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# Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Leadership Practices of Female Principals

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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

Jennifer Anne Mooney Campbell

December 2011

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Dr. Eric Glover, Chair

Dr. Virginia Foley

Dr. Elizabeth Ralston

Dr. Pamela Scott

Keywords: Female, Leadership, Ethic of Care, Instructional Leadership

## ABSTRACT

Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Leadership Practices of Female Principals

by

Jennifer Anne Mooney Campbell

The problem of this qualitative study is to assess teacher perceptions of the leadership practices of female principals. The focus of this study was at the elementary school level. The data were collected from the teachers about their perceptions regarding the female principals with whom they work. This qualitative study was conducted by interviewing 8 teachers from 3 elementary schools in northeast Tennessee. The teachers were interviewed to understand their perceptions of effective leadership practices exhibited by female principals.

During the data analysis, 7 constructs were identified after examining and coding the data for related themes. These 7 constructs were: (a) vision, (b) student growth, (c) staff development, (d) organization, (e) communication, (f) caring, and (g) community. In addition to the themes, participants shared perceptions of disadvantages, advantages, and effective leadership characteristics of female principals.

Based on the research the following conclusions were drawn. Teachers want to have clear expectations, organization, and follow through in the school environment. This could be accomplished through clear communication and expectations by the principal. Teachers would also like a caring work environment that is created by a principal who listens, respects, and

understands others. Each teacher has a variety of different responsibilities and they would like acknowledged. Most of the teachers want a school vision that is focused on providing a productive learning environment for all the students.

Recommendations for future research included the following:

1. Only teachers were interviewed in this study. Additional research in this area could be the study of principals' perception of effective leadership practices. This information could be used to determine the similarities and differences between what principals and teachers view as effective leadership practices.
2. Interview teachers from middle and high schools to assess their perception of effective leadership practices. There could be a difference in the leadership practices of elementary, middle, and high school female principals.
3. Additional research in this area needs to be conducted in a variety of elementary schools. This would provide a larger sample of participants.
4. Interview teachers from elementary schools to compare their perceptions of male and female principals.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my parents Jack and Pat Mooney. From an early age, you have taught me to persevere and instilled the importance of an education. Thank you for encouraging and supporting me throughout my life. I am very blessed to have you both as parents.

I wish to also dedicate this study to my husband Eric. Thank you for giving me the time to write, research, and study. You continued to give me support through this process.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank God for the talents to complete this task. God was with me throughout this process and I couldn't have done this without his blessings.

I would also like to thank the principals and teachers who participated in the study. Thank you to the principals for allowing me to conduct my study in your school. Thank you to the teachers who shared their experiences with me. All the information you shared was insightful and I am truly grateful for sharing your experiences.

I wish to thank my committee chair Dr. Eric Glover for being supportive and encouraging to me while completing this journey. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Virginia Foley, Dr. Elizabeth Ralston, and Dr. Pamela Scott for their positive feedback and encouragement along the way.

I would like to thank my editors Dr. Joyce Duncan and Mr. Travis Scott for their expertise in this process. Also, I would like to like my friends and family along the way that would ask how the dissertation was going. Those kind words kept me on task and motivated me to complete this dissertation.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

We are in the midst of an age of transformation in education. It is an age of creativity and new frontiers, but also of shifting roles and beliefs and the feeling of being, technology-and-education wise, on the unsettling cusp of the past and the future. If we are to successfully lead our children into a world we cannot yet fully imagine; if we are to prepare them to become active, confident leaders and shapers of their own destiny, then we must do more than just talk about leadership, we must show it. (Reilly, 2005, p. 21)

At the beginning of the 1900s females were discouraged at the time in pursuing a career in public school administration due to male dominance in the field. However, in 1928 females held 8% of secondary school principals, 55% of elementary school principals, and 1.6% of district superintendents (McFadden, Maahs-Fladung, Beck-Frazier, & Bruckner, 2009).

Although the numbers of female administrators in public education have steadily increased over the years, as a gender females are still underrepresented. Female are underrepresented by lower salaries than those of their male counterparts and the administrative positions are located in smaller districts (Gupton & Slick, 1996). According to Jones, Ovando, and High (2009) females are also underrepresented because of stereotypes, lack of mentors, and discrimination. These factors affect aspiring female leaders.

Traditionally, administration in public education was male-dominated, which discouraged talented females from seeking these positions (Gupton & Slick, 1996). As females began entry into these positions, they encountered several barriers including sexual discrimination, gender perception, leadership behaviors, and stereotypes, which hindered them from entering administrative positions. These barriers inhibited females from placement in administrative roles (McFadden et al., 2009); thus, females often did not seek administrative positions and failed to discover their leadership abilities.

In contrast, by the 21st century a number of females obtained administrative positions in public education, having broken through the *glass ceiling* and attained graduate degrees in school leadership. Regardless of that progress, there is limited research on the leadership characteristics and perception of others about female elementary schools principals (McFadden et al., 2009). Most research on females and sex role behaviors seem to be on females who demonstrate masculine leadership characteristics because historically leadership required masculine characteristics such as assertiveness, verbal perception, and auto-centrism. Other research posits that society encourages females to use their nurturing qualities when leading. Researchers remark that sex roles influence female leadership characteristics such as being accessible and nonhierarchical. Female leadership characteristics create a work environment that empowers employees (Howard-Hamilton & Ferguson, 1998).

The attitudes and perceptions of teachers towards a female school administrator can influence that administrator's evaluation of her own job performance. Those attitudes may deter females from seeking administrative positions. However, in an effort to reform schools administrative policies shifted towards female leadership characteristics such as empowering teachers, site-based management, and transformational leadership (Hudson & Rea, 1996).

Female leaders also possess attributes that support teamwork. Burns (2006) compared behaviors between genders and discovered that female leaders were more collaborative and dedicated to teamwork. Wiseman (2009) explained that teamwork was important in a school culture because no one person had the knowledge base to make unilateral decisions. A school culture that focuses on teamwork encourages faculty to share and apply particular knowledge about situations. These leadership practices create models for administrators.

Rost (1993) discovered a shift towards transformational leadership in which the leader and followers work together to accomplish a goal. When the leader engages followers, this raises both of them to a high level of morality. Sashkin and Sashkin (2003) studied differences between male and female CEOs who were transformational leaders. They found few differences between male and female transformational leaders, but there was a significant discrepancy in their daily interactions with the subordinates. They found that females scored higher in transformational leadership characteristics in areas of respect and concern, important factors in any organization. Yukl (2002) explained that, when a transformational leader showed respect and concern, followers felt trusted, motivated, and loyal to the organization. This motivated the follower to do more.

Mulligan and de Casal (2004) noted that transformational leadership creates a collaborative effort between the leader and the followers that creates relationships rather than a task-related focus. Females also exhibited transformational leadership qualities such as helpfulness, nurturing, and sensitivity. These qualities that demonstrate concern for others are becoming more visible in schools and emerging in the workplace. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) said that developing relationships with followers depended on the leader and the way in which he or she related to the organization.

In this era of educational reform principals, teachers, and districts are accountable for improving student performance. Therefore, principals need to find effective ways to lead schools toward that end. Howell (2009) found that males and females had different approaches to leadership. According to Howell a Pew survey in August of 2008 found that females scored higher than males on the qualities the public acquainted with leadership. However, survey participants reported no difference in the effectiveness of male and female leaders.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2009) the federal government offered a financial incentive to improve the nation's schools. The government earmarked a \$4.35 billion dollar fund labeled Race to the Top to reform education. States applied for the grant and receive funds based on particular guidelines. In the Race to the Top program (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) public schools must reform in four specific areas: (a) improve low achieving schools; (b) retain and recruit effective principals and teachers; (c) prepare students to succeed in college, the workplace, and a global economy; and (d) monitor academic growth and learning. With increased accountability and school reform, more research can reveal the ways in which effective leadership practices promotes student learning in public schools.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

According to Kouzes and Posner (2007) Michele Goins, the chief information officer of Hewlett-Packard's Imaging and Printing Group, explained to a group of university students that the opportunity to lead should be available to everyone. She added that leadership should be a response to the moment, and it was important to approach everyday interactions as an opportunity to lead. Through Michele's observations she noticed that leaders can chose the way in which they approach everyday issues by being better listeners, mentoring someone, and having a positive attitude.

A principal's leadership can have a positive, a negative, or a marginal effect on school achievement. The problem of this study is to assess teacher perceptions of the leadership practices of female elementary school principals in Upper East Tennessee. The study examined perceptions of teachers regarding the practices of female principals.

### *Research Questions*

The overarching research question for the proposed qualitative study included: How do female or male teachers perceive working in a school with a female principal? Secondary questions for the study included:

1. What advantages do female or male teachers perceive in working with a female principal?
2. What disadvantages do female or male teachers perceive in working with a female principal?
3. What effective leadership characteristics do teachers perceive as specific to a female principal?
4. What ineffective leadership characteristics do teachers perceive as specific to a female principal?

### *Significance*

Hersey and Blanchard (1982) defined leadership as the ability to motivate individuals toward a goal. Therefore, leaders need to know behaviors to motivate individuals toward advancement by channeling them toward the goals of the organization. One goal for an organization could be change; therefore, the leader should motivate individuals toward change. To improve schools principals must understand the dynamics of the leadership (Knab, 2008). As education changes so does the role of the principal, and with those changes comes increasing demands on the principals. Therefore, aspiring female principals and educational leaders may benefit from the findings of this study by understanding the way in which teachers' perceive leadership practices. This may benefit aspiring principals by attaining effective leadership

practices, enhancing methods to facilitate change in a school, and increasing the ability to take a curriculum to a higher level of learning.

Nogay and Beebe (2008) also reported a limited number of studies on teachers' perceptions of principals by gender. However, they noted a 1982 study by Shareatpanahi that suggested male and female teachers responded differently to a female principal. Male researchers or a male perspective made up the majority of the educational research on females in administrative positions. This possible researcher bias could limit female leadership in American schools. More studies could help females learn about effective leadership practices and behaviors. Aspiring female leaders may benefit from the findings in this study in order to understand which leadership practices are successful.

#### *Scope of the Study*

I employed a phenomenological qualitative design for this research. Data were collected in face-to-face interviews with nine elementary school teachers, purposefully selected from three elementary schools in Upper East Tennessee. Mertens (1998) defined phenomenological research as understanding the lived experience of the participants that participants offer through their point of view. The nine elementary teachers in this study clarified their perceptions of working with an effective female principal. In a phenomenological study the key characteristics derive from the participants' experiences with the situation. The researcher refines that information to create an understanding of the experiences or phenomenon.

#### *Researcher Perspective*

During my career teaching in both public and private schools I worked with three female principals. Each had her own unique leadership qualities evidenced by a commitment to the school and to student learning. Their commitment to best practices and student learning inspired

me to become an educational leader. Each principal had certain characteristics that affected me as an educator and leader.

One of the female principals demonstrated characteristics associated with an instructional leader, an individual concerned with the central practices such as teaching and learning in a school (Williams, 2000). At the beginning of my career she offered guidance on the correct way to complete lesson plans and provided additional teaching strategies to use in the classroom. Because of her guidance, I had a better understanding of teaching and the activities included in the profession. My next two teaching positions were also with female principals. Both women encouraged my teaching, and one was particularly supportive. This leader was a good listener and helped solve problems in the classroom. She was supportive during my first 3 years of teaching and when I returned to graduate school. She continues to encourage my becoming a leader. These female principals shared similar characteristics including building relationships with the faculty and offering individual praise. When the principal approved of my efforts, I was inspired to work harder. Other female coworkers shared similar experiences over the years. My experiences have impacted me by demanding the best out of the students in the classroom and myself.

#### *Definition of Terms*

*Leadership.* Leadership refers to the way a person can achieve a goal or alter a situation by influencing the actions of a group of individuals (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Northouse, 2004).

*Perception.* Perception refers to gaining insight (Morris, 1982).

*Transformational leadership.* Transformational leadership refers to an individual creating a connection to increase the motivation in the follower and leader (Northouse, 2004).

*Glass ceiling.* Glass ceiling refers to favoring males in higher level leadership positions (Yukl, 2002).

*Effective.* Effective refers to producing a successful or valuable outcome (Morris, 1982).

### *Overview of the Study*

This qualitative research study contains five chapters. Chapter 1 presented the introduction, problem, research questions, significance, scope of the study, the researcher perspective, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 included the review of literature for the research study. Chapter 3 offered the introduction, data collection, data analysis, and validity and reliability. Chapter 4 presented the research findings, and Chapter 5 included the findings and suggested recommendation for practices and future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature examines effective leadership practices used in organizations or school settings. Some of the leadership practices emphasized in this literature review are associated with the characteristics of effective female leaders such as caring, listening, and teamwork. As Yukl (2002) noted, in a competitive organization it is important to find out which leadership characteristics are effective. Therefore, the review of literature explains leadership practices that promote an effective organization.

#### *Leadership*

##### *Evolution of Leadership Theories*

Northouse (2004) explained that over the years leadership has been viewed as having particular traits, processes, and concepts. These leadership characteristics have evolved into a number of theories from the great man theory to transformational theories. The great man theory is based on the assumption that leaders are born. This theory portrays leaders as heroic and who rise to the occasion when needed; usually associated with a male quality (Cherry, n.d.). The great man theory assumed similar qualities to the trait theory that emerged in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

Northouse (2004) explained that the trait theory focused on the leader's traits. These traits have a certain affect on how the leader handles a particular situation. It is the traits and the personality of the leader that is important to the leadership practice. Cherry, (n.d.) suggested that trait theories assume that leaders possessed certain characteristics that are shared by leaders.

Some characteristics individuals possessed are qualities such as energy and friendliness that made them better leaders (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

The contingency theory is another that focuses on the qualities of the leader, but it matches the behaviors to the appropriate situation. The effectiveness of the leader depends on his or her style or approach to the situation (Cherry, n.d.; Northouse, 2004). It is important to understand the situation in order to recognize the leader's effectiveness. The effectiveness is based on the matching the situation with the leader's practices (Northouse, 2004).

According to Northouse (2004), the situational theory is when the leader has to adapt her or his characteristics in order to meet the needs of a given situation. The leader must evaluate the situation and meet the needs of the subordinates by demonstrating supportive or directive behaviors. For the leader to be effective he or she evaluates the commitment and competent level of the subordinate to complete the task. Then, the leader adapts his or her leadership practice according to the needs of the subordinate.

In the style approach theory the emphasis is on how the leader acts. This is a shift from the study of leaders' behaviors towards their subordinates. Here the leader combines both the task and relationship behaviors to influence the subordinates to obtain a goal. Some leaders need to be either more task or relationship oriented depending on the situation (Northouse, 2004).

An approach identified since the early 1980s is transformational leadership. This is part of a paradigm shift in leadership theory that gives more attention in meeting and assessing the follower's needs. This approach to leadership focuses on the connection between the subordinates and leaders in which the leader wants each subordinate to reach his or her full potential (Cherry, n.d.; Northouse, 2004). According to Werhane, Posig, Gundry, Ofstein, and

Powell (2007) women exhibit transformational leadership characteristics by having a give-and-take relationship with each subordinate. The leader and subordinates create a shared vision for the organization together, and this allows the leader and subordinate to interactively participate in the organization while reaching particular goals.

### *Historical Considerations*

Langdon (2001) stated that during the colonial period many viewed females as incapable of higher learning, thus females did not attend college or receive educational opportunities. In the 19th century, females from wealthy families had tutors at home and a few attended women's or religious colleges. However, in general females had few opportunities for higher education until the 20th century. Even in the early 1900s men's colleges refused entry to females; those who could afford education attended women's colleges, studying ladylike refinement, the arts of homemaking, and the profession of teaching. Graduates attained teaching positions, considered respectable jobs, which contributed to females dominating the teaching field (Langdon, 2001).

According to Smulyan (2004) teaching was a predominantly female profession in the early 1800s. Females were mostly regarded as caregivers and natural teachers for children, and Jones (2000) noted that in the United States this view allowed females to dominate the teaching field. In the early 19th century leaders of the young democracy wanted to improve literacy for all classes of men and women by establishing common schools. In the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century this created a large number of girl schools that offered literacy training to a large number of females. During the Civil War as men joined the military, approximately one fourth of the educated females became American school teachers. In assuming the duties of the absent males, the roles of females expanded from the home into the workforce.

Smulyan (2004) noted that teaching was an acceptable profession for females because it was an extension of working with their own children in their homes. Therefore, females began to dominate elementary and secondary teaching positions due to accepted social norms. Leadership, however, was the province of males; consequently, they typically held positions as principals. Females who aspired to become principals encountered barriers created by social norms and attitudes.

Chapman (2000) examined social norms reflected in an elementary school reading series. As late as the 1950s elementary school reading series typically portrayed females as teachers, nurses, mothers, and homemakers. Wojalik, Breckenridge, Gibson, Hancox, and Sobehart (2007) also examined social norms, positing that females typically prepared for roles as mothers or homemakers or secured lower level jobs. On the other hand, the socialization of men typically involved seeking higher level professional jobs. Movies, books, advertising, subliminal messages, and families reflected society's expectations for gender roles.

In general Chapman (2000) noted that female roles were portrayed as fearful and dependent; thus, women adopted the roles with their passivity rewarded by societal approval. Females were supposed to marry by a certain age and many attended college primarily to meet a husband. In fact, one third of those enrolled would not finish college in order to marry, while half of those who graduated from college worked only until they were married. Those who did procure long-term employment applied for separately advertised women's positions and received half the salary of males.

According to McFadden et al. (2009) another social norm of the early 1900s included hiring males as administrators because male dominance was an accepted leadership trait, while females were followers. In 1905 males dominated secondary school administrator and

superintendent positions. By 1928 however, 55% of elementary school administrators were female. Although the positions were still lower in pay, the era marked significant gains for females.

According to Morse (2007) women had minimal rights in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the inability to divorce, vote, go to college, or have a job. After the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that gave females the right to vote, lifestyles began to change for females. Female's roles changed with the right to vote and the beginnings of the women's rights movement. As happened during the Civil War, females entered the workforce during the World War II because of the shortage of workers when men joined the military (Morse, 2007).

After World War II most of the men re-entered the workforce while the females returned to the home to take care of the family. The status quo remained the same until the economic development of the 1960s allowed females to re-enter the workplace and contribute to the family economically. Even so, salaries remained unequal and persistent discrimination curtailed advancement. This began to change with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 offered equal opportunity in the workplace that helped females advance (Morse, 2007).

Loden (1985) explained that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination against females in the workplace and in education. This affected how corporations associated with females. In 1967 Executive Order added to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act included penalties for sex discrimination by government contractors. Thus, sex discrimination became an economic liability to businesses, which helped females advance into management roles.

Logan (1998) added that Title IX and the Women's Educational Equity Act offered positive advancements for women in educational opportunities and employment protection.

Although the act took immediate effect, positive attitudes towards the changes took much longer. Societal and cultural acceptance required a different way of thinking. Title IX made a major impact on society and on the United States education system. As a result females advanced into higher education and nontraditional occupational roles, which allowed experience in a range of different roles and influenced societal expectations. The changes increased the possibility for women to move into top-level educational leadership positions.

### *History of Females in Educational Administration*

Webb and McCarthy (1998) explained that although Ella Flagg Young encountered many barriers, her commitment to improving the quality of education allowed her to be the first female superintendent of one large Chicago school system in the late 1800s. Ella Flagg Young began her career as a primary teacher in Chicago with the Old Foster School. According to Webb and McCarthy (1996) after only 1 year of teaching, she moved to Brown School as a head assistant. After 2 years at Brown School, Young became the first principal of a new Chicago Normal School, which was a model for teachers.

During Ella Flagg Young's career, she became principal of one of Chicago's largest elementary schools. Although customarily female leaders were in smaller elementary schools, Young's high score on the certification examination enabled her assignment to one of the largest elementary schools in the Chicago area. During this time only male principals were required to take certification examinations. Although females could hold administrative positions without a certification exam, Ella Flagg Young insisted on taking the exam, and scored highest among all the other potential principals.

According to Webb and McCarthy (1998) Ella Flagg Young was selected district superintendent in 1887. During her term as district superintendent she promoted a council for

teacher participation in decision-making on textbooks, curriculum, and other issues at their individual schools. Unfortunately, the school system did not implement her school council plan until years later. Shakeshaft (1989) noted that in the beginning of the 1900s a large number of females held school administrative positions. After becoming the first female district superintendent of one Chicago public school system, Ella Flagg Young made an optimistic prediction about females in administration, as follows:

Women are destined to rule the schools in every city. I look for a majority of big cities to follow the lead of Chicago in choosing a woman for superintendent. In the near future we will have more women than men in executive charge of the vast educational system. It is woman's natural field, and she is no longer satisfied to do the greatest part of the work and yet be denied leadership. As the first women to be placed in control of the schools of a big city, it will be my aim to prove that no mistake has been made and to show critics and friends alike that a woman is better qualified for this work than a man. (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 18)

Shakeshaft (1989) reported that after 75 years in education Ella Flagg Young's prediction had not manifested as she predicted. By the 1990s Conner and Sharp (1992) noted that a majority of teachers were females, while men were administrators. In the United States the 2.3 million teachers comprise 1.6 million women and 0.7 million men. A national survey by the American Association of School Administrators in 1987-1988 reported that the total percent of female superintendents was only 3.7%, while 24% of school principals were females. Therefore, the total percentage of women in administrative positions was less in the 1980s than it was in 1905. According to Gosmire, Morrison, and Van Osdel (2010) the National Center for Education Statistics found the percentage of female public school principals increased between 1993-94 and 2003-04. The percent of elementary school principals increased from 41% to 56%, and the percent of female secondary school principals increased from 14% to 26%. The National Center for Education Statistics (2010) found that the percent of elementary school principals increased

in 1999-2000 and again in 2007-2008. The percent of female elementary school principals increased from 52% to 59%, and the percent of secondary female school principals increased from 22% to 29%.

### *Preventive Issues for Females in Obtaining Leadership Roles*

#### *Personal Characteristics*

Shakeshaft (1989) noted that females began their roles in educational leadership later in life, often in their mid-30s to late 40s. Interestingly, the majority of females who held educational leadership positions were only children, the firstborn, or in a family with fewer than three siblings. According to Shakeshaft women who were firstborn or only children are typically higher achievers. This might be due to parents, especially fathers, investing in the only child. On average female administrators were born into a two-parent family. As for educational attainment, female administrators achieved a higher level of education than their fathers who were in careers of unskilled or skilled laborers, educators, and professional men. Mothers of female administrators achieved a higher level of education than did their husbands. However, a majority of the mothers of female administrators were homemakers.

Shakeshaft (1989) noted that although female administrators did marry 44% were unmarried by choice. According to Hill and Ragland (1995) if female administrators had children, they typically applied for administrative positions after their children were in school or in college. According to Shakeshaft (1989) the reasons some female became administrators in mid-life was due to sexual discrimination and family circumstances. This contributed to females having more teaching experience than did males in similar positions. Over 40% of females who were teachers and solely responsible for childcare and housework were only able to take on

additional administrative positions when their responsibilities at home lessened. In mid-life women could focus on their careers because it marked a stage of self-discovery and self-worth.

Ruhl-Smith, Shen, and Cooley (1999) noted that most female advanced into an educational administrative role when they gained a strong teaching background and understood the details of administration. Another factor that influenced a female's decision to advance into an educational administrative role was encouragement from family and peers. After placement in an administrative role, females were likely to stay in that position for an extended period and often for the duration of her career.

Andrews and Ridenour (2006) found an increase of females enrolling in educational administration graduate programs across the country as well as females holding degrees and certifications in educational administration. In 1972 the percent of females with doctoral degrees in educational administration was 11; however, by 1990 that percent had increased to 51. Even though Caucasian males continued to dominate educational administration positions, increasing numbers of females entered and succeeded in the field, a consequence, perhaps, of the empowerment of the feminist movement of the 1960s. Morse (2007) noted that even though the feminist movement allowed females to perceive themselves as leaders they were not being adequately prepared for their roles.

### *Stereotypes of Female Leaders*

According to Hill and Ragland (1995) contemporary barriers and historical myths still hinder females despite advances in education and equal opportunities. Unfortunately, these myths distorted the view of females as leaders. Historical and contemporary myths involve females as silent martyrs, fiery temptresses, and icy virgins. Other images represent females as gold diggers, schemers, and seducers who use their wiles to gain a higher position. Media images

also distort females in leadership roles by portraying them as “manipulative, adversarial, bitchy, and distasteful” (Hill & Ragland, 1995, p.8).

Traditionally stereotypes portray females educators as harsh, prudish, unmarried, and living a meager life. These female lives center on their school existence where eventually they accept leadership roles (Hill & Ragland, 1995). Hudson (1996) noted that a percent of females in leadership roles is unequal to the percent in teaching positions. Even though females dominate administrative preparation programs, they tend to remain in teaching positions. Females accepted leadership roles without any authority, which allowed the higher paying leadership positions to be filled by men (Hill & Ragland, 1995).

Hudson (1996) identified sexual stereotypes that contributed to the inequalities of hiring females for educational administration positions. For decades stereotypes of females included traits such as emotional, weak, incapable, and indecisive, which hindered promotion to educational administrative positions. Stelter (2002) found that females responded to these stereotypes by suppressing their natural gender behavior or demonstrating behavior similar to a male in order to move towards to a higher position. This led to success for many females leaders.

Many perceive a successful leader as male or someone possessing masculine qualities, which influences the hiring and promotion process (Stelter, 2002). Consequently, female leaders feel pressured to demonstrate masculine leadership practices to appear successful (Stelter, 2002). Organizational superiors may rely on gender perceptions to describe job performance or attribute gender characteristics to effectiveness. Some female leaders receive negative evaluations when their behavior does not correspond to the gender expectation or stereotype held by the superior. Social and cultural interactions create gender stereotypes; consequently, female leaders must deal with expectations created by gender stereotype role expectations. For example, a female may

bring gender roles created by her history and her person-oriented leadership practice to a leadership position (Stelter, 2002).

There were incongruences between what people expected from a female leader and expectations about leaders in general. Therefore, stereotypes and prejudice emerge because people view females as having communal qualities that involve empowering others, listening, and communicating. People tend to expect a successful leader to have agentic qualities, typically instrumental and assertive behaviors associated with men (Eagly & Carli, 2003).

In a national survey of 1,026 randomly selected adults the data revealed that 48% of participants preferred a male supervisor to a female, 22% preferred a female supervisor, and 28% had no preference (Simmons, 2001). Eagly and Carli (2003) found the reason for a higher male preference rate was female leadership practices are questioned and females are held to a higher competency standard. Thus, it appeared that females must demonstrate consistently superior performance to compete with perceptions of male leadership ability (Eagly & Carli, 2003).

According to Andrews and Basom (1990) many teachers have a predetermined perception of a female's ability to lead a school. There is an accepted paradigm that administrative work requires masculine behavior. Females need to develop their individual strengths in order to become leaders instead of using masculine gender behaviors. Traits such as kindness and caring can produce positive results for school administrators. Andrews and Ridenour (2006) explained that a new leadership paradigm associated with feminine attributes that involved placing them in the center of the organization that makes them more accessible. This shift makes female leadership more accessible, includes everyone in the organization in decision-making, and promotes shared problem-solving, team building, and inter-connectedness.

### *Roles and Responsibilities of a School Principal*

The Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) was created by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in order to provide a set of standards to improve education in public schools. The first ISLLC standards were adopted in November 1996 by the National Policy Board of Educational Administration (NPBEA) and the most recent version was implemented on December 12, 2007 (Lindahl & Beach, 2009). Some of the reasons for the development of ISLLC standards were to enhance school programs, improve standards, provide professional development, offer programs that trained administrators, and create a licensure framework (Murphy & Shipman, 1998).

The ISLLC standards have helped to shape educational practices and educational planning (Lindahl & Beach, 2009). The ISLLC standards are used to strengthen leadership and help to meet the needs of the school (Murphy & Shipman, 1998), and this has influenced the role of the principal because it has transitioned him or her from a manager to leader. This was accomplished by six ISLLC standards helping leaders to gain knowledge, perform consistently, and close achievement gaps (Johnson & Uline, 2005).

The following are the six ISLLC standards: (CCSSO, 2008)

Standard 1- To facilitate a vision that is shared by the stakeholders

Standard 2-Develop a school culture that provides student growth and staff development

Standard 3-Ensuring a safe and effective learning environment

Standard 4-Collaborating with community and faculty

Standard 5-Acting in a professional and ethical manner

Standard 6-Understanding the political and cultural perspectives

Boatman (2007) identified several qualities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century leader that involve communicating, balancing, empowering, collaborating, and creating a vision that are similar to the six ISLLC standards. Many of these qualities are thought to be feminine but can be used by both males and females. These qualities do come naturally to females regarding leadership. The following look at how these natural female leadership practices relate to the six ISLLC standards.

*The Association with Transformational Leadership and ISLLC Standard 1*

Lindahl and Beach (2009) explained that ISLLC standard 1 is to facilitate a shared vision with the stakeholders. The role of the leader is to collaborate with the stakeholders to develop a vision that encompasses the values of the organization. According to Northouse (2004) this process can be associated with a transformational leader whereby the leader and followers create a connection to one another. This connection increases the level of motivation between the leader and follower; therefore, a transformational leader influences and motivates the follower to reach his or her fullest potential. Loden (1985) cited a survey conducted by *Vogue* magazine that interviewed 20 top professional females to determine the differences between the leadership practices of males and females. One interview in the qualitative study noted that females naturally motivate, educate, and bring out the best out in others, which parallels the characteristics of a transformational leader.

Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) stated that transformational leaders were mentors who empower followers through encouragement. Encouraging followers to reach their full potential contributes to the capability of the organization. Followers will contribute to the capability of the organization when leaders encourage them to reach their full potential. According to Northouse (2004) individualized consideration is a quality of transformational

leadership that involves leaders who listen to and understand the needs of the followers.

Subsequently the leader helps the followers toward self-actualization.

Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) defined transformational leaders as individuals who gain trust from their followers by setting high behavioral standards and becoming role models. Transformational leaders offer a vision for future goals and a plan with which to accomplish them. Northouse (2004) explained that a transformational leader creates a vision by understanding the interests of the individuals or units in the organization that offers a focal point and clarity for the future of the organization. Through the vision of the leader followers gain a sense of identity and self-efficacy because of the grounding of that vision in the perceived interest of the followers.

Eagly and Johnnesen-Schmidt (2001) gave a large sample of male and female managers the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to measure the frequency with which they used transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership practices. Although results revealed a small but significant difference in male and female leadership practices, females scored higher on three of the attributes for transformational leadership: individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. These results suggested that female leaders motivated followers by appealing to their individual needs, displayed confidence about future goals for the organization, and encouraged followers to feel pride in their work. However, females also scored higher in the transactional leadership practice of contingent reward. The study found that female leaders offered followers rewards for satisfactory performance (Eagly & Johnnesen-Schmidt, (2001).

Female leaders tend to promote feminine leadership practices, which include nurturing, considering, and being attentive to their followers. By encouraging and supporting followers a

leader can provide inspiration that promotes excitement about the future of the organization and provides motivation in achieving that goal. These tendencies are associated with a female gender role (Eagly & Johnnesen-Schmidt, 2001).

*The Association with Instructional Leadership and ISLLC Standard 2*

Lindahl and Beach (2009) identified ISLLC standard 2 as developing a school culture that provides student growth and staff development. The ongoing staff development and supervision by the principal can contribute to each teacher's learning and instruction. DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) reported that a successful school principal who takes responsibility for instruction influences student achievement. The responsibilities of principals expand to include instructional leadership to assure high standards for all students and to meet the needs of special education students. Thus, instructional leaders must have knowledge of instruction, curriculum, and assessment to increase student performance levels. In addition principals must understand the special education requirements addressed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. These requirements have increased the expectations of the instructional leader. For example, some principals hired from outside the education field find it difficult to meet the special education requirements (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

Knab (2009) reported that the focus of school leadership changed over time including upper level administrators applying the term instructional leadership. According to Williams (2000), instructional leadership referred to the principal being concerned with the central practices and activities of the school that involve teaching and learning. In other words, an effective instructional leader participates in the planning and monitoring of the instructional programs. Knab (2009) explained that instructional leadership practices prevailed in early private

schools because the head teacher was also the principal. As a result many private schools employed the term headmaster; however, when principals became managers, their focus changed to district responsibilities. In modern education principals are reviving instructional leadership practices to focus on improving instruction. Hoy and Hoy (2006) noted that focusing on improving instruction influences student achievement. Schools need to analyze instructional strategies because students differ in gender, culture, emotions, and learning styles that may influence their learning.

Hill and Ragland (1995) noted that female principals focused more on the instructional and curricular aspects of the school. Therefore, the faculty and staff perceived female principals as modeling practices from instructional leadership. Before becoming principals females customarily taught for longer time periods than did males. This provides females with a stronger curriculum and instructional background that allows female principals to become stronger instructional leaders (Hill & Ragland, 1995).

In a study by Jones, Ovando, and High (2009) female middle school principals explained the importance of instructional leadership to daily decisions in the schools. Female middle school principals understand the importance of instructional leadership by continuing to develop strategies to enhance teaching and student learning. Female middle school principals who displayed instructional leadership practices focused on student learning and used instruction-based research to make decisions. They also helped teachers with instructional matters associated with teaching.

According to Mertz and McNeely (1998) female high school principals spend more time on managerial tasks than on instructional ones. The majority of their day is engaging in verbal interaction with others. Shakeshaft (1989) found that female high school principals spend more

time communicating with others, more time working after school, and less time at their desks during the school day. Female high school principals had more contact with superiors and a greater amount of time scheduled for phone calls and meetings compared to males. With all the managerial tasks during the day, female principals still value the academics, curriculum, and teachers in the school. In the Mertz and McNeely (1998) study a survey taken of female high schools principals examined the importance of and commitment to student learning and curriculum. Although the principals expressed that their first priority should be instructional leadership, it ranked fifth in how they spent their time.

*The Association with Leadership and Management and ISLLC Standard 3*

Lindahl and Beach (2009) noted that ISLLC standard 3 promoted a productive learning environment. This was accomplished by the educational administrator that plans the schedules, budget, safety plans, and technology. Those are just a few of the items an educational administrator needs to plan in order to establish a productive learning environment. Northouse (2004) noted that an educational administrator can have different approaches when planning a learning environment either through being a manager or a leader.

Reynolds and Warfield (2010) explained that leadership and management are interchangeable words, but they have different connotations and practices. Yukl (2002) noted a difference between leadership and management in the personalities of the individuals. Managers show concern with order in an organization and in the way in which tasks are completed. Reynolds and Warfield (2010) defined managers as individuals who rely on control. On the other hand, a leader expresses concern for the people in the organization and wants them to succeed. Yukl (2002) explained that leaders are concerned with how things affect people. An important aspect in a leader is reaching consensus before anything is changed. Yukl (2002), quoting Bennis

and Nanus, summed up the difference between leadership and management as “managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing” (p. 5).

According to Yukl (2002) the outcomes of a manager and leader are different. In management an individual has goals for the organization with a timeline for completion. A leader creates a vision for the organization and provides followers with strategies to realize that vision. In other words a leader communicates the vision to followers, while a manager assigns followers tasks to complete. A manager monitors individuals while they are completing the tasks and problem solves when needed. A leader inspires followers to accomplish the vision for the organization and trusts them to work toward that goal without extensive oversight.

Helgesen (1990) conducted a study on the similarities and difference in the way in which males and females managed an organization. During a typical day male managers used 60% of their time for formal tasks such as meetings. The balance of the day involved informal tasks that required immediate attention. Male participants complained that the informal tasks disrupted their day and subordinates were taking their time. Female managers also spent 40% to 60% of their time in formal meetings and the rest completing informal tasks. However, female managers did not consider informal tasks as an interruption and made an effort to be accessible to subordinates. Female managers wanted subordinates to know that someone cared and they enjoyed being involved and helping.

In communication styles male managers preferred face-to-face meetings and phone calls. Although the study was completed before the popularity of electronic mail, males considered postal mail burdensome and the responsibility of the secretary. Females also enjoyed face-to-face meetings and phone calls but did not view mail as a burden. Outside of the organization both males and females maintained relationships. They networked with individuals because they felt it

was their responsibility to represent the company. Males spent 22% to 38% and females spent 20% to 40% of their out of work time networking with peers and colleagues (Helgesen, 1990).

After regular working hours male managers worked extra hours at home, which reduced family time. Male managers had few interest or hobbies outside of their jobs. Female managers did not give up their family time for their jobs and had hobbies that included reading on current events, history, and books related to work. Females also had an identity and viewed their jobs as one aspect of themselves. Males viewed their jobs as part of their identity. In sharing information within the organization, males found it difficult. Because males viewed their jobs as part of their identity, they considered information a source of power. Females, on the other hand, made time during the day to share information. Females viewed themselves as being at the center of the organization, which allowed them to reach out to others by sharing information. Sharing information may derive from the need to develop relationships with subordinates (Helgesen, 1990).

#### *The Association with Collaboration and ISLLC Standard 4*

Lindahl and Beach (2009) explained that ISLLC standard 4 involves the educational leader collaborating with the faculty and community. According to Ruhl-Smith, Shen, and Cooley (1999) females enter a career in educational administration because of intrinsic rewards and collegiality. Generally when a female approaches a leadership role, she wants to empower others and create changes through collaboration. Examples could be involving others in sharing information and power, thus creating open communication in the workplace. Northouse (2004) explained that empowering individuals creates a connection between the leader and followers that increases the productivity of the organization.

Communication is a major daily activity for educational administrators. Females in educational administration typically use a less coercive and less autocratic style of speech. Shakeshaft (1989) reported that 70% of an elementary school administrator's day involved some type of communication such as telephone calls, unscheduled meetings, daily exchanges, writing notes, and reports. For secondary school administrators a majority of the day involves using oral and written communication.

Female school administrators tend to employ precise grammar and use fewer slang terms in verbal communication. Female administrators also pose questions to express opinions or answer statements. Females are able to build community through language. This is accomplished by being polite, respectful, and attentive to the person speaking while listening and summarizing the speaker's points. Females typically use polite and less aggressive responses. While listening a female will less likely interrupt and more likely remember what the speaker said. In general females hear the personal and emotional issues from the speaker instead of focusing on the facts (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Effective leaders would benefit in using communication practices that are less autocratic, more persuasive, and nonthreatening. Practicing nonthreatening communication aids conflict avoidance in times of uncertainty. This permits a nonresistant exchange of questions and answers between the leader and followers. In addition nondefensive communication and conflict reduction techniques are necessary for an effective leader, which are qualities employed by females in their communication techniques (Shakeshaft, 1989). Condren, Martin, and Hutchinson (2006) agreed that females possess stronger interpersonal skills, enabling their awareness of the emotions of others, which could affect the quality of work. Labeled emotional intelligence, this type of leadership employs interpersonal skills in the organization to recognize emotional

reactions. When sensing heightened emotions the leader can redirect the follower in a constructive manner.

*The Association with Ethic of Care and ISLLC Standard 5*

According to Lindahl and Beach (2009) ISLLC standard 5 involves the leader acting in a professional manner. This involves the educational leader planning for the school using ethical and moral development that promotes student success. Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) examined the differences between male and female perspectives on moral development. Using the Kohlberg scale of justice reasoning, the authors assessed difference between the justice and caring perspectives according to gender. Individuals tend to consider the morality of justice and care when viewing a real-life moral situation. In general females focus on the ethic of care that according to Starratt (1991) focuses on and is loyal to the relationship. Each individual honors one another and wants the person to enjoy life when presented with a moral dilemma. Men focus on the ethic of justice when presented with a moral dilemma by treating the individuals in accordance to the situation.

In the Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) study subjects were adolescents and young adults with real-life dilemmas. In analyzing care and justice, both perspectives were important to mature moral thinking. At times males and females represented equal concerns about caring and justice; however, males had higher justice scores when dealing with mature moral thinking. The males who scored high on the justice scale showed less concern with needs and more concern about fair treatment of individuals in the real-life dilemmas. Females who scored higher on the caring perspective expressed more concern about the circumstances and the needs of the individuals and less about their equal treatment (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988)

Gilligan (1982) said that females demonstrate the characteristics of the morality of caring. Males view caring from a different perspective and they demonstrate characteristics towards the morality of justice. Males view caring as an active responsibility that alters the focus from the logic of relationships to the consequences of choice. The female view on the ethic of justice pertaining to the rights and responsibilities of others comes from understanding the logic of relationships, which aids recognition of needs in all people.

#### *Administrators Using the Ethic of Care*

According to Beck (1992) caring for others is an important part of human interaction. Most educators and administrators support the ethical practice of caring for the needs of others and practice it. In modern society educators and administrators face many challenges where the ethic of caring can assist schools into the next century.

Starratt (1991) noted that administrators can guide social issues by commitment to an ethic of caring. Administrators need to value human relationships and cherish each human being in the school. Relationships are the central component in a school environment that cares for students, promotes compassion for others, and clarifies school motives and mission. Lightfoot (1983) found that good high schools promote good relationships between the teachers and students. High school students want teachers to function as mentors and not as friends. They want to emulate a mature adult who upholds the standards and traditions of the school. A safe environment accompanied by rules that represent structure and order create good teacher-student relationships. High school students want a sense of order and visible rules.

In addition Nodding (1988) suggested that with an emphasis on academic achievement educators and administrators focused more on grading, discipline, and attendance than on the ethic of caring. The ethic of caring, in a report by the Holmes Group and Carnegie Task Force in

1986, was ignored as an aspect in education. Restructuring the current hierarchical management, time distribution, class, size, instructional goals, content selection, modes of evaluations, and patterns of relationships could add an ethic of caring to schools. Teachers have a responsibility to teach not only academics but shape students as caring individuals. Dewey (1915) suggested schools must become a developing community that explores occupations that reflect societal needs. These occupations are intertwined throughout subjects such as science, history, and art. This prepares students to become productive members of the community by giving them self-direction and the dedication for service.

#### *The Association with the Future Challenges and ISLLC Standard 6*

According to Lindahl and Beach (2009) external factors can impact the school environment. These factors must be considered when in the preplanning phases of any planning model to ensure the educational leader is proactive, an advocate, and assess the political trends. The following are a couple of challenges an educational leader might experience in the future.

#### *Academic Performance*

A challenge that administrators may encounter in the future is improving academic performance. Administrators face the challenge of understanding educational goals related to producing students who can successfully function in a workplace. This can be accomplished by administrative leaders analyzing the educational goals and move them towards academic excellence. Students need preparation to compete in the global market. Being competitive with the global market has affected educational policies. Therefore, the mission of the schools should be an economic one because they have a relationship with the economy (Beck, 1992).

Murphy (1991) noted that the increased pressures put on schools to restructure to improve academic performance were in response to the economic demands and expectations of

society. Some politicians and other citizens assume that schools fail to educate students adequately in the areas of technology, science, and industry. This assumption was made from the *Nation At Risk* report in 1983. In their opinion this deficit education could affect the position of America in the world economy. The global market was competing with America's industry, technology, and science. *A Nation at Risk* (1983) revealed that both educational leaders and President Ronald Reagan are committed to keep society informed of academic reform and support academic excellence. In the 21st century Carnegie Corporation of New York (2009) noted that the teaching of mathematics and science comprise the two main subject areas targeted for improvement. To meet the needs in future schools need to reform by refining math and science throughout the curriculum beginning in the earliest of grades. This allows the students to master the content by knowing how it applies to real-life situations.

#### *Social Problems Students May Experience*

Beck (1992) noted a challenge for administrators may be a student's social problems including gender, race, poverty, and school level inequalities. Other social problems students may encounter include teen pregnancy, gangs, truancy, suicide, and vandalism. Administrators need to be sensitive to student social problems because these nonacademic issues can consume a large portion of time. Beck (1992) also noted that both local and state administrators must decide on appropriate resources and programs to educate students about social issues. Administrators must adapt student programs to address the social problems in their community. For example, Stein (2010) reported the Obama administration has a \$110 million dollar campaign for outreach programs to combat the risks of sexual activity and encourage contraception.

Armstead, Bessell, Sembiente, and Plaza (2010) explained that from 2004 until 2008 a study funded by a \$33 million research grant took place in one of Florida's largest school

districts to determine what students expected from teachers. One of the major themes found in the study was that students wanted teachers to challenge them with new concepts, skills, and ideas. Students wanted teachers who were patient and cared about them individually. They described good teachers as those that provided hands-on experiences, concrete examples, and more classroom interaction. The students said that teachers should care whether they learned and about their future.

### *Changes in the Organizational Structure*

The changes in an organizational structure is the third challenge facing administrators. Beck (1992) explained that certain groups demand change from the traditional bureaucratic model focused on definite roles, central authority, and chains of command. Some criticize this outdated organizational model as responsible for the failures in schools. Dunlap and Goldman (1991) noted that top-down power focuses on the authority of power and not on manifesting the power through another. The manifestation of power uses the knowledge of teachers, support specialists, and administrators to solve a problem. These educational specialists have a large knowledge base due to their experiences and area specializations. Although educational specialists have similarities because they have comparable training, they approach solutions to problems based on their knowledge base. Increased specialization requires more collaboration between the educational specialists in order to reform the school.

Beck (1992) noted that an ethic of caring can meet the changes in the organizational structure by building the community and the people. Administrators can emphasize service and other activities that support a nonbureaucratic structure. The ethic of caring tends to minimize to locus of control and allows teachers to develop professional autonomy, collaboration, and communication between the people in the school system.

### *Summary*

The review of literature examined leadership practices associated with female leaders. With increased accountability it is important for educational leaders to use effective leadership practices. It is beneficial for principals to understand the leadership practices teachers perceive as effective and to incorporate those practices into their leadership. The literature review examined particular leadership practices associated with female leaders. It is important for educational leaders to educate themselves on effective leadership practices. As the literature suggested, incorporating effective leadership practices will strengthen the motivation level of the followers in the workplace. The leaders stay attentive to the follower's needs by making time during the day to listen and share information. This creates a connection between the follower and leader.

CHAPTER 3  
RESEARCH METHODS

*Introduction*

This was a qualitative case study designed to present and analyze the perceptions of teachers regarding the effective female leadership practices of their principals. The focus of the proposed qualitative study was at the elementary level. I collected data from teachers about their perceptions regarding the female principals with whom they work. I interviewed teachers to understand how they interpret, make sense of, and construct meaning in their work at school (Merriam, 2009; Mertens, 1998).

The feminine qualities associated with leaders have changed leadership to better meet the needs of people (Helgesen, 1990). The purpose of this study was to determine what leadership practices female principals use that successfully or not influence teachers in an elementary school setting. This was determined by interviewing teachers about their perceptions.

The primary research question I addressed was: How do female or male teachers perceive working in a school with a female principal? Secondary research questions for the study include:

1. What advantages do female or male teachers perceive in working with a female principal?
2. What disadvantages do female or male teachers perceive in working with a female principal?
3. What effective leadership characteristics do teachers perceive as specific to a female principal?

4. What ineffective leadership characteristics do teachers perceive as specific to a female principal?

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and the research plan for the study. Specific detailed sections explain purposeful sample, recruiting protocol, interview guide, interview logistics, ethical protocol, and the data analysis process.

### *Data Collection*

#### *Interviews*

This qualitative study involved phenomenological research practices to emphasize participants' individual experiences. This type of research focused on the perceptions of the phenomenon experienced. In this phenomenological study the information came from the perceptions of elementary school teachers working with female principals (Mertens, 1998). The participants chosen for the study included nine teachers from three different elementary schools. Only eight teachers participated from the nine chosen. One teacher chose not to participate. The district superintendent selected three elementary schools with successful females as principals for the study. The participants from these schools included beginning teachers and some who have been teaching for a several years at the same elementary school; thus, their experiences vary.

The interviews in this qualitative study were individual and face-to-face with both male and female elementary school teachers in one district. Eight teachers from three elementary schools participated in a formal interview process that lasted approximately 1 hour. Hatch (2002) identified formal interviews as semistructured or structured because the researcher guides the interview with open-ended questions. I interviewed each participant in her or his classroom. I assured that the classroom is sufficiently equipped for the interview and had the tape-player to

record the session. All face-to-face interviews occurred after school hours during the spring of 2011.

I reminded the participants that the information from the interviews will be in a manuscript report submitted for research. I assured participants that their information will remain anonymous, and that quotes used in the final research report will not have names attached. I informed participants that the interview should take approximately 1 hour and the session was tape-recorded to assure accuracy. I asked for questions before they begin.

I asked participants to read and sign the informed consent form before participating in the study (See Appendix D). Each participant received a copy of the informed consent form. I asked the participant for permission to record the interview session before turning on the tape-recorder. I began by asking the participant the interview questions such as “What are the characteristics of a successful female principal?” I asked each participant to use his or her own words to describe his or her perceptions of the characteristics of a successful female principal. During the interview I asked for specific information following the original questions if needed. This allowed the researcher further examination of the topic (Creswell, 2007). Secondary questions probed the response further if needed (Appendix E).

At the conclusion of the interview I summarized the comments made by the participant. I asked the participants if the summary was correct and remind them that their direct quotes might be in a published document, but they would remain anonymous. At any time the participant had the opportunity to withdraw from the study. At the conclusion of the session the participant had the opportunity to make any additional comments before the tape recorder was disconnected. I would like to thank the participants for their participation in this study. After the eight

interviews, data analysis was used. A transcriptionist transcribed the tape-recorded interviews. Central themes were derived from the teacher's individual experiences (Ritchie & Lewis, 2008).

### *Purposeful Sample*

The participants for this sample included eight teachers from three elementary schools in one school district. Creswell (2007) explained that purposeful sampling is appropriate for qualitative research. Purposeful sampling is the means of selecting the study's site and participants because they have an understanding of the information needed. The participants included eight elementary schools teachers from schools the superintendent identified as having effective female principals. Each of the eight elementary teachers is highly qualified in his or her subject area according to criteria of *No Child Left Behind Act* (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2005) and have a variety of years teaching in the same school with effective female principals. Both male and female teachers who had a variety of years teaching experiences were interviewed.

### *Recruiting Protocol*

The recommendation for participants came from the superintendent through a letter (See Appendix A) for the three elementary schools with successful female principals. Subsequently I contacted the principals of each school through email and phone call to select the three teachers, combination of males and females, to be interviewed (See Appendix B). Following that recommendation I contacted participants and requested a face-to-face interview at their convenience (Appendix C). There was one participant who was unable to meet for an interview. After confirmation each participant received a consent form that explains the purpose of the study and possible uses of the research. The participants understood that participation is voluntary and they may withdraw from the study at any time. If a teacher cannot participate, I

asked the principal of the school to choose another. In this case, the teacher who was unable to participate was the only male in the school. Another teacher was not chosen.

### *Data Analysis*

According to Marshall and Rossman (1995) data analysis is the process of using and organizing collected data. The researcher organizes the collected data into categories or patterns and filters out anything unusual. Merriam (2009) stated findings from the data could reflect a variety of analytical levels ranging from the concrete to the abstract. Once the researcher organizes the data the next step should include sense-making, seeking themes, and answering the research questions.

A constant comparative analysis comprised data analysis. A constant comparative analysis involves using one piece of data and comparing it to others to determine similarities and differences (Merriam, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). I began with open coding analysis, examining the transcripts for themes and patterns that support the data. I used a constant comparative analysis to place the data into categories that include subcategories. This process reduces the information from the transcripts and includes relevant information into categories (Creswell, 2007).

### *Ethical Protocol*

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006) the researcher is ethically responsible for the rights and welfare of the subject by being knowledgeable about professional guidelines, legal considerations, and ethical requirements. It is important for the researcher to obtain both consent and permission for the study. I protected the rights of the participants by maximizing potential benefits and minimizing potential risks. It is vital that the researcher protect the privacy of the participants and assures minimal misinterpretation of the data.

The East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board (ETSU-IRB) protects the rights and welfare of participants in a study. I obtained permission from the ETSU-IRB before collecting data. The ETSU-IRB is a committee that reviewed the purpose of the study and determines if it will harm the participants. The ETSU-IRB committee is for the welfare of the participants.

I obtained permission from the superintendent of the school system involved in the study and contacted the principals and teachers from the three elementary schools about their participation, then I submitted for approval from the ETSU-IRB. I assured the superintendent, principals, and teachers that their names and direct quotes will be anonymous. Each participant read and signed an informed consent form and was reminded that this participation was voluntary and he or she may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Each participant gave permission before tape-recording began. A professional transcriptionist transcribed the tape-recorded data. All tapes and transcriptions of data are protected in a locked cabinet for 5 years. Before publication of the report, I offered member-checking to participants to read the final report and direct quotes. Seidman (2006) suggested that the researcher should stay in contact with the participants during the research process. This allows the researcher to contact participants with any questions or interpretation of data.

#### *Validity and Reliability*

Validity and reliability are important to the reader because they help determine the trustworthiness of the qualitative research. Therefore, there are different ways of assessing qualitative research through internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Internal validity questions whether reality matches the research finding. External validity indicates that the research findings are transferable from a qualitative study to another situation.

Debate on external validity continues because it applies generalizations to other situations (Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) define reliability as consistency in findings over time. Objectivity includes several observers making a collective judgment on a phenomenon.

In order to check for validity in this research study I used an external auditor not connected with the study. This external auditor had varied knowledge in qualitative research to assess for accuracy. A peer review or debriefing by fellow doctoral graduate also checked for validity by asking meaning, method, and interpretation questions. Member checking is another method to aide in validity by allowing participants to review the data, interpretations, and conclusions (Creswell, 2007). I used member checking in my study to ensure validity. Merriam (2009) described member checking as taking the researcher's primary interpretation of the data to the participants and asking whether it captured the true perspective. An outside auditor transcribed the interviews to ensure a true perspective. Because the participants understood the experience, I gave each participant a copy of his or her individual data to review, and he or she could make corrections if needed. Creswell (2007) noted that these methods strengthened the accuracy of the study. In addition the researcher should provide evidence of reliability in order to enhance consistency by having a quality recording of the interviews (Creswell, 2007).

I also used triangulation to analyze the data of the eight interviews because it adds to the credibility and strengthens the research findings. Triangulation uses different methods to check the credibility of the findings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2008). Triangulation involves the application of different methods, sources, and theories to offer evidence of reliability. This evidence aids the discovery of particular themes or patterns from the research data (Creswell, 2007). Then, I used these patterns and check for consistencies in the research data.

CHAPTER 4  
RESEARCH FINDINGS

*Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to construct a theoretical framework analyzing perceptions of teachers regarding effective leadership practices of their female principals. The study involved collecting data through individual interviews from participants at three elementary schools with female principals. After gaining approval from the school system's director of schools, the three female principals chose a total of nine teachers for the study. Three teachers whose teaching experiences ranged from beginner to several years of experience were chosen from each elementary school. Males and females were interviewed from each school. Out of the nine teachers only eight were interviewed. Interviews were conducted during the spring of 2011. The research examined the perceptions of teachers related to the following research questions:

1. How do female or male teachers perceive working in a school with a female principal?
2. What advantages do female or male teachers perceive in working with a female principal?
3. What disadvantages do female or male teachers perceive in working with a female principal?
4. What effective leadership characteristics do teachers perceive as specific to a female principal?
5. What ineffective leadership characteristics do teachers perceive as specific to a female principal?

Interviews were conducted after school hours and lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. Participants understood that participation was voluntary before interviews began and signed a consent form explaining the study. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each participant received a copy of his or her transcript to review and verify authenticity. Participants were given a name in order to keep their identity as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Participants for the Study*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>
Participant 1-Debbie	Female	17 years
Participant 2-Katelyn	Female	8 years
Participant 3-Heather	Female	4 years
Participant 4-John	Male	6 years
Participant 5-Matthew	Male	3 years
Participant 6-Amber	Female	4 years
Participant 7-Mary	Female	16 years
Participant 8-Elizabeth	Female	19 years
Participant 9-	Male	Unable to participate

*Teacher Perceptions of Female Principal Advantages*

Interviews identified what teachers perceived as effective and ineffective leadership characteristics of female principals. Seven constructs were identified after examining and coding data for related themes. These seven constructs were: (a) vision, (b) student growth, (c) staff

development, (d) organization, (e) communication, (f) caring, and (g) community. In addition to the themes participants shared perceptions of disadvantages, advantages, and effective leadership characteristics of female principals.

### *Vision*

One trait teachers expressed as an effective leadership characteristic in female leaders was vision. Many participants expressed that having vision is an important characteristic for any leader.

John, a teacher with 6 years of experience, explained that vision is an important characteristic for any leader. John shared that his current principal has a vision for the school. John said, “She has a certain vision for our school and she just has to make sure that it’s carried out. I don’t really think male and female teachers treat her or view that vision any differently.”

He stated:

You have to have your vision in mind and you can’t be swayed. I think you can’t let gender figure into that. I think you just have to stick with what your vision for the school is and what you know is right as far as your leadership. So again I don’t really think it should be gender specific or gender influenced, and like I said I don’t really see that right now.

Katelyn, a teacher with 8 years of experience, expressed that a female principal has the “tendency to persuade everyone to be a part of some vision or a committee or something that she wants to carry out through the school, instead of just dictating.” She continued by saying that “a female principal would probably lay out more detail as to why she thinks you should be on this committee or a part of this vision to persuade the person.”

Elizabeth, a teacher with 4 years of experience, discussed the importance of a principal knowing his or her staff. She stated, “I think knowing the people that work under you, understanding their characteristics so that you can bring out the best in them.”

In a school's vision data are used to identify goals (CCSSO, 2008). Mary, a teacher with 16 years of experience, stated how data are used in her school: "Where are there weaknesses in their school, and really looking at the data, working with people to figure out what strategies that the school or grade levels need to put in place to see where our deficits are."

Mary has worked with three female administrators in her 16 years of experience. She continued:

The two administrators that I have that were very effective female administrators also were very data driven. They focused on the child and their strengths and weaknesses for each individual teacher for the children and they realized the home life and some of the other things, the emotional states of the children also were very effective in the test data, which would drive them in making some decisions for the school.

Mary explained the time and effort it took for the two female administrators to analyze the data and to determine what was best for the students. She indicated that these administrators realized that other factors could influence test scores such as home life. Mary continued to explain that while analyzing the data, the administrators would take these factors into consideration to determine what was best for students in the school.

#### *A Focus on Student Growth*

A second factor teachers expressed as an effective leadership characteristic in female leaders was student growth. Providing ways to facilitate student growth was through monthly grade level meetings with the principal. Heather, a teacher with 4 years of experience, remarked that teachers at her elementary school could ask her principal for help. She stated:

She [principal] can help them form strategies for fixing those, issues, but then also, each grade level meets once as week to plan for that week. So I feel like not only do we have grade level teams, we have building team that's help support each teacher in the building. And she is the facilitator of all of this.

Heather continued that this gives a sense of *team spirit*. Heather explained that team building allows all the faculty members at her school to support one another. She indicated that the faculty members share ideas to develop strategies for students who are struggling.

Katelyn has worked with four female principals in her teaching career and discussed how decisions are made at her school based on the student needs:

What's going to be better for the student, because they come first, so any decision should...that are made, should be made to impact students' learning at school. Definitely students and when it comes to money, budget...like how's the money going to be best spent and which would also lead back to the student, you know, spending money to make sure they are learning.

Katelyn explained how the budget is spent based on the student's academic needs at her school. Katelyn indicated that the budget is spent in order to benefit the students. She continued by explaining that the needs of the students are considered before any decisions are made.

Amber, a teacher with 4 years of experience, expressed how her female principal is organized and active throughout the school day. "It's very rare that you ever find her at her desk in her office. She tries to come into my room at least once a day. She walks through, observes and talks to the students if she can." Amber continued, "She's [principal] also on top of everything. She knows the background of all the students. I can mention a student by first name and she knows exactly who I'm talking about."

#### *A Focus on Staff Development*

Matthew, a teacher with 3 years experience, worked in a different school system with a female principal. Matthew indicated that things were prescribed with authority, "Okay, you're the teacher. Do what you want." Matthew explained that working with his current female principal has been a learning experience. "I've learned a lot about classroom management and again my expectations of what as a school I should be doing to help the school improve and

become a better learning environment for students in general.” Matthew discussed that learning more about classroom management has helped him to have a better learning environment for students. He continued by indicating that understanding the school’s expectations and participating in staff development has been a valued experience for him.

Mary explained a couple of ways the faculty at her school receives staff development. One way is “our faculty meetings are spent learning best practices.” Mary gave an example using the six traits of writing and how it was used during a faculty meeting:

How are certain people teaching the six traits of writing, what are people for previewing information, and in our faculty meetings it’s more of a teaching and a-ha moments and giving and sharing what are the related teachers doing that affect what the teachers are doing in the classroom.

Mary discussed how a book study is another way the faculty at her school receives staff development. She continued by explaining that at the end of the year each team gets to choose what book they would like to read for next year. She stated that they get to choose from 30 books or more. Mary explained the process of the book study:

She has been very instrumental as far as making sure because if all you do is just teach what you’ve learned you’re not going to become a better teacher. So we all have our own books that our team chose about teaching practices. So each of the team got to pick out a book and we have read it throughout the year together as a group on our own and then discussions in our monthly team meeting including related arts.

Mary discussed that each team meets throughout the school year and discusses the book. Mary continued by explaining that this allows the teachers to discuss what they learned during monthly meetings. Mary indicated that the relate arts teachers are also included in these monthly meetings.

### *Highly Organized*

Organization was a fourth theme that was exhibited by female principals. Many participants stated that organization is an important quality for a female principal. They

expressed that their principals were organized in all aspects in the school and that this helps with follow-through. Many of the participants indicated that their principals followed-through with procedures and expectations.

Heather, a teacher who has worked with one male and two female principals, remarked that organization is an important characteristic for any leader. She stated: “The thing that matters to me is that, they have strong leadership and they are extremely organized and they have follow-through.”

Debbie has had a similar experience with follow-through while working with a female principal:

I think being very verbal and expectations of what’s expected of the teachers and you know the faculty and staff are not guessing what’s expected of them, I feel like female principals are very verbal and they just...lay it out, what you need to be doing in order for the school to run successfully.

Debbie expressed that knowing what is expected by the faculty and staff is an important quality of the female principal. She remarked that this helps the faculty and staff knows what is expected of them. Debbie knows what her principal expects her to do.

Matthew, a teacher who has worked with two female principals, noted having clear expectations and follow-through was an effective leadership quality:

In working with a female principal I’ve found that the expectations are always very clear. They’ve always been very direct and I know what’s expected of me. There’s never been any question as to what I should or should not be doing. It’s always been very clear cut and that’s a very positive thing.

Debbie, a teacher with 17 years of experience, explained how organization is an effective quality because “well organized, explain it exactly out, what expectations are expected of the teachers...that’s been a positive and just basic follow-through with those procedures.” Debbie explained that she worked with female principals who were organized and everything was

explained thoroughly, there was follow-through, and the expectations were clear. She indicated that an organized school helps it to run successfully.

Mary discussed how organization is used by her female principal: “Very task oriented, extremely organized” and “being task oriented but at the same time making sure that everything is followed through.” Mary expounded on ways that female principals she worked with were organized:

Organized basically starting out the school year they have everything ready to go before the teachers ever hit the building. They already have thought about the bus procedures. They’ve thought about as related arts schedules and the planning and the lunch schedules. They’ve already had that, spent time working to get that organized, to get that together to hand out to the teachers.

Mary explained that her female principal is organized and has everything ready before the school year begins. She remarked that a lot of time and forethought goes into scheduling before the faculty and staff sees it. She continued by explaining that this is helpful because the mistakes in scheduling would be taken care of before school begins.

Heather shared a way that her female principal stays organized:

...sticky note theory. If there’s something that she can’t get an answer for you right then, she’ll write it on a sticky note and place it on her door or her desk or somewhere that she sees all the time, and she will revisit that sticky note until she has an answer for you and then she’ll throw it away once the issue has been resolved.

Heather explained that the sticky note strategy is one of the ways her principal is organized. Heather continued to explain that if her female principal was unable to answer a question, she will write it on a sticky note and place it on her door. Heather indicated that this allows her principal to revisit a question and continue to find the answer.

### *Open Communication Practices*

Communication was the fifth theme that was a characteristic of female principals. Most of the teachers expressed that open dialogue and having clear expectations were important parts of communication. The participants indicated that this helps the faculty and staff understand what is expected of them. It was indicated by some of the participants that having an open dialogue creates a positive atmosphere where they can talk with the principal about concerns.

Elizabeth has worked with two male and five female principals. Elizabeth indicated that she would rather communicate with a female principal because it is easier for her. “Well in my opinion it’s easier to communicate with a female principal. You’re pretty sure of what the expectations are. You know exactly where you stand probably 97%-98% of the time because of the good communication.” Elizabeth continued her thoughts on communication: “I think the good communication, keeping everybody tuned into what’s going on and what’s happening. I think also they’re better listeners. I think they’re better listeners as well as communicators, but they also listen.”

Amber explained how her principal is available to answer questions. “Our principal always supports us and is always available if there are any questions or concerns. We have a positive atmosphere here. Our principal is a good leader.” Amber indicated that her principal communicates all the facts to the teachers before a decision is made:

She tries to give the staff all of the information that we need to make an informed decision. She will then say, “Okay, what do you think our next step should be?” She makes us feel valued and that our opinion matters.

John also discussed his open dialogue of his current female principal:

Again it goes back to doing what’s best for the school and the students, and again any principal I guess should do that, but I do think our current principal does an excellent job of that, and maybe that does come back to again maybe because

she's female maybe she is more open to those suggestions and things. I don't know. I don't want to speak for her, but I do maybe see that she does take more time to really keep an open dialogue with her staff and with the people in all aspects of the school, not just teachers but assistants, custodians.

Matthew expressed how important it is to take everyone's input into consideration through communication. "At this school I think or in general working under a female principal I think they do take everyone's opinions into consideration before making any major decisions." Matthew remarked that it is a best practice in decision making to take everyone's opinion into consideration. He indicated that this helps to make the best decision for the school.

Mary explained how her principal also takes everyone's opinion into consideration before a decision is made by "listening to both sides of an argument whatever it is, whether it's teacher or teacher, whether it's teacher or parent, whether it's teacher or student, listening to both sides of the story before making the final comment." Mary indicated that her principal understands all sides of a situation before making a decision. Mary continued by explaining that this is an effective quality of her principal because everyone is listened to before a final decision is made. This was prominent behavior identified by Mary of her principal.

Amber's principal communicates with faculty through weekly updates:

In the updates she always puts at the bottom "You make us great", just to be positive. Our principal gives out a lot of thank you's in the weekly updates and whenever she sees you she asks, "How are you doing?" In the grade level meetings she asks, "Is there anything that I can do you for you? Is there anything that you need?"

Amber discussed how her principal writes a weekly update not only for a means of communication but as tool to provide feedback. She remarked that the positive comments on the weekly update makes the faculty and staff feel like their female principal cares for them. Also, asking how they are doing provides positive feedback.

## *Caring*

Caring was the sixth theme that was a characteristic of female principals. Most of the participants expressed that female principals were caring, nurturing, and concerned about the needs of others. The participants explained that these traits enable the faculty to talk about concerns or situations about home because a female principal has better understanding of all the responsibilities. It was indicated by the participants that these caring traits create a support system between the principal and teachers.

Katelyn explained that female principals have an understanding of motherhood:

I think that the whole motherhood...like the child gets sick, a female principal can understand. You need to go home with your child. Like things like that when it comes to family, not that men don't...they can relate on that level.

The participants only shared their experiences in working with a female principal and not male principals when it comes to family life. The participants explained that there is a certain amount of understanding that a female principal has when it comes to family life. They indicated that a reason is most female principals have experienced the responsibilities of home, children, and work. The participants also discussed how it helps to have a principal who understand the faculty's needs.

Debbie shared that her experiences with female principals "has been wonderful". She explained how female principals understand the needs of others. Debbie said:

Most of the female principals I've had have been in the classroom, so they're able to relate and understand what you're going through. They understand the challenges of being a teacher and also being a mom. A lot of them understand how hard it is between work, family, children and all of the responsibilities, so it's always been a positive for me.

Debbie discussed her positive experiences in having a female principal. Debbie continued by explaining how her female principal recognizes the challenges of trying to balance working and home life. Debbie shared that her female principal could relate to the faculty because she has worked in the classroom.

Amber indicated that it is an advantage working with a female principal because of the support. “As a female, you can sometimes better relate to and have more in common with another female.” Amber discussed that over her career she was able to relate to female principals because they had more in common.

Elizabeth has worked with five female principals over her career. Elizabeth observed that female principals can relate to female issues. In Elizabeth’s experiences, she discussed how female principals might be able to recognize the faculty’s home and work situation. She remarked that working with a female principal is a benefit:

One of the benefits I think is a female principal can relate to another female’s issues, whether it be in the classroom or whether it be personal, professional, I think there’s a connection there. They can connect with you and either help you or lead you in another direction if need be.

Katelyn has worked with four female principals over her career. She noted that nurturing is a prominent quality of female principals. She wasn’t sure if nurturing was a female principal quality or her personality. She explained the female principals she worked with were nurturing:

They all seem to be nurturing. And I don’t know if that’s just because I’m young but I could always talk to all four of them. You know, like my mom at work...even if it was about personal stuff. They seem nurturing, but ...I don’t know if that was just them as a person or them as a principal.

John summed up female principals as having a *rounded perspective* when it comes to a teacher’s personal life:

I had to pick one thing I would think that female principals do see a more well rounded perspective as far as knowing you have so many other things at home that could be influencing how you're doing your job and maybe tries to even make sure you're also fostering and keeping that part of your life in good working order.

John discussed a prominent characteristic of a female principal was having a rounded perspective of a faculty member's home and work life. John explained that having a rounded perspective is a positive quality. He remarked that a female principal can comprehend how life might influence a faculty's member job. John indicated that a female principal might suggest ways a faculty member can keep his or her life in working order.

At Amber's school her female principal makes them food when they have had a difficult week. "Whenever our principal knows that we've had a rough week or there's been a lot that's gone on in school, she will show us that she cares by making or buying food and desserts to encourage the staff." She indicated that the food shows the faculty and staff that their principal cares about them and creates a positive environment.

Heather stated that working with a female principal is an advantage because of the nurturing aspect. "I just think women are just more in tune with children and their emotional needs. They have more of that nurturing aspect that sometimes I don't think men have."

#### *A Sense of Community*

A sense of community was the seventh theme that was a characteristic of female principals. Participants discussed how their female principals were involved in the school's community. Some of the ways females principals were involved inside of the school are through committees. The participants explained how their female principals are involved in committees.

Heather shared how her principal is involved in some of the committees at her school:

We have our leadership team who organizes or budget and daily operations and those kinds of things and then we have an RTI committee that supports teachers

when they are trying to identify struggling learners, before we test them for special education. [Principal's name], the RTI committee, and teachers from every grade that meet once a month and look at students that are struggling and provide classroom teachers with resources and strategies for helping those students.

Heather's explained that the female principal at her school acts a facilitator when the RTI committee meets every month to identify struggling learners. Struggling learners are identified in the meetings. Then, ideas and resources are discussed to help the struggling learners. Heather indicated that the RTI committee supports the faculty and struggling learners.

John's principal is also involved with the committees at his school:

I know here I feel like we do have really good committees. I think we have really good grade level meetings once a month, and that's something that we had never done before our current female principal came and that was a really good change that was put in place. Once a month she meets with every grade level individually and she's very open to suggestions, to problems we're having, to needs that we may have, so I think being open to that and if nothing else taking the time to listen to those things.

Mary expressed that her school is *community oriented*. She continued by explaining how teachers share effective teaching strategies at faculty meeting and grade level meetings, which create a sense of community. Mary indicated that her principal attends the grade level meeting to share important information. She discussed that this creates a sense of community because all the faculty members are informed of school issues or a variety of teaching strategies.

Amber discussed how her principal is involved in the school's community. Amber's principal's level of involvement has benefited the school. "It's amazing how she [principal] does that, but she's just very involved, very involved with the community, with the parents, with the students, and with the teachers. Her level of involvement is extremely beneficial to our school."

### *Perceptions of Advantages*

Participants also shared their perceptions of advantages when working with a female principal. These perceptions came from personal experiences and through observations. Some of the perceptions were from previous or current experiences with female principals. These participants had a variety of experiences working with female principals that were positive.

Mary shared what she thought could be an advantage. “If there was something I needed to share that was more emotional possibly I could go to that person, but I don’t actually view either one as an advantage working with a female or male.” Mary indicated in her experiences with both male and female principals they had open communication.

Elizabeth explained an advantage she has experienced:

One of the benefits I think is a female principal can relate to another female’s issues, whether it be in the classroom or whether it be personal, professional, I think there’s a connection there that they can connect with you and either help you or lead you in another direction if need be.

Elizabeth discussed that her female principals could relate to female issues. Elizabeth was able to talk with her female principal when she needed personal or professional advice.

Elizabeth’s principal would offer her professional advice when needed. She shared that this created a mutual respect between Elizabeth and her principal.

Matthew shared an advantage from a male’s perspective. He said, “Just a different perspective or different point of view on some topics or areas versus having the male, being a male having a female principal gives me a different perspective on occasion.” A female principal provided Matthew with a female’s perspective on a variety of topics. Matthew indicated that he valued having a perspective from a female rather than just having a male point of view.

John explained that a female perspective provided him with a female point of view. He shared that a female perspective provides him with an alternate way of looking at the situation.

John gets to understand a situation from both his point of view and a female's perspective:

I think for me personally it just gives me a different perspective a lot of times like in meeting with a female principal, I feel like it balances me out. Sometimes it helps me see perspectives that I ordinarily wouldn't have seen.

Heather shared two advantages she has experienced in an elementary school setting:

The advantage to me in an elementary school setting is that I just feel like women are more in tune with children and their emotional needs. They have more of that nurturing aspect that sometimes I don't think men have.

Heather's second advantage was that "I think sometimes men can be bent easily with tears and those emotional pulls, so I don't think women are as easily swayed by crying." In Heather's experiences, this has been an advantage because she stated that female principals understand the needs of children. She indicated that this might be contributed to a female's nurturing quality. Even though female principals are nurturing, Heather indicated that they are not influenced by tears.

Debbie explained that "most of the female principals I've had have been in the classroom, so they're able to relate and understand what you're going through. They understand the challenges of being a teacher and also being a mom." Debbie discussed how most of the female principals she worked with had experience in the classroom before becoming an administrator. Debbie discussed that her female principals understood the responsibilities of home and work.

Katelyn discussed a similar advantage when working with a female principal.

Katelyn said, “I think that the whole motherhood...like the child gets sick, a female principal can understand.” When family situation arise, then a female principal might have a better understanding. Katelyn indicated that this could be attributed to the fact that female principals might have a different perspective to family situations than males.

### *Perceptions of Effective Leadership Practices*

Participants also discussed effective leadership characteristics or qualities they have perceived when working with a female principal. The participant’s perceptions came from personal experiences and observations. Through these experiences the participants shared a variety of effective leadership practices. These leadership practices could be used by aspiring leaders.

Mary has worked with three female principals over her career. She said, “I have noticed the effective leaders that I’ve had have been very well organized, have confidentiality, they respect others’ opinions, they formulate their own ideas, getting it out to you. Also they look at the big picture.”

Elizabeth worked with five female principals. She indicated the following as effective leadership practices. She stated, “I think it goes back to good communication, organization, delegation of duties. [Principal’s name] is really good at that.”

Amber’s perceptions of effective leadership qualities are similar to Elizabeth. Amber said, “I think the effective leadership characteristics that my principal has, is that she very organized, thorough, and active in all aspects of the school.” Amber explained that her female principal is involved in the school by visiting classrooms and talking to students. She is rarely at her desk.

Debbie had similar perceptions of effective leadership characteristics through her experiences. She said, “Organization...very detail oriented, explaining it exactly out...what expectations are expected of the teachers. That’s been a positive and just basic follow-through with those procedures.”

Matthew stated:

In working with a female principal I’ve found that the expectations are always very clear. They’ve always been very direct and I know what’s expected of me. There’s never been any question as to what I should or should not be doing. It’s always been very clear cut and that’s a very positive thing.

Matthew explained that the female principal he has worked with were direct and had clear expectations. Matthew indicated that he knows what is expected of him in the workplace. He explained that this enables him to come to work without wondering what he should be doing. He explained further that he understands what he should be doing at work because his female principal has clear expectations.

Katelyn said, “I think a female principal would have a tendency to persuade everyone to be part of some vision or a committee or something that she wants to carry out through the school, instead of just dictating.” Katelyn shared that being able to persuade others rather than dictating is an effective leadership quality. She indicated that female principals might have a tendency to persuade rather than dictate. She stated that others would be receptive in being a part of the vision or committee if handled in a positive manner.

John has worked with one male and three female principals. He remarked that a principal has to have certain characteristics to be an effective leader. According to John, an effective leader is not gender specific. He stated:

I don't really know if I see it as female/male either way. I think to be a principal you need just certain leadership characteristics and I don't know if it really technically matters male or female. I think to be a strong principal you're going to have to have certain leadership characteristics that would not be gender specific.

In Heather's experiences, she identified support as an effective leadership quality.

According to Heather having a supportive principal in the workplace is important. Heather stated she has been supported by her female principals through assisting her in solving problems. She said:

The most important thing is support, I feel like if at any moment I'm having an issue, that I can go to my current female principal and say "I'm having this issue" and that she's extremely supportive and she will find the resources to help me fix that problem.

Heather continued with another effective leadership quality:

[Principal's name] is very organized and if she tells you that she is going to do something, then it is going to happen. In my other placements I didn't necessarily feel like that was the case. So, I just really appreciate that fact that she's got clear follow-through, clear instructions and directions, we know exactly what's going to happen and what it should look like and how she wants to see our building running, and it's just clear-cut boundaries, and I really appreciate that of her and I think the staff do too.

#### *Teacher Perceptions of Disadvantages*

A majority of the participants interviewed were very positive about working with female principals but shared some disadvantages. These disadvantages were perceptions from the participants. These perceptions came from their own personal experiences and some were through observation. The disadvantages involved three themes that are emotion, perceptions, and organization.

#### *Influenced by Emotion*

John stated that he worked with a female principal whose decisions were influenced by emotion:

Now a former principal I did feel like emotions sometimes swayed her decision making and I don't know if that's necessarily a female thing or if that was just her personality, but I did feel like in one of my former female principals that I did see more of an emotional tie there, but definitely don't see that now.

According to John, his former principal was influenced by her emotions and he perceived this as a disadvantage. He continued to explain that it was difficult for the faculty to understand what decision was made because she could be swayed by emotion. He indicated that this current female principal does not exhibit this characteristic.

Elizabeth worked with a female principal who would hold grudges. She explained:

Sometimes females tend to hold grudges and male principals usually if something bad happens they deal with it and it's over. When I worked in a Catholic school once there was a very prominent nun that was the principal and she held grudges a little bit, and so you had to step lightly.

Elizabeth has worked with both male and female principals. Elizabeth indicated that in her experiences female principals tended to hold a grudge, while most of the male principals did not hold a grudge. She noted that this was especially true when she worked at a private school. Elizabeth explained that the female administrator would hold a grudge and the faculty knew they had to be careful.

Katelyn indicated that a female principal's mood could be a disadvantage:

I've worked for four female principals and you can always tell when it's just not a good day to talk with them and I think that's just part of the make-up of women. And I've never worked for a male principal to compare that, but with all four of my female principals I could always tell when it just wasn't a good day.

Katelyn discussed how mood can influence her female principal's day. Katelyn explained that just by mood she knew if she could approach her female principal. She indicated that she thought that this could be part of a female make-up, but Katelyn was unable to compare it to a male principal.

## *Teacher Perceptions*

Participants shared experiences about their perceptions of female principals. Debbie observed that female principals have to prove themselves by working hard. This is a negative perception about female principals because they have to work harder in order to receive an administrative position. Through Debbie's observations she shared that a:

disadvantage with some female principals is they've had to work harder to prove themselves, because for so long you could say a "good ol' boy system" and they've really felt like they've had to come in and really prove themselves as an administrator and that would be the only negative that I have seen.

John shared a perception:

Maybe there is a perception that female principals might be more emotional whereas the male principals won't be as emotional. Males would be more structured. But again I don't really think that's necessarily the case, but I can see where that perception is there.

John remarked that it is a perception that females might be more emotional. John indicated that the reason males are perceived as less emotional is because they are structured. According to John, he only views this as a perception and it does not pertain to his current principal.

Heather shared a disadvantage that she perceived in working with a female principal is intimidation. According to Heather some females are intimidated by a female principal. She discussed that a female may not be intimidated by a male principal. Through Heather's experiences she shared a perception that could be a disadvantage:

I don't know, with women it seems like they may be more intimidated by another woman, whereas a man some people feel like that they are supposed to be in those roles, so they'll be more accepting of what a man will tell them to do, but to me it doesn't matter. I've had two equally wonderful principals of both genders.

Amber stated that there are perceptions from parents and the community about female principals:

They may think that if the principal is a female, then they can get their way easier. I've been in a situation in another school where someone came in the school demanding to see the person in charge. The principal was right in front of him and she said, "You're looking at the person in charge", and he said, "No, I want to speak to a man."

According to Amber sometimes female principals have to be assertive because there is a perception that they are less assertive. She explained that parents may have the perception that female principals are less assertive. Therefore, female principals may come across as assertive at first because of perceptions.

John explained why he thinks there could be the perception that female principals are emotionally driven:

I think there is a perception that female principals could be more emotionally driven whereas males have more of a perception of being just to business data driven. Again I don't really think it's true, but I think the perception is there sometimes, and I think when a female principal comes in there probably is that barrier or that hurdle they have to jump over to prove that they're not going to be emotionally driven.

John stated that it is a perception that female principals are influenced by emotion and males are data orientated. He continued to explain that sometimes this perception causes a barrier for females. He indicated that females might have to prove they are not emotional in order to contradict that perception.

When Heather met her current female principal she asserted her authority:

I don't know if women feel like they need to assert that authority more than men, but I was kind of put off by that at first, but now that I know her, she's really not that way. So I don't know if it was that perception of "I have to show my authority for them to respect me", but I don't think that's the case...she earned it with me.

Heather remarked that her female principal asserted her authority when she first met her. Heather noted that she doesn't know if females have to assert their authority for respect. According to Heather, that was a first impression and she knows now her principal is not that way.

### *Ineffective Organization*

Elizabeth discussed an experience with female leader who had ineffective organizational skills. She continued to explain that the female principal's home situation might have influenced her effectiveness at work. Elizabeth stated that the reasons for the female leader's ineffectiveness were due to "her young children and she was late a lot because of all that she had to do at home." According to Elizabeth, the female principal has a difficult time balancing home life and work.

Mary shared disadvantage with female principals was less "give and take." She explains:

A lot of times I see that with male principals there's some give and take. It's not as concrete. Everything is not black and white concrete. With female principals I notice sometimes with the three principals that I've had as administrators, a lot of times the gray areas, what you'd consider gray areas sometimes where you can give and take a little bit more, a lot of times they're much more rigid with the information.

Mary discussed a disadvantage with female principals is there was less give and take. According to Mary there is more give and take with male principals. Mary noted that in her experiences female principals were more rigid with information than males. She continued by explaining that in her experiences male principals were flexible when it came to sharing information.

Mary shared a situation about a particular female administrator that was not rigid and would:

change her mind frequently from one thought process to the next. She might tell one person one day that this is the way it was going to be and might say by the afternoon change her mind instead of making her decision only one time and sticking with whatever decision she had.

Mary indicated it was difficult to for her to know her female principal's final decision because she would change her mind. Mary explained that this female principal would sometimes change her mind when it came to decisions. Mary had experienced working with a female principal who was more rigid and another one that was less rigid. She indicated both ways as ineffective.

Matthew shared an experience with a female principal that:

in trying to get some things done there were things that I would think would be easy as far as paperwork or any administrative stuff that just kept getting put on the back burner, and to me that was frustrating.

Matthew found a former female principal frustrating because things were not completed in a timely manner. Matthew remarked that the items that needed to be finished were not completed. He remarked that this disadvantage in organization was frustrating.

Mary shared a situation about an ineffective female principal:

I did work with an ineffective female administrator at one time who never knew what time it was, would come to school late or miss quite frequently, would leave early, might have a headache, there was always some complaints, focusing on what you had to say as an individual whether it was of importance for school. A lot of times that administrator would be trying to do three or four tasks at one time while they were listening to you so you didn't feel like you were valued in the information that you had to bring to the table.

Mary explained that she worked with an ineffective female principal who lacked organizational skills when it came to time management and focusing on individual people. Mary

indicated that several times her female principal would miss work or come in late. Mary also noted that when her principal would work on a task or a couple of tasks at one time when she was trying to talk to her.

### *Summary*

Themes emerged from the interviews that explain how these elementary school teachers perceive the effective leadership practices of female principals. According to the teachers in this study female principals possess certain characteristics and qualities that promote certain positive effects in an elementary school setting. The participants would like a female principal who develops a school vision that benefits the needs of the students. The vision needs to be communicated to all the stakeholders involved and everyone should be held accountable. All school decisions should take student needs into consideration.

In this study many of the participants also identified an effective female leader as caring and involved in the school community. The participants valued working with a female principal who was concerned about their home life and work situation. The participants indicated that a caring female principal provides a positive community.

Effective organization was another quality identified by the participants. Organization is an important quality. Organization in all aspects of the school helps the faculty and staff know what is expected of them. In this study an effective female leader also provides staff development at all levels. Chapter 5 addresses a summary of the findings, conclusions about this research, and recommendations for future studies.

## CHAPTER5

### SUMMARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of elementary school teachers regarding effective leadership practices of female principals. Eight participants were interviewed in this qualitative study. These participants were chosen by their principals. Once the participants were chosen an email was sent to them explaining the study. At the interviews participants signed a consent form, and an interview guide was used by the interviewer. This allowed the interviewer to probe specific areas to examine the topic further (Creswell, 2007).

Interviews identified what teachers perceived as effective and ineffective leadership characteristics of female principals. The theoretical framework included seven constructs that were identified after examining and coding the data. These seven constructs were: (a) vision, (b) student growth, (c) staff development, (d) organization, (e) communication, (f) caring, and (g) community. The interview responses indicted the perceptions identified by female and male teachers. In addition to the constructs, the interviews indicated some perceptions that related to effective and ineffective leadership characteristics.

#### *Research Questions*

Research question 1 was: How do female or male teachers perceive working in a school with a female principal?

A majority of the daily activity involves communication for an educational administrator (Northouse, 2004). Throughout this study participants remarked that communication was an

important characteristic of a female principal. Generally, participants said that female principals were easier to communicate with than male principals. Female principals were available when a faculty or staff member had a question or concern. Through good communication by the principals, the participants expressed that they knew what was expected of them. The participants noted that this helped them meet goals set by the principal.

ISLLC standard 4 involves collaborating with the faculty and community (Lindahl & Beach, 2009). Verbal and written communications are means of discussing information with the faculty and community. This creates a positive relationship between the principal and faculty (CCSSO, 2008). Most of the participants interviewed had a positive experience working with female principals because of the quality of their principals' communication. They understood their principals' expectations.

A majority of the participants interviewed did not indicate a preference for working with a male or female principal. The focus was not on gender. They said they wanted a leader with particular characteristics. The participants wanted a principal who was a strong leader who was organized and had clear expectations. As long as participants understood expectations, then they felt they could meet the school's goals.

Research question was 2: What advantages do female or male teachers perceive in working with a female principal?

An important part of human interaction is caring for others. Most administrators and educators care for the needs of others and demonstrate it in the workplace (Beck, 1992). Most of the participants shared that female principals seemed to be more caring. Two of the participants remarked that a female principal is caring by understanding the family needs of the faculty and

staff. Because most of the female principals were teachers before becoming administrators they were able to relate to the challenges of balancing work and home. Female principals seem to be more understanding when teachers are allowed to share personal or work related information.

In most situations females focus on the ethic of care which is focusing on relationships (Starratt, 1991). Female principals exhibit the ethic of care by listening and understanding others. One participant noted that her female principal is nurturing and understands the needs of others. This correlates with a function of ISLLC standard 2 because the leader sustains a nurturing culture of trust, high expectations, and learning (CCSSO, 2008).

Both males interviewed valued a different perspective from their female principals. They remarked that this provided them with a different perspective. One participant shared that it balances him out. It gives him a different perspective that he might not ordinarily see.

Research question 3 was: What disadvantages do females and males perceive in working with a female principal?

Some of the participants in this study remarked that a perceived disadvantage in working with a female principal was mood. It was perceived that a female principal's emotions swayed her decisions. A participant shared that sometimes a female principal's emotions could influence a decision. This participant indicated that this causes a female principal to have less flexibility with decisions. In this participant's experience, male principals have more give and take when it comes to decisions and are less emotionally influenced.

A couple of participant's shared that emotion can also influence a female principal's day. One participant stated that she knew to stay away from her female principal on the days she was in a bad mood. One participant in the study worked with a female principal who held grudges.

Typically in her experiences a male principal would not hold a grudge. According to Hudson (1996) stereotypes have been around for years about females possessing traits such as being emotional, indecisive, and weak that would hinder their receiving an administrative position.

Stelter (2002) found that females responded to these stereotypes by suppressing their natural gender behaviors and demonstrating qualities similar to males in order to move into an administrative position. It was a detriment for Heather when she met her new female principal for the first time because she displayed characteristics of authority. Heather's female principal made some strong statements when they first met. Heather shared that a female principal should earn the respect of others instead of displaying authority. According to Andrews and Bascom (1990) many people, including teachers, have a perception of the female's leadership abilities. There is a perception that masculine behaviors are needed for administrative work.

Research question 4 was: What effective leadership characteristics do teachers perceive as specific to a female principal?

Generally interviewees suggested that female principals were more organized, had a clearer vision for the school, and were more focused on student learning and growth. Making sure that instructional time supports instruction is an important part of ISLLC standard 3 because it provides a productive learning environment that promotes student learning (CCSSO, 2008). Lindahl and Beach (2009) explained that a productive learning environment is accomplished by an administrator planning schedules, safety plans, budgets, and technology. Some of the participants in this study remarked that organization was an effective leadership characteristic. Many participants interviewed expressed that their female principals were organized. These female principals were organized through all aspects of the school. One participant remarked that

her principal was rarely at her desk because she is involved in all aspects of the school environment.

Another participant remarked that her female principal is organized by being detail oriented and the faculty knows her expectations. The teachers in her school know what is expected of them and they have follow-through. Another participant explained that she appreciated that her female principal has follow-through and that her principal's directions and expectations are clear. The teachers at her school know what is going on in the school and have clear expectations of what their principal wants to see at the school. One of the males interviewed also stated that his female principal has clear expectations and he knows what is expected of him. He discussed this is a positive quality of his female principal to know what he should be doing.

### *Vision*

A clear vision that is shared with the stakeholder that encompasses the value of the organization is ISLLC standard 1. It is the role of the leader to develop a vision with stakeholders. The vision should encompass the value of the organization (Lindahl & Beach, 2009). An effective leadership characteristic shared by one of the participants involved a shared vision. According to this participant an effective principal should share a vision and encourage others to carry it out through the school. This participant continued by explaining that effective leader discusses the details of the vision instead of dictating them.

### *Student Growth*

Promoting a school environment that fosters student learning is part of ISLLC standard 2 (CCSSO, 2008). A participant shared that she worked with two administrators who motivated

student learning through data. According to this participant, these two administrators were data driven. This was an effective characteristic to this participant because it promoted student learning. They focused on each child and understood his or her home life and other situations that could affect data. They understood the complete child and tried to make the best learning environment for all the children.

Research question 5 was: What ineffective leadership characteristics do teachers perceive as specific to a female principal?

According to Hudson (1996) sometimes women are hindered from administrative positions because of stereotypes. Often they are perceived as being weak, emotional, or indecisive. One participant remarked that letting emotion influence decisions was an ineffective leadership quality. This participant said that her former female principal would let her emotions sway her decisions and vision. She added that she thinks it is also a perception that females let emotions influence a decision.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, female leaders have been stereotyped as being prudish and harsh. They are dedicated to their teaching careers in order to receive a leadership role (Hill & Ragland, 1995). One participant shared that she did not respect the fact that her female principal demonstrated her authority when she first met her. The participant wanted this female principal to earn respect through her actions instead of positional authority.

### *Organization*

Two of the participants remarked that unproductive organizational skills were an ineffective leadership characteristic. One participant shared that a previous female principal would not complete administrative paperwork in a timely manner. This was frustrating for this

participant because items were not completed. Two participants shared that family and children influenced the effectiveness of their former female principal. According to the two participants, these female principals were often late for work because of their children. One female principal would leave work early and complain of headaches. Helgesen (1990) explained that female managers did not reduce family time and hobbies for their administrative position. Female managers identified their job as one aspect of themselves.

### *Summary*

The purpose of this study was to assess teacher perceptions of the leadership practices of female principals in northeast Tennessee. This was achieved by interviewing teachers about how they what they perceived as effective leadership practices exhibited by female principals. A principal's leadership characteristics can have an effect on school's environment. Aspiring female principals and educational leaders may benefit from the findings in this study. This will help them understand what teacher's perceive as effective leadership practices.

The literature review examined particular leadership practices associated with female leaders. It is important for educational leaders to educate themselves on effective leadership practices. As the literature suggested, incorporating effective leadership practices will strengthen the motivation level of the followers in the workplace. The leaders stay attentive to the followers by making time during the day to listen and share information. This creates a connection between the follower and leader.

The data analysis suggests that female principals possess certain qualities that positively affect teachers by enhancing their motivation. The participants in this study want a female principal who is attentive to their needs by listening and understanding the responsibilities

teachers have in balancing home and work. The participants also wanted a female principal who provides a vision and school decisions that are based on the needs of the students.

The participants also valued having a female principal who is organized in all aspects of the school environment. The participants shared that when their female principal has clear expectations of what they need to do and follow through to make sure they did it appropriately. Female principals need to continue to use school data to incorporate a school vision and the best practices for the students. The participants indicated their principal's having a clear vision helps them to create the best learning environment for the students.

#### *Recommendations for Practice*

A principal's leadership ability can have a positive or negative effect on school performance. The teachers in this study shared their perceptions of the effective leadership practices of female principals. Principals have the choice of how they will approach everyday issues through mentoring, listening, and displaying a positive attitude (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). The teachers interviewed discussed how female principals use effective leadership practices. The following recommendations were made based on the research.

#### *Recommendations for Principals to Practice*

- Provide clear expectations, strong organization, and high quality communication.
- Provide follow through to make sure the school's expectations were completed correctly.
- Provide a caring work environment by listening, respecting, and understanding the needs of others.

- Recognize that each teacher has a variety of responsibilities and challenges in balancing home and work.
- Provide the teachers with a clear school vision. Stay focused on the vision in order to provide a productive learning environment for students.
- Provide the teachers with more give and take when it comes to decision making.
- Use the school's data to provide the best learning environment for all students.

#### *Recommendation for Female Principals*

- Female principals need to be aware that stereotypes still exist. They might be perceived as being emotional, bossy, and inconsistent with decision making. These stereotypes may cause barriers for female principals to address. Being aware of such stereotypes can enable female principals to reduce the impact of such stereotypes when they occur.

#### *Recommendations for School Districts in Selecting Principals*

- School districts need to select principals who are caring, organized, and have clear expectations for the staff.
- Look for future principals who will support the ISLLC Standards and incorporate them into the school environment and when working with the faculty.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

The problem of the study was to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding the effective leadership practices of female principals. This study provided the perceptions of a small

percentage of teachers in three elementary schools. The following are the recommendations for additional study:

- Only teachers were interviewed in this study. A study of the principal's perception of effective leadership practices could be used to determine the similarities and difference between what principals and teachers view as effective leadership practices.
- Interview teachers from middle and high schools to assess their perception of effective leadership practices. There could be differences in the appropriate leadership practices of elementary, middle, and high school female principals.
- Additional research in this area needs to be conducted in a variety of elementary schools. This would provide a larger sample of participants.
- Interview teachers from elementary schools to compare their perceptions of male and female principals.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Letter to the Director of Schools

Director of Schools [Name]  
Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Dear Dr. [Name]:

I am a student in the doctoral program at East Tennessee State University working on my dissertation. In my research study, I will be interviewing nine teachers currently teaching at Fairmont, South Side, and Woodland Elementary Schools. These schools were chosen as having effective female principals. The purpose of the study is to assess teacher perceptions of the leadership practices of female principals in Upper East Tennessee. I would like your permission to complete face-to-face interviews with teachers at these three elementary schools as having effective female principals. All information, such as the names of teachers, principals, and schools, will be confidential. Please feel free to contact me by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or through e-mail at mooneyj@XXX.org to respond or if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Mooney  
Graduate Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University

## Appendix B

### Letter to the Principals

Principal [Name]  
Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Dear Dr., Mr., or Mrs. [Name]:

I am a student in the doctoral program at East Tennessee State University working on my dissertation. In my research study, I will conduct face-to-face interviews with three teachers you identified from your elementary school. The purpose of the study is to assess teacher perceptions of the leadership practices of successful female principals in Upper East Tennessee. I would like your permission to complete face-to-face interviews with three teachers you identified at your elementary school. These interviews should be in a neutral site, such as a conference or workroom. All information, such as the names of teachers, principals, and schools, will be confidential. Please feel free to contact me by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or through e-mail at mooneyj@XXX.org to respond or if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Mooney  
Graduate Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University

## Appendix C

### Letter to Participants

Jennifer Mooney  
Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Date

Dear Mr. or Mrs. [Participant's Name]:

I am a student in the doctoral program at East Tennessee State University working on my dissertation. I am currently researching my dissertation on *Elementary School Teachers Perceptions of Effective Leadership Practices of Female Principals*, and I would like to know if you would be interested in participating in the study.

The intent of this study is to assess teacher perceptions of the leadership practices of female principals in Upper East Tennessee. To achieve this goal, the study will examine the perceptions of teachers through interviews regarding the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of female principals. Aspiring female principals and educational leaders may benefit from the findings of this study.

Your identity and personal information will be confidential. At the end of the study, I will protect all identification and personal information. If you decide to participate, you will be granting permission for the researcher to use your quotes in the study. There will be no connection of names or personal information with the quotes. The researcher will publish the results in a dissertation. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime. Please feel free to contact me by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or through e-mail at mooneyj@XXX.org to respond or if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Mooney  
Graduate Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University

## Appendix D

### Informed Consent for the Individual Interview Participants

#### **EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER**

#### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jennifer Anne Mooney

TITLE OF PROJECT: *Elementary School Teachers Perceptions of Effective Leadership  
Practices of Female Principals*

This Informed Consent will explain about being a participant in a research study. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to volunteer.

#### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study is to assess teacher perceptions of the leadership practices of female principals in Upper East Tennessee. To achieve this goal, the study will examine perceptions of teachers by interviewing them in selected elementary schools regarding the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of female principals. Aspiring female principals and educational leaders may benefit from the findings of this study.

#### DURATION

The participants will be individually interviewed face-to-face at their elementary school. Each interview should last one hour. There will be nine participants interviewed in this study during the spring semester of 2011.

#### PROCEDURES

The superintendent of the Johnson City Schools has given approval to conduct the study. Each female principal has given their permission to interview three teachers from each of their elementary schools. The study will include interviews of beginning and veteran teachers.

All the interviews will be conducted at the participants' convenience after school hours at their elementary school. Each interview will be will tape-recorded and an auditor will read the transcripts. The participants will be able to read the transcribed material and make clarifications, if needed.

#### ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES/TREATMENTS

There are no alternative procedures or treatments. The participation in the study is voluntary.

#### POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research study.

#### POSSIBLE BENEFITS

Aspiring female and educational leaders will have access to the information in this study. The perceptions of the participants are valuable because they can explain effective leadership practices.

#### CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, problems, or research-related medical problems at any time, you may call Jennifer Mooney at 423-XXX-XXXX, or Dr. Eric Glover at 423-XXX-XXXX. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6054 for any questions you may have 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 cannot reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

The researcher will make every attempt to keep your study results confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the Principal Investigator's locked filing cabinet for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The researcher will publish the results of this study in a dissertation. The researcher will assure the participants that their names and direct quotes will be anonymous. Although the researcher will maintain your rights and privacy, the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board and the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis will have access to the study records.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

My participation in this research study is voluntary. I understand that I may refuse to participate at anytime without any penalty. I confirm that I have read or had this document read to me. I will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. I have been given the chance to ask questions and to discuss my participation with the investigator. I chose to participate in this study.

---

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

---

PRINTED NAME OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

---

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

DATE

Revised March 20, 2011

## Appendix E

### Interview Protocol

- I. Introduction to the study and welcome participant
  1. I would like to thank for your participation in the study. The purpose of this study is to assess teacher perceptions of the leadership practices of female principals in Upper East Tennessee. To achieve this goal, the study will examine perceptions of teachers by interviewing them in selected elementary schools regarding the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of female principals. This data from this study will be used in a dissertation and your participation will remain anonymous. This interview session should take an hour. Do you have any questions before I turn on the tape-recorder?
  2. Have the participant sign the consent form.
  3. The interview questions will begin.
  
- II. Main Interview Questions for Male and Female Teachers
  1. How do female or male teachers perceive working in a school with a female principal?
  2. What advantages do female or male teachers perceive in working with a female principal?
  3. What disadvantages do female or male teachers perceive in working with a female principal?
  4. What effective leadership characteristics do teachers perceive as specific to a female principal?
  5. What ineffective leadership characteristics do teachers perceive as specific to a female principal?
  
- III. Secondary Interview Questions for Male and Female Teachers
  1. What is the successful female principal's prominent behavior?
  2. What do you perceive as the most important leadership characteristics or practices for an effective female leader?
  3. What role does gender play in school leadership?

4. What is it like to work at a school with a successful female principal?
5. What do you perceive as best practices for decision-making and leadership? How are the teachers, staff, principal, and community involved in the decision making in the school?
6. What assurance is there that students have equal opportunity to learn?
7. How do the teachers, staff, and principal perceive themselves as responsible for student learning?
8. How is the school lead by the data to evaluate academic performance and programs in the school? Information for the secondary research question came from the Council of Chief State School Officers (2008).

IV. Conclusions

1. Any additional questions.
2. Turn off the tape recorder.
3. Thank the participant for his or her participation in the study.

VITA

JENNIFER ANNE MOONEY CAMPBELL

Personal Data:      Date of Birth: October 12, 1972  
                         Place of Birth: Johnson City, Tennessee  
                         Marital Status: Married

Education:            Public Schools: Johnson City, Tennessee

                         East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee  
                         Speech and Hearing, B. S.  
                         1995

                         East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee  
                         Early Childhood Education, M. Ed.  
                         1997

                         East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee  
                         Educational Leadership, Ed.S.  
                         2007

                         East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee  
                         Educational Leadership, Ed.D.  
                         2011

Professional  
Experience:            1999-Interim First Grade Teacher, Fairmont Elementary, Johnson City,  
                         Tennessee

                         2000-2001- Substitute Teacher, Johnson City Schools, Johnson City,  
                         Tennessee

                         2001-2003-Preschool Teacher, Ashley Academy, Johnson City, Tennessee

                         2003-Present- Elementary School Teacher, Towne Acres Elementary  
                         School, Johnson City, Tennessee