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SPEED BUMPS AND L-PLATES

Female Deputy Principals' Perceptions of the Barriers in Aspiring to
Primary Principalship

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

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Abstract

The majority of New Zealand's teaching workforce is female. In leadership positions, women outnumber men in the deputy principal role, yet are significantly underrepresented in principalship. How do women themselves explain this leadership disparity? This small-scale qualitative research study explores the perceived barriers in aspiring to principalship that are held by female deputy principals in the primary sector. It utilises semi-structured interviews to gather data from seven female deputy principals in primary schools in the Bay of Plenty. Data is analysed thematically in order to extrapolate the significant barriers identified by the participants.

While international academic literature has acknowledged the disproportional gender representation within principalship and identified potential factors, the New Zealand research base is still limited. Further research into the barriers facing female leadership may benefit future female aspiring principals in New Zealand by providing an awareness of the potential challenges and offer possible strategies to contend with the identified barriers.

The research findings indicate a common set of factors perceived to pose barriers to women aspiring to principalship. These include: the impact of gender, the evolving role of principalship, the demands of management versus leadership, the maintenance of work/life balance, familial obligations, participant's self perceptions and the desire for a "best fit" school as a first time principal.

This study suggests that further professional support structures and leadership development opportunities be created to respond to the specific needs of aspiring female principals. The provision of targeted programmes would go some way towards addressing the barriers identified by participants and ensuring the promotion and cultivation of aspiring female leaders that is necessary to sustain future educational leadership in New Zealand primary schools.

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This is a journey undertaken, not by one, but by many. It is their time, support and love that have made this possible.

The journey is the reward.

~Chinese Proverb

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

*Remember, Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did,
but she did it backwards and in high heels.*

~Faith Whittlesey

1.1 Study Overview

Education is a field that consists of a predominantly female workforce, yet despite constituting the professional majority, women are underrepresented in principal's positions.

The noted absence of women in principal roles is influenced by a myriad of internal and external influences, some personal and others systemic. Sherman (2005) identifies numerous factors that create difficulty for women to achieve higher positions of responsibility and although fewer females hold principal positions, this does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest amongst women to aspire to principalship. So if applying for principalship is attractive to women, why are there not more female principals?

The last few decades of research on gender and school leadership has provided significant insight into this situation. Many researchers (Blackmore, 1999; Brooking, 2004; Coleman, Haiyan & Yanping, 1998; Court, 2002; Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Schmuck et al., 1983; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1993, 1998) acknowledge the disparity between women's involvement in the teaching profession and their limited representation in educational leadership in many countries. In New Zealand, women comprise 82% of teachers in primary schools and hold 80% of senior management positions, yet male applicants appear more likely to be successful in obtaining a principalship, as women constitute only 40% of the principals in these schools (Brooking, 2003, Ministry of Education, 2002).

What are the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in principalship? The literature indicates there are established barriers that may influence a female potential

applicant's decision to apply for principalship. The challenges can be classified as emotional, financial, social and academic (Kaparou & Bush, 2007; McCreight, 1999) and account for the low representation of women in leadership positions in education (Blackmore, 1999; Coleman, 2002; Shakeshaft, 1989).

In New Zealand, the need to recruit and retain principals has been well-documented (Brooking, Collins, Court & O'Neill, 2003; Wylie, 2008). However, there is limited research available regarding the perceived barriers that prevent the largest proportion of the potential leadership workforce from attaining principalship - aspiring female leaders.

The purpose of this study is to identify the perceived barriers facing seven female deputy principals who aspire to principal positions in primary schools in New Zealand. The study explores the factors that these women perceive as barriers to gaining principal development opportunities and appointment as principals. Analysis of the perceived challenges includes a number of professional, personal and systemic perspectives. The nature of the principal's job plays a substantial role in an individual applying for promotion. Personal factors such as confidence and relationships also influence potential applicants. The systemic factors of community gender preference and lack of focused career development programmes present additional barriers for women aspiring to principalship.

Areas explored in this study include: gender perceptions, community expectations, job demands, social factors, personal influences and the lack of suitable leadership development programmes targeted to women. Through gaining in-depth knowledge of these barriers, this research project suggests steps towards mitigating them and offers an awareness of how best to encourage and support aspiring leaders in their pursuit of principalship.

1.2 Participant Context

Qualifying the participants offers contextualisation to this study. All seven participants are deputy principals in primary schools in the Bay of Plenty. Deputy

principals have been selected as they are commonly viewed as holding the position that typically leads to principalship. While it is acknowledged that teachers in other positions do aspire to principalship, the focus is upon the group that predominantly progresses to the principal's role.

Within this small-scale study, the participant's backgrounds are varied with representation from a range of deciles, experiences and cultural backgrounds. Pseudonyms have been allocated to each participant to protect their identity within the study.

1.3 Researcher Orientation

The focus of this study is relevant to my current educational context. As a female deputy principal in a primary school who aspires to principalship, I have noted the number of female colleagues who share similar goals, yet still remain in the deputy role. Additionally, I have observed that the majority of my peers are female, however principals are predominantly male. While assumptions are commonly made as to why this is the case, I maintain that a more constructive and potentially generative approach to this issue is to explore the perceptions of the women themselves regarding the barriers they face in aspiring to principalship and ways in which these might be mitigated.

Through conversation with colleagues, it has become apparent that there are a number of perceived barriers to principalship for women. How much of a barrier is it to be a female? What factors are commonly represented amongst the participant field? How can these barriers be overcome? I was also intrigued to examine the impact of women's self-perceptions on their career aspirations. While I have my own personal impressions as to the barriers facing aspiring female principals, ascertaining the perceptions of others will assist in the construction of a collective awareness of the barriers and possible approaches to eliminate them.

Engaging in further study in educational leadership coincided with my career development as a deputy principal. Through my postgraduate studies I have been

exposed to a multitude of viewpoints, theories and approaches concerning leadership development. This assemblage of knowledge has provided me with a solid foundation from which to build my study. My research experience has been enhanced by the awareness that evidence-based research and practice provides a compelling platform for responsiveness, adaptation and innovation.

I have also had the opportunity to pursue professional development in the field of leadership. After attending numerous courses, workshops and lectures aimed at aspiring leaders, I found a lack of support in certain key areas necessary for my principalship preparation. Specific professional development in areas such as financial planning, property management, and ministerial compliance requirements is not commonplace and global theoretical approaches did not offer me the skills necessary to prepare me for applying for principalship.

My own personal experiences and those of my colleagues provided the impetus for this small-scale research study.

1.4 Significance of Study

By pursuing this research, I anticipated a more salient understanding of the barriers facing female aspiring leaders. The information gathered from this study has the potential to assist professional development providers in offering programmes that cater to the needs of female aspiring principals.

New Zealand is currently in the midst of an increasing principal recruitment and retention problem and suffers from a declining supply of qualified applicants (Brooking, 2003; Collins, 2002). Failure to cultivate leadership potential amongst women will significantly impact upon the future of New Zealand education.

Currently, the lack of extensive principalship development programmes means that aspiring principals need to identify their own opportunities for promotion and to negotiate their own career progression through the system (Education Review Office, 2001). Since 1989, traditional career paths and developmental processes for

principalship have become fragmented (Education Review Office, 2001). The only nationwide leadership development option for aspiring principals, the National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP), had limited scope in 2009 and has only recently been re-established on a national scale for 2010. For those aspiring leaders not involved in the NAPP, preparation for principalship must be sought out on an individual basis. With geography, finances and school infrastructural support all being highly contextual, participation in principalship development opportunities may be problematic for some female aspiring principals.

By exploring perceived systemic and personal barriers, aspiring female leaders may gain greater insight into the identified obstacles and the ways in which these can be overcome. This understanding will better enable them to make principalship an accessible leadership option for themselves.

The following chapter reviews a selection of the literature on female educational leadership and the related potential barriers. The review includes both international literature and research within the New Zealand context. Chapter Three outlines the methodology, research design, data analysis and review of the ethical considerations of this study. Chapter Four presents the research findings and, subsequently, Chapter Five reviews the main findings in relation to the literature. The concluding chapter summarises the findings, identifies the implications and limitations of this study and offers recommendations which have emerged from the research.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go but ought to be.

~Rosalynn Carter

2.1 Introduction

This study focuses on the perceived challenges facing seven female deputy principals who are aspiring to principal positions in primary schools in New Zealand. The analysis of these perceived challenges will be from a number of systemic, professional and personal perspectives: the disproportional representation of female leaders, gendered-leadership styles, community expectations, job demands, personal barriers and lack of suitable leadership development programmes targeted to women. This literature review summarises both New Zealand and international perspectives of the challenges aspiring female leaders encounter.

The chapter begins with an examination of scholarly views on female leadership and then reviews the literature focusing on the perceived external and internal barriers that are faced by aspiring female leaders. Perceived barriers to women's progress into principalship account for the low representation of women in leadership positions in education (Blackmore, 1999; Coleman, 2002; Shakeshaft, 1987) and can be further classified as; emotional, financial, social and academic barriers (Kaparou & Bush, 2007; McCreight, 1999). It is not that women lack the desire to lead, but rather that they are constrained by a 'jigsaw of interlocking factors' (Whitcombe, 1980). The literature also indicates multiple factors that encourage or dissuade aspiring female leaders from applying for principal positions. Finally, the literature review explores some of the potential ways in which these barriers could be mitigated in order to assist women's path into primary principalship. Within the review, the terms principal and head teacher are used interchangeably, as is appropriate in different cultural contexts.

Scholars such as Shakeshaft (1987) believe that the most significant barrier to women “has been a culture characterised by male dominance, because all of the specific barriers identified can be traced back to a society that supports and enforces a male-dominant system” (p. 79). This review suggests that the issue is multi-faceted. Influenced by societal, systemic and political factors, a series of internal and external barriers present themselves to aspiring female leaders. As Dimmock and Walker (2005) state, educational leadership can be seen as a “socially bounded process” which “is subject to the cultural traditions and values of the society in which it is exercised” (p. 1). In the 1990s, there were numerous studies conducted both in New Zealand and abroad that explored the reasons for women being less likely than men to become senior leaders in education (Gupton & Appelt Slick, 1996; Ouston, 1993; Ozga, 1993; Schein & Mueller, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1998; Strachan, 1993). The outcomes of these studies indicate that among the numerous factors affecting women’s success in securing a principal appointment, public preference for male leaders and familial obligations were the most prevalent.

