

ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

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The Graduate School
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March 9, 2020

ROADBLOCKS TO THE PRINCIPALSHIP FACED BY FEMALES

Abstract of Capstone

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
College of Education
At Morehead State University

By

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West Liberty, Kentucky

Committee Chair: Dr. Michael W. Kessinger, Assistant Professor

Morehead, Kentucky

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ROADBLOCKS TO THE PRINCIPALSHIP FACED BY FEMALES

Females are consistently underrepresented as school leaders when compared to their male counterparts. Females have begun to close the gap as elementary school principals but are still often overlooked as effective and competent school leaders of high schools. This capstone offered a depiction of Kentucky's female principals during the 2019 – 2020 school year at each school level. It examined female school leaders' perspectives toward six researched barriers; family responsibilities, socialization, mentoring, leadership styles, stereotypes, and geography. It sought to examine the extent each barrier may have affected female school leaders during their careers. Participants also identified additional hindrances that served as obstacles while trying to attain their principalship. The findings from this study show gender discrepancies still exist today, specifically at the elementary versus high school levels, with females nurturing qualities being the main reason they fill principal roles with younger children. The data show that one's gender is more determining of her ability to lead a school than her education, experience, or level of competency. It reveals societal constraints and beliefs still influence the employment system, despite legislative gains and a recent rise in female administrators.

KEYWORDS: female leadership, gender barriers, gender differences, principalship
school leaders

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, the ones who always encourage and push me. You all have been my support system from the very beginning and I truly cannot thank you enough for all you have done for me. To my mom, Paula, and my dad, Michael, thank you both for always believing in me. You all have never doubted my ability to complete this degree. To my sister and best friend, Jennifer, for being my biggest cheerleader with anything I attempt. To my husband, Josh, for your unwavering support and love. This work is for each of you. I hope I have made you all proud.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The fight for gender equality has historically been a hotly debated issue. Females have challenged laws for the right to vote, to work alongside their male counterparts, to earn equal pay, to be provided with equal education rights, and to receive appropriate considerations in regard to health care. While great strides have been made in recent years, there still are unequal representations of females in the workplace, in wages, and as leaders.

Gender enforced societal constraints still have a strong grasp on several areas in females' lives. There was an increase of females in the workforce during and after World War II, especially in male-dominated jobs, but the increase has steadily halted since (Garlow, 2018, Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2019). From 1940 to 1944, the percentage of female factory workers increased from 20% to 30% (Hartmann, 1982). Moreover, the wage gap has consequently followed the same pattern (Garlow).

Occupational integration, the cycle of falling into gender specific and dominated jobs, is another disparity to overcome. According to Garlow (2018), "the rate of occupational integration slowed after 1990" (para. 7). She also argues that if current rates are projected, it would take 330 years for gender integration to be unified (Garlow). Additionally, pay parity is not projected to occur for another 40 years (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2019). Clearly, the path for females to gain access and equity is a long one.

It is, then, important to understand the causes of underrepresentation of females in the workplace. Furthermore, understanding specific hindrances that exist which force females into lower roles than males is of vital importance. Gender stereotypes, biases, discrimination, and various types of family roles and responsibilities all hinder females and push them to conform gender roles (Garlow, 2018). These barriers consequently play a part in the types of jobs females fulfill. They often do not hold positions of leadership. For example, in the legal profession, 45% are associates, with only 22.7% being partners and 19% being equity partners (Warner, Ellmann, & Boesch, 2018). In the medical field, only 16% of females are School of Medicine deans while 40% are surgeons or physicians (Warner et al.). In the financial services industry, females constitute over half of the accountants, auditors, and financial managers, but less than 13% are “chief financial officers in Fortune 500 companies” (Warner et al., para 10). Lastly and most importantly for the purpose of this capstone, in the education field, females have attained more doctorate degrees than males for the past eight years; however only 32% and 30% respectively are professors and college presidents (Warner et al.).

The biases regarding females as school leaders start with their gender stereotyped emotional personalities. Females are often viewed as too weak, emotional, irrational, moody, and dramatic (Elsesser & Lever, 2011), characteristics which are viewed as undesirable qualities in a leader. However, they are actually more focused on creating interpersonal relationships with staff, empowering others, setting high expectations, and serving as role models than males (Conner & Sharp,

1992; Eagly & Schmidt, 2001; Eckman, 2004a; Giese, Slate, Brown, & Tejada-Delgado, 2009; Kerr, Kerr, & Miller, 2014; Newton, Giesen, Freeman, Bishop, & Zeitoun, 2003; Shakeshaft, 1986). Additionally, females are often considered less qualified (Kruse & Krumm, 2016), despite their advanced degrees and more years of experience.

Further investigation regarding barriers and biases affecting female leaders must be conducted in order for females to be aware of the gender-imposed hindrances that they currently face while trying to attain principalship jobs. This chapter outlines the problem regarding underrepresentation of female school leaders, the significance of the underrepresentation, and the background information regarding female school leaders. The context of the study, research questions, and definition of terms are also included.

Statement of the Problem

Gender differences regarding females as leaders continues to exist in problematic ways. Young girls are told they can succeed in doing anything boys can do, but are not made aware of the current societal constraints that will impede their progress along the way. Regardless of the years of teaching experience or advanced education they have, females are consistently overlooked for positions as school leaders, while males with fewer years of experience and degrees are given the opportunity to serve in these roles (Kruse & Krum, 2016; Stromquist, 2013).

Females outnumber males in the teaching profession but are proportionally underrepresented in school leadership positions (Loewus, 2017). This

underrepresentation is due to gender challenges that are both self-imposed and created by societal norms. Eurich (2019) explains that data actually show females are more self-aware and confident than males, but their awareness and confidence do not transcend to leadership roles. Females tend to underestimate and undervalue themselves more often than males and actually create additional barriers for themselves (Eurich). In the teaching profession, males dominate as school leaders, even though females outnumber them as teachers. The question of it being a socially promoted standard that females are widely accepted to teach children, but are not commonly recognized as leaders becomes, then, pertinent. It is at the elementary level where females are accepted as leaders more commonly than males at any other level due to their motherly qualities. Yet they are not viewed as capable leaders of high schools because of the possibilities of them being too emotional and their generally smaller statures, which might serve as hindrances when handling discipline of older students.

The purpose of this study was to examine female school leaders at the various school levels (elementary, middle, and high) in the state of Kentucky. This capstone explored the school leader's perspective towards six researched barriers and examined the extent to which they may have affected the female school leaders. Additionally, this study sought to identify any other barriers noted by female respondents. Participants were given the opportunity to identify any additional hindrances or other areas that served as obstacles while trying to attain principalship.

A desirable outcome of this study was to provide awareness regarding challenges females might face while trying to attain principalship.

Significance of the Problem

Regardless of the idea society tries to promote in terms of gender equality, females are still fighting an uphill battle (Ospina-Ortiz & Roser, 2019). Globally, females earn less than males and are underrepresented in leadership roles (Ospina-Ortiz & Roser). In the United States, the gender wage gap in 2018 was at 18% with females earning “82 cents for every dollar earned by men” (Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 2019). This stark difference equates to females earning half of what males have earned over a 15 year span (Institute for Women’s Policy Research). However, in the education sector, the gender pay gap is slightly controlled by salary schedules, which customizes pay scales for teachers and administrators, regardless of gender. While salary schedules do help to eliminate the pay gap, in general, the teaching field, along with other female dominated fields, is arguably underpaid (Hopkins, 2018). A female dominated field, then, becomes, part of a large pay gap. Gupton (2009) points out that while females are filling more elementary school leadership positions than males, these roles are also consistently paid less than middle and high school administrative positions, where males tend to occupy leadership positions.

In the educational world, females “have not been able to overcome the stigma of a culture that consciously or unconsciously, believes that women in education are better suited for the classroom” (Noel-Batiste, 2009, p. 1). If society truly aspires to

gender equality, even though the cycle of promoting males to leadership roles and pay gaps still occurs, then a change must ensue. Females are not only underrepresented as school leaders, but also as leaders of organizations and businesses. However, a solid starting place for embarking on this change is within the walls of school buildings. It is here that girls of all ages and female teachers can either be exposed to seeing females as leaders of schools, or continually see males serving in these roles.

Background of the Problem

While men had the right to vote, own land, and make decisions for themselves for centuries, women have not always enjoyed these rights. Instead, for many years, their husbands and laws suppressed and prohibited them from owning land, voting, and having a voice in their lives. For many years, females did not work outside the home. They served their husbands, raised children, and took care of their homes. When they started entering the workforce during the Industrial Revolution, they were hired as factory workers and received lower wages than males (Lewis, 2019). Females entering the workforce eventually led to the development of labor unions and the fight for equal rights, which was fueled by Seneca Falls Convention, the first women's rights convention, in 1848. This momentum for fairness eventually led to the passing of the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote over 70 years later (National Constitution Center Staff, 2019). The amendment was not fully ratified in all 50 states until 1984, when Mississippi finally accepted and endorsed it.

With a small taste of equality and being granted the right to vote, females realized they were not fully satisfied, and started to push for more freedoms, such as

equal pay and opportunities. Until this point, females could be discriminated against based solely on their gender. They could be paid less as males who were employed in the same jobs as they were. In fact, they could also be fired for becoming pregnant while working or they could have been bypassed for a job because they were pregnant. In an effort to remove some of these biases, females and their allies fought for several changes.

Women's rights activists began the fight for equal pay, which resulted in the passing of The Equal Pay Act in 1963. This passage was followed by the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination not only based on race, but also on gender (National Park Service, 2019). Additionally, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 finally prohibited gender discrimination based on pregnancy. However, the National Partnership for Women and Families (2016) found that "tens of thousands of women throughout the United States continue to experience pregnancy discrimination in the workplace" (para 1). Despite social advances and legal action to end discrimination based on gender, issues still remain today. For example, a study conducted by the National Partnership for Women and Families (2016), using data from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission from 2010 through 2015, confirms that "the most common reason women filed a charge of pregnancy discrimination during the nearly five-year time period studied was because they believed they were discharged from employment for becoming pregnant" (para 3).

In the field of education, the teaching profession has traditionally been dominated by females (Howley, Howley, & Larson, 2007; Kruse & Krumm, 2016).

Hopkins (2018) claims that the large percent of females in the teaching field aids in the underpayment for this profession, which has also led to education being undervalued and disrespected. In terms of filling administrative roles, females are consistently outnumbered by males (Ospina-Ortiz & Roser, 2019). In the United States, the number of female principals has increased since the mid-1980s. During the 1987-1988 school year, only 25% of public schools had female principals, which doubled to over 52% in 2011-2012 (Hill, Ottem, & DeRoche, 2016). In the 2011-2012 school year, approximately 76% of teachers were female, while in 1987-1988 nearly 70% were females (Hill et al.). Proportionally, these percentages from both timespans do not accurately reflect the number of female teachers. Even though gains have been made to increase females' presence as school leaders, they have not respectively met equal gender representation, and are far from this goal.

Since females consistently outnumber males as teachers, they should equally represent leadership positions as well. In the last few decades, females have made major gains in moving to managerial roles (Gupton, 2009), yet they have not completely bridged the gap in many professions, including the education sector. It is important for their representation to seep into these roles so they can show that gender does not determine their effectiveness as a leader. While several hindrances contribute to the discrepancy regarding female leaders, gender stereotypes is the number one barrier (Pirouznia, 2009). Regardless of their potential to serve as leaders, females are often discriminated against based on gender, the one factor they cannot control. Other barriers include family responsibilities, socialization, and

leadership styles. Location also plays a role as a hindrance for aspiring female principals. Rural areas generally have strong ties to tradition, which supports and enforces males as leaders. These areas are usually more resistant to change and view female leaders more negatively than males (O'Reilly & Borman, 1987).

In order to eradicate, or at least lessen, hindrances, aspiring female leaders (in all professions) need to be made aware of them. They need to know what they are facing and be prepared to handle the barriers before encountering them as leaders. Additionally, by shining light on these gender specific barriers, society can mindfully begin to make changes to help reduce the gendered influence in principals, managers, decision-makers, and other leadership positions.

Local Context

In the state of Kentucky during the 2018-2019 school year, there were 42,024 public school teachers (Kentucky Department of Education, 2019a). Of this amount, 78% were females and the remaining 22% were males (Kentucky Department of Education). Clearly, females currently dominate the teaching field, which they have historically dominated. They serve in these roles in overwhelming numbers, yet in school leadership roles, females are consistently underrepresented. When comparing the percent of male and female principals in 2018-2019, the numbers are nearly equal. With a total of 2,439 principals in Kentucky during 2018-2019, 49.3% are females and the remaining 50.7% are males (Kentucky Department of Education, 2019b). While these numbers are very close to one another, when comparing them

proportionally to the percent of female and male teachers, there is an obvious discrepancy.

Research Questions

This capstone focused on two research questions: (1) How are females represented in school leadership positions at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in the state of Kentucky? (2) What perceived barriers did females identify as they sought school leadership positions?

Definition of Terms

The following definition and terms were used for the purpose of this study:

Family responsibilities – socially enforced barrier where females are viewed as the main caretakers.

Leadership styles – methods and approaches used to manage, direct, and motivate people.

Location – geographic place and the traditions tied to it.

School administrator or school leader – the building principal, assistant principal, or vice principal within an elementary, middle, or secondary school.

