one or two a day that I am giving written feedback for. I try to walk to most areas of the campus once a day just to be seen there.

*What other things as a principal go on that you need to deal with?*

There's a lot of stuff that is reactionary. You find it out at that moment and it needs to be taken care of. So you have to prioritize that and find out what's an immediate thing and what's a thing you can work with some other time. There are a lot of times in the day where I get caught in a situation socially where I'm not able to get anything done and talking about something that really has no bearing on anything but to walk away at that moment would be perceived as negatively so you kind of sit there and suffer through it a little bit, because that is the right thing to do socially and its what relationships need.

*Do you think that helps build trust?*

I would hope so.

*I know we are very data driven, what types of data do you look at?*

It's funny because I have tried not to add to the climate that already existed here yet. I think there hasn't been. The data that I want isn't even produced yet. Last year when I was at a curriculum role at a school where we had written the master schedule to facilitate PLCs within common planning periods. So those teachers regularly had common data. We don't have that here right now because we don't have common plan periods. We are trying to establish PLCs but that's not during a common plan period. So there is not that kind of data readily available. I've been very intentional in having conversations around value added. Still I am finishing that up because I still have a few teachers that have value added last year and I just want to talk to them. It's important to talk to them about value added, that you talk about end of year, like when we get our results back from even from things that aren't state exams. I want people to talk to me about them and I'll make a formal meeting of sorts to say these matter. I think that there is

one thing I want it's a culture that people understand that when results come in we are going to talk about them.

*As you reflect on your career at what point did you decide to become an administrator?*

Pretty early on. I know with certainty in my third year as a teacher I wanted to be an administrator.

*Was there somebody that you had in your life that encouraged you to be an administrator?*

There was an inspiration, but a negative inspiration. I thought these people are doing things that don't have a clear vision or are immoral or unethical. I thought I could do a better job.

*Your background – could you give me your education, career path?*

I actually started college as a ... major at ... State and I was there for a year and a half and then took a semester off. I transferred to ... College in ... and was an ... major and didn't actually think about being a teacher until my second year there. It ended up taking me five years of college, taking that one semester off in there as well to finish my undergrad and I finished in... with a certification to teach. Did my student teaching at .... Then I got my first job, I taught summer school at ... And then I got a job teaching at ... County High School in .... I was there for two years, taught ..., and one semester of... which was like a remedial class. Came to ... got a job at ... school teaching. Had really good value added, but found out early on that I didn't enjoy Middle School, because of the personalities of middle schoolers took some getting used to. Sometimes I scared them unintentionally. In fact, I'll never forget my supervisor at the time told me that I should consider transferring to a high school and he recommended ... He said they would have an opening. I got an interview there and that third year was when I figured out I wanted to be a principal. I transferred to ... High school and spent nine years there teaching predominantly sophomore junior .... I taught fundamental college prep and honors, I did not teach AP. In fact I kind of became the fundamental specialist because I was good at handling kids who were a handful and I want to say three years in that four years in that, no it would have been six or seven years, I got my masters in Education Administration through .... They had some in-service hours or something that I had to record I did those at the school with two assistant principals, they both kind of helped me do basic things such as discipline. I walked along on some bigger stuff. Then I got my first job in administration about 8 months after I finished my masters and that was a job as an administrative assistant at ... High School which was in March in the middle of the year, hired by ... I was there only four months then I left because when it became an assistant principal's job I was not hired. They hired another person there. So then I went to ... High School and got an assistant principals job there and I worked at ... for one year but truth be told while I was working as an assistant principal there it became clear that ... was going to be redesigned and in fact they had named an interim head principal who became permanent head principal and he and I stayed in touch. In fact some of the things the basic concepts of Small Learning Communities and that type of thing, him and I had worked on while I was an administrative assistant. I stumbled across one of those proposals. I talked to ... while I was at ... and he approached me about the possibility of coming back to ... for the redesign. I applied for that, went through the interview process, let the head principal at ... know and I went to ... and was there for two and half years, really enjoyed it, loved it, was really pleased with the results and Knox County Schools had a leadership academy that I saw advertised and it said they would pay your tuition. I thought well I don't want to pay for tuition,

so I thought that sounds like a good plan. So I applied to that and actually didn't think I would get accepted. That one year I think they were looking for people who kind of had experience. I got into that, I spent a semester at, I ended up with 2 ½ years at ..., a semester at ..., I finished up the Ed.S. that summer and then I was placed at ... for two years as a curriculum principal. Spent two years there, we were a TAP school, put up a 5 on value added and in the summer I was named as the head principal at ...