Schmuck (1975) suggests that “sex has a major influence on an individual’s aspiration and achievements both generally in our society and specifically in the field of education” (p.64). This attention to gender may indicate that women have been viewed from a deficit perspective. However, the literature indicates that barriers to leadership for women are more complex than basic gender status. Researchers have attempted to identify and categorise barriers to women’s progress into principalship in order to account for the low representation of women in leadership positions. Scholars such as Adkison (1981) frame barriers within specific themes such as sex-role stereotyping, sex-role socialisation, career socialisation, organisational characteristics and the devaluation of female perspectives. Regardless of the precise framing and sub-categorisation of the barriers facing aspiring female leaders, a natural beginning to the exploration of the literature is the impact of gender itself.

2.2 Gender Representation in Principalship

This section evaluates the literature concerning the imbalanced gender representation in principal’s positions. In a field where the majority of the workforce is female, there

is still an underrepresentation of women in principals' positions. During the last few decades, research on gender and educational leadership has provided insight into this situation. Many researchers (Coleman, Haiyan & Yanping, 1998; Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Schmuck et al., 1983; Shakeshaft, 1987) acknowledge the disparity between women's involvement in the teaching profession and their limited representation in educational leadership in many countries. Concurrently, scholars in New Zealand have also explored the reasons for women's underrepresentation in educational leadership (Court, 1994; Korndorffer, 1992; Neville, 1988; Strachan, 1993, 2009; Whitcombe, 1979, 1980).

The ranks of the teaching profession have traditionally been occupied by more women than men and this remains the case in today's schools. Women numerically dominate the teaching profession in many countries with the majority of women remaining in the classroom (Acker, 1989; Coleman, 2002; Fitzgerald & Moore, 2005; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Schmuck, 1975). Sugg (1978) suggests that teaching became the dominion of women by default as this was a field neglected by men and goes on to note that even as far back as 1890 in the United States, "there was a sharper discrimination in favour of men in administrative work" (p. 114). Despite Sugg's (1978) contention that female dominance in the teaching force has resulted in the "feminization of education," there is still a distinct lack of female representation in principals' positions.

In the New Zealand context, men are six times more likely to win a principal's position, disregarding experience or qualifications, than women (Brooking, 2004). Ortiz and Marshall (1988) found that women do not have the same opportunities as men in educational leadership and attributed this problem primarily to the stereotypes attached to women and leadership. Blackmore and Sachs (2007) conclude that:

The problem of the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership is not about women's lack, whether of ambition or capacities, but rather, it is the consequence of the limited opportunities created by the systemically gendered

cultural, social and structural arrangement that inform female educators' choices and possibilities relative to their male colleagues. (p. 12)

Adler, Laney and Packer (1993) argue that aspiring female leaders encounter the 'glass ceiling', the "invisible barrier to achievement" (p. 22). While not a physically tangible barrier, the presence of a 'glass ceiling' allows aspiring female principals to view the principal's position, yet prevents them from attaining it.

In 2003, women represented 82% of New Zealand's educational workforce, yet occupied only 40% of principal positions (Brooking, 2003). Between 1998 and 2007, the percentage of female principals had risen from 33% to 43.2% (Ministry of Education, 2007). There is increased growth in the numbers of female principals; however this statistic is still not representative of the number of women in education. From 1998 to 2007, principal's salaries across all sectors showed that male principals earned on average \$5047.10 more than their female counterparts (Ministry of Education, 2007). This salary disparity can be attributed to the fact that more men hold principal's positions in larger schools and that principal salary is determined by the number of staff they are allocated.

As of 2008, women constituted the majority of the primary teaching workforce with 81.5 % of middle management being female, yet only comprised 47.6% of all principal's positions (Ministry of Education, 2008a). Ostensibly, it appears as if women are holding almost half of all principal's positions, although this is not directly proportional to the number of women in the primary education sector. Statistics indicating that women are underrepresented in principalship in New Zealand reinforce the perception of educational leadership as a masculine domain.

2.3 Gender Associated Leadership

The literature reveals a commonly perceived and contentious gender dimension to leadership approaches. An analysis of gender-specific leadership traits establishes a context for further discussion by providing the basis of commonly held gender perceptions.

2.3.1 Leadership Stereotypes

Teaching has traditionally been viewed as an area in which women could utilise their nurturing skills and men their abilities to lead (Court, 1994). This view is also supported by Neville (1988) who notes that the common perception is that “men lead; women follow; men manage; women teach” (p. 3). Coleman (2002) further contends that prevalent gender stereotypes “cause barriers to career progress and centre round the unthinking belief that there is a ‘natural order’ - male leadership and female subordination” (p. 79). Gender-based stereotypes identify women as less qualified or worthy to lead than males, hence what Edson (1988) terms as the male legacy in educational leadership.

Numerous scholars have noted perceived differences in leadership styles between men and women (Al-Khalifa & Migniuolo, 1990; Coleman, 2002, 2007; Eagly, Karau, & Johnson, 1992; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2007; Harris, Smith & Hale, 2002; Miklos, 1988; Neville, 1988; Schein, 1976; Shakeshaft, 1993). Earlier models of leadership, derived almost exclusively from all male samples, provided descriptions of traits, behaviours, and influence strategies associated with leaders (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2007). While past research of leadership traits was traditionally male-oriented, it is the “exposure to non-traditional leadership styles that is a key element in facilitating women’s paths into administration” (Young & McLeod, 2001, p. 491). Leadership approaches such as distributed leadership provide the opportunity for women to explore leadership styles with a focus on communicative and collaborative relationships, an acknowledged strength of female leaders (Court, 2002; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2007; Kezar, 2000).

In addition to gender-associated leadership traits, earlier literature acknowledged the questioning of women’s career motivation. Gross and Trask (1976) predicted that once aspiring leaders had entered the teaching profession, “men would give earlier consideration to the possibility of becoming a principal than the women, on the assumption that the men would be more concerned about occupational advancement than would the women” (p. 71). Sherman (2005) disputes this notion by suggesting that the lower number of women in leadership positions does not necessarily indicate

lack of interest in advancement, rather it exemplifies the barriers that prevent their ascension to principalship.

These gender constructs of leadership have created assumptions regarding the normative role and position of the male leader and reinforced causal hegemonic links between masculinity and leadership. There is also the proliferated view that qualities such as nurturing and caring are feminine educational traits which contrasts with the stronger masculine leadership role. A consequence of this polarisation is the over-representation of men in leadership positions in schools and the over-representation of women in classrooms. An exploration of New Zealand literature, found that “deep-seated gendered structures permeate” women’s leadership experiences and “contribute to the underrepresentation of women in primary principalships” (Brooking et al., 2003, p. 150). It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the concept of principalship is ‘normally’ constructed as the domain of men and teaching as essentially the work of women.

An alternative approach present in the literature was to examine gender-oriented leadership using an oppositional discourse of masculine versus feminine leadership.

2.3.2 Perceived Male Leadership Traits

Typical masculine traits include ambition, competitiveness, financial acumen, organisational ability and an individualistic approach (Adkison 1981; Al-Khalifa & Mignuolo, 1990; Coleman, 2002). Pounder and Coleman (2002) state, that “the notion of male and female gender qualities facilitates the argument that male gender qualities are oriented towards the more impersonal, task-oriented or transactional approach to leadership” (p. 124). Southworth (1995a) concurs that there are “conventional societal assumptions; male heads are expected to be more directive, authoritative and task-oriented” (p. 11). Schein and Mueller’s (1992) research in Germany, Great Britain and the United States confirmed the hypothesis that successful middle managers are perceived to possess male characteristics. There is evidence in both international and New Zealand studies of the desire to appoint

principals on the masculine preconceptions of leadership or “hero” leadership (Brooking, 2004, 2006; Gleeson & Knights, 2008; Strachan, 1999a).

2.3.3 Perceived Female Leadership Traits

In her New Zealand study, Court (2002) acknowledged that female leaders possessed “a set of common characteristics that are essentially different from men's” (p. 120). Female leaders are perceived to demonstrate compassion, collaboration, nurturing, sensitivity and sound communication (Adkison 1981; Coleman, 2007; Eagly et al., 1992; Harris et al., 2002; Neville, 1988; Schein & Mueller, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1993). Shakeshaft (1993) comments that female leaders cultivate relationships, build strong communities and are more instrumental in instructional learning than men. More recent literature focusing on women's leadership describes an image of leadership that is collaborative, relational and de-emphasises hierarchical relationships (Kezar, 2000). Unlike other studies that examined women's leadership traits in comparison to male approaches, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2007) focused solely on how women lead and identified a collaborative approach to leadership as a hallmark of female leadership. They (2007) also noted that a female leader's focus tends to centre on creating change via participatory processes, not autocratic leadership.

Bassett (2009) argues that pervasive stereotypes imply that women are constitutionally incapable of being leaders. Women are too kind, too gentle and lack the indomitability to make difficult decisions. This feeds the prevailing belief that an autocratic, individualised, male-defined leadership style is the most effective one.

The perceived difference in gender leadership styles also impacts upon the perception of a female leader's potential effectiveness (Grogan, 1996; Marshall, Patterson, Rogers & Steele, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1998). The concept of feminine leadership and the belief of some, that female leadership is educational rather than managerial, permeates many sectors of the community (Rosener, 1990). Within a neoliberal context, the resulting public perception is that women are not as capable as their male counterparts of being effective principals.

Women in leadership must balance avoiding the fear of the feminine that characterises perceptions of potential weakness or ineffectiveness, with society's expected 'emphasized femininities' that have greater investment in traditional gender roles (Blackmore, 1996). While research has been completed on the emerging patterns of commonality amongst teachers who have decided to pursue principalship, the significant role of gender is reflected in educational markets and the images of what constitutes an effective or strong leader (Blackmore, 1996; Fink, 2008; Schmitt, 1994). There is still a manifest challenge facing scholars, practitioners and communities in uprooting deeply embedded beliefs about the appropriateness of women in leadership roles.

2.4 Community Responses to Gendered-Leadership Stereotypes

While Adkison (1981) reported that teachers viewed female principals as more influential than male principals in their school's educational affairs, much of the literature indicates that educational leadership is clearly seen by most stakeholders as a male field (Court, 2002; Schein, 1976; Schein & Mueller, 1992). As part of an analysis of 19 studies completed between 1973 and 1978, Shakeshaft (1999) examined attitudes toward women in school leadership and found a preference for male leaders. In England, Coleman (2005) found that there is a stereotypical norm of authoritarian leadership held by communities that endorses masculinity and therefore male leaders. Within a New Zealand context, Brooking (2003) examined the selection practices of Boards of Trustees and found considerable evidence of sexism and prejudice against women. As Boards of Trustees are representatives of the community, they reflect the leadership preferences of the parent body.

2.4.1 Female Response to Stereotypes

Women moving into principalship follow a career path from teaching which is perceived primarily as a feminine role, to principalship which is defined primarily as a masculine role. The gender stereotypes implicit in their career paths create unique dilemmas for female principals. In her New Zealand studies, Strachan (1999b) notes that some female leaders challenge and resist leading in what is perceived as a "masculine" way and design their own feminist leadership agenda. Other leaders

adopt democratic and collaborative leadership practices such as shared or distributed leadership (Court, 2003).