Socialization – constructs of acceptable male and female behavior.

Stereotypes – preconceptions of a person or group of people.

Underrepresentation – portrayal showing the comparison between female and male school leaders that demonstrates females' low fulfillment of leadership roles.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The gap that exists between male and female school leaders is a longstanding issue (Howley et al., 2007; Kruse & Krumm, 2016). Females have been accepted and are commonly found as leaders of their own classrooms, just not of school buildings and other staff members. In order to fully understand how females have come to assume the roles of teachers, and not as leaders, a detailed explanation of their history in schools, legislative action, and challenges that impede them as they assume leadership roles needs to be outlined.

Females' path to education was a difficult one, as they were not permitted into colleges until long after they had been established (Dzuback, 2003). Even when they were finally permitted to attend colleges, they were not provided with the same educational opportunities as males. Various legislative acts helped to level the playing field for females, which aided in their presence in school leadership roles. However, they still experience hindrances that do not exist for their male counterparts. Increasing the representation of female school leaders will not be achieved until all parties involved are consciously aware of gender specific barriers, both self-imposed and socially-imposed.

History of Females in Administration

An analysis of education is not complete without considering gender biases, which have influenced practices throughout history and continue to do so. These biases were codified in the beginning of normal teaching schools and affected their

composition. The increase in popularity of public education in the 1800s warranted the expansion of normal schools. While colleges were developed during the colonial period in the United States, they were exclusively for males. Females were not admitted until the second half the nineteenth century (Dzuback, 2003).

When colleges finally began to admit them, females experienced a less rigorous curriculum than did males and were even required to complete domestic chores for male students (Dzuback, 2003). Normal schools' focus was to provide education to students to become teachers. They offered a unique opportunity for females to earn higher education and to enter the workforce in leadership positions.

The majority of teachers in normal schools were female due to gender-based constraints placed on other professions. Males filled higher paying and leadership jobs such as doctors, lawyers, and businessmen; these jobs, however, "were closed to women, with the exception of supportive roles such as nurse or secretary" (Bohan & Null, 2007, p. 5). Normal schools finally provided females with an equal learning opportunity, and females fully seized this opportunity as they began to assume roles as teachers in overwhelming numbers.

Continued increases in normal schools' popularity created the need to establish a specific individual to fill the principal teacher role. Principal teachers were in charge of "clerical and administrative duties that kept the school in order, such as assigning classes, conducting discipline, maintaining the building, taking attendance, and ensuring that school began and ended on time" (Kafka, 2009, p. 321). Principal teachers were usually males working in a field of primarily female teachers. As

schools grew, so did the principal teachers' responsibilities, mirroring the requirements in today's schools. A shift from clerical duties to observing teachers, providing guidance and support, and evaluating teaching practices necessitated a full-time principal.

Even though the teaching world was dominated by females, they did not consistently start fulfilling principalship jobs until the twentieth century; even then, this primarily occurred in elementary schools (Howley et al., 2007; Kruse & Krumm, 2016). There were and still are differences existing between the elementary and secondary leadership positions influencing the gender selected for this role. Secondary administrative positions, which are generally filled by males, command higher incomes. More secretarial work defines principalship at the elementary level, and since females have traditionally filled these types of jobs, they are more frequently hired in these positions.

Furthermore, elementary principal jobs are predominately filled by females because they are more likely to be found in jobs where they supervise other females, as opposed to males (Kafka, 2009). As the schools were smaller, there was a lack of competition for the elementary principalship when they were first established in the 1800s. Males were not interested in leading smaller schools. They wanted the responsibility of leading larger schools with more duties, thus opening the door for females to serve as the leaders of elementary schools. Additionally, secondary school principalships required more advanced degrees than those of elementary schools.

Since society had already limited females' access to colleges, this limitation in turn excluded them from these prestigious leadership positions (Rousmaniere, 2007).

The rise and fall in the number of female administrators depends on males' ability to serve in these roles. When males were at war, districts sought females for administrative roles. If males were available, then females were assigned lesser roles. Additionally, through government-funded programs, such as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, afforded males unique opportunities for advancement to leadership positions. This Act gave servicemen the opportunity to go to college, earn administrative degrees in education, and enter into a field requesting leaders of their gender (Kafka, 2009).

In order to attract males to administrative positions, those positions were paid more money and offered faster routes to the top of administration. The blending of rural elementary schools, which increased their size and student enrollment, consequently amplified the attractiveness of the principal role for males, causing a decline in female principals at this level (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2007). The surge of male principals, then, specifically, pushed females back into teaching roles and allowed males to serve as their leaders. World War II brought with it a crisis generated by the perceived lack of masculinity caused by the number of females serving in schools, which also resulted in males being sought after for leadership roles (Kafka; Martino, 2008; Rousmaniere). This mixture of feminization and changing monetary dynamics, began the influx of male principals and a decrease in females serving in these roles.

Legislative Action

Changes in female administration began with the passing of the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which prohibits gender discrimination in pay for equal jobs (Crampton, Hodge, & Mishra, 1997). Even with this Act, disparities still existed between gender and pay, then and now. In the late 1970s, females with bachelor's degrees earned less than males who had not even earned a high school diploma (Guy, 1993). As of 2010, females consistently earned less than males, regardless of the educational attainment (Stromquist, 2013).

Where males use education to provide equal opportunities to compete against one another, this tactic has not been successful for females competing against males. Their educational level, in some locations, must be two years higher than males' attainment in order to have equal pay (Stromquist, 2013). This unequal expectation has resulted in females outnumbering males in educational attainment, but not in administrative roles.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 also brought forth changes as it forbids "workplace discrimination with regard to hiring, firing, compensation, classification, promotion, and other employment decisions on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion and gender" (Crampton et al., 1997, p. 336). For females, this breakthrough means that they can no longer be discriminated against based on gender. While this Act aspired to end discrimination as a cultural barrier, it also helped produce the Equal Opportunity Employment Act of 1972. This Act provided further defense against discrimination in the workplace. It was because of these Acts

that females started to assume more positions in previously male-dominated jobs (Guy, 1993).

Title IX of the Education Amendments was the first to provide females with equal educational program access. Not only does it prohibit gender discrimination against students, but equally against female employees. Prior to Title IX, females were discriminated against in colleges and universities. Stromquist (2013) points out the admission processes were not equal, as they were less rigorous for males than females. Stromquist further notes after Title IX was put into practice, females experienced the highest jump in educational attainment at all levels from 1970 to 1980. Currently, females outnumber males at all educational levels (Kruse & Krum, 2016). However, if females want to be competitive with males in obtaining equal pay, they need to surpass them in educational attainment.

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 and the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 offer other aspects helping to eliminate gender barriers in workplaces. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act provides protection against discrimination related to pregnancy or childbirth (Ortiz & Marshall, 1986). FMLA affords job security for employees through unpaid leave for reasons regarding birth, adoption, serious medical conditions of an immediate family member, or a medical condition prohibiting the individual from working (Marczely, 1994). It is important to note that the United States is “the only industrialized nation in the world without a paid-leave policy for parents at or around the birth of a child” (WestEd, 2014, p. 2).

While the integration of these Acts provides females with the opportunity to enter the workforce and still serve traditional roles such as being a mother and caretaker, the United States is still not up to par with other industrialized nations in regards to maternity leave.

Barriers for Females in Administration

There are unique gender barriers to consider when analyzing differences in administrative positions. Even though the percentage of females in administrative positions has increased from 25% to 52% in public schools in the past 30 years (Hill et al., 2016), females are proportionally underrepresented in these roles. Females dominate the teaching field at every school level yet are consistently outnumbered by males in administrative positions (Kafka, 2009; Kerr et al., 2014; McGee, 2010; Reynolds, White, Brayman, & Moore, 2008; Riehl & Byrd, 1997).

Females' roles in society continue to evolve. They are taking on more responsibilities in the working world, yet they are still being held to traditional standards, which constrain them from advancing, as do their male counterparts. This is particularly true when analyzing their roles in family dynamics. They are tasked with balancing family and work responsibilities, while trying to compete in the male-dominated leadership field. They often have to make a choice between having children or earning administrative roles, a decision many males do not face.

Due to this gender bias, females tend to enter into administrative positions later in life, usually when their children are older and family responsibilities can more easily be managed (Eckman, 2004a; McGee, 2010). If they do have children and

work as principals, they usually do this at the elementary level. They are closely closing the gender gap at this level. Their maternal qualities paired with the work hours of elementary principals make this job more suitable for females.

Socialization and gender stereotypes create gender-specific hindrances impacting females as they attempt to climb administrative ladders. They delay their career choice due to the anxiety of being underprepared and low levels of self-confidence more often than males (McGee, 2010; McQuigg & Carlton, 1980). Consequently, they have more years of teaching experience than males and have higher levels of educational attainment as well. These two aspects should increase their qualification levels, but they are consistently pushed aside for principalship positions. Also, due to females' family responsibilities and working toward higher education, they do not have time for social and professional networking circles, which can help promote them to administrative positions (McGee; McQuigg & Carlton). The lack of mentors (regardless of their gender) to provide support and guidance in attaining administrative positions creates yet another obstacle. Since female administrators are scarce, mentoring provides exclusive learning opportunities to aspiring female principals, which can affect their success as leaders.

Gender stereotypical behavior also generates an additional barrier. Females are often viewed as too weak, emotional, irrational, moody, and dramatic to lead others (Elsesser & Lever, 2011). A stereotypical view of prospective high school female principals is they are not strong enough to handle discipline issues with older

students (Logan, 1998). The current socially constructed view is that if they are to lead a school, they are socially accepted to lead elementary schools.

Males and females lead using different styles. The perceived feminine style of leadership, being emotionally involved and establishing working relationships with colleagues, is not always accepted. However, females' servant style of leadership is actually beneficial and effective (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010; Sherman & Wrushen, 2009). Female administrators spend more time in classrooms and interacting with teachers and students (Conner & Sharp, 1992; Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1986). They also focus more on being instructional leaders, whereas males tend to view their administrative jobs more from a "managerial, industrial perspective" (Shakeshaft, p. 118). Moreover, the identities in which males and females form with their jobs are different. When males achieve principalship, they view it as a display of personal achievement. Conversely, females view it as a servant role to the community (Shakeshaft).

Additionally, male and females differ in decision-making styles. Males tend to make final decisions without consulting others, while females are inclined to use more democratic, cooperative, and participatory styles than males (Giese et al., 2009; Lee et al., 1993; Little, 1983; Shakeshaft, 1986). These styles help foster an inclusive and supportive learning and teaching environment. In fact, studies equally suggest that teachers are more satisfied and morale is higher in schools led by females (Lee et al.; McQuigg & Carlton, 1980; Shakeshaft).

Geographic locations create yet another distinctive barrier for females (O'Reilly & Borman, 1987; Wallin & Sackney, 2003). In rural areas that maintain traditional stereotypes, females are relegated to the classroom, while males serve as their leaders. Rural areas' strong ties to these traditions make it difficult for females to break through this barrier. While females are still proportionally underrepresented as leaders in urban areas, they stand a better chance at achieving administrative positions than in rural areas (Hyndman, 2009).

Family responsibilities. A common barrier for female administrators is family responsibilities (Clark, Caffarella, & Ingram, 1999; Eckman, 2004a; Pirouznia, 2013). This barrier is often created in conjunction with social expectations, in which females are expected to take care of their families and put their jobs on the back burner. In turn, these roles influence the age at which females obtain administrative jobs, making them older than their male counterparts (Clark, 1995). Conversely, while females tend to postpone their advancement in leadership positions because of family responsibilities, males often accredit their decisions to move up administrative ladders as a way to earn more money for their growing families (Eckman). Often the breadwinners of the family, males are driven to advancing in their jobs because they feel the responsibility to provide for their families.

Having a supportive spouse, for males and females, is a common factor in helping to balance professional and personal lives (Clark et al., 1999; Eckman, 2004a). However, they have very different roles for each gender. Male principals overwhelmingly attribute a stay-at-home wife as a means of being able to become

successful principals. They rely on their wife to handle family responsibilities while they are able to focus on work obligations. By intertwining their families with their jobs through school events, they are able to create a unique balance and dedicate time to each obligation.

Females are far less likely to have a stay-at-home partner and do not involve their families with work responsibilities. Males' description of involving their wife with their jobs demonstrates an interesting concept. Females have the mindset to separate their professional and personal lives, while males see the blending of the two as a way to strengthen them both. This differentiation further illustrates the idea of females feeling the need to focus solely on their jobs, instead of both family and jobs like males.

However, fewer female administrators are married than are males and support fewer children living at home than males, or often none at all (Eckman, 2004b). Without these constraints, their schedules are freed up for the job's requirements. Gender bias in females' abilities to balance work and family responsibilities clearly exists today.

The amount of time required, specifically for high school principalship deters females. While elementary schools do require additional time after regular school hours, they do not compare to the variety of extracurricular activities that occur at high schools. Several professional obligations occur after school hours and on the weekends requiring the principal's presence. In turn, this diminishes time spent with families. The requirements of the elementary versus high school principal jobs

explain the lack of female high school administrators. Females, especially mothers, feel more comfortable serving in leadership roles in elementary schools because they are still able to fulfill their desires to be a leader, while also having time for their families.