*Thinking back, do you feel at any time there were any barriers that put a hiccup in anything?*

For me the biggest barrier was really kind of my own behavior some times. I can be very matter of fact and very businesslike to a fault. I always joke that I have a little bit of a Rain Man complex in me that I get so oriented on a task that I put aside some of the social stuff. And in fact I guess it was last summer I started reading Dale Carnegie, "How to win friends and influence people." It's about how to interact appropriately basically in society. That's been helpful. I'm not ever going to make an emotional decision, but I forget that not everybody is the same way and that's been something I've worked really hard on.

*What personal traits have helped you in being a success as an administrator?*

The things that came naturally to me: I'm task oriented, I can see the big picture and I'm a very strategic thinker. Like if I know what it is I'm trying to achieve, I can make a plan that makes sense, I can communicate it clearly. I think I'm a good communicator, I wouldn't call me a charismatic one, but I can communicate clearly. Multiple manners, I can write well, I can speak in a way that people get, but at the same time I'm not some inspiring...

*Do you think your ... background has helped you in some of those things?*

Yea, in particular writing, I think yea. That's been a big one, but the ability to think analytically about schools and how schools should be constructed has been a really big, that's probably the biggest thing. That comes really easy to me to look at a school and say this school, here are the inefficiencies. The things that I've had to work at are the social aspects. You have to remember education is a people business. The cliché that you hear again and again is people don't care what you know until they know that you care. I get that, that's totally true and that's not true for me. Being aware that that's not true for me but it is true for other people has been a really big deal and probably the thing that I've grown in most lately.

*What skills, in general are some key pieces of knowledge that you need for this position?*

I think that you have to have the knowledge of what good teaching is and additionally the ability to be objective and look at data and say, I use the "Money Ball" example again and again. For me the "Money Ball" – I read that book as I was joining the data team for Farragut High School. I distinctly remember when I first joined the data team we were looking at student growth and there was a school that had this phenomenal student growth and I was sitting there with someone else and said "that student growth is amazing" and one of the administrators that was sitting with me said, yes but that's because they've gone year long. Like instead of saying this is genius, we should all go year long, they were saying, like writing it off. And I think that's where all you can ask for is to know what it is you are supposed to do and then put as many resources in to doing that as possible. That's ultimately what there is. I think though there are bad things about public education in modern times in particular like No Child Left Behind there are some drawbacks to it but the good thing about it is you know exactly where you are being measured. So that is the

product you are trying to grow and then you put resources towards growing it. And if you can think about it in those simplified terms, while at the same time remembering that you are dealing with people, you are dealing with kids.

*Do you think that's a skill? Like knowing how to get those resources and put those resources in and make it all work?*

Yes, and thinking creatively about it. That's where I think things like the PLCs are important because right now we know what it is we are trying to grow but we can't really even measure whether or not we are growing.

*What do you think has influenced your leadership style?*

Mentors

*So what about those mentors?*

The mentors that I look up to have been good communicators, have delegated, like the best leaders don't do everything, they ask other people to do things and that's been a big one for me because, and we've talked about this just a minute ago, there was a time I wanted to do everything and that's a really good thing but it's also good when you grow other people to do it too, to grow. When I look at our TAP leadership team, I think how can I help them grow. When I look at my administrators, I think what's next for them. I can I help them achieve their goals. Because if I'm doing that, if we are growing people appropriately, that makes Knox County Schools better, but it also makes us better as a school and I think that goes down to the classroom teachers, what can I do to help classroom teachers grow. I think more of those systems that we have. Right now no systems that we have right now are my systems. And that's important to keep in mind. I'm not ready to just go we are going to do this.

Has there been a special mentor or coaching experience that you felt strongly about, that has helped you or has it been in general the people you have worked with?

The mentors that stand out the most and I can think of one or two are the ones that didn't just say you did a really good job, it was when people said this was good, this is what you need to work on now. When people are willing to have those difficult conversations. Even though those are painful at the time.