Lumby (2007) argues that women employ numerous strategies, such as adopting multiple roles in different contexts, to reduce their “otherness.” Coleman (2005) and Grogan and Shakeshaft (2007) note that some female leaders identify advantages in being women, as they can employ femininity to diffuse aggression and feel free of the male stereotypes associated with leadership. While there are women who combat the masculine stereotype, others risk potential defeminization by adopting masculine-associated traits in order to comply with heroic notions of effective principalship (Gleeson & Knights, 2008). Schein and Mueller (1992) maintain that some women believe they must exhibit 'masculine' characteristics in order to succeed. Court (1994) notes that some women are reluctant to aspire to principalship due to management practices that emphasise control, rather than collaboration, a more feminine approach.

Adler et al. (1993) identify some of the strategies employed to deal with the gender barrier, including styles of dress, language and social interactions. Schein's (1976) research suggests that many women have initially emulated a more masculine style but later replace this with an approach cultivated by themselves. However, a paradox exists as women can sometimes elicit disapproval from the community, their peers or staff for behaving assertively in their leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Balancing personal presentation with preconceptions of their gender is a complexity for female leaders. It is evident from the literature that a paradigm shift must occur in order for women to be viewed as equally acceptable applicants for educational leadership positions. Therefore, the preferences held by individuals responsible for the appointment of principals are of critical relevance.

2.4.2 Role of Gender Perceptions in Appointment Process

Schein and Mueller (1992) maintain that, with all other variables being equal, the perception that men demonstrate more effective leadership characteristics increases the likelihood of a male being appointed to a principal's position. Shakeshaft (1993) notes numerous studies which indicate that one of the most significant barriers to

female advancement is the negative attitudes toward women held by those who are responsible for the hiring process. Coleman (2005) draws our attention to the fact that primary school hiring panels tend to favour men. Miklos (1988) agrees by stating that attitudes towards the appointment of female principals may be influenced by the percentage of women on boards. If selection panels are tempted to appoint based upon their own image, the membership of the panel has important implications for aspiring female leaders. Shakeshaft (1987) asserts that due to the lack of characteristic or skill criteria, the selection process of hiring a new principal allows Board of Trustees “to formulate criteria based on something as nebulous as fit” (p. 100).

Coleman’s (2005) research on English female head teachers found that the participants experienced sexist attitudes in relation to job applications. Male applicants were preferred as heads, particularly by parents and governors, many of whom bring in attitudes from business and the wider world that impact negatively on women. The underlying stereotypes are of a soft, collaborative female leader and a dominant, hierarchical, male leader. These stereotypes can serve to support the belief that women are less suitable than men as principals and can also prohibit internal school development. Harris (2005) argues that “top-down approaches to leadership and internal school structures offer significant impediments to the development of distributed leadership” (p. 259), which is often viewed as a hallmark of female educational leadership. Schein (1992) adopts a more global approach noting that in Western cultures, the assumption of control is particularly associated with masculine roles.

From a New Zealand perspective, in her qualitative study of primary school Boards of Trustees’ selection practices, Brooking (2003) found a gender preference for male principals because of their “community fit” (p. 4). Boards of Trustees indicated preferences for a principal with masculine leadership qualities in discipline and sport. By appointing male candidates, Boards of Trustees wanted to redress what they deemed as “feminised schooling,” the gender imbalance within the teaching workforce (Brooking, 2003, p. 9). Due to the increased number of women in the

teaching profession, there are some Boards of Trustees who have stated their concerns over the lack of male role models (Brooking, 2003; Strachan, 2009).

Some literature suggests that Boards of Trustees' and community preferences act as "gatekeepers" to maintain the typecast of the typical male role of leadership (Brooking et al., 2003; Schmuck et al., 1983). They select 'safe' principals, someone with whom they feel comfortable (Blackmore, Thomson & Barty, 2006). In their research, Blackmore et al. (2006) also suggest that success was unlikely if applicants did not 'fit' a particular mould that suited the various stakeholders and female applicants are less likely to fit the mould than males.

2.5 Evolving Role of the Principal

With increasing accountability and an evolving landscape of expectations, the role of the principal in New Zealand has become both extensive and demanding. As Reeves (2006) states, "leaders are the architects of individual and organizational improvement" (p. 27). In an educational context that faces pressure from a variety of stakeholders and demands flexibility in principals' practice and orientation, aspiring principals now must adopt a multi-faceted approach to leadership.

The introduction of self-managing schools has seen an increase in accountability and documentation demands for principals (Stewart, 2000). This increase in role and expectations has created its own barrier to principalship. In recent years, large-scale education reforms, marketisation, school-based management and lead learner expectations, have all played a significant role in the evolution of the principal's role. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) identify accountability requirements, consuming workloads and staffing issues as significant reasons for job dissatisfaction and deterrents in applying for principalship.

In addition, while Glanz (2004) notes that the deputy principal's role is perceived by many in education as a transitory phase and a reward given to an effective teacher on his/her way to principalship, many deputy principals do not necessarily see principalship as a desirable career step (Brooking et al., 2003; Oplatka & Tamir,

2009). Wylie (1997) notes that in the 1996 NZCER national survey, “half of the deputy principals in the survey were not interested in becoming principals and a further quarter were unsure” (p. 47). Pounder, Galvin and Shelton (2003) maintain that the closer aspiring principals get to principalship and the more insight they gain, the less likely they are to pursue the position. Lack of interest in the position of principal is in itself a barrier. One of the aspects of the job that creates concern for potential applicants is the tension between leadership and management expectations.

2.6 Leadership versus Management

Finding the balance between the leadership and management aspects of principalship is an ongoing struggle for many principals. According to Hall (1996), leadership “is philosophy in action, with management as an integral part” (p. 11). In comparison, Shakeshaft (1987) notes there is little interconnection as leaders are more focused on the technical aspects of management that turn principalship into a managerial, rather than an educational endeavour. Wylie (1997) believes that “administration is still competing with educational leadership for priority and takes more of a principal’s time” (p. iii). It is evident that the balance of leadership and management is in constant flux for contemporary principals and potentially more so for female principals. Strachan (2009) argues that women are naturally resistant to managerialism as “feminist educational leadership is educational rather than managerial” (p. 124).

Neo-liberal concepts of performativity, marketisation and accountability have transformed the manner in which educational systems are led and managed. The changing practices and orientation of leadership roles have had a significant impact on New Zealand education with principals having to focus on numerous management and financial issues. Codd (2005) contends that “during the 1990s, under the influence of neo-liberalism, economic objectives replaced citizenship as the primary political purpose of public education in New Zealand” (p. 196). Educational leaders are now being confronted with copious issues connected to the emergence of a market-driven paradigm. Due to the “competing demands of the state and the market, school managers are becoming increasingly isolated from colleagues and classrooms

- leading to a growing divergence between the managers and the managed” (Power, Halpin & Whitty, 1997, p. 342).

Wylie (2008) observes that the tension between educational leadership and school management, evident in her previous research, was also present in the responses to the BES (Best Evidence Synthesis) and the Kiwi Leadership Framework. There is stress amongst current principals as to how to balance management and leadership responsibilities. Wylie (2008) concluded that only 17% of principals felt they had enough time for the educational leadership dimension of their role.

There is the concern amongst educators that increasing compliance and accountability issues means that the primary job of educating and raising student achievement suffers (Power et al., 1997; Wylie, 2008). For many principals, adapting to the new role is demanding. Frustration with an evolving principal’s role has seen an increase in the number retiring from school leadership both in New Zealand and overseas (Norton, 2002; Robertson, 1999; Williams, 2003).

While Hall (1996) contends that “in the field of education, leadership and management are inseparable” (p. 10), there are divergent views as to whether the primary role of the principal is to manage the school as a business, or to lead the teaching and learning (Wylie, 1997). Wylie (1997) interviewed principals who view management “as a support to educational leadership” (p. 9). In addition, she (1997) also noted that principals perceive educational leadership to involve facilitating change, providing vision and establishing progress, whereas management was viewed as the “housekeeping items” (p. 10) of paperwork, compliance and resourcing. In comparison, community perceptions suggest that “principals have always been judged on their effectiveness with student discipline, how well the building is maintained, and the relative happiness of the students, faculty and staff” (Hayes, 2004, p. 6). With the ongoing struggle to maintain a balance between multitudinous managerial and educational demands, there is concern amongst some aspiring principals that principalship distances leaders from children.

2.7 *Lack of Learning Contact*

The intensification of management and administrative responsibilities has impacted upon curriculum leadership (Brooking et al., 2003). This poses a struggle for aspiring leaders attempting to balance curriculum expertise, student welfare and their own pedagogic values and identities (Gleeson & Knights, 2008). Wylie (1997) observes that some non-teaching principals are “reluctant to lose direct experience with the curriculum and with teaching” (p. 18). Livingstone (1999) also comments that teaching is an aspect of the job that principals find most rewarding, yet the demands of educational administrative duties mean that they struggle to remain student-focused.

With regards to female leaders, Eagly, Karau and Johnson’s (1992) meta-analysis found that women are more concerned with students and learning than their male counterparts. It is not surprising then, that Shakeshaft (1993) found that female leaders are more instrumental in instructional learning than men and they exhibit greater knowledge of teaching methods and techniques. Current deputy principals have commented that their high work satisfaction derives, first and foremost, from a sense of calling and commitment towards the education of young people (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Shakeshaft (1987) also states that “women enter education to teach, to be close to children, to be able to make a difference” (p. 205). Therefore, continuing to structure schools so that principalship is less directly associated with student contact increases the likelihood that women will opt out of applying for principal’s posts.

Establishing an equilibrium between the managerial and educational expectations of principalship is challenging. Balancing the professional demands of principalship with one’s personal sphere presents additional complexities to aspiring leaders.

2.8 *Work/Life Balance*

The demanding, stressful and time-consuming nature of the principal’s role poses problems with regards to work-life balance. Within New Zealand, Wylie (1997) identifies principal workload as a deterrent for aspiring leaders. The introduction of

Tomorrow's Schools in 1989 altered the workload demands on New Zealand's principals. Wylie's (1997) research indicates that "in 1989, a principal's average workload was 48.1 hours a week" and "increased to 60 hours a week the following year" (p. 15). Factors such as the new self-managed approach, Board of Trustees-related work, property and educational leadership responsibilities were cited for the increase in time. Hogden and Wylie's (2005) study continues to illustrate the impact of workload on principal's wellbeing and concluded that principals' stress levels can be most improved by decreasing their workload and establishing a work/life balance. The significance of support from outside agencies and organisations was also highlighted (Hogden & Wylie, 2005).