Socialization. Social constructs expect females and males to behave in specific ways. Agentic characteristics, such as being assertive, confident, and independent, have traditionally been ascribed to males and are widely accepted as ideal qualities in a leader (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Communal characteristics, such as being cooperative, democratic, and servant, are more often found in females and are key in making leaders more effective (Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, & Keiser, 2012; Porat, 1991; Sherman & Wrushen, 2009). However, some communal characteristics like sympathy, sensitivity, and kindness, can often be viewed negatively, which suggests the idea of females who exhibit these characteristics are not suited for leadership roles.

Society assumes females in administrative and leadership positions must behave like males and push their feminine qualities aside (Christman & McClellan, 2012) as males who are commonly accepted as leaders (Scott & Brown, 2006). The social acceptance of male leaders has resulted in females imitating their leadership styles (Korabik, 1990; Porat, 1991), which isn't always feasible given social constraints. Females have been given the task to behave like males, so they can be viewed as potential leaders, but they cannot be too masculine, as this would work

against their favor (Christman & McClellan; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Korabik; Porat; Sherman & Wrushen, 2009).

Social constructs dictate how we view leaders and who we accept as leaders (Christman & McClellan, 2012). Eagly and Karau (2002) argue that gender is “the personal characteristic that provides the strongest basis of categorizing people” (p. 574). Thus, when a female tries to lead as a male does, she is perceived as less feminine and more as an imposter. Instead, she must find a unique balance of blending effective feminine, communal leadership qualities so she can lead organizations successfully, while also integrating traditional masculine, agentic characteristics in order to be accepted as leaders by society. Females who try to walk the fine line of mixing the two gender specific qualities might “be unfavorably evaluated for their gender violation, at least by those who endorse traditional gender roles” (Eagly & Karau, p. 575). In fact, a study by Heilman (1995) found that successful female leaders were labeled “as more hostile (e.g., more devious, quarrelsome, selfish, bitter) and less rational (i.e., less logical, objective, able to separate feelings from ideas) than successful male managers” (as cited in Eagly & Karau, p. 576).

Having a professional network can help individuals in attaining administrative positions. However, if a female is a wife, mother, student, and teacher trying to acquire a principal’s job, her professional network might be limited by these constraints. The lack of time to create a professional web of correspondents can negatively influence her ability to obtain an administrative position. The good old

boys' system of promoting only men with similar characteristics to the current leadership in place disenfranchises females (Eckman, 2004a; McQuigg & Carlton, 1980). Males generally recommend hiring other males, as they share similar leadership styles and ideas and know individuals from the same networks.

Mentoring. Mentoring is a key component of attaining principalship for both genders. It is equally effective for prospective female administrators regardless of the mentors' gender. It promotes efficacy, confidence, and provides a role model for future leaders. Mentoring is especially beneficial when females mentor other females because they see females as successful leaders, regardless of societal constraints based on gender. Without mentors, females are less likely to apply for leadership positions (Eckman, 2004a). Additionally, females with mentors are more likely to "attain higher levels of career development" (Scanlon, 1997, p. 45) than those without mentors. Remedying the lack of female administrators can be done by providing support systems, such as networks, mentors, and role models, all of which have shown positive effects for female administrators (Logan, 1998).

However, mentoring can possibly have negative results when female administrators serve as mentors to other females, thus creating another barrier for prospective female administrators (Sherman & Wrushen, 2009). Successful female leaders may not want to share the elite club with others, sabotaging other potential female leaders. This fear to share resources negates any positive benefits mentoring has to offer for those females. If current female administrators maintain the elitist

club, then other females will continue to struggle finding confidence to apply for jobs in administration.

Given the lack of females in administrative roles, the insufficient amount of successful female leadership is difficult to ignore. They are not socially accepted as leaders, in turn affecting the mindset and confidence of potential female leaders. This feedback loop creates the idea they cannot achieve these prestigious roles (Lee et al., 1993; Sherman & Wrushen, 2009). In turn, females' exhibit lower levels of self-esteem and confidence in regards to leadership positions when compared to males (Shakeshaft, Nowell, & Perry, 1991). They do not feel equally valued in society, which also prevents them from applying for principal jobs and other leadership positions (Clark et al., 1999; Lee et al.; Reynolds et al., 2008; Shakeshaft et al.).

These lower levels of self-esteem and confidence are further buttressed and constructed when females see the majority of principal and leadership jobs continually being fulfilled by males. Females doubt their abilities and are afraid to push themselves to obtain leadership roles for fear of failure (McQuigg & Carlton, 1980). They feel as though their failures or successes are representative not only of themselves as leaders, but also representative of the female gender entirely.

Leadership styles. Another potential barrier is the style of leadership. Since many males advance to administrative roles through the coaching world, they generally describe their leadership styles with coaching and authoritative terms (Eckman, 2004a). Females are more inclined to describe their styles as being focused as an instructional leader and developing interpersonal relationships with staff

(Conner & Sharp, 1992; Eckman; Giese et al., 2009; Kerr et al., 2014; Newton et al., 2003; Shakeshaft, 1986). They exhibit characteristics found in servant, collaborative, and transformational leadership styles more often than males (Eagly & Schmidt, 2001; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010; Sherman & Wrushen, 2009), increasing their effectiveness levels.

In turn, characteristics of these types of leadership styles, such as being innovative and empowering, setting high expectations for behavior, and serving as a role model help to create a more successful organization (Eagly & Schmidt, 2001). They are more effective in establishing and communicating school goals, supervising, and evaluating instruction (Nogay & Beebe, 2008). In comparison, males are more likely to integrate characteristics of the socially accepted task-oriented leadership style, where they are focused on completing tasks to achieve a specific goal (Korabik, 1990). Females generally lack characteristics associated with this style, feeding into the socially accepted idea they are not effective leaders.

Societal beliefs integrate the idea of females having higher sensitivity levels than males. They are viewed as more emotional, which is an obstacle they face when reacting to workplace situations. Females must carefully choose the expression of their emotions because their reactions can be analyzed based solely on their gender. However, Johnson, Busch, and Slate (2008) contend that males possess and require more respect and have higher levels of sensitivity than females, which is contradictory to gender stereotypes. When males react in anger or frustration, their

actions are rewarded because they are showing their emotions. Females, on the other hand, are described as overreacting when they exhibit these same emotions.

Gender roles created by society disadvantage females. They must behave and respond to situations in the traditional feminine manner or they will be subjected to scrutiny. Responding with typical male agentic characteristics, such as “speaking assertively, competing for attention, influencing others, initiating activity directed to assigned tasks, and making problem-focused suggestions” (Eagly & Schmidt, 2001, p. 783) make them less desirable leaders, as these are characteristics commonly associated with male leaders (Christman & McClellan, 2012; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Korabik, 1990; Porat, 1991; Sherman & Wrushen, 2009). Instead, they are expected to respond using communal characteristics like “speaking tentatively, not drawing attention to oneself, accepting others’ direction, supporting and soothing others, and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems” (Eagly & Schmidt, p. 783). These societal expectations continue to set females up for failure as leaders. Even when given the opportunity to serve as leaders, they cannot lead in appropriate ways because they are limited by gender-enforced expectations.

Stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are reported as the number one barrier females experience when trying to obtain principalship jobs (Pirouznia, 2009). Societal and cultural barriers either deter females from applying to principal jobs or suggest that they are not as qualified as males (Kruse & Krumm, 2016). A common barrier is the expectation of females to become mothers and wives, which in turn could impact their choices to remain as teachers instead of advancing to

administrative roles (Eckman, 2004a). Despite stereotypes, female administrators are as effective, if not more than males, are more supportive, organized, and obtain effectual leadership skills (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Inman, 1998; Little, 1983; Nogay & Beebe, 2008; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010).

There are gender differences associated with the level of respect from colleagues and work ethic exhibited by both groups as leaders. Female principals lack the respect afforded to male principals and must work harder than males at the same types of jobs (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Eagly & Schmidt, 2001; Napier & Willower, 1990). These differences can be linked to females being overachievers, the feeling that they are not being equally compared to males, or are held to higher and unequal standards of evaluation (Adams & Hambright; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Schmidt; Napier & Willower).

Double standards in evaluation of principals also influence females differently. As an example, they must first meet high standards before being chosen for a leadership position, since they are in competition with males who dominate the field. Then they must maintain those high expectations throughout their careers as leaders. Eagly and Schmidt (2001) illustrate these expectations that females are held to “higher standard of effectiveness to attain leadership roles and to retain them over time” (p. 795). Similar mistakes made by males and females are subjected to different criticism and can result in dissimilar reactions and evaluations.

Gender congruence is another stereotypical barrier females must confront. Turnover and satisfaction rates are two concerning areas, particularly for male

teachers in schools led by female principals (Grissom et al., 2012). High turnover rates can be linked to males experiencing female principals for the first time and adjusting to females managing them instead of males. Females in leadership roles present a new relationship hierarchy for males, where they must answer and take direction from a female leader. This new dynamic also plays a role in the level of effectiveness teachers rate their principals (Marvel, 2015; Nogay & Beebe, 2008). Gender plays a more important role in the level of effectiveness than does actual leadership styles (Marvel). Male teachers tend to evaluate female principals as less effective than do female teachers, who evaluated the same female principals as above average (Lee et al., 1993). This gendered evaluation discriminant further demonstrates the internal issues males face when dealing with females as leaders. Regardless of their styles, they will rate them as less effective based on the one aspect they cannot change, their gender.

Communication is different for males and females, as they tend to use different types of language and evaluate what they hear differently (Shakeshaft et al., 1991). Females will communicate more often with sympathetic traits in order to create a deeper connection with the other person, while males tend to avoid this style of communication to maintain their dominance (Basow & Rubinfeld, 2003). Male teachers might have a difficult time accepting female leaders because they are not accustomed to being told what to do by a female and grow hostile toward her. Additionally, feedback is also given and evaluated differently based on the teacher's and principal's gender.

Male principals are more likely to withhold negative feedback from female teachers because they do not feel equipped to handle the emotional result; whereas with male teachers, they openly discuss errors without fear of emotion (Shakeshaft et al., 1991). The lack of feedback is linked to the idea of females being more emotional than males and more easily becoming upset when they are criticized, despite the deficient amount of evidence because of this prejudiced assumption. Generally, male leaders take care of issues themselves or appoint someone to deal with the issue, before confronting a female with negative criticism.

In addition to communication, physical characteristics also serve as a barrier for females. Male leaders will often consider a female's attractiveness before hiring her for leadership positions, especially if they will be in a close working relationship (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Shakeshaft et al., 1991). This sexist nature of hiring is a gender-specific barrier for females, which does not exist for males. Being an attractive male does not serve as a hindrance for promotion, but rather as an advantage. Furthermore, having attractive female teachers is not an issue for male principals. The issue is formed when the proximity of working with attractive females increases, which could possibly create a perceived inappropriate relationship.

Geographic differences. Rural areas present distinctive challenges to female administrators. Many rural areas are resistant to changes, given that communities in rural areas have strong ties with the school system. Additionally, social perceptions of female leaders are consistently more negative in rural areas (O'Reilly & Borman, 1987). School systems are usually the largest employer in the community and there is

a strong feeling of attachment between rural communities and the school system (Wallin & Sackney, 2003). Since schools, especially high schools, have traditionally been led by male administrators, rural communities find it exceptionally difficult to accept female leaders in this position.

Rural community members might believe that males have intrinsic and specific skill sets rendering them better leaders than females (Wallin & Sackney, 2003). Thus, changing the decades old face of leadership presents an even more challenging barrier for females attempting to achieve principalship in these areas. Furthermore, in rural areas, people are more likely to maintain the mindset of females being most effective as leaders of classrooms, instead of leaders of schools.

Along with traditional setbacks, there are other aspects to consider when analyzing the lack of female administrators in an area. Larger and wealthier communities are more likely to hire female administrators than smaller, poorer communities. Hyndman (2009) found that richer, larger, and more advanced counties in Kentucky are more likely to hire females in leadership positions, while poorer and more rural counties hire internally and hire males. Geographically, the southeastern region of Kentucky has the least number of female administrators, with the most found in the Northern/Bluegrass region (Hyndman). This geographic disparity provides further support of the longtime geographic constraints placed on female biases. With deep-rooted traditions promoting male dominance, it is difficult for females to have an equal playing field in achieving leadership status.

Female Administrators at the Secondary Level

Not only are females outnumbered in principal positions at all levels, they are particularly outnumbered at the high school level as school leaders (Shakeshaft, 1986). Females' degrees are usually more advanced than males' (Wallin & Sackney, 2003) and they are more prevalent in educational leadership programs (Kruse & Krumm, 2016). They possess the needed leadership skills for this level, just as they do other levels, (Nogay & Beebe, 2008), but continually are bypassed by male applicants.

It is a long held belief females make the best leaders at elementary schools (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Howley et al., 2007). They are seen as more emotionally supportive and available than males and exhibit the motherly qualities making them ideal leaders for younger children. They are consistently more prevalent as principals at the elementary level than high school level (Shakeshaft, 1998). Elementary school principals are more involved in instructional planning and activities, which is often described by females as one of the most important aspects of leadership roles (Newton et al., 2003). Increased involvement could explain one reason they are drawn to apply and are hired more often at this level.