*What about social networking? Do you think that plays an important role first in obtaining a position and second being successful in the position?*

Personally I don't believe it plays a role in getting a job. Bottom line, I'm going to hire the best person I can for the job. Whether it be a teacher or an administrator, I really try to think about not really what this person is but what they can be, I try to look at the capacity, how much can they grow. Like if I were looking at teachers, if I have one person that has experience but I don't think their top end is much beyond their experience and I have another person who doesn't have experience but once they gained the appropriate experience and it can be more, that's gonna be the person I want. I think sometimes it maybe helps to have your name out there, your face. I think that once you are in the structure. I think once you are in the structure, once you are an administrator, it's more how you act. I think one of the comments that myself and several other principals have used in conversation is that it is always an interview.

*What issues do you think may have hindered or promoted your ability to be a principal?*

For me it has been me, my issues. You have to be willing to work on you. It's easy to say I am who I am. We hear people say that. Then this might not be the job, you have to be willing to assess. Five years ago, I was always sure that I was right.

*So what has changed? What made you come to that realization?*

I think that you need to be a little more, it's good to be confident but at the same time you have to be reflective. Like my confidence almost came off as being abrasive and kind of rogue. I think you have to be aware of that. As you grow, like I, it's been funny but I've had people say when I hear you speak you are thinking about every word, and I'm thinking about every word. And I didn't used to do that. There's some, you have to be, cause you never know what's going to happen.

*Has this been something that has kind of evolved from experience?*

To go back to the mentors who have told me that you have to be aware of this. Very rarely do people see their own flaws so that's been something and truthfully I know, I'll say that I was considered for jobs that I didn't get because there was that questions about is he self-aware?

*Do you think there are either advantages or disadvantages or an even playing field to being a male in the educational world and looking at top-level positions?*

I would not consider myself naive at all, but this is something that I might be kind of naive about. I mean, I think there was a time when most administrators were going to be Caucasian males, I think that's probably not the case. In the end, I think you do what you do and you work. I've had people call me and say what did you do to become an administrator; I want to become an administrator. I said here's what I did, I took over leadership roles, I made myself an important cog in the workings of the school, I made myself an expert on something. In particular lately the thing that has been a selling for a lot of people getting into administration has been their knowledge of small learning communities, that's been a big thing. I've seen that happen and seen people get those jobs, I don't think it matters about gender, I don't think it matters about race. I mean, given to equal applicants, if they were exactly equal, you are going to want to add diversity to a staff. That makes sense. But given two unequal applicants I'm always going to take the better one. Everyone is focused much more on results. 15 years ago, when the stakes weren't as high for what you were trying to accomplish, the social networking probably mattered more. I know that the social networking and maybe gender and race played a bigger part in it. I don't think they do now.

Male Number 2

Do you mind if I ask you first how old you are?

I'm 36.

*A typical day in your job, what does that look like?*

Um, the words typical day don't really always fit the administrator role. You start with a planned out day. I started with some bus duty and made sure that everybody got off the buses and into their classes ok. Then I kinda walked around for a while trying to talk with some teachers. I think it is important that we go out and try to be that face of the school and have some energy. I was trying to get out and I know I hadn't done it a lot lately, I've been torn away, so I try to get out and pop my head into some classrooms and say good morning to people. We had an admin meeting that lasted a good long while. That was almost two hours. Going over some things, nuts and bolts of reworking ISS and whatever issue of the week. And also within that week, we can get that done a lot quicker, but we joke around a lot in that time, because it's the only time we are all together. We try and enjoy that time. After that, what was I doing, worked on the endless stream of emails. They just never stop, email after email after email. Everyone wants a decision from you and what's your input, what's your thought. So it's always a lot of constant decisions that you have to make and that gets taxing on you. I was working on something, I know I was working on updating the data loop that we have going. Working on updating those with the latest 3-week grades. And then we had an incident in the tenth grade and Ms. Harman is the tenth grade principal these days and she was out of the building this afternoon and two special ed students got into an altercation so I went and addressed that so kind of what I had planned out for the next hour/hour and a half all got away. Trying to get that wrapped up in time, I was hoping to get a few things knocked out but I had an evaluation, I wanted to do a classroom observation for a while. Did that for half the block, then came back. Started trying to help our curriculum principal on some evaluation questions of her own. Usually there are some supervisory duties with teachers, some type of classroom observations whether it's a formal walk through and then a lot of constant decisions. Always battling the incessive barrage of emails that things you can do right now, things you got to wait till later that require some thought.