In 2008, Wylie (2008) reported on 2007 data that indicated 38% of New Zealand principals experienced high stress levels and 4% extremely high stress levels. Stress levels are associated with some key aspects of job satisfaction: the ability to provide educational leadership, the inability to balance work and personal life and low morale levels. Wylie (2008) reported that morale levels amongst principals dropped between 2003 and 2007 which directly coincided with the increase in pedagogical demands on principals. While principals value and enjoy being the lead learner, the impact of the supplementary role has led to an increase in stress levels.

Hayes (2004) and Livingstone (1999) both identify numerous factors that contribute to work-related stress for principals: the amount of paperwork, number of hours worked, curriculum changes and impact on personal life. In our current educational climate, pressures can include: compliance issues, staffing, property, community concerns and Board of Trustee issues. Green, Malcolm, Greenwood, Small and Murphy (2001) state that many principals experience "excessive stress, unnecessary paperwork and jobs that have too much management and not enough leadership" (p. 23). Furthermore, there is the inclusion of less traditional job aspects that contribute to principals' stress levels. Hargreaves and Fink (2007) conclude that "the energy demanded from engaging in networking, innovation and implementation under considerable time pressures was so intensive that leaders run severe risks of burning out" (p. 47).

Additionally the size of the school can influence the demands on the principal. Being located in a smaller school can be equated to harder work with longer hours and higher levels of stress due to the multi-faceted role of a small school principal (Hogden & Wylie, 2005). Smaller schools possess a less robust staffing infrastructure, therefore smaller school principals, particularly in rural areas, are required to perform a myriad of daily tasks ranging from bus runs to secretarial duties, in addition to the tasks expected of their larger-school colleagues.

Due to workload-related stress, there are unfavourable impressions of principalship held by some deputy principals who view the position “as overwhelming, highly energy consuming, remote and politically embedded, all of which are elements perceived to be incompatible with the deputy’s personality, life style and preferences” (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009, p. 228). Hargreaves and Fink (2007) note that “potential leaders are therefore questioning leadership roles as they are presently defined and asking themselves whether they are worth their time, energy and commitment” (p. 49). Indicating a possible trend, many interviewees in Oplatka and Tamir’s (2009) work decided not to apply to headship because of concerns over job satisfaction, well-being, or a sense of self-fulfilment.

While Coleman (2005) contends that there are difficulties associated with work-life balance for both male and female leaders, the additional time spent preparing for leadership outside of regular school hours is likely to impact on women more than men. Although generalisation is unwise, it is predominantly women who bear responsibility for the home and for childcare, thus Neville’s (1988) identification of women as being multi-committed. Ouston (1993) cites work overload as female leaders’ most significant problem, with balancing the responsibilities of home and work identified as a close second. Adams and Hambright (2004) found that some of their surveyed teachers expressed concerns about female administrators working harder than comparably positioned men as there was the belief that women tend to be overachievers and subsequently overwork themselves in leadership positions.

Throughout the literature, balancing the demands of a professional and personal life emerges as a significant barrier for women who are aspiring to principalship.

2.9 Significance of Family

Female leaders make choices relating to family and career which influence their potential success in both realms. In previous decades, Schmuck (1975) noted that in educational leadership, “men have been more frequently married and women have been more frequently unmarried” (p. 24). However, she also observed that there was “evidence that one’s marital status is decreasing in its importance to women’s career choices” (p. 24). While there is indication the impact of marriage and family status on women’s career paths is reducing, the literature suggests that family life remains a barrier to women’s advancement to principalship. Recent studies, conducted both in New Zealand and abroad, indicate that women’s familial responsibilities continue to affect their professional lives (Coleman, 2009; Court, 2004; Fitzgerald & Moore, 2005). The impact of family on female career aspirations is significant.

Both men and women seek balance in their lives between family and work, however familial and domestic responsibilities customarily impact more upon women. As a consequence, maintaining a work-life balance can be a particular challenge for female leaders (Coleman, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1987, 1989). Coleman (2005) reports that it is evident tensions arise from combining motherhood and principalship. Traditionally women were the primary caregivers for the family and Neville (1988) maintains that it is not simply the mere biological fact that they can procreate, but rather “women are trapped by society allocating to them the nurturing role” (p. 8). Echoing those sentiments, Coleman (2002) argues that “the traditional model has been women following men whose career normally took precedence over both family interests and the career prospects of the female partner” (p. 67).

Neville (1988) also highlights the less frequently voiced concern over the potential impact of leadership aspirations on a female leader’s children. Relinquishing the primary caregiver role to pursue career advancement can create familial tensions. Both Coleman (2002) and Hall (1996) acknowledge the presence of guilt related to

role conflict and suggest that this intensifies for women holding senior positions in education.

Coleman (2005) found that the issue of childcare highlights differences between male and female leaders. Male leaders often have a female partner at home to provide childcare, whereas female leaders use childcare facilities. In addition, Shakeshaft (1987) notes that for aspiring female leaders who had children “the lack of reliable childcare and limited pregnancy benefits were listed as obstacles to taking on additional administrative responsibilities” (p. 112).

Two distinct categories of female leaders appeared in the literature. Younger women who place career first and delay having children in lieu of career advancement (Edson, 1988) and older women who have had families prior to pursuing leadership opportunities (Coleman, 2005). Coleman (2002) observes that younger aspiring leaders “are opting for a ‘male’ pattern of career where children figure much less; they either have one child or none, or less frequently two, taking only minimal maternity leave” (p. 152). Single women are also affected by familial expectations. While they do not have to balance a family and career, gender stereotypes still affect them as they “are viewed as potential wives and mothers and as such, caretakers of children - not managers of adults” (Edson, 1988, p. 109).

Coleman (2005) comments that career breaks and the return to work are of vital significance to a large proportion of women and have a considerable impact on their career progress. She found that female leaders were more likely to have a career break than men and less likely to return to the same echelon post-career break.

Shakeshaft (1993) maintains that while there is no documentation to suggest that family responsibilities inhibit women’s ability to do their jobs, this view is often held by those who hire them. Coleman (2007) found that males in decision-making roles did not tend to be supportive of women in leadership positions because of the demands placed upon them as wives and mothers. With the additional responsibilities

of family, prospective employers may doubt an aspiring female leader's commitment and consequently exhibit reluctance to appoint them to principal's positions.

2.10 Relationship Tensions

Within the familial realm, the primary relationship between an aspiring female leader and her partner is also explored in the literature. Edson (1988) states that female career aspirations can cause tensions in marriages as the "husband's career may be subordinated to allow the wife to accept a new career opportunity" (p. 58) and vice versa. One of the constraints on a career can be geographical relocation. Traditionally women have followed a husband or partner's career move, to the detriment of their own career. As a result women have often taken on work where it is available to them and consequently gained a variety of experience in a piecemeal, rather than planned or progression fashion (Coleman, 2005; Schmuck, 1975).

Conversely, there is documented evidence of female leaders who stress the importance of the support of husbands and partners in their leadership aspirations (Coleman, 2002; Hall, 1996). Despite the tensions that pursuing career advancement can create, Edson (1988) acknowledges that for women in current leadership positions, "one of the first things most married women mention is the support they receive from their husbands" (p. 85). Contrastingly, Neville (1988) states that "careers are an important factor in contributing to the divorces of successful women" (p. 17). Tensions between aspiring female leaders and their partners or husbands can create discord or provide necessary support.

Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan and Ballenger (2007) maintain that while family and home responsibilities continue to influence career decisions, there has been increased support and encouragement for women to aspire to leadership roles. Societal expectations have evolved with regards to women in the workforce and childcare options have increased, thus making career advancement easier than it has been in the past.

The first part of this literature review has focused on the systemic and external barriers facing aspiring female principals. The second section explores the personal barriers within women that present challenges to their principalship aspirations.

2.11 Internal/Personal Barriers

Although less frequently attributed to being a significant barrier to principalship within the literature, the individualistic internal aspects of aspiring female principal's personas are acknowledged in some research as valid barriers to career advancement. Shakeshaft (1987) states that the internal barriers most often cited as contributing to women's lack of achievement in leadership are "low self-image, lack of confidence and lack of motivation or aspiration" (p. 83).

2.11.1 Confidence

The belief that women lack confidence in relation to career planning is recognised in educational research, both in New Zealand and overseas (Coleman, 2005; Court, 1994; Ouston, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1987, 1989). Court (1994) contends that the persisting association of masculinity with leadership influences those who are responsible for the principal selection process. It can deter potential female applicants from applying as it may reinforce their fear that they are not suited for the responsibility. Schein (1992) states that the "toughest problem for learning leaders is to come to terms with their own lack of expertise and wisdom" (p. 367). Confidence is viewed as a necessary characteristic in aspiring principals. Fink (2008) asserts that confidence is crucial to leadership success as it "influences the willingness to invest - to commit money, time, reputation, emotional energy, or other resources" (p. 14).

In her study, Coleman's (2005) responses show that the majority of male participants were confident in their ability to secure a headship. Conversely, Ouston (1993) comments on women's lack of confidence and links this to the absence of a common perception as to how females in principal's roles should behave. Hall (1996) refutes this argument by stating women are equally as confident and ambitious as their male colleagues, yet estimates their chances of success as lower. Perhaps the socialisation experiences of men and women also lead more men to seek principalship earlier in

their careers? As mentioned in a prior section of this review, gender-related socialisation experiences also appear to contribute to a relatively large proportion of women who view themselves more as curriculum and instructional guides and not as managerial leaders. Therefore in a managerial realm, confidence can be reduced.

With regards to age, McLoughlin (as cited in Ouston, 1993) identifies a lack of confidence in older women, but reports that “younger women interviewees had an internal confidence which the older woman had not achieved” (p. 9). Society’s perceptual evolution and an increasingly supportive infrastructure for working women may be factors in the increased confidence of younger women. Despite this potential increase in confidence, Shakeshaft (1987) observes that it takes women four times as many interviews as it does men to secure their first principalship.

Shakeshaft et al. (2007) note that since the mid 1980s there has been an increase in women’s confidence and aspirations to senior positions. However, the literature indicates the continual underrepresentation of female leaders.

2.11.2 Qualifications

Shakeshaft (1987) states that historically “women have been socialised not to pursue education” (p. 109). However, in the study conducted by Neville (1988), all of her participants were high academic achievers. Coleman (2005) sees a challenge for women relating to age and qualifications. For women who have taken a career break or raised children, the loss of promotional opportunities, absence from professional development and lack of awareness regarding pedagogical innovations can be viewed as problematic. While Hall (1996) argues that “education potentially provides the structure of opportunities to support individual aspirations” (p. 44), rejoining a fluid and dynamic workforce requires time, commitment, resilience and reflection.