Several factors make males appear more desirable at the secondary level than females. One of these factors being males are viewed as more capable and suitable to lead secondary schools. They are believed to possess the skillset, both emotionally and psychologically, to be effective leaders (McQuigg & Carlton, 1980). They are also viewed as being more effective at handling discipline in secondary schools

(Logan, 1998). Traditionally, this is the role they have taken. They are the leader of a staff of mainly female teachers. Their leadership styles are believed to be best for this level, even though research shows females have skills, such as attention to core operations and problem solving (Howley et al., 2007) that make them desirable and effective school leaders (Newton et al., 2003).

Summary

The development of the principal role is an important aspect to consider when analyzing females in this position. Even though, historically, the majority of teachers were females, a male principal teacher was put in place to manage them. The only level where female administrators might outnumber males is at the elementary level. Proportionally, they outnumber male teachers at every school level.

Historical events have both helped and hindered females' advancement. When males were not available to fill leadership roles, females served in their absences. However, when males were available, females were redistributed to lower paying jobs or sent home. Legislation has helped to provide a more level playing field for females, but societal and self-imposed constraints still impede their advancement. This study focused on six commonly identified barriers, family and job choices, socialization, mentoring, leadership styles, stereotypes, and geographic differences, and how they influence females on their climb to administrative positions.

Even though females at all school levels usually have more advanced degrees and more experience teaching than their male counterparts, they are less likely to apply for leadership roles unless they feel that they are truly prepared and qualified

for the position. Females' leadership styles and skills make them ideal leaders, even though they are combating a stereotypical leadership model. It is purported that females have to work harder than males to receive similar positive evaluations and they are not as respected in the workplace and society. Regardless of these beliefs, female principals are evaluated positively by teachers, and are often given much higher ratings than males.

Lastly, females are constantly fighting a battle that does not exist for males, their gender. Eagly and Karau (2002) argue that when females are perceived as leaders they are directly impacted by the "inconsistency between the predominantly communal qualities that perceivers associate with women and the predominantly agentic qualities they believe are required to succeed as a leader" (p. 575). Even if females are serving their organization and leading it successfully and efficiently, they could be potentially doomed from the start due to their gender.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine female school leaders from elementary, middle, and high school levels in Kentucky during the 2019-2020 school year to gain their perceptions related to gender-specific, self-imposed, and societal barriers that impede female school leaders. The study focused on six commonly reported and researched based areas that serve as hindrances for females. These barriers include family responsibilities, socialization, mentoring, leadership styles, gender stereotypes, and geographic differences. This chapter outlines the research design, participants, the instrumentation utilized, and the procedures that were used for the study.

The capstone also offered a depiction of Kentucky's female principals at each school level. This piece of the study provided a method to examine the number of females serving at each school level to determine the setting in which female school leaders serve.

Research Design

A mixed methods descriptive design was utilized in this study. One of the driving forces behind this style of research is the focus of portraying descriptions of the responses from participants. The study aimed describe quantitatively and qualitatively female school administrators across the state of Kentucky in regards to challenges they have encountered on their way to earning principalship. Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain that quantitative research "is an approach for testing

objective theories by examining the relationship among variables” (p. 4). They also detail that this style of research generally has “assumptions about testing theories deductively, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative or counterfactual explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings” (Creswell & Creswell, p. 4).

Descriptive statistics allow for a reporting of measures of central tendency, such as “mean, median, mode, deviance from the mean, variation, percentage, and correlation between variables” (Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 2001, para 5). This type of analysis allowed for an accurate representation of female administrators’ responses to the survey questions. Also, the descriptive approach allowed for the participants’ opinions regarding the barriers to be measured during a one-time setting and did not required an extended amount of time or multiple administrations of the survey.

Subjects and Sampling

The study employed single-stage sampling using a Google Forms survey which was sent to all female principals in Kentucky during the 2019-2020 school year. Both public and private female school administrators were included in the survey. The researcher used the Kentucky Department of Education’s (KDE) School and District Contact Information webpage (2019) to compile a list of all female school leaders and their email addresses in the state. To attain a list of female principals at private schools, the Non-Public Schools webpage (2019) from KDE was used to create a list of subjects.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used in this study consisted of a combination of four vetted surveys. Questions were included specific to each of the six research barriers previously outlined. Participants' demographic information, such as age, marital status, level of education, years of experience, and current role within the school (building principal or assistant principal) were collected. Data regarding the size of the participant's school, personal beliefs about female administrators, and view of society's opinions about female school leaders were also collected.

Four vetted survey instruments were used to create the survey for this capstone. The researchers for each of the individual surveys established the validity and reliability previously in their respective study. The researcher's bias was eliminated since the researcher was not directly involved with participants as they responded to the survey.

Survey items were pulled from a study by Graham, Desmond, and Zinsler (2011) and the survey's validity, readability, and usability were all reviewed and analyzed by school counselors before the initial administration of the survey.

Statements and questions from a dissertation by Naylor (2007) also aided in the creation of the survey for this capstone. The original instrument was created and used by Herrin (1992).

One question from the "Teaching and Learning International Survey" used by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, n.d.) was

utilized in this study. The OECD used their survey in international analysis of educational practices.

Questions from Brown's (2004) survey were also used. Its validity was evaluated by the American Association of School Administrators. The original questionnaire was also assessed by educational leadership specialists, Margaret Grogan and Cyruss Brunner (Brown).

Lastly, questions from Hilliard's (2000) dissertation were used. Hilliard explains that the barriers included in her survey "were carefully correlated with the findings in the literature to address content validity for the instrument, and each item was worded as clearly and concisely as possible to avoid misinterpretations by those who would rate each item" (p. 44).

The link to the Google Forms survey was emailed to female principals and assistant principals listed on the Kentucky Department of Education website. In addition to the survey link, an informational email explaining the purpose of the survey was included. The survey window expired after three weeks. Before the beginning of the final week, a reminder email was sent to all participants encouraging them to complete the survey before the deadline. In attempt to reach more participants, a final email was sent just to the participants who had not yet completed the study.

Procedures

The capstone was a descriptive mixed methods study examining female school leaders' perceptions toward achieving principalship. An online survey was

used to collect data regarding gender representation of school leaders across the state of Kentucky. Additionally, it analyzed the influence of the six researched barriers that consistently affect females during the time they were seeking the role as a principal.

The survey, with an informational email explaining the capstone, was emailed to all female principals in the state. This list was compiled using the Kentucky Department of Education website to identify female principals. After the survey and informational attachment had been emailed to female principals, a reminder email was sent to all participants encouraging them to complete it. The reminder email was sent after a week had passed. A final reminder email was sent one week before the survey ended. When the time frame for completing the survey had passed, the researcher closed access to the survey and began the data analysis portion of the study.

Once the window for receiving the survey was closed, responses from Google Forms were moved to a spreadsheet for review and manipulation. Data were transposed into manageable format for use in pivot tables. This included taking the Likert responses and converting them into a numerical value of 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agreed. Several pivot tables were constructed to allow summarizing the responses according to the themes. The pivot tables summarized the responses for barriers that limited opportunities for advancement, factors which helped advance the career opportunities for women, conditions that may influence

opportunities for women, and demographic information of the respondents. The pivot tables were used to prepare for the discussion provided in Chapter 4.

Data Analysis

The researcher created a survey by pulling questions from other surveys to gather data from female administrators across the state of Kentucky during the 2019-2020 school year. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. Frequency groups, means, and standard deviations were computed. These data allowed for an examination and discussion of female school leaders.

The data from the demographic questions were compiled into tables and charts. These diagrams provided illustrations of participants in order to answer the first research question of the study. Additionally, these data allowed for characteristics of female school leaders (such as age, marital status, level of education, and school building and school system classification) to be graphed and analyzed. The researcher's conclusions were based on the data gathered from her survey. The data were also correlated to the research presented in Chapter 2 of the capstone and similar findings were outlined.

For the Likert-type scale questions, the responses were combined, percentages of responses by categories, and overall means were computed. The data from these questions were also presented in graphical representations to illustrate participants' perceptions of the barrier discussed in each question. This organizational approach allowed the researcher to draw conclusions and comparisons from the survey responses to the research previously discussed. Furthermore, the graphics also

provided visual representation for readers to gain a better understanding of the trends indicated through the responses.

Chapter 4

Findings and Results

Research shows that females have consistently dominated the educational field, in regards to teaching positions (Kruse & Krum, 2016; Stromquist, 2013). However, they consistently serve in fewer leadership roles than their male counterparts. This discrepancy serves as the basis and context for this study. It sought to review the perception from female school leaders at various school levels (elementary, middle, and high) in the state of Kentucky during the 2019-2020 school year from responses received through an online survey. The study provided an examination of research-based barriers that were gender-specific, self-imposed, and enforced by society that impede female school leaders. These barriers included family and job choices, socialization, leadership styles, stereotypes, and geography, and the study examined the extent to which they may have affected the female school leaders. Additionally, it sought to identify any other barriers of female respondents. The capstone focused on the following two research questions:

- (1) How are females represented in school leadership positions at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in the state of Kentucky?
- (2) What perceived barriers did females encounter when seeking school leadership positions?

The data for the capstone were gathered from voluntary female respondents serving as principals or assistant principals in Kentucky during the 2019-2020 school year. Private school principals were also included in the study. School leaders were

emailed a link to the survey, which was created using Google Forms, and were asked to complete the 22-item survey. This chapter examines the results of the data analysis of the capstone. The data allowed for an examination and discussion of the perceived barriers female school leaders experienced while seeking administrative positions. The data analysis includes descriptive statistics, frequency groups, means, and standard deviations. For the Likert-type scale questions, the responses were summarized with percentages of responses by categories, and overall means with standard deviations reported. Visual representations in the forms of tables and figures have also been provided.

Survey Response Rate of Sample

The link to the Google Forms survey was emailed to a total of 980 participants. All of the potential respondents served as school leaders during the 2019-2020 school year either as head principal or assistant principal at public or private schools in the state (see Table 1). The total survey response rate was 37.6%, which constituted 369 respondents. Head principals had the highest response rate at 62.1% (229). Respondents who worked in a public school setting vastly outnumbered private school respondents with 324 (87.8%) from public schools compared to 45 (12.2%) from private schools. Of the 229 (62.1%) head principals responding, 137 (59.8%) reported serving as an assistant principal before becoming head principal.

Table 1

Statistics of Participants

	Public	Private	Total
Total number of respondents	324 (87.8%)	45 (12.2%)	369 (100%)
School setting			
Rural	172 (53.1%)	7 (15.6%)	179 (48.5%)
Suburban	78 (24.1%)	27 (60.0%)	105 (28.5%)
Urban	74 (22.8%)	11 (24.4%)	85 (23.0%)
Current position			
Principal	186 (57.4%)	43 (95.6%)	229 (62.1%)
Assistant principal	138 (42.6%)	2 (4.4%)	140 (37.9%)

Demographics of Participants

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the various age groups of the participants.

The responses have also been divided by the sector in which participants work, public or private. The largest percent of participants surveyed fell into the age range of 40-44 with 25.2%, while the smallest was in the 60 or over group with only 3.5%. The next two groups with the fewest respondents were the 25-34 and 55-59 age groups with 9.2% and 7.3% respectively. The 45-49 age group housed 20.1% and 19.2% were in the 35-39 age range. The remaining 15.4% were in the 50-45 age group.

Table 2

Age Groups of Participants

Age Groups	Public (n=324)	Private (n=45)	Total (n=369)
25-34	28 (8.6%)	6 (13.3%)	34 (9.2%)
35-39	65 (20.0%)	6 (13.3%)	71 (19.2%)
40-44	86 (26.5%)	7 (15.6%)	93 (25.2%)
45-49	67 (20.7%)	7 (15.6%)	74 (20.1%)
50-54	50 (15.4%)	7 (15.6%)	57 (15.4%)
55-59	22 (6.8%)	5 (11.1%)	27 (7.3%)
60 or over	6 (1.9%)	7 (15.6%)	13 (3.5%)

Regarding the marital status of the respondents, 83.2% were married, with only 6.8% being classified as single, and 8.9% were divorced. The remaining 1.1% were widowed. This information is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Marital Status of Participants

Marital Status	Public (n=324)	Private (n=45)	Total (n=369)
Single	24 (7.4%)	1 (2.2%)	25 (6.8%)
Married	264 (81.5%)	43 (95.6%)	307 (83.2%)
Divorced	32 (9.9%)	1 (2.2%)	33 (8.9%)
Widowed	4 (1.2%)	0 (0%)	4 (1.1%)

Participants with children greatly outnumbered those without. Three hundred twenty-four (87.8%) participants had children, with 45.1% of them raising two children, followed by 26.2% raising three children. Only 10.5% of respondents said they had raised four or more children and the remaining 18.2% had raised one child.

Participants were able to select age groups of their children at the time they became teachers, so more than one category could be chosen. The age of participants' children when they first became a teacher were largely clustered into the first age group of 0 to 5 years, with 52.5% in this category. Forty respondents (12.3%) specified that their children fell into the 6 to 10 group. The following age group of 11 to 15 years consisted of 3.7% participants, while 16 to 20 had 0.9%, and the last category of 21 or older had 0.6%. The other 42.3% of participants reported not having children when they entered the teaching field. Figure 1 depicts these data.

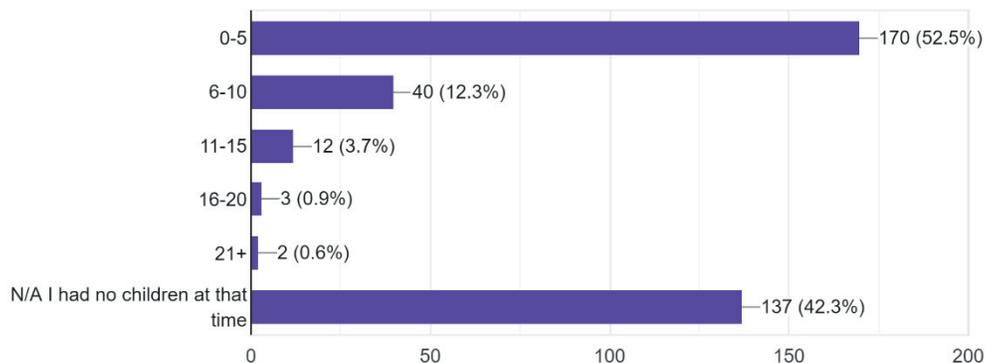


Figure 1: Ages of children when participants entered the teaching field. This figure depicts the age groups of participants' children when they first became a teacher.

Figure 2 depicts a similar question regarding the age of respondents' children when they became an assistant principal or head principal. Over three fourths of the participants' responses fell into the first two categories, with 38.6% of participants indicating that their children were 0 to 5 years old and 38% reporting that theirs were 6 to 10 years old when they became an administrator. Another 32.1% of respondents

stated their children were 11 to 15 years old, while 17.6% of participants fell into the fourth category of 16 to 20, and 8.6% were categorized in the 21 years or older group. Only 4.6% reported not having children when they first became administrators.

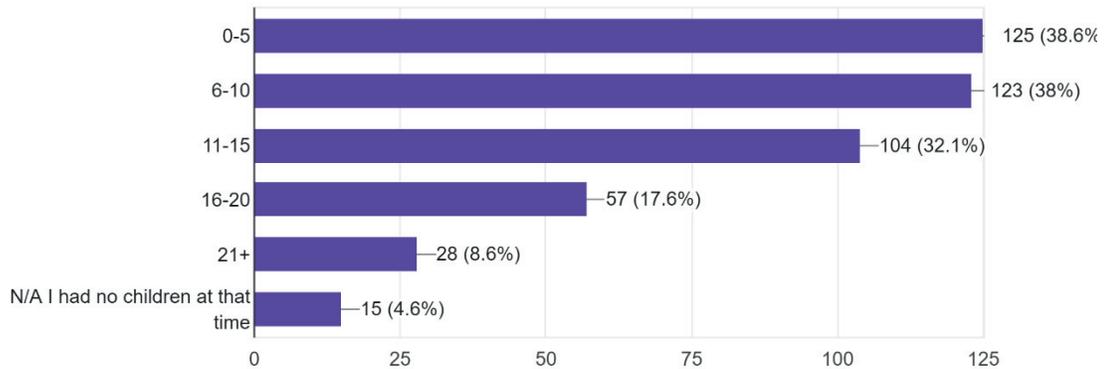


Figure 2: Ages of children when participants attained leadership positions. This figure shows the ages of participants' children when they became assistant or head principals.

As to the highest degree earned, bachelor's degrees were on the lowest end, with only 1.1% falling into this category. All of these participants served as school administrators of private schools. Thirty-seven respondents (10%) reported having a Masters or Rank II. A large amount of participants, 81.6%, had earned an Educational Specialist or Rank I degree. The remaining 7.3% reported earning an Ed.D. or Ph.D.

Table 4

Educational Status of Participants

Highest Degree Earned	Public (n=324)	Private (n=45)	Total (n=369)
Bachelors	0 (0.0%)	4 (8.9%)	4 (1.1%)
Masters/Rank II	23 (7.1%)	14 (31.1%)	37 (10.0%)
Ed.S/Rank I	277 (85.5%)	24 (53.3%)	301 (81.6%)
Ed.D/Ph.D	24 (7.4%)	3 (6.7%)	27 (7.3%)

Tables 5 and 6 report the number of years spent as a classroom teacher and as a school administrator. These are separated based on the classification of the respondents' institution. Of the total population surveyed, 40.9% of participants reported spending 6 to 10 years as teachers before advancing to administrative positions. This category was followed by 11 to 15 and 1 to 5, encompassing 27.9% and 11.4% respectively. The 16 to 20 year category accounted for 12.2% of participants' time spent in the classroom, while only 5.1% spent 21 to 25 years, and the remaining 2.4% spent 26 or more years as teachers.

In the administrative category, the first two timespans accounted for 77% of time spent as an administrator, with 43.9% falling into the first category of 1 to 5 years, and 33.1% in the 6 to 10 year group. The third category of 11 to 15 years defined 14.6% of respondents, while only 6.5% fell into the 16 to 20 group, 1.6% in 21 to 25, and only one person reported spending more than 26 years as an administrator.

Table 5

Public School Participants' Years of Experience (n=324)

Years	Teacher	Administrator
1-5	34 (10.5%)	142 (43.8%)
6-10	139 (42.9%)	106 (32.7%)
11-15	94 (29.0%)	49 (15.1%)
16-20	33 (10.2%)	21 (6.5%)
21-25	16 (4.9%)	5 (1.5%)
26 or more	8 (2.5%)	1 (0.3%)

Table 6

Private School Participants' Years of Experience (n=45)

Years	Teacher	Administrator
1-5	8 (17.8%)	20 (44.4%)
6-10	12 (26.7%)	16 (35.6%)
11-15	9 (20.0%)	5 (11.1%)
16-20	12 (26.7%)	3 (6.7%)
21-25	3 (6.7%)	1 (2.2%)
26 or more	1 (2.2%)	0 (0.0%)

When asked about their previous coaching experience, 48% indicated they had coaching duties during the time they were teaching. While the responses were almost split in half, it is important to note the significance that coaching has on one's opportunity to serve as a school leader. Research shows that males tend to advance to leadership positions through coaching opportunities (Eckman, 2004a.) While females might not be as likely to have as many opportunities to serve as coaches, because even in girl sports, males often serve as coaches, participants in this study found opportunities to enter the coaching field.

The responses regarding geographic location as a barrier actually present opposite findings when compared with other research. Almost half of the respondents (48.5%) described their school system as rural, while 23% indicated the district as urban, and the remaining 28.5% as suburban. According to Hyndman (2009), richer, larger, and more advanced counties in Kentucky are more likely to hire females in leadership positions, while more rural counties hire internally and hire males. While these data might indicate a change in mindset, from females not being socially accepted as leaders in these areas to actually being promoted as school leaders, it is important to note the difference in number of elementary schools and high schools. Females outnumbering males as elementary principals could impact the findings from this portion of the survey.

Participants selected the lowest and highest grades served in their buildings and also estimated the student enrollment as of August 2019. Over half of the participants served in schools with traditional elementary, middle, and high school grade levels, Preschool/Head Start or Kindergarten through 5th, 6th through 8th, and 9th through 12th grades. One hundred four respondents selected one of the two traditional elementary grade ranges accounting. In the traditional middle school grade levels, 50 participants fell into this category, while 78 participants were in the high school grade ranges. The remaining 45.48% of participants chose more unique grade ranges, for example, Preschool/Head Start through twelfth grade (2.44%) or first through fifth grades (1.08%). Table 7 provides a detailed examination of the levels selected.

Table 7

Enrollment Grades and Percentages

Grades Served	Count	Percent	Total Enrollment
9th - 12th	78	21.14%	76,802
Preschool/Head Start - 5th	73	19.78%	34,991
6th - 8th	50	13.6%	34,954
Kindergarten - 5th	31	8.4%	14,257
Preschool/Head Start - 8th	26	7.05%	10,322
Preschool/Head Start - 6th	18	4.88%	9,655
6th - 12th	9	2.44%	6,775
Kindergarten - 8th	10	2.71%	4,224
Preschool/Head Start - 12th	9	2.44%	3,682
7th - 8th	5	1.35%	3,681
Preschool/Head Start - 2nd	5	1.35%	2,829
Kindergarten - 12th	8	2.17%	2,742
8th - 12th	3	.81%	2,649
Kindergarten - 4th	5	1.35%	2,352
6th - 6th	4	1.08%	2,346
1st - 5th	4	1.08%	2,116
Preschool/Head Start - 3rd	3	.81%	2,088
Preschool/Head Start - Preschool/Head Start	7	1.89%	1,968
2nd - 5th	2	.54%	1,180
Preschool/Head Start - Kindergarten	2	.54%	1,163
3rd - 5th	2	.54%	1,095
7th - 12th	3	.81%	994
Preschool/Head Start - 1st	2	.54%	772
Kindergarten - 2nd	1	.27%	620
Kindergarten - 6th	2	.54%	545
8th - 9th	1	.27%	492
11th - 12th	2	.54%	460
Preschool/Head Start - 10th	1	.27%	230
1st - 8th	1	.27%	206
Preschool/Head Start - 4th	1	.27%	202
Preschool/Head Start - 9th	1	.27%	112
Total	369	100%	226,504

Response to Survey Items

Barriers limiting opportunities. The first Likert question asked participants the following: Please indicate the degree to which each of the following may be a barrier limiting opportunities for women to advance to principal roles. This section included specific, research-based barriers that may limit or hinder females' advancement to school leadership positions. They were given a scale of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree, and no opinion. Table 8 presents percentages associated with each barrier, along with the means and standard deviations.

Table 8

Barriers Limiting Opportunities for Female Principals (n=369)

	SA	A	N	D	SD	No Opinion	Mean	SD
School districts do not actively recruit women	29 (7.86%)	78 (21.14%)	77 (20.87%)	118 (31.98%)	47 (12.74%)	20 (5.42%)	2.782	1.179
Lack of mobility of family members	37 (10.03%)	128 (34.69%)	72 (19.51%)	72 (19.51%)	31 (8.40%)	29 (7.86%)	3.200	1.163
Mid-management career, "glass ceiling"	41 (11.11%)	88 (23.85%)	82 (22.22%)	110 (29.81%)	33 (8.94%)	15 (4.07%)	2.983	1.183
Lack of opportunities to gain key experiences prior to seeking a principal position	38 (10.3%)	99 (26.83%)	44 (11.92%)	134 (36.31%)	50 (13.55%)	4 (1.08%)	2.838	1.257
Lack of professional networks for women	40 (10.84%)	124 (33.6%)	65 (17.62%)	103 (27.91%)	27 (7.32%)	10 (2.71%)	3.131	1.169
Perception of constituents that women are not strong facility/business managers	71 (19.24%)	110 (29.81%)	29 (7.86%)	117 (31.71%)	37 (10.03%)	5 (1.36%)	3.168	1.337
Perception of constituents that women are unqualified to handle budgeting and finances	29 (7.86%)	64 (17.34%)	51 (13.82%)	167 (45.26%)	51 (13.82%)	7 (1.9%)	2.594	1.167
Perception that women will allow their emotions to influence principal decisions	94 (25.47%)	110 (29.81%)	34 (9.21%)	91 (24.66%)	35 (9.49%)	5 (1.36%)	3.376	1.354
The nature of principals' work makes it an unattractive career choice	50 (13.55%)	98 (26.56%)	49 (13.28%)	132 (35.77%)	35 (9.49%)	5 (1.36%)	2.989	1.253
Lack of mentors/mentoring in school districts for beginning principals/assistant principals	74 (20.05%)	118 (31.98%)	47 (12.74%)	92 (24.93%)	30 (8.13%)	8 (2.17%)	3.316	1.280
Perception that women are not politically astute	40 (10.84%)	76 (20.6%)	60 (16.26%)	137 (37.13%)	49 (13.28%)	7 (1.9%)	2.782	1.236

Table 8 (continued)

Barriers Limiting Opportunities for Female Principals (n=369)

	SA	A	N	D	SD	No Opinion	Mean	SD
Perception that women cannot handle discipline	85 (23.04%)	110 (29.81%)	25 (6.78%)	99 (26.83%)	45 (12.2%)	5 (1.36%)	3.250	1.395
Overall	628 (14.18%)	1203 (27.17%)	635 (14.34%)	1372 (30.98%)	470 (10.61%)	120 (2.71%)	3.031	1.271

Note: A higher mean value indicates a barrier was perceived to be more agreeable as a barrier (strongly agree = 5, 1 = strongly disagree, no opinion).

The barrier with the highest mean rating was regarding constituents' perceptions of females' emotions influencing their decisions as principals ($M = 3.376$, $SD = 1.354$). This was followed by the lack of mentors for beginning principals/assistant principals ($M = 3.316$, $SD = 1.280$). The perception of discipline being too difficult for women to handle ($M = 3.250$, $SD = 1.395$) and the lack of family members' mobility ($M = 3.200$, $SD = 1.163$) were scored similarly. Constituents' perceptions of women being unqualified to handle budgeting and finances ($M = 2.594$, $SD = 1.167$), the perception that women are not politically astute ($M = 2.782$, $SD = 1.236$), and districts not actively recruiting women ($M = 2.782$, $SD = 1.179$) were three barriers with the lowest mean ratings.

Respondents' additional comments. Participants were given the opportunity to expand on scope of the survey by responding to the following statement: Please indicate any other barrier (not previously mentioned) that might limit opportunities for women to advance to principal roles. There were several common themes amongst the responses. The most common response involved around the time commitment needed to fulfill principals' jobs effectively. These responses also often referenced how the responsibilities of being a mother and wife were viewed

negatively in conjunction with being a school leader. Many participants noted that childcare was an issue for mothers and their husbands' jobs and responsibilities were generally put before their own because they were the breadwinners of their families. Along with this barrier, some participants explained the difficulty of earning advanced degrees while also being a mother, teacher, and wife. This obstacle could lead to a lack of females without advanced degrees being outnumbered by males who have them.

Another overarching theme was the good old boys' club and how males in leadership roles do not actively recruit or hire females. Instead, they are more prone to hire applicants similar to themselves, other males. Some respondents also reported that males are generally considered the first choice when it comes to filling leadership positions. A few participants even reported that they were passed over for leadership jobs even though they had more experience and advanced degrees than the males who were hired. Politics at the school, district, and community level also play a role in attaining a principal job for some participants. Some respondents described their experiences of trying to attain principal jobs as being hindered by who they did or did not know in other leadership positions. Coaching and location were also referenced several times. Some comments explained that rural areas and small districts have fewer administrative opportunities and when they do become available, they are usually filled by male coaches. A few respondents explained that the rural setting in general could be a hindrance for females as they try to advance due to their strong ties to traditional practices of males leading schools.

Gender stereotypical behavior was cited multiple times as a barrier, as females are more often viewed and accepted as leaders of elementary and middle schools and not of high schools. Playing into this idea are females' physical size, strength, and appearances, all of which were also mentioned. Additionally, females are often viewed as instructional leaders, not disciplinarians, potentially influencing their perceived abilities to lead a school. Respondents referred to the misconception of females being too emotional to lead and explained that this perception also creates a barrier that does not exist for males. One response explained that males and females are viewed differently in leadership positions. She explained that she was told by a superintendent that she was "too confident and seemed too comfortable during a principal interview." She further clarified that this attribute would have been viewed as a strength if she were a male. Encouragement from both male and female leaders, age, burnout, and lack of networks and recruiting were also all cited as potential barriers for aspiring female leaders.

An additional reoccurring theme was the repeated mentioning of females being a barrier to other aspiring female leaders. One participant stated the following:

When I was a teacher, I actually heard other teachers talk about how they didn't want to work for a female principal. (These were also female teachers). When I questioned them, they said that women are difficult to work for; they expect too much. Then later, when our site-based council was hiring a new principal, they sent out a survey to the teachers about what they wanted to see in the new principal. Some teachers actually put, "Don't hire a woman."

Another leader alluded to the idea that other female leaders might be jealous or might retaliate against hiring other female leaders. Other responses mentioned that female

leaders are often viewed as micromanagers and their confidence and strong personalities make them undesirable leaders. One participant wrote, “Strong women are seen negatively, whereas strong men are soon positively.” In addition, comments were made regarding males not being comfortable with strong female leaders.

Being surrounded and outnumbered by males in leadership positions were also hindrances. One participant mentioned being “talked over, cut off, and not given opportunity to speak” in meetings. Another respondent explained her opinion regarding conversations when “a man says no, it is the end of the conversation” whereas when “a woman says no, it is the beginning of negotiations.” Lastly, an interesting comment made by a private school leader stated the following:

In the Catholic Schools, Priests are the “boss” of the principals so most priests don’t value women unless they are decorating or baking. Priests prefer men as principals without a doubt and men are allowed to do or “get away with” so much more than women in the role of principal.

Advancement factor responses. The second Likert question asked participants to indicate the degree to which each of the following factors may help advance career opportunities for women principals. Their responses, using the same scale from the previous question, are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Advancement Opportunities for Female Principals (n=369)

	SA	A	N	D	SD	No opinion	Mean	SD
Emphasis placed on improving instruction	161 (43.63%)	163 (44.17%)	31 (8.40%)	8 (2.17%)	5 (1.36%)	1 (0.27%)	4.269	0.813
Knowledge of instructional process	175 (47.43%)	157 (42.55%)	24 (6.50%)	7 (1.90%)	5 (1.36%)	1 (0.27%)	4.332	0.794
Knowledge of curriculum	179 (48.51%)	152 (41.19%)	23 (6.23%)	7 (1.90%)	6 (1.63%)	2 (0.54%)	4.338	0.813
Interpersonal skills	227 (61.52%)	110 (29.81%)	18 (4.88%)	7 (1.90%)	5 (1.36%)	2 (0.54%)	4.490	0.792
Responsiveness to parents and community groups	204 (55.28%)	130 (35.23%)	21 (5.69%)	7 (1.90%)	5 (1.36%)	2 (0.54%)	4.420	0.799
Management of facilities and budget	157 (42.55%)	149 (40.38%)	43 (11.65%)	14 (3.79%)	4 (1.08%)	2 (0.54%)	4.202	0.870
Management of students	191 (51.76%)	128 (34.69%)	35 (9.49%)	8 (2.17%)	5 (1.36%)	2 (0.54%)	4.341	0.844
Overall	1294 (50.1%)	989 (38.29%)	195 (7.55%)	58 (2.25%)	35 (1.36%)	12 (0.46%)	4.341	0.823

Note: A higher mean value indicates a barrier was perceived to be more agreeable as a barrier (strongly agree = 5, 1 = strongly disagree, no opinion).

All of the opportunities had means above 4.0, which indicates that participants agreed they would all be beneficial opportunities. The highest reported opportunity was interpersonal skills ($M = 4.490$, $SD = 0.792$), followed by responsiveness to parents and community groups ($M = 4.420$, $SD = 0.799$).

Respondents' additional comments. When given the opportunity to identify additional ideas to advance females' career opportunities, participants did not hesitate to provide a variety of suggestions, many of them with overlapping themes. The most repeated response revolved around providing mentoring opportunities and increasing the avenues for networking for aspiring female leaders. Participants described the importance of affording teacher leadership opportunities to those who want to advance to principal and assistant principal positions. Support from other school leaders (males and females), districts, and community members was another area of concern for many members of this study.

Respondents also identified the need for training regarding the management of facilities and budgets. These are areas of concerns especially since females are often viewed as strong instructional leaders. One participant wrote:

The expectation is that women would be good with instruction. Women are held to a higher standard in terms of having instructional knowledge about best practices than men are. My observations in education are that the most people believe that men are much more able to handle personnel and financial issues than women. Women are too emotional. I would advise any women that while instructional practices are always important, for women it would be more valuable to prepare themselves in the areas of school law, finances, and personnel matters.

The respondents also included the need for conflict resolution and communication skills, for male and female leaders. Many participants pinpointed the importance of establishing relationships and connections with students, parents/guardians, and community members. One school leader expanded on this idea by stating, “Be visible in the community, especially on social media. Self-promotion in a way that isn’t focusing on self, rather the good work you are doing to support education.” At the private school level, competitive pay for female principals was addressed.

One participant explained how decision makers can help females advance career opportunities by pointing out that more opportunities for female leaders would arise if system leaders nurtured leadership and created opportunities for aspiring leaders that were unbiased by gender and perception. This particular respondent also succinctly stated, “Women often have the skills, not the opportunities.”

Outside influences for advancement. The final set of statements asked respondents to indicate the degree to which each may influence opportunities for females to advance to principal roles. Their responses used the same Likert-like scale as previously used. All of these statements revolved around societal constraints and biases that may affect females as they strive to achieve leadership positions. Several of the statements compared male and female opportunities, characteristics, and leadership styles. The data from these questions offer comparison between gender biases (see Table 10).

Table 10

Outside Influences for Advancement for Female Principals (n=369)

	SA	A	N	D	SD	No Opinion	M	SD
School districts prefer that males hold positions as principals	55 (14.91%)	96 (26.02%)	65 (17.62%)	109 (29.54%)	36 (9.76%)	8 (2.17%)	3.069	1.255
Women's family responsibilities conflict with the time requirements of the job	118 (31.98%)	157 (42.55%)	36 (9.76%)	47 (12.74%)	10 (2.71%)	1 (0.27%)	3.886	1.079
Women have to work harder to prove they are qualified and/or competent	122 (33.06%)	116 (31.44%)	34 (9.21%)	73 (19.78%)	20 (5.42%)	4 (1.08%)	3.677	1.273
Parents and community prefer men as school principals	42 (11.38%)	87 (23.58%)	99 (26.83%)	110 (29.81%)	21 (5.69%)	10 (2.71%)	3.053	1.119
Men will resent having a female supervisor	37 (10.03%)	87 (23.58%)	86 (23.31%)	128 (34.69%)	27 (7.32%)	4 (1.08%)	2.942	1.136
Female principals generally have limited exposure to the political power structure	36 (9.76%)	70 (18.97%)	92 (24.93%)	126 (34.15%)	34 (9.21%)	11 (2.98%)	2.855	1.146
There is a lack of same gender mentors or role models for principals within the education setting	43 (11.65%)	93 (25.2%)	73 (19.78%)	122 (33.06%)	30 (8.13%)	8 (2.17%)	2.992	1.187
There is limited encouragement from others, which discourages the aspiration of women to be school principals	47 (12.74%)	73 (19.78%)	69 (18.7%)	140 (37.94%)	34 (9.21%)	6 (1.63%)	2.887	1.213
Few women apply for positions as principals/assistant principals	16 (4.34%)	59 (15.99%)	57 (15.45%)	172 (46.61%)	54 (14.63%)	11 (2.98%)	2.472	1.073
Inability to change residential locations (mobility)	37 (10.03%)	144 (39.02%)	79 (21.41%)	76 (20.6%)	22 (5.96%)	11 (2.98%)	3.274	1.096
Leadership styles of women are not appropriate for principalships	9 (2.44%)	20 (5.42%)	26 (7.05%)	155 (42.01%)	159 (43.09%)	0 (0%)	1.821	0.953

Table 10 (continued)

Outside Influences for Advancement for Female Principals (n=369)

	SA	A	N	D	SD	No Opinion	M	SD
Male administrators advance to upper administrative positions more rapidly than females in this district	98 (26.56%)	96 (26.02%)	46 (12.47%)	81 (21.95%)	40 (10.84%)	8 (2.17%)	3.363	1.376
Biases against women principals do NOT exist in my school district	80 (21.68%)	86 (23.31%)	77 (20.87%)	80 (21.68%)	30 (8.13%)	16 (4.34%)	3.300	1.277
Females perform principal functions as effectively as males in my district	228 (61.79%)	102 (27.64%)	13 (3.52%)	8 (2.17%)	3 (0.81%)	15 (4.07%)	4.537	0.749
Females and males in comparable principal positions encounter similar role expectations by their peers in my school district	121 (32.79%)	134 (36.31%)	43 (11.65%)	52 (14.09%)	14 (3.79%)	5 (1.36%)	3.813	1.156
Female and male principals in my school district are viewed as displaying gender specific characteristics in their administrative style	30 (8.13%)	95 (25.75%)	98 (26.56%)	104 (28.18%)	27 (7.32%)	15 (4.07%)	2.992	1.100
Females possess the same administrative leadership characteristics as males in this school district	118 (31.98%)	152 (41.19%)	36 (9.76%)	49 (13.28%)	3 (0.81%)	11 (2.98%)	3.930	1.025
If principals had more mentors and sponsors, females would progress to higher principalship positions more rapidly in my school district	39 (10.57%)	92 (24.93%)	116 (31.44%)	83 (22.49%)	20 (5.42%)	19 (5.15%)	3.134	1.077
Role demands are the same for both males and females who hold comparable principal positions in my school district	120 (32.52%)	147 (39.84%)	40 (10.84%)	48 (13.01%)	8 (2.17%)	6 (1.63%)	3.890	1.077
Principals perform gender-biased duties in my school district	18 (4.88%)	57 (15.45%)	72 (19.51%)	145 (39.3%)	72 (19.51%)	5 (1.36%)	2.462	1.121
In general, males are more qualified for principal jobs than females	6 (1.63%)	8 (2.17%)	14 (3.79%)	93 (25.2%)	248 (67.21%)	0 (0%)	1.458	0.807
There is a difference in the level of principal appointment by gender in my school district	21 (5.69%)	50 (13.55%)	67 (18.16%)	134 (36.31%)	89 (24.12%)	8 (2.17%)	2.391	1.167
The "good old boy/girl" network in my district helps individuals get principal positions	87 (23.58%)	79 (21.41%)	54 (14.63%)	84 (22.76%)	54 (14.63%)	11 (2.98%)	3.170	1.417
Total	1528 (18.00%)	2100 (24.74%)	1392 (16.4%)	2219 (26.15%)	1055 (12.43%)	193 (2.27%)	3.100	1.325

Note: A higher mean value indicates a barrier was perceived to be more agreeable as a barrier (strongly agree = 5, 1 = strongly disagree, no opinion).

The statement that received the highest mean rating was regarding females' abilities to perform principals' functions as effectively as males (M = 4.537, SD =

0.749). Other high scoring statements include females' family responsibilities conflicting with the time requirements of the job ($M = 3.886$, $SD = 1.079$), females having to work harder to prove they are qualified and/or competent ($M = 3.677$, $SD = 1.273$), and both genders experiencing similar role expectations by peers in school districts ($M = 3.713$, $SD = 1.156$). The statements related to females possessing the same administrative leadership characteristics as males ($M = 3.930$, $SD = 1.025$) and role demands being comparable ($M = 3.890$, $SD = 1.077$) also scored very high. The two statements with the lowest means were females' leadership styles not being appropriate for principalships ($M = 1.821$, $SD = 0.953$) and males being more qualified for principal jobs than females ($M = 1.458$, $SD = 0.807$).

Mentoring plays a key role in securing a position as a school leader. Without mentors, females are less likely to apply for leadership positions and to continue their education (Eckman, 2004a; Scanlon, 1997). The findings from this study support the influence mentors have on mentees. The data show 285 respondents (77.2%) had a role model who influenced their entry into principalship. Of this amount, 191 (67%) reported this role model was a female. While Sherman and Wrushen (2009) point out that sometimes female mentors of female mentees might actually serve as another barrier for them, due to their desire of not wanting to share the elitist feminine leader club, the results from this survey do not support this idea.

Final Comments

Participants were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments at the end of the survey. Some comments referenced the impact female bias had on their

attempt to attain principalship jobs. One participant stated, “Women in positions of authority do more harm to other women than any man does.” Another respondent reported that female Site Based Decision Making council members “who make principal selections and district level administration are biased against females.” She also explained that “upper level administrators are threatened by younger female administrators, anyone they think may be seen as doing a better job than them or than they did.”

A reoccurring theme was the perception that females are too emotional to lead. Some participants commented on how being a mother and having children made an impact on their career paths. Networking and support systems were also mentioned as strategies to enhance females’ opportunities to serve as school leaders.

Many participants expanded on their opinions of gender being a barrier by referencing the good old boys’ system. One participant wrote, “The pressure placed on women is not exclusive to the role of principal. I think society in general has ideals about how women should act, look, perform. I do feel there is a lot more pressure on women in any type of leadership position to continue to be ‘perfect’ in all things.” Another participant stated that the male dominated political structure plays a major role in female advancement to leadership positions. One respondent explained the influence the good old boys’ system had on her and other aspiring female leaders in her previous district. She wrote, “In my previous district, I could not get hired as an assistant principal and it was very much a ‘good ole boy’ system. Coincidentally, I know of six female administrators who left that county because they were not hired as

administrators.” Another participant stated, “I wish districts would be held accountable for their hiring processes. Females are still discriminated against and are expected to carry a lot of the load while males are not always pulling their weight. ‘The good old boy system’ is exhausting and unfair!” One participant’s comment explains her varied experiences, which states, “A male principal encouraged me to be a principal to which I am thankful. But I have worked under two male superintendents who strongly favored men. The good old boy network is still strong and alive.”

A few participants noted the perception that females make the best leaders at the elementary and middle school levels, but are not widely accepted at the high school level. One principal wrote:

Women are seen as more care oriented, which is viewed as appropriate for younger children where men are viewed more as justice oriented which is viewed as appropriate for the older students (middle and high) in addition, I believe the emphasis placed on athletics and coaching facilitates the promotion of men at the high school level.

One respondent described her move to high school principal position. She was the first female high school principal in her district, so she kept a strict focus on dispelling rumors of emotional female leaders. Other responses regarding the high school principal position included the rarity of having females as head high school principals and the need for them. One participant noted the following:

More female principals are needed across the state at the secondary level. When attending professional development for lead principals specific to high schools, there are rarely females present. It would be helpful and more comforting to be able to connect and have professional development with other female high school principals.

Another added that her petite stature had created another barrier for her to overcome while interviewing for assistant principal jobs at the high school level.

A couple of participants reported race having more of an impact on their opportunities to get administrative positions than did their gender. However, race was outside the spectrum of this study.

It is important to emphasize while many participants reported gender bias at some level, a few respondents did report that gender has not played a role in their careers. Some comments suggesting gender was not an issue were, “If the question of one’s gender relating to job performance was ever an issue, it isn’t anymore,” and that “principals are assigned based on Site Based Decision Making Councils’ vote and those who are most qualified. It has nothing to do with gender.” One principal explained how gender bias exists, but how she is working to overcome it:

I’m very fortunate that my district has a lot of female school administrators and my superintendent is not gender biased. He also assists me in overcoming gender biases that I face as a female high school principal and assists me in networking to become a superintendent.

Summary

This study provided specific demographic data for the 369 female school leader respondents in Kentucky during the 2019-2020 school year. It focused on six research based barriers, family responsibilities, socialization, mentoring, leadership styles, stereotypes, and geography. Seventy-eight (21.14%) participants from this study served in schools with grades nine through twelve, while 73 (19.78%) were in traditional elementary schools, preschool/head start through fifth grade, and 50

(13.6%) were principals or assistant principals in traditional middle grade schools. The remaining were in school with more individualized grade levels. Of the participants, 307 (83.%) were married and 324 (87.8%) were mothers. Nearly all of the participants, besides four (1.1%), had earned more than a bachelor's degree.

The survey was sent to all public and private school female leaders; the private sector was represented at a much smaller level than public school leaders. Only 45 (12.2%) of responses were from private school, while 324 (87.8%) were public school administrators. It is important to consider the small number of private school administrators in this study when analyzing their responses for potential generalizability.

Results from the survey indicated that the one of the biggest barriers limiting females' opportunities for advancement was the perception of their emotions influencing work related decisions. Other identified barriers include the lack of mentors for administrators for beginning principals and assistant principals, the perception of discipline being too difficult for females to handle, and family members' mobility. Of these four barriers, two of them focused on the emotional perceptions of females, which highlight the influence that social constructs have on females and their leadership abilities. However, the respondents viewed dealing with finances, budgeting, and politics as lesser obstacles to overcome.

Participants considered all of the factors surveyed as advancement opportunities as valuable options for improving aspects of their leadership and

management styles. These factors also included statements regarding interpersonal skills, curriculum, and instructional knowledge.

The findings from this study indicate that female school leaders do not doubt their own capabilities to serve as successful administrators. They feel as though their leadership styles are appropriate for the leadership position and believe they serve as equally effective school leaders as do their male counterparts. However, they still feel the pressure of juggling family responsibilities along with the many aspects of a school leadership position. The participants also indicated that they felt the need to work harder than males who have similar roles in order to prove they are qualified and competent.

When expanding and identifying additional barriers, participants did not hesitate to mention the good old boys' network. They also described the impact their gender had on them while trying to attain school leadership positions. These reasons spanned from the negativity associated with the emotional side of being a female, to the family responsibilities, to the smaller physical build of their bodies. Regardless of what others seem to think of them as leaders, females' belief in their own abilities, skills, and leadership styles demonstrate that they do not lack confidence in their field of expertise.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Actions, and Implications

Gender disparity in today's time is still an issue. While females fill teaching positions, they are less likely to be found in leadership positions. This survey sought to shine light on obstacles and their effect on females' career opportunities as they advance to leadership positions. The results suggest that some of the main reasons females were not afforded the same experiences and opportunities as males were societal constraints and misconceptions of females' emotional levels. The lack of mentoring relationships for aspiring principals and assistant principals were also cited as a barrier for many participants. Regardless of the barrier, perception, or gender, all individuals should be afforded equal opportunities.

Summary of Results and Findings

The results indicate that females were hindered by many of the barriers found in the research reviewed prior to conducting the survey: children, stereotypical misconceptions, and lack of mentors and networking. However, respondents did not indicate they were limited by their leadership styles, actual ability, or requirements of the job. In fact, in responses to questions regarding the roles and responsibilities of male and female school leaders in their district, many fell into the agree or strongly agree categories. When responding to the statement about males and females encountering similar role expectations by peers in the district, 225 (69.1%) of the participants agreed and strongly agreed. Two hundred seventy (73%) participants agreed or strongly agreed that females possess the same administrative leadership

characteristics as males within their district. The respondents also disagreed with the statement regarding principal appointment by gender occurred in their district.

When asked if the good old boy or girl network exists in their district and helps individuals get principal jobs, 166 (44.99%) of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that it was still present. There were also several comments regarding the good old boys' club in the open-ended sections. Participants described it as "exhausting" and "alive and well." Nevertheless, other participants made it clear that they do not believe the good old boys' system is still in place and suggest it is an antiquated idea.

In general, the gender stereotypical behaviors were scored with higher means than other statements. A couple of the statements receiving a high percent of disagree or strongly disagree responses were about the perception of females being unqualified to handle budgets and finances ($M = 2.594$, $SD = 1.167$) and the perception that females are not politically astute ($M = 2.782$, $SD = 1.236$). The highest scoring perception statement, and the highest scoring barrier statement was that females will let their emotions influence job related decisions ($M = 3.376$, $SD = 1.354$). This barrier was followed by the belief that females cannot handle discipline ($M = 3.250$, $SD = 1.395$).

Interpretations

If females are going to be portrayed as equally effective, receive similar treatment and be offered the same opportunities as their male counterparts, gender stereotypical barriers will be the first hurdle to overcome. In regard to improving

networking and mentorships for female leaders and aspiring leaders in Kentucky, a newly established organization, Kentucky Women in Educational Leadership (KWEL), was created to offer support systems and learning opportunities for professional female leaders. While admission to KWEL is selective, districts with low representation of female leaders can aim to improve this issue by offering mentoring opportunities from current and even retired female leaders to aspiring ones. District leadership teams can seek out females who are taking on leadership roles within their schools and provide additional leadership opportunities to gauge their interest. Knowing the staff, their educational background (if they have already completed administrative courses), or their current course load will help identify possible aspiring leaders.

Establishing an online community of current female school leaders might be helpful to provide situational advice for those currently in principalship roles. This could also be opened up to any female who is interested in principal or leadership jobs. The idea of an online community was actually a comment from one of the respondents to the survey. She explained that an online community would offer unique perspectives and opinions for current and aspiring female leaders. It would allow individuals to learn from one another from each person's unique experience. She also justified an online community would not add to list of meetings or obligations of the job, but would provide a platform for easy access and would be available at any time.

Implications for Improvement and Change

Based on the responses from the survey, female leaders would benefit from more networking opportunities and mentorships. They also consistently identified statements regarding gender biases as major hindrances. These biases include emotional perceptions, physical size impeding their ability to discipline older, larger students, and their responsibilities as a mother interfering with the responsibilities of the job. If these gender specific barriers are going to be broken, then females must work together to overcome them. However, if they are unaware of the issues, then fixing them is not possible. Society needs to view females as equally effective leaders. This can be accomplished by providing aspiring and current female leaders with opportunities to interact, share, and learn from expert female school principals.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

Limitations. The results of this capstone were limited to the respondents. Several attempts were made to contact principals and assistant principals across the state of Kentucky. However, some email addresses were undeliverable. A few individuals who were initially contacted responded and said they no longer serve as a principal or assistant principal. Attempts were made to contact the correct individuals in those districts, but this step took additional time.

The survey's time constraint served as a possible limitation. Even though participants were given three weeks to complete the survey, it was also sent at the beginning of the school year, which is typically a very hectic time for principals. Generalizability is another limitation with this study. Various attempts were made to

include as many principal and assistant principals, however, some populations may not be accurately represented. For example, the study only received responses from 45 private school leaders. Another area missing was the representation of female administrators from several larger Kentucky school districts. In this case, only a small number of school leaders responded to the survey. More participants from private schools and larger school districts would have provided a more accurate portrayal of the overall perception of female administrators.

Delimitations. One of the delimitations of this study was the choice of the problem and research. The overarching theme of the capstone and its research questions revolved around gender biases. This served as a delimitation because it implies this bias still exists. While the boundary of the research questions and survey function as delimitations, they also helped to narrow the scope of the capstone.

The researcher chose just to include female principals and assistant principals in Kentucky. These boundaries were set in order to provide unique viewpoints regarding barriers and hindrances to females who serve in a school leadership role. The survey's population was established by the scope of interest and the focus of the second research question, which examines barriers experienced by female school leaders.

The study's methodology was also a delimitation. The researcher wanted to employ mixed-method techniques to provide statistical data and analysis while also giving participants the opportunities to identify additional barriers, opportunities, and to provide any other comments. The researcher chose not to modify the statements or

questions included in the survey. Even though the questions and statements were pulled from vetted surveys, some of them might have been composed in a way that influenced participants to respond in a certain manner.

Assumptions. With any study, an assumption should be made that the participants responded to the questions honestly. However, this is not always the case. Since participants had to provide their email addresses, to ensure the correct individuals participated and to limit them to one response, they may not have felt comfortable responding honestly to the questions. The participants of the study might also have had a unique interest in the topics addressed in the survey, thus their participation might have been fueled by their interest or experiences. The results from the surveys revealed the accurate perceptions of the respondents.

It is important to note that there is an underlying assumption that gender bias still exists for female school leaders in Kentucky. Even though literature and other research do suggest that gender bias and barriers exist, the research questions of this study also insinuate this assumption.

Recommendations

Based on the responses and data gathered from the survey questions, aspiring female school leaders could benefit from a mentoring program. According to the results of the question regarding mentoring, 192 (52.03%) participants reported the lack of a mentor or mentoring program as a barrier during their careers. A mentoring program that provides aspiring female leaders with other successful female school leaders would support networking and guidance.

All of the advancement opportunities addressed in the second Likert question should also be considered as factors to address with female school leaders. Over 90% of participants strongly agree or agree that a focus on interpersonal skills would help advance career opportunities for females. Additionally, 88.39% responded with strongly agree or agree to each of the factors listed in this question that they would assist aspiring female school leaders.

Specific action regarding females serving as high school principals needs to take place. One participant mentioned the lack of female high principals at professional development sessions. Other respondents commented about the stigma of females not being socially accepted to serve as school leaders of older students. In order to eradicate this issue, additional research should be conducted focusing on the high school level. In addition, specific learning opportunities, networking opportunities, and unique secondary level situations could be addressed with females aspiring to become high school leaders.

Future Actions

The next steps for this study could be to create a follow up survey that focuses specifically on high school level female school leaders and the hindrances and barriers they have experienced. It would also be beneficial to do a comparative study wherein all secondary level principal and assistant principals in Kentucky complete a similar survey regarding barriers they have experienced. Both of these options would provide additional information regarding barriers at the school level where females tend to serve in fewer numbers than males. It would also be interesting to extend the

survey to other states to determine if there are similarities or vast differences amongst the responses.

There may also be a need to examine the difference in barriers at each school level: elementary, middle, and high. As the results from this study indicate, females from all school levels have experienced barriers to different extremes. The comparison of each school level might highlight on other biases and hindrances not addressed in this study.

Since this study had a much smaller percentage of participants from the private sector, it would be interesting to delve into this area with more specific outcomes. There are some aspects from the private sector that aren't as commonly mentioned in public schools, such as the pay disparity and the impact religious constructs have on private schools, as was mentioned in this study.

The roles, responsibilities, and barriers associated with being a superintendent would be another avenue to pursue. Data from 2018-2019 school year indicate that only 29 of Kentucky's 172 superintendents were females (Kentucky Department of Education, 2019c). If females want to close the gender gap in all leadership positions, then this one position cannot be ignored.

This study's findings would be beneficial to share at conferences where female leadership is at the center of discussion. Aspiring female leaders can benefit from learning from other successful leaders. Making females aware of some of the hindrances others have experienced on their route to school leadership positions will certainly help them be ready to handle similar situations when they arise.

Reflections

Reflecting on this study and the data gathered indicated that many of the barriers females face while serving in leadership positions revolve over societal misconceptions related to their gender. For example, since female are often more emotional than males, there is a perception that they will let their emotions dominate when dealing with work related issues and decisions. Another misconception regarding their inability to handle discipline was cited. The lack of professional networks and mentors for beginning female principals and assistant principals were also reported as hindering factors.

When identifying possible options to help females advance their careers, all of the statements scored extremely high. This scoring shows that regardless of knowledge about these topics, which ranged from improving instruction to managing students, faculties, and budgets, the participants believed there was always room for growth. It is interesting that the statement with the highest score was about interpersonal skills ($M = 4.490$, $SD = 0.792$).

The lowest scoring statement throughout the entire survey focused on males being more qualified for principal jobs than females ($M = 1.458$, $SD = 0.807$). It was followed with the second lowest scoring statement regarding females' leadership styles not being appropriate for principal jobs ($M = 1.821$, $SD = 0.953$). However, one of the highest scoring statements dealt with female school leaders performing functions as effectively as males in their districts ($M = 4.537$, $SD = 0.749$). These

three statements alone imply that females do not doubt their ability to serve as leaders.

It is also important to note that the group of participants from this survey already serve in leadership positions, either as head principals or assistant principals. Thus, the barriers identified from this survey might be different than a survey that focused on aspiring female leaders, as they might have possibly experienced other barriers on their route to principalship.

Conclusions

The results of this study provided insight into factors that hinder and opportunities that could help females advance to school leadership positions. The participants completed an online survey, which was composed of questions from several vetted surveys, all of which focused on barriers and opportunities that have impacted or could influence females' career choices. Based on the responses from this survey, several conclusions can be drawn.

Some of the major hindering factors from this survey included the perceptions of females, their emotional sides influencing their work, and networking. The number of comments made regarding the good old boys' club still serving as a barrier was alarming. Strong, vocal, and stern female leaders are often viewed more negatively than their male counterparts simply due to their gender. These characteristics in a male leader would more than likely be viewed positively, whereas with a female leader they are undesirable. The impact of having children while serving as a school leader was also identified as a hindrance. As the literature equally identified these as

impediments for females, it was not surprising to see them come up countless times with this study.

Females believe they have the appropriate skillset, knowledge, and ability to serve as effective school leaders. They do not doubt themselves, but realize that opportunities to network with other successful leaders would help propel them into more leadership positions. Mentorships and networking opportunities will also give them access to situations and issues prior to and while serving as school leaders, which will increase their success.

The goal of this study was to identify barriers female school leaders at various levels (elementary, middle, and high) in the state of Kentucky have experienced. It focused on six researched barriers, family and job choices, socialization, mentoring, leadership styles, stereotypes, and geography, and examined the extent to which they may have affected the female school leaders. Participants also identified additional hindrances or other areas that served as obstacles while they attempted to attain principalship. The capstone sought to provide awareness regarding challenges females face while trying to attain principal positions. While it was successful in achieving these goals, in order for it to provide more awareness, the results need to be shared at conferences and with aspiring female leaders. By increasing knowledge about possible barriers, female school leaders can be more prepared to handle them effectively and efficiently.

Females have reached the top of the ladder and they are beginning to chip away at the glass ceiling. They have consistently outnumbered males in advanced

degrees and years of experience as teachers. Although they have fought their way to the highest steps, the glass ceiling remains a very real, very gender-directed barrier to their success. A ladder lets a person climb, but we are ignoring its purpose when females can only climb far enough to see the males above them: ladders lead somewhere. With changes in our perceptions of females in educational leadership positions in Kentucky, those leaders can use the ladder as it was meant: to climb to the top and to experience true and equal success.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Survey Email

Dear Principal/Assistant Principal,

My name is Sarah Elam Farrow, and I am a doctoral student at Morehead State University. I am completing my capstone project on barriers female principals and assistant/vice principals observed and experienced on their way to attaining a school level leadership position. The population for this study consists of females in leadership roles at the elementary, middle, and high school levels across the state of Kentucky. The study will use a survey instrument to collect data related to the perceived barriers females encountered when seeking school leadership positions.

The survey link below has been emailed to all female principals and assistant principals at public and private schools in the state. If you agree to participate, please complete the survey. Your completion of the survey will serve as permission to use your responses in the study. Your identity and responses to the survey will remain confidential. However, in order to limit responses, the survey will require your email address. This will not be shared or be included in the analysis of the data. The survey should take no longer than ten minutes to complete. Please complete the survey as soon as possible or by Friday, September 27th.

Survey Link: <https://forms.gle/NhF48ZdpPFtyUQ469>

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this study. Your responses are crucial to have an understanding of the challenges facing female school administrators.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at selamfarrow@gmail.com. You may also contact the chair of my committee, Dr. Michael Kessinger at m.kessinger@moreheadstate.edu.

If you have received this email in error, please disregard.

Sincerely,

Sarah Elam Farrow

Appendix B

First Reminder Email

Dear Principals and Assistant Principals,

I want to thank those of you that have completed the survey for the study I am conducting regarding an examination of challenges facing female school administrators. Approximately 20% of those contacted have completed the survey.

If you have not had time to complete the survey yet, please consider taking a few minutes to do so. Your participation is crucial in providing a representative picture of challenges facing female school leaders in Kentucky.

If you are aware of any female school administrators that might not have received my request, please feel free to share this email with them.

Survey Link: <https://forms.gle/NhF48ZdpPFtyUQ469>

Your completion of the survey will serve as permission to use your responses in the study. Your identity and responses to the survey will remain confidential. However, in order to limit responses, the survey will require your email address. This will not be shared or be included in the analysis of the data. The survey should take no longer than ten minutes to complete. Please complete the survey as soon as possible or by Friday, September 27th.

Again, thank you for your time and participation with this study.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at selamfarrow@gmail.com. You may also contact the chair of my committee, Dr. Michael Kessinger at m.kessinger@moreheadstate.edu.

If you have received this email in error, please disregard.

Sincerely,

Sarah Elam Farrow

Appendix C

Final Reminder Email

Dear Principal and Assistant Principals,

I am reaching out to you one last time regarding my study. Your participation is crucial in providing a representative picture of challenges facing female school leaders in Kentucky. The survey should take no longer than ten minutes to complete.

If you have time, please complete the survey by Friday, September 27th.

If you are aware of any female school administrators that might not have received my request, please feel free to share this email with them.

Survey Link: <https://forms.gle/NhF48ZdpPFtyUQ469>

Again, thank you for your time and participation with this study.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at selamfarrow@gmail.com. You may also contact the chair of my committee, Dr. Michael Kessinger at m.kessinger@moreheadstate.edu.

If you have received this email in error, please disregard.

Sincerely,

Sarah Elam Farrow

Appendix D

Survey Instrument

Please choose the response that best describes you for each question.

Your marital status

- a. Married b. Single c. Divorced d. Widowed

Your age group

- a. 25-34 b. 35-39 c. 40-44 d. 45-49
e. 50-54 f. 55-59 g. 60 or over

Your highest degree earned

- a. Bachelors b. Masters/Rank II c. Ed.S/Rank I d. Ed.D./Ph.D

Total number of years as a classroom teacher

- a. 1-5 b. 6-10 c. 11-15
d. 16-20 e. 21-25 f. 26 or more

Position:

- a. Principal b. Assistant/Vice Principal

School setting:

- a. Public b. Private

Total number of years as a school administrator

- a. 1-5 b. 6-10 c. 11-15
d. 16-20 e. 21-25 f. 26 or more

Number of years in current position

- a. 1-5 b. 6-10 c. 11-15
d. 16-20 e. 21-25 f. 26 or more

How old was/were the child(ren) you were raising when you first became an assistant/vice principal or principal? (Select all that apply.)

- a. 0-5
- b. 6-10
- c. 11-15
- d. 16-20
- e. 21+
- f. N/A I had no children at that time

Did you coach a sport while you were teaching?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Please indicate the degree to which each of the following may be a barrier limiting opportunities for women to advance to principal roles.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	No opinion
School districts do not actively recruit women						
Lack of mobility of family members						
Mid-management career "glass ceiling"						
Lack of opportunities to gain key experiences prior to seeking a principal position						
Lack of professional networks for women						
Perception of constituents that women are not strong facility/business managers						
Perception of constituents that women are unqualified to handle budgeting and						

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	No opinion
finances						
Perception that women will allow their emotions to influence principal decisions						
The nature of principals' work makes it an unattractive career choice						
Lack of mentors/mentoring in school districts for beginning principals/assistant principals						
Perception that women are not politically astute						
Perception that women can't handle discipline						

Please indicate any other barriers (not previously mentioned) that might limit opportunities for women to advance to principal roles.

Please indicate the degree to which each of the following factors may help advance career opportunities for women principals.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
Emphasis placed on improving instruction						
Knowledge of instructional process						
Knowledge of curriculum						

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
Interpersonal skills						
Responsiveness to parents and community groups						
Management of facilities and budget						
Management of students						

Please indicate any other factor (not previously mentioned) that may help advance career opportunities for women principals

Please indicate the degree to which each of the following statements may influence opportunities for women to advance to principal roles.

	SD	D	N	A	SA
School districts prefer that males hold positions as principals.					
Women’s family responsibilities conflict with the time requirements of the job.					
Women have to work harder to prove they are qualified and/or competent.					
Parents and community prefer men as school principals.					
Men will resent having a female supervisor.					
Female principals generally have limited exposure to the political power structure.					
There is a lack of same gender mentors or role models for principals within the education setting.					
There is limited encouragement from others, which discourages the aspiration of women to be school principals.					
Few women apply for positions as principals/assistant principals.					
Inability to change residential locations (mobility).					
Leadership styles of women are not appropriate for principalships.					
Male administrators advance to upper					

	SD	D	N	A	SA
administrative positions more rapidly than females in this district.					
Biases against women principals do NOT exist in my school district.					
Females perform principal functions as effectively as males in my district.					
Females and males in comparable principal positions encounter similar role expectations by their peers in my school district.					
Female and male principals in my school district are viewed as displaying gender specific characteristics in their administrative style.					
Females possess the same administrative leadership characteristics as males in this school district.					
If principals had more mentors and sponsors, females would progress to higher principalship positions more rapidly in my school district.					
Role demands are the same for both males and females who hold comparable principal positions in my school district.					
Principals perform gender-biased duties in my school district.					
In general, males are more qualified for principal jobs than females.					
There is a difference in the level of principal appointment by gender in my school district.					
The "good old boy/girl" network in my district helps individuals get principal positions.					

Did you have a role model who influenced your entry into principalship?

- a. Yes b. No

22. What was the gender of the role model who influenced your entry into the principalship?

- a. Male b. Female

Thank you for completing this survey. Your input will be very valuable in gaining an understanding of the challenges facing females entering school administrative roles. If you have any comments, please enter them below. Please press <SUBMIT> to record your responses. Again, thank you.

VITA

SARAH ELAM FARROW

EDUCATION

December, 2009	Bachelor of Arts Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
December, 2013	Master of Arts Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
May, 2016	Master of Arts Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
Pending	Doctor of Education Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

2010 – Present	Spanish Teacher Montgomery County High School Mount Sterling, Kentucky
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HONORS

2019	Outstanding Graduate Student (Ed.D.) in P-12 Administrative Leadership Program Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
2020	Kentucky Women in Education Leadership Inductee Kentucky Association of School Administrators Frankfort, Kentucky