*How do you keep that straight?*

I don't if I do. It's a real challenge. Some things you can kind of zip an answer back. I'm a three device guy. I have a phone, an ipad and then a computer. So I try and multitask as much as I can.

Was this job what you expected?

You know, I...people ask is so and so ready to be a principal for the principalship. I think there is only a certain degree that you can be ready for it, because until you do the job, you don't really know what the job entails. People tell you it's demanding and its stressful and its time consuming and it is all those things. I was talking with Cheryl Hickman yesterday. She came over to check on me yesterday and it's...the thing about this job that surprised me is the weight of this job. There really feels like a weight. Like literally a heavy position of pressure and strain and stress knowing that 150 kids and 125 staff members, whatever they end up doing falls on me. The good they do the bad they do, the decisions I make have a widespread impact. Balancing the thing that you have a kids education which leads to enormous opportunity for their future or

missed opportunity, then you are dealing with someone's livelihood and the decisions you are making affect them and their family and their well-being. There's just a lot of...that's something that was surprising to me was how stressful the job can be. Right after I go the job, a former head principal who is now an assistant principal told me welcome to stressville. What's he talking about? It didn't take me long to figure out what he was talking about. It's hard to turn it off. This is the first job when I'd wake up and stressed and go to sleep stressed.

*Was that different as an assistant principal?*

I think the biggest thing as an assistant principal for me was I knew my roles and if I could focus on these things that I am responsible for and I can manage that easier. Now I'm responsible for everybody. And the impact of what that means. I really enjoy those conversations.

*What do you think the issues are, things that contributed to you wanting to become an administrator? Was there any person, or any event or anything that led you?*

I taught at ...for three years. I taught at ... for five years. I really thought I was going to do what folks in ... do: they get a job at ..., they get tenure at ... and they die. Because they pay so better than what we see here. Then like any good ... I got my Ed.S. to get more money to increase my pay scale there. I really thought that was what I was going to do. I coached football and I was going to coach football and teach and that was going to be it. Started my Ed.S. I started pulling back from coaching, I was coaching middle school and freshman, I wasn't coaching varsity more just because of family strain and stress. So I needed to be home more so that allowed me to still coach. I started my Ed.S. and through that process, that was the same time that reconstitution was going on at... and ... and I had a lot of history at ..., heard about it and so it was probably January or February ish and I had kind of started thinking that maybe I wanted to do this administration thing after all. Wasn't really serious about it but then that reconstitution thing came up and I saw that and it kind of got my mind twirling that maybe this was something I should do. I talked to some people and I figured most folks would go you are crazy why would you want to be an administrator at ..., but most said yes, you should do really do that, you would do a good job with that. Once I decided to apply for it I was all in. Actually, ironically that application process was more or less you apply for both schools... and ..., and I specifically said I do not want to be at ..., I want to .... I grew up pre-intern, intern, football coach. I did not care for Fulton. We didn't like Fulton. The interview was in this big room on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor and all the big wigs from downtown, principal at ... and ... actually got up and said I don't think I'm in this interview, got up and walked out because I had made it clear I wasn't applying for the position, I was applying for this school. In hindsight I think it was probably good for me because it told everybody in the room that I wanted to be at that school. I wound up getting that position and was there for two and a half years. After my second year there I was asked to be part of the leadership academy. The director of secondary schools said I want you to do it. I said I'll do it, but don't take me out of Austin East. I don't want to go anywhere else. He said I want you to go to .... I finally said basically you are my boss, whatever you want me to I'll do. I came over here for a semester. I was here with... for a year, but really here full time for a semester. It really was a surprising twist of fate. The timing worked out, it was interesting the way things came together. I didn't feel like I could be in the classroom forever without the coaching piece. So I was kind of thinking about, what else is out there for me? Some of the people, ... was someone who was kind of in my corner. I knew ... a little bit. What's really

ironic was my wife wanted to be an administrator for a long time. She was set from the beginning. I was doing it for a pay bump and I got into administration before she did.

*Can you give me your jobs and how long and where?*

I was at ... for four years counting my internship, five years at ..., ... for two and a half years as assistant principal, ... as assistant principal for a semester, ... for a year, assistant principal. This is my second year here as principal.

*Could you describe any barriers that maybe you encountered along the way?*

I was lucky and blessed along the way. I got into it on my first shot, and that's hard for a lot of people, the hardest part is getting in. Once you get into the club it's easier to work your way through. Breaking out of that teacher realm. I think what helped me was that I was going on an administrative team that started from scratch; they wiped everybody out, so they wanted to build. There wasn't as certain pigeonhole that they were trying to find. I think as you build a team you look for those things. I was going to a school that not a lot of people wanted to be at and I also had some credibility in the community. It didn't hurt that I was a former coach in a football heavy environment. I know I got in very easily; a lot of folks spend a long time trying to get in. Probably the obstacle/barrier for me was coming out of leadership academy. I applied for the ... and I felt I would have been a really strong candidate for that position. I interviewed with the committee. I didn't get that position, but .... got the position. Had I got that I wouldn't be here. It's one of those, I grew a lot from that, I had the opportunity to sit down with the superintendent for half an hour and sell myself to him so that is my way of spinning it. As soon as she got the job she called me and said I've got to have you and I'm thinking yea you do, you've never been a building level administrator. We made a good team. She knew where she wanted to go with the school I knew the nuts and bolts. I learned a lot being with her for that one year.

*Personal traits, what do you think about your personality helps you be an administrator?*

I try to be high energy. I think folks like to see an active person. I try to be visible. I try to be positive and I try to connect with people. I think all those things allow you to when you got something you have to push on others, even a mandate, it's a little easier to take when, I try to be genuine, I try to be someone that folks can trust so that when I am saying this is something we have to do, well ok we have to do this instead of what's he trying to pull over us this time. I feel that trying to be positive and stay on the bright side of things that if I cast a negative light onto something then that's the way the school is going to take that. If it's an initiative that, and that's something that I struggle with as the state and the district says here's what we are going to do. They keep telling us all the things we are going to do and I've got a find a way and take those initiatives and make them palpable and positive to the staff. If I don't, it's not going to happen.

*Switching from personal traits to skills, what skills or knowledge do you think are important?*

Skills, I think in today's day and age you have to be able to manage technology to balance all the things, emails, and documents. For me trying to stay organized is something I struggle with, managing your time, being able to really keep a calendar and function by that. I do all my evaluations that way. If it's on my calendar and it's on their calendar. I think you got to be able to make decisions quickly but also thoughtfully. Sometimes I don't. Sometimes I make decisions quickly but not thoughtfully, sometimes I sit on them too long when a quick decision

would have been better. That's just trial and error. A lot of decisions are situational. Your first instinct is I have to do something right now, you really don't. Ok, who do I need to call to tell me what to do? You usually have more time to make decisions.

*Do you think that is a learned skill, or do you think it's innate?*

I think it is kind of both. I think the innate piece around me that helps me do a good job is that I don't get rattled. I stay pretty calm in situations. You've got to stay calm, you can't let other folks know you are rattled, because when you do that, they get rattled. Being able to work quickly. You have to figure out what things you can do quickly and move on and things that you say, I can come back to that tonight. A lot of that comes from just doing it.

*What did you teach by the way?*

Chemistry

*What do you think has influenced your leadership style?*

I think the people I've worked for. The more numbers of leaders you can work for, the better off you are or work with because you see different ways of doing things. If you only work for one principal that's your belief of what a principal should be, good or bad, that is your role model as a principal. As a teacher I've worked for four different principals. I'd like to think I take a little bit of each of them. Especially my first few months on the job as an assistant principal, It was, I'd think about my last principal, I'd tell myself, ..., what would ...do? I don't know but I'm going to find out is very well received when I'm talking about something that I really don't know about. Follow-up. Folks see that you are not going to BS them and you are going to give them what they need and that goes a long way with folks. Folks will value you. It's important to read a person a kind of find out what do they need. Do they need me to solve their problem for them, do they need an answer right away, do they need to just be heard, or do they need to just come in and throw up. That takes time to figure out how different people are, the ability to read people. I worked for a guy who gave you a whole lot of space, gave you a lot of autonomy; let me make a lot of decisions. He just said let me know what you are doing so if someone asks me I can talk about it. I really appreciated that because it allowed me to grow as an administrator and when I would make mistakes he would support me through those. Some people gave him a bad rap of he doesn't do anything he delegates everything and he does delegate a lot of stuff, but I grew a lot working for him. Give people space and I've got a couple folks working with me who are learning and new. She'll say what do I do? It's easy for me to say do this, this and this but she doesn't grow through that. So I try to do the whole what are you thinking about. I try to do that cognitive coaching stuff that led her in her mind that I'm going to do this and this. You need to have a jumping off thing. You need to have people that you work for give you space to make mistakes. I worked with a lady who is very, very organized, very much a taskmaster. Try to take a piece of that because I want to be organized, I will get organized but I don't stay organized. I try to emulate some of the stuff she did. I learned a lot working for different football coaches as well. A lot about leadership. That translates a lot over. I find myself making an evaluation schedule based on the format that a coach used for a practice schedule. I have those skills because of the way he did. It can be from any other group or structure.

*You've talk about quite a few different people having an influence. Have there been one or two people that really have served as a really strong mentor?*

Yea, the guy who sat in this chair before me. He was my official mentor and still, he and I talked this morning, he has sensed in me that I have been a little more stressed lately than usual. He kind of reached out to me and see how I was doing. We were talking through some things and last year for us was weird for us because he was my direct supervisor. He's not in that position anymore. Last year he knew things that were going on that would filter down, but he couldn't tell me about it yet. I think he really had a hard time trying to support me. Jon is a great mentor and he's always been very supportive of me. Again, someone, I didn't talk about him specifically but you talk about a big picture. Also, I learned of how not to do some things based on some things that he did here. We did some changes.

*Do you think social networking, not Facebook etc. but with other administrators is important?*

One of the hard parts about being a principal is that I have no colleagues in the building; I have no peers at all in the building. I can talk with my assistant principals but I supervise them, I have to shield them as well. If I'm frustrated about the next thing that we have to do, I can't let them know all that. I can talk to another principal. I think it is very important to us in Knox County because there are 14 of us and a natural connect, but at the same time it is very difficult. Someone I talk to a lot is ... from .... She and I worked together at .... She came in to .... during reconstitution. She is someone I am very close with and ...at ... I lean a lot on. The leadership academy experience knowing folks at various levels of school and ... and I communicate and lean on each other at times. That helps but at the same time if I say this issue is killing me to them it might not be a big deal because they don't understand the context it means to ... and I don't know what it means to ....

*What things do you feel hinder your ability to be successful at times?*

Multiple and conflicting initiatives. That's just kind of the theme of what's going on right now, the level of reform in the state of Tennessee and Knox County. I don't know it is that we do well. We do a whole lot. Every thing we do is good, my concern is that we are doing too much that we are not doing anything well.

*What issues do you think help you be a successful leader?*

I think people are the key in making things work well. When you have good people who care about kids and are student centered and open to change cause where we are living there is nothing but change. If you get people who aren't open to that it is very difficult to work with. I think technology is a good thing for our students and can be a game changer when it is done well. It is just what is doing it well mean at this point. We haven't figured that out yet. Other things that help us be successful is, it really comes down to people, when you have the right people in the right places. Then it's hard when folks leave it is hard to replace them with good folks. Not everyone wants to work in our environment; it takes a very special person to do that. We have to try to find out not only who are good teachers, but also who are good teachers in our environment. We have done a great job of building leaders over the last 5 to 6 years. That is what we have now is that we have lost a whole lot of good folks. We've had tons and tons of folks go on to promotions, which is awesome.

*Advantages or disadvantages of being a male/female in this position or getting this position?*

I'll say I've seen female principals struggle with strong female teachers. I watched a principal at .... We had a strong female principal come in. ... at that time was very much controlled by

female department heads, single high school systems department heads were almost like supervisors and she alienated those ladies and she didn't make it through the year. I think being a male, I think sometimes we fight the old coach mentality we gotta make sure that we are not old school principal that's its always a man a guy who has a lot of keys and doesn't know anything about instruction. I have to make sure I'm not just an old football coach that I am an instructional leader.

*Do you think since the shift has gone from being just a manager as a principal to an instructional leader do you think that has helped change how gender is viewed?*

From the administrative side I think that has enormously helped because you look at who's coming in and who is being awarded schools. You can no longer be that athletic director. I think for a female it is hard, you don't see a single female athletic director in Knox County at times you've seen one, but you still have some gender bias in that. Usually your special ed principal is usually a female. Females get pulled into the curriculum spot a lot. I think that AD piece comes from the coaching. I think we have made huge strides, I think we still have huge strides to go. ... who is my newest curriculum principal, she was at assistant principal at .... She was pregnant and wound up going home and taking care of her kids and she was the athletic director at .... She had kids and did that for a long time and then came back as a leadership coach.

## VITA

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