2.11.3 Resilience and Reflection

Bassett (2009) contends that women need to engage in critical self-reflection to assess the extent to which they themselves are responsible for perpetuating the stereotypes that serve as barriers to advancement. Hoyt (2005) observes that women with high

levels of leadership efficacy are more resistant to being adversely affected when challenged by stereotypical comments or actions that question their leadership capacity. Effective female leaders maintain their confidence and in turn, present more strongly as leaders when confronted with these stereotypes. However, when facing a selection panel, women may need to avoid appearing too resilient, as they risk appearing unfeminine - a tenuous balance to maintain (Hall, 1996).

Shakeshaft (1987) states that “like self-confidence, aspiration and motivation have only been defined using a male lens and male experience” (p. 86). This suggests that rather than viewing reluctance to approach leadership as a lack of confidence, women may simply be opposing popular beliefs which stress the importance of career advancement. While confidence may present as a barrier for women, it can also be significantly influenced by an aspiring leader’s potential leadership and learning context.

2.12 Leadership Contexts

Geographical location, the size and decile of a school and the local community can also present as barriers to aspiring female leaders.

2.12.1 Geography

Mobility is a factor that can influence the feasibility of a principal’s position for an aspiring candidate. Schmuck (1975) discusses the concept of place-bound and career-bound people, with the significant difference being that career-bound individuals are more proactive in seeking appointment. By allowing a position to determine their location and career path, career-bound women are presented with a wider scope of potential jobs. Miklos (1988) also acknowledges that most aspiring leaders believe geographic mobility enhances career prospects.

However, gender appears to play a role in determining the extent of mobility. With regards to male aspiring leaders, Coleman (2005) maintains that men are particularly sought after for the leadership of primary schools therefore possibly feel confident about moving from one school to another, gaining more varied experience than their

female colleagues. Although Edson (1988) does believe that some aspiring female leaders move geographically because of “their determination to excel in administration” (p. 55) therefore they move to broaden their potential opportunities. But what influences the mobility of those aspiring female leaders?

Schmuck (1975) maintains that “marriage is importantly related to career mobility in educational administration” (p. 24), as obligations and relationships can affect a female applicant’s sphere of potential jobs. Edson (1988) acknowledges that women’s need for support systems can contribute to a reluctance to relocate in order to enhance their career. Willingness to seek career advancement through relocation is present in some female aspiring principals, yet the factors of partner’s careers, family and job availability do create a barrier to geographical relocation.

2.12.2 School Size, Location and Community Expectations

The size and geographical location of a school have been noted in the literature as potential barriers for female aspiring principals. Within New Zealand, Strachan (2009) observes that women are more likely to be principals of small rural schools and lower decile schools. The fact that women tend to work in smaller schools where they must balance a teaching component with principal responsibilities, makes the aforementioned work/life balance difficult to achieve (Strachan, 2009). There is also the contention that women have largely been 'ghettoised' into the least desirable, small, lower-decile, difficult schools and rural communities (Wylie, 1998). By possibly being limited to smaller schools in lower decile areas for potential principalship, another barrier emerges for women. Within smaller rural communities attitudes and perceptions can influence the potential of female applicants being considered for principalship.

Conservatism tends to be more evident not only in rural communities, but also in the more traditional academic school communities, where masculinity is linked to entrepreneurialism and informed most recently by discourses around ‘masculinity in crisis’ (Blackmore et al., 2006, p. 312). Current perceptions indicate that the reduced number of males in education and the lack of role models for male students, has led

some communities to believe that masculine roles and structures require promotion. Schools that are able to offer well-resourced and comprehensive programmes are most likely to be led by white, middle class and well educated men (Blackmore, 1999). In the context of a marketised education system such as New Zealand, it appears that gender does correspond with locality (Blackmore et al., 2006).

In addition to the collection of previously identified barriers, focus will now be placed on the examination of literature pertaining to the significance of leadership development opportunities for women.

2.13 Women's Leadership Development

In 2006, 52% of New Zealand principals were aged between 40 and 54 years and 31% were over 55 years (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2007). Due to the predicted future shortage of school principals in New Zealand, it is critical that we identify and respond to the perceived challenges female educational leaders face with regards to achieving principal positions (Brooking et al., 2003). With an awareness of these concerns, work may be undertaken to eliminate future perceived and actual barriers to attract a more robust and diverse pool of educational leaders from the largest proportion of our workforce and thus enhance succession planning. Sherman (2005) believes that programmes should be implemented that specifically target the induction of women into aspiring leaders programmes.

Because the availability of principalship development programmes is limited, aspiring principals must identify their own opportunities for promotion and negotiate their own career progression through the system (Education Review Office, 2001). Since the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools* in 1989, traditional career paths and development processes for principalships have become fragmented (Education Review Office, 2001). Stewart (2000) argues that continuous training for aspiring principals is essential for the continued development of high quality schools. Therefore, it is imperative that female educational leaders examine institutional structures for practices that perpetuate unequal power relations, devise an appropriate

plan of action to address these challenges and develop skills in both procedural tasks and educational leadership (Strachan, 1999b).

According to the literature, achieving these tasks may prove problematic. Research reflects a common view that many women lack a strategic approach to planning their careers. Aisenberg and Harrington (as cited in Ouston, 1993) maintain that “women are less likely to have a career map than men” (p. 8). Schmuck (1975) also discusses the tendency of women not to formulate concrete career paths. Further research suggests that women lack confidence in developing their career aspirations (Blackmore, 1993; Court, 1998; Strachan, 1999b). Yet is it confidence or lack of development opportunities that presents a barrier?

Within the New Zealand context, Stewart (2000) maintains that “principal development or leadership development and training have not been available as a right for the whole population” (p. 91). Lack of management training for aspiring leaders is a contributing factor in the underrepresentation of women in principal’s roles (Court, 1994). One such example is the absence of mentoring programmes using female mentors which prohibits further growth and development amongst aspiring female leaders (Sherman, 2005).

The literature reflects the significance of mentoring as a developmental tool for aspiring female principals. Mentoring can be defined as the “forming of mutually supportive learning relationships between two individuals working in the same or a similar organisation” (Kirkham, 1995, p. 76). Southworth (1995b) qualifies it within the educational realm as “peer support.” The opportunity to learn and develop alongside an accomplished peer is generally considered a beneficial approach to leadership progression. Mentoring is consistently regarded as a significant tool for principal preparation and development (Bush & Coleman, 1995; Crippen, 2004; Daresh, 1995; Southworth, 1995b), while Coleman (2002, 2005) and Grogan (1996) both argue that mentoring is particularly important in the advancement of aspiring female leaders.

Edson (1988) contends that if female role models were available, women would be more likely to pursue leadership roles at the same early stages in their career as their male colleagues. Mentoring is generally regarded as vital to supporting women into senior roles in the most crucial middle stages of career progress (Gupton & Appelt Slick, 1996; Hill & Ragland 1995). Coleman (2005) found in her study that current female head teachers rate the support of a previous head as the most important influence on them, in essence a form of informal mentoring. Shakeshaft (1987) agrees and delves one step deeper in stating that “research has found the same-sex role model to be crucial for women, but not for men” (p. 115). This contradicts Leizear (1984) who argues that mentoring, by either gender, can be a significant factor in the career development and advancement of women.

Having established the effectiveness of mentoring as a leadership development tool, exploration of the criteria of an effective mentor is necessary. Quality mentorship for principals should include mentors who are respectful, patient, committed and aware of the complexities of leadership (Villani, 2008). Edson (1988) maintains women “must find mentors to succeed” (p. 73), yet there are few women in senior leadership roles to act as mentors (Coleman, 2002). The absence of suitable role models for female aspiring leaders is a long-standing problem in the development of female leaders (Edson, 1988; Hall, 1996).

There is a clear need for relevant and robust professional development programmes that will cater to the needs of female aspiring principals. Ribbins (2003) suggests that current leadership development programmes are largely normative and lack clear understanding or shared definitions of the key concepts and practices required for principalship. Shakeshaft (1987) suggests the concept of internships to provide women with experience and the opportunity to gain visibility as viable candidates for principalship. Another option is financial assistance for women to attend graduate school courses to further their qualifications.

Currently within New Zealand there is no formal qualification for principalship. Preparation to pursue principalship is undertaken by aspirants through tertiary

education or working with Leadership and Management advisers through School Support Services at the University of Waikato. New Zealand research does identify a need for pre-principalship preparation programmes to assist aspiring leaders in developing their skill base (Brooking et al., 2003; Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005; Collins, 2002).

Three strategies have been developed by the Ministry of Education to attempt to address the issues of principal recruitment and retention: the First-time Principals Programme, the Principals' Development Planning Centre (PDPC) and Leadspace (Brooking, 2007). In relation to aspiring principals, a limited government-sponsored programme was introduced in 2008 with the National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP) being offered in various regions as a pilot and has been re-established as a nationwide programme for 2010. In my local context, the Principal's Association has created an Aspiring Leaders Programme to encourage and develop the leadership skills of aspiring male and female leaders in the Rotorua area.

Hargreaves and Fink (2007) identify a "disturbing international crisis in leadership succession in the schools of many western countries" (p. 47). Within New Zealand there is awareness of the problem of recruiting and retaining principals (Brooking et al., 2003). The looming concerns about the dwindling supply of school principals due to an aging workforce and the absence of any succession planning must be addressed (Brooking, 2007). However, despite the shortage of qualified candidates, research indicates that leadership development programmes will become increasingly demanding due to the expanding dimensions of the principal's role (Hayes, 2004).

2.14 Summary

A critical review of the literature suggests that there are definite barriers for women aspiring to principalship. Some challenges have been identified as systemic; others are more personal in nature. The literature consulted for this review indicates a degree of congruence regarding the differences of gendered leadership styles, concurs that women face deeply embedded problematic societal images of masculine leadership

and highlights the myriad of barriers that are accepted as the norm for aspiring female leaders.

By gaining more in-depth knowledge of the perceived barriers facing women aspiring to principalship, this research project hopes to identify steps towards mitigating them, thus offering valuable insight as to how to encourage and support aspiring female principals in New Zealand schools.

The next chapter outlines the methodology, research design and data analysis, in addition to the ethical considerations in this research.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

Leadership should be born out of the understanding of the needs of those who would be affected by it.

~Marian Anderson

3.1 Introduction

Research has numerous definitions. Bouma and Ling (2004) state that “research provides answers to researchable questions with evidence that is collected and evaluated in a disciplined manner” (p. 20). Best and Kahn (1998) define research as a “systematic activity that is directed toward discovery and the development of an organized body of knowledge” (p. 18). Research is guided by global perspectives, theoretical orientations and assumptions of what is valid. This study is conducted within the context of educational research.

Educational research serves many purposes. It may be utilised as a tool to educate, affect educational policy and create connections between educators (Cresswell, 2002). The motivation for conducting research is the creation of new public knowledge. Drew (1980) explains that “research is conducted to solve problems and to expand knowledge” (p. 4). The consumers of that knowledge may be policy-makers, teachers or other researchers. It is likely that consumers of this small-scale qualitative study will predominantly be professional development providers and female potential principal applicants.

Educational research is a field filled with many complex dimensions and a multitude of viewpoints. Research approaches are influenced and actuated by ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs. Establishing a theoretical viewpoint is a critical component in designing a research project as subscription to a particular paradigm impacts on the manner in which research is undertaken. Understanding the meaning of educational research and the nature and significance of the main research paradigms is fundamental to this endeavour. Being aware of the educational researcher’s role in knowledge creation is imperative as following a particular

paradigm impacts upon the research methodology/methods utilised and the knowledge created.

3.2 Research Perspective

Within research, “the consensual set of beliefs and practices that guide a field is typically referred to as a paradigm” (Morgan, 2007, p. 59). Bogdan and Biklen (1982) define a paradigm as “a loose collection of logically held-together assumptions, concepts or propositions that orient thinking and research” (p. 30). Paradigms are normative, guiding the practitioner without the necessity of long existential reflection.

Paradigms are also attached to the nature of reality and knowledge. These two important elements influence the choice of methods used to create new knowledge and assist in the adoption of a theoretical perspective or paradigm. The “various taxonomies used to distinguish paradigms share three fundamental elements: ontology, epistemology, and methodology” (Schnelker, 2006, p. 44). Three broad paradigms provide potential frameworks for research: positivist/scientific, interpretive, and critical post-structuralist; each possessing unique ontological, epistemological and methodological inferences.

Early positivist/scientific research was primarily based upon the gathering of objective quantifiable data. However, particularly in education, the emphasis upon the positivist approach to research has declined in recent years. Kvale (2007) has observed the “rejection of methodological positivism in the social sciences” (p. 12) and qualitative methods “have since the 1980s become key methods of social research” (p. 7). Strauss and Corbin (1998) define qualitative research as “any type of research that provides findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (p. 10). Characterised by a reliance on participants’ views, qualitative research asks broad questions, collects word data, analyses language thematically and conducts research in a subjective manner (Cresswell, 2005). One of the aims for qualitative research is to understand the world from the point of view of the research participants and to discover themes, knowledge, and relationships (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative researchers believe that there are multiple

perspectives to be explored. By using broad-based questions in a socially-interactive environment, researchers are able to uncover and interpret their participants' perceptions of reality and social contexts in which they operate.

3.3 Research Approach

The theoretical underpinning of a study assists in systematic data collection and coherence. This small-scale research study is situated in an interpretive paradigm and utilises a constructivist framework. By employing the qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews, I aim to understand and represent the interpretations and experiences of the participants with regards to their perceived realities. Participant perceptions of reality are influenced by their own individual experiences and associated with what they deem to be true.

Following an interpretive or anti-positivist approach places a priority on the gathering of meanings as opposed to the uncovering of absolute truths. Walliman (2001) maintains that an interpretivist approach attempts to observe "the individuals in society, to understand their values and actions, in order that we may understand the structures and workings of social systems" (p. 168). Hearing the participants' stories and perceptions throughout the interview process of this study creates a foundation for the interpretation of their meanings. In the interpretive paradigm, participants' individual contexts and experiences constitute their own realities.

In current educational research, the social constructivist approach of reality is frequently employed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that context and researcher play an influential role in this mode of inquiry. Researchers are seeking to understand how people construct an understanding of their world. Their reality is individualistic, but researchers seek links to a shared reality as experienced by others. Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle (2006) comment that, "traditionally, purely qualitative research is often done by persons who hold a framework referred to as interpretive, constructivist or naturalistic" (p. 7). The concept of social constructivism also emerges through the interview interactions of the researcher and participants and the construction of knowledge created through dialogue (Kvale, 1996). With this study

focusing upon the views of female deputy principals, the methodology is qualitative and situated within the interpretive paradigm, with an acknowledgement of the feminist viewpoint. Due to the entire research sample of this study being comprised of female participants, a brief explanation of the feminist research paradigm is imperative.

Research has traditionally been conducted from a male viewpoint (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Ezzy, 2002). As a female presence in academic research increased, the need for an alternative emerged. Cohen et al. (2007) observed there was a “need to address the emancipatory element of educational research - that research should be empowering to all participants” (p. 35).

Consequently, research approaches that are unique to women have developed. Walliman (2001) notes that “feminist research is a particular model of social research which involves theory and analysis that highlights the differences between men’s and women’s lives” (p. 97). Scott (1985) suggests that unlike male participants who communicate in a linear manner which suits questionnaires, feminist qualitative approaches allow women to make connections with aspects of their lives. Research that is conducted by a woman, involving female participants, falls within the context of a feminist research paradigm as Ezzy (2002) believes the observations and conclusions are less oppressive to women. Because I am a woman interviewing female participants, acknowledgement of the aspects associated with this paradigm are necessary. Data gathered and collated is adopted from a female viewpoint and perceived reality.

3.4 Research Design

Research design utilises a flexible structure to make connections between theoretical paradigms and research methodology. With regards to structure, Cohen et al. (2007) state that “the purposes of the research determine the methodology and design of the research” (p. 78). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) maintain the focus and purpose of research is to “reveal how a study fills gaps in an existing knowledge base, expands the knowledge base and initiates investigation in a neglected line of inquiry” (p. 40).

3.4.1 Research Question

A research study is derived from the design of a question which determines the focus and scope of the study. The research question provides the seed from which the study will develop (Lodico et al., 2006). This study will identify and analyse what perceived barriers are held by female deputy principals in aspiring to primary principalship.

Due to limited knowledge, qualitative inquiry can be tentative. Consequently, Morse (1994) argues that the researcher should “make the question as broad as possible, rather than prematurely delimit the study with a narrow question” (p. 226). The focus of this study is directed by the research question: *What are the perceived barriers for female deputy principals in aspiring to principalship?* This question guides this study’s data collection and analysis. The study involves seven participants from the Bay of Plenty and has been conducted using semi-structured interviews. Analysis of participants’ responses has led to the emergence of six significant categories regarding what constitutes barriers for female deputy principals in aspiring to principalship. Because it is the perceptions of the participants that are being analysed, qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to identify the barrier themes.

3.4.2 Research Method - Semi-structured interviews

It is essential that the research method selected is appropriate to the objectives of the study. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe methods as “a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analysing data” (p. 5). One of the most widely used methods for data collection in qualitative research is the interview and it is commonly acknowledged in the selected literature as the preferred method in qualitative research (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Bell, 2005; Best & Kahn, 1998; Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2007).

The purpose of the interview method is to obtain information about the nature and depth of an individual’s knowledge concerning a specific subject. Kvale (1996) contends that qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews, “are today

regarded as essential for obtaining knowledge of the social world” (p. 9). The technique of interviewing is one of the most powerful tools used to gain insight into the realities in which participants exist (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, as cited in Petrie, 2005).

There is not one specific definition of an interview, as it can be viewed on a continuum that ranges from a “social encounter” (Rapley, 2001), to a narrative (Gudmundsdottir, 1996), to a prescribed and structured series of questions. Anderson (as cited in Mutch, 2005) defines an interview “as a specialized form of communication between people for a specific purpose associated with some agreed subject matter” (p. 125).

The variations of interview types are determined by the amount of structure. Structured interviews have an established set of questions from which no deviation occurs. Semi-structured interviews are characterised by pre-prepared list of questions, but researchers “allow themselves the opportunity to probe beyond protocol” (Lodico et al., p. 124). In non-structured interviews there is the greatest amount of flexibility as they are primarily conversation-based. For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews provide the framework to guide questions and the flexibility for answers to be as fluid as possible.

Best and Kahn (1998) comment, “that in the hands of a skilled interviewer, a depth of response is possible that is quite unlikely to be achieved through any other means” (p. 322). Prior knowledge and awareness of the research topic is an asset for researchers. Kvale (2007) explains that “substantial familiarity with the theme and context of an inquiry is a precondition for the expert interviewing” (p. 49). With regards to this study, immersion in the same professional field and geographical region as the participants, means that I therefore have an awareness and knowledge of the context of the study.

The personal nature of semi-structured interviews contains the potential for the development of rapport, increased motivation and the co-construction of knowledge.

Questions provide the foundation for this method of data collection and “are best viewed not as neutral or uninterested invitations to speak, rather they share the grounds or the footings on which the participants can and should speak” (Freebody, 2003, p. 137). Conversation also adds a personal element to the research process. As Borg (1981) notes, “this method is unique in that it involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals” (p. 86). Another advantage to semi-structured interviews is the concept of adaptability. In contrast to a questionnaire that has no immediate feedback, “the interview permits the research worker to follow up leads and thus obtain more data and greater clarity” (Borg, 1981, p. 86).

One of the complexities faced during the interview process is the preparation for unanticipated participant responses. The ability to be flexible with question content and order is essential to maintaining the fluid nature of the interview. Burns (2000) states that “one of the most important aspects of the interview is flexibility” (p. 583). By following up ideas, using probes and investigating emotions, semi-structured interviews can be more effective than questionnaires (Bell, 2005). For example, as the researcher, I am able to individualise the language, tone and pace of each interaction to suit participants.

Lodico et al. (2006) believe that “even when collecting semi-structured interviews, it is important to have a protocol that will help guide the collection of data in a systematic and focused manner” (p. 124). In this study, each interview was conducted using an identical interview schedule. Flexibility in question order was used, yet the content of each question remained the same for each interview. As each participant responded, I recorded notes using various codes to identify different themes and used a digital recorder to capture the interview dialogue in its entirety.

“Interviews allow the subjects to convey to others their situation from their own perspective and in their own words” (Kvale, 1996, p. 70). In this study, participants were provided with a copy of the interview schedule and the freedom to respond using formal or vernacular language. Kvale (1996) also argues that the “virtue of

qualitative interviews is their openness” (p. 24). Throughout the interview process, factors such as prior association and similar backgrounds can influence and facilitate participant openness.

Limitations of Semi-structured interviews

While they allow a more fluid approach, lack of formal structure can make semi-structured interviews problematic as the data collection is less systematic than other approaches and analysis may consequently prove difficult.

As Bell (2005) notes, interviewing “is a highly subjective technique and therefore there is always the danger of bias” (p. 157). The human element can create complications. A negative aspect of the personal interaction is the potential for personal bias or lack of objectivity. In this study, the interview transcripts were given to the participants to review for accuracy and unbiased representation of statements. Relationships are both the strength and the weakness of the interview method. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982) comment, “relations set the tone for most qualitative research, even with less extensive interviewing, the emphasis is on equality and closeness in the relationship, rather than on formality” (p. 120). The professional rapport already developed between the participants and myself provides a solid and respectful foundation from which to conduct the interviews.

The positional power dynamic is also a potential point of contention. Kvale (2007) maintains one “should not regard a research interview as an open dialogue between egalitarian partners as there is “clear power asymmetry” between the researcher and participant (p. 14). As a fellow deputy principal interviewing the participants, I perceive my role as interviewer to be more collegial in nature and less one of unbalanced power.

There is also the potential complication of self-realisation during the interview process. Kvale (2007) argues that the interviewer should be cognisant of the interpersonal dynamics within an interview as “a well-conducted interview may be a rare and enriching experience for the subject, who may obtain new insights into his or

her life situation” (p. 14). The possibility exists that during an interview, through the articulation of their perceptions; participants may reflect and realise a desire to change their career paths. In an attempt to mitigate this, detailed information regarding the purpose and content of the study was given to each participant prior to their agreement to be involved. Participants also had the option to view the interview schedule prior to their interviews.

Researcher inexperience and lack of expertise may also be detrimental to the research progress. Best and Kahn (1998) argue that because the “objectivity, sensitivity, and insight of the interviewer are crucial; this procedure is one that requires a level of expertness not ordinarily possessed by inexperienced researchers” (p. 322). By participating in tertiary courses with a focus on research methods and receiving support and guidance from thesis supervisors, I hope to mitigate the potential downfalls of infrequent interviewing experience.

There are critics who argue that a single method research approach reduces the validity and reliability of the resulting data (Dellinger & Leech, 2007; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). There is the additional concern that using a single method approach may miss important data or perspectives. A positivist/quantitative approach is not applicable to this research study as it “defines life in measureable terms rather than inner experience” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 17). Utilising positivist methods would have limited my ability to interpret and represent the experiences of my participants.

The utilisation of a mixed-methods approach is supported by some researchers who maintain that numbers can be used to add precision to words and narrative thus providing stronger evidence. A mixed method approach offers “a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 129).

While combining approaches in research design and data collection should be considered whenever possible, a mixed-methods approach is more expensive in terms

of time, money, and energy. For this small-scale study, various constraints prevented the adoption of a mixed methods approach. The in-depth perceptual responses of the participants did not lend themselves to quantitative methods such as questionnaires and due to the personal nature of the responses, focus group discussions were inappropriate. Using semi-structured interviews, I was able to “understand, explain and demystify social reality through eyes of different participants; the participants themselves define the social reality” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 19).

The semi-structured interview is an effective research tool that can be used in the collection of data. With knowledge of this method’s strengths and drawbacks and an awareness of the concepts of co-construction, negotiation and respect, researchers can utilise interviews to produce robust data.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

Data that is collated from interviews must be recorded, analysed and interpreted. Bell (2005) argues that for the researcher, the “aim is to obtain as representative a range of responses as possible to enable you to fulfill the objectives of your study and to provide answers to key questions” (p. 120). There is no singular, accepted approach to the analysis of qualitative data (Cresswell, 2005). It is vital to maintain the defined links between theory, design and data analysis from the onset, as the method of data collection is directly related to the method of analysis (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006).

The use of coding in data analysis is sagacious as it involves looking for patterns and themes. Codes emerge from the data through the process of reading and analysing the research material. As Miles and Huberman (as cited in Bell, 2005) state, “codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (p. 214). By utilising coding, researchers can use themes to identify major concepts and cluster key issues thus enabling data interpretation and the formation of conclusions (Bell, 2005; Lodico et al., 2006).

3.4.4 Thematic Categorisation

Thematic analysis is a qualitative strategy that identifies categories from the data. The importance of this strategy is the emergence of themes (Mutch, 2005). Words, metaphors and emotions are part of thematic data and analysing these requires substantial time and skill. Common themes can emerge through the analysis of data. Cresswell (2005) states that, “data analysis reflects description and themes, as well as the interrelation of themes” (p. 50). For this research project, data was collected and prepared for analysis via transcription. Text segments or themes were then identified and assigned relevant codes.

3.5 Access to Field

3.5.1 Sample Group Size

Kvale (2007) maintains that “the number of subjects necessary depends on the purpose of the study” (p. 43). The purpose of this study is to identify the perceived barriers to principalship that are held by female deputy principals in primary schools. To answer my research question I wanted to procure a range of perceptions through in-depth interviews. The need to conduct these interviews within academic time constraints, limited the number of participants. Sample size was also determined by the additional considerations of cost of travel and demanding professional schedules. In order to conduct robust interviews within these parameters, a sample group of seven participants was selected.

3.5.2 Participants

Bouma and Ling (2004) consider the most significant aspect of sampling is that “the manner in which the sample is drawn determines to what extent we can generalise from the findings” (p. 113). The initial step in this study was to mail invitations to participate to numerous female deputy principals in the Eastern and Western Bay of Plenty. Bouma and Ling (2004) argue that “random sampling procedures are particularly important in research that aims to assess the attitudes, values or beliefs of a population” (p. 125). The criteria for participants were: female, deputy principal, possess aspirations towards principalship. I received seven positive responses. The selection of the specific position of deputy principal reflects the small scale nature of

the study and acknowledges that deputy principals are in the most likely position to aspire to principalship (Wylie, 2008).

The age range of the participants was between 34 and 51 years. Four of the participants identify as Māori and three identify as European. The participants were evenly represented geographically. Three reside in the Eastern Bay of Plenty (Rotorua) and four reside in the Western Bay of Plenty (Tauranga). Their number of years in teaching ranges from 6 to 32 and time in a deputy principal's role from 7 months to 14 years. While six of the participants have children, it is acknowledged there are women in deputy principal's positions who do not have children.

Kvale (1996) identifies the qualities of a robust interviewee as being cooperative, knowledgeable, truthful and consistent. Every participant in this study has been in the field of education for at least six years or more. All presented themselves in a professional, knowledgeable and collaborative manner. The dialogues that emerged during the interview process were reflective, detailed and insightful.

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) believe the research interview should not be viewed "as a completely open and free dialogue between egalitarian partners" (p. 33). Therefore, in order to maintain a balanced, professional and safe research environment, the ethical considerations are substantial.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

By reflecting upon the purposes for which research is conducted and ensuring research methods are ethical, researchers attempt to maintain a relationship of respect with their participants. An ethical concern exists regarding the researchers' pursuit of information and the participants' well-being that may be potentially threatened by the research (Cohen et al., 2007). Ethical research practice that maintains respect ensures researchers' and participants' integrity. Noddings (as cited in Howe & Moses, 1999) states that "the relationship between researchers and participants ought to exemplify caring, particularly trust and mutual respect" (p. 34). Research may strive to be objective and unbiased, yet must also be built upon a foundation of respect. While

there are numerous principles that researchers should adhere to for ethical guidelines, the concept of respect is the most essential component of ethics. “The core idea of research ethics is expressed as ‘respect for persons’” (Wilkinson, 2001, p. 15).

While research projects have an ethical framework, complications may arise during the research process. As knowledge is created through the dialogue between the researcher and participant, consideration must be given to the ethical implications of this personal interaction. Kvale (2007) contends that there is “tension between the pursuit of knowledge and ethics in research interviewing” (p. 16). Through submission of my research proposal to a university ethics committee, prior to initiating data collection, I was “required to think through in advance value issues and ethical dilemmas that may arise during an interview project” (Kvale, 2007, p. 25). The checks and balances system of the ethical approval process demanded reflection and anticipation of potential ethical concerns.

3.6.1 Role of Researcher

The researcher/participant relationship is of primary importance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and the role of the researcher critical in ensuring an ethical and safe interview environment. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) maintain that the knowledge produced by semi-structured interviews “depends on the social relationship of the interviewer and interviewee, which rests on the interviewer’s ability to create a stage where the subject is free and safe to talk of private events recorded for later public use” (p. 16). They further state that “morally responsible research behaviour is more than abstract ethical knowledge and cognitive choices; it involves the moral integrity of the researcher, his or her sensitivity and commitment to moral issues and action” (p. 74). The formation of a foundation built upon respect and ethical conduct is essential for the creation of quality research. Personal feelings and emotional proximity can be “an important vehicle for establishing rapport and for gauging subjects’ perspectives” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 132), therefore the role of the researcher is significant.

The significance of the researcher as a person is intensified because the interviewer is the main instrument for obtaining knowledge (Kvale, 1996). Being in a similar

position, in a similar geographic region and within the same age range, assisted me in developing a secure and collegial rapport with the interview participants. This outcome echoes the sentiments of Bogdan and Biklen (1982) who argue that if treated correctly, emotional connections “can be an important aid in doing qualitative research” (p. 132).

Bouma and Ling (2004) further contend that “the responsible researcher is considerate, does nothing to injure, harm or disturb the participants in research and keeps data collected on individuals secure” (p. 203). Throughout this study, all data has been kept secure via encrypted computer passwords and locked filing systems.

3.6.2 Informed Consent

Research cannot be conducted without the informed consent of the participants, one of the most widely accepted principles for ethical research (Robinson & Lai, 2006). Informed consent can be explained as:

An interpersonal process between researcher and participant, where the prospective participant comes to an understanding of what the research project is about and what participation would involve and makes his or her own free decision about whether, and on what terms, to participate. (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 272)

Sound research practice should include the “principle of informed consent which involves the careful consideration of explanations and consultation before any observation, data collection” or questioning has begun (Bell, 2005, p. 45). Free consent implies that volunteers are doing so with free will; therefore coercion has no place in ethical research. Factors such as pressure, guilt or resentment should not be the motivation for a subject’s participation. Cohen et al. (2007) believe that “researchers have to ensure that volunteers have real freedom of choice if informed consent is to be fulfilled” (p. 52). The key elements of participant comprehension and awareness regarding consent being truly informed must be ensured. At the initial stage of this study, participants were provided with an outline of the study, details of

my professional background, contact details of my supervisor and myself and a written consent form to ensure informed consent.

While consent may be given at the initial stages of the research process, it is vital that participants are able to withdraw from research at any stage of the project. Using coercion to gain someone as a participant or to remain as one is unethical as “any exploitation of participants is an unethical practice” (Best & Kahn, 1998, p. 42). Informed consent includes consideration of four key elements: purpose of research, publishing rights, access to transcripts and right to withdraw (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Throughout the entire research process, the participants in this study were advised of their rights to withdraw and were provided with written documentation of the purpose, process, publishing rights and copies of individual transcripts.

3.6.3 Benefit and Harm

Notions of benefit and harm are key issues in educational research and directly relate to the concept of ethics. “Avoiding causing harm to participants, for example, is surely an absolutely basic consideration” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 272). As Robinson and Lai (2006) explain, researchers “have an ethical obligation to reduce possible harm by anticipating it and discussing the possible risks of their research with those who are likely involved” (p. 69). Stress, insecurity and resentment can be felt by the participants. A researcher must consider and reflect upon the benefits for stakeholders of the research and measure them against the potential cost to the individuals participating. Benefit must outweigh risk throughout the research process in order to achieve an ethical balance (Best & Kahn, 1998). Guillemin and Gillam (2004) explain the “principle of beneficence, which refers to the obligation to act in ways that benefit other people, or at least in ways that do not harm them” (p. 270). It is imperative that researchers evaluate this balance when establishing their project in order to maintain a respectful relationship with their participants.

Lodico et al. (2006) state that “the emotional distress experienced during the interview by itself might present a source of potential harm that the researcher must consider” (p. 150). In this research project, the reflection upon their own personal

skill base or future career path could be detrimental to the participants. At the conclusion of interviews, participants may experience tension or anxiety if they have been open regarding their own personal experiences and may have concern over the later use of the interview data (Kvale, 2007). These concerns could be mitigated through the review of the professional researcher/participant relationship which is based on collegiality, sensitivity and confidentiality. Procedures for data use in this study were reviewed with the participants at the conclusion of each interview.

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) argue that ethical researchers “should be aware that the openness and intimacy of much qualitative research may be seductive and can lead participants to disclose information they may later regret having shared” (p. 73). Participants were made aware of their rights to withdraw from this study through the initial correspondence package and later at the onset of each interview. Additionally, a transcript of their interview was given to each participant to vet.

By identifying the benefits of participation in the study, “many would-be participants could be persuaded to take part in research if it is made clear that it will, or may, bring personal, educational and social benefits” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 60). Many of the participants in this study felt it was important to have their perceptions heard in the educational community. Through further dialogue, it was found that having a forum in which to share their perceptions of the perceived barriers appealed to some of the participants as they believe it may help identify needs and facilitate a change in awareness of the challenges facing female aspiring leaders.

Robinson and Lai (2006) also acknowledge that “harm can arise from the dissemination and publication of research” (p. 71). There are complexities surrounding interviews as a research method as they involve “researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena” (Mauther, Birch, Jessop & Miller, 2002, p. 1). When research is published and shared amongst communities, one has to be cognisant of the ramifications of the findings for their participants. It is because of this aspect, that the concept of confidentiality must be maintained.

3.6.4 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Researchers can practice non maleficence, the concept of no harm, by protecting a participant's right to privacy with the inclusion of confidentiality and anonymity provisions. Miscomprehension regarding the definitions of both terms "can result in serious misunderstanding between researchers and participants" (Bell, 2005, p. 48). Therefore, it is essential that prior to taking part in research all participants are aware of the ethical parameters related to these two concepts.

Anonymity is a key aspect of confidentiality. Maintaining the privacy of a participant's identity is crucial for ethical care. Participants should not be identified in any publication or dissemination of research findings without their consent and researchers should undertake all reasonable precautions to prevent disclosure of participant's personal information or involvement in the study. Mutch (2005) reiterates this by stating that "participants should be assured that any data they provide will remain confidential to the researchers and be stored in a secure manner" (p. 79).

The maintenance of anonymity within a New Zealand research context is challenging. Because the population of New Zealand is relatively small, the likelihood of identification increases. Lower population numbers mean smaller professional networks and an increased awareness of colleagues. Additionally, the size of the population allows for greater potential identification of participants due to idiosyncratic phrasing, language and experiences. The research arena of New Zealand does not provide the concept of 'safety in numbers.' In this study, each participant's identity has been protected by the use of a pseudonym and great care has been taken to ensure that the substance of their contributions does not lead to their identification. In cases where a quote may potentially breach anonymity, it has been purposely left unattributed.

Confidentiality is the maintenance and securing of identifiable information a researcher may gather about their participants (Best & Kahn, 1998). A key caveat to remember is that "the more sensitive, intimate or discrediting the information, the

greater is the obligation on the researcher's part to make sure that guarantees of confidentiality are carried out in spirit and letter" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 65). Due to the nature of this study and the small geographical region in which it was conducted, confidentiality is essential. With the focus of this study being on aspiring principals, awareness of colleagues' and potential competitor's perceived barriers could be detrimental to the participants and potentially beneficial to me, as a fellow aspiring principal. Participants may also wish to remain circumspect about their principalship aspirations and not divulge these to current employers. Maintaining a participant's privacy and dignity is paramount to ethical research. Confidentiality in this study was maintained through the electronic securing of transcripts and participant details were known solely to myself. Ethical research practice that maintains respect ensures researchers' and participants' integrity.

3.7 Data Quality

Research credibility mandates that the principles of validity, reliability and trustworthiness be maintained by researchers (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The verification of knowledge is connected to the concepts of validity and reliability (Kvale, 1996). However, validity and reliability are rooted in a positivist perspective and should be redefined for their use in an interpretive paradigm. Additionally, the role of the researcher in ensuring data quality should be evaluated from a constructivist standpoint.

3.7.1 Validity

Validity is used to express the degree of trust towards the claimed research results. Compared to quantitative research, qualitative research has different measures for validity. Generally, qualitative researchers perceive validity as being an unclear and ambiguous concept as there are multiple words to describe validity and no conferred definition of validity in qualitative research (Dellinger & Leech, 2007). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) argue that, "issues of reliability and validity go beyond technical or conceptual concerns and raise epistemological questions about the objectivity of knowledge and the nature of interview research" (p. 242). Validity is established

when it can be determined that a study actually measures what it was intended to measure.

Bouma and Ling (2004) note that “another problem raised by questions of validity is that concepts are often multidimensional and impossible to represent with a single variable” (p. 49). This statement clashes with the positivist quantitative approach which uses numbers to verify and qualify validity. An alternative view offered by Pervin (1984) is that validity is directly connected to the depth in which a method investigates its topic. This is somewhat complex to assess, however it does lend itself to the qualitative research approach. In qualitative research, the researcher is expected to critically self-reflect on the validity of their research results. Measurements such as honesty of the researcher, the transparency of the research process and the depth and scope of data are used to determine the degree of validity.

With regards to validity of the interview method, Cohen et al. (2007) argue “there is no single canon of validity; rather the notion of fitness for purpose within an ethically defensible framework should be adopted, giving rise to different kinds of validity for different kinds of interview-based research” (p. 373). Yet, despite its lack of solid criteria, validity is an essential component in research and by minimising bias, it can be partially addressed. It is vital that all identifiable bias is addressed in an interview situation and that evidence that questions or challenges that view is noted. If these steps are not taken, biases could threaten validity (Robinson & Lai, 2006).

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) identify further key areas that determine validity: adequate length, use of an interview guide, room for spontaneous participant answers, sound interviewer skills and knowledge. However, there are numerous factors that may impinge upon a researcher’s ability to draw valid conclusions from interviews: poorly designed questions, participant mood or comprehension of the questions, or inability to code data. The transcript verification process in part, ensures validity as it secures the accuracy of what is said by participants. In this study, participants were provided with copies of their individual transcript for vetting purposes and feedback.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability pertains to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings (Kvale, 2007). Some of the selected literature suggests that reliability cannot be achieved within a qualitative research paradigm (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). However, employing the concept of repetition can result in the evaluation of consistencies. Interview transcripts can determine the reliability of research through the comparison of the same data and analysis. Questions in the interview schedule can be used to check the consistency of the participant's responses. In this study, an identical interview schedule was used for all interviews.

Reliability is only one aspect of quality within qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) extend their description of reliability to include the elements of credibility, dependability, consistency and trustworthiness, with the last element requiring further explanation.

3.7.3 Trustworthiness

The aim of trustworthiness in qualitative research is to support the argument that the research findings are “worth paying attention to” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Trustworthiness is deemed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to be the main criteria for quality, yet it is a concept that is complex to elucidate. Amongst researchers there is a lack of shared language and approaches with regards to trustworthiness. A concise definition is dependent upon the paradigm within which the research is conducted as that underpins the standards of trustworthiness (Williams & Morrow, 2009). A positivist paradigm offers more concrete evidence of trustworthiness within the quantitative data, whereas other paradigms lack such empirical provisions. An interpretive paradigm addresses this issue by utilising reliability and validity to establish trustworthiness. Golafshani (2003) maintains that trustworthiness of research in a qualitative interpretive paradigm is achieved not through exact and precise numerical measures of truth, but rather through the “generalizability of the result” (p. 603).

Transparency of the research process when employing qualitative methods is a key issue with regards to the trustworthiness of the data analysis (Cousins & McIntosh, 2005). Trustworthiness is also determined to a large extent by the consumers of the research and validation through recognition in supplemental research.

3.7.4 Reflexivity

If qualitative research within an interpretive framework involves personal interactions and interpretations, how does this impact upon the role of the researcher in establishing quality of data? Reflexivity involves self-awareness of the researcher's own potential biases and predispositions as these may affect the research process, conclusions and overall quality. Cresswell (2005) defines reflexivity as the process by which "researchers reflect on their own biases, values and assumptions and actively write them into their research" (p. 50). Lichtman (2006) further states that reflexivity "is usually associated with a critical reflection on the practice and process of research and the role of the researcher" (p. 206).

Some researchers such as Reinharz (1997) and Pillow (2003) view the concept of reflexivity as empowering and one that enables researchers to explore the participants' views at a deeper personal level. However, within the context of qualitative research, it is essential that researchers ensure that personal bias has not overly influenced their research and compromised the quality of the data.

I am currently a female deputy principal at a New Zealand primary school in the same area as the interview participants; therefore I have my own preconceived notions as to what the barriers in aspiring to principalship might be. I was careful to not verbalise these prior to, or during the interviews. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) would describe this as "reflexive objectivity, being reflexive about one's contributions as a researcher to the production of knowledge" (p. 242). Conversely, my prior knowledge was beneficial in creating an interview schedule that was suitable to the specific context of this study thus enhancing the quality of the data gathered.

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH FINDINGS

In organizations, real power and energy is generated through relationships. The patterns of relationships and the capacities to form them are more important than tasks, functions, roles, and positions.

~ Margaret Wheatly

4.1 Introduction

The research question required participants to reflect on their perceptions of the barriers facing female aspiring principals. This chapter presents the findings of the research, based on the interview data collected and discusses the results of the analysis. Thematic data analysis saw six significant barrier categories emerge. Following a format similar to the literature review, the participant's responses will be presented thematically. While diversity in the participants' experience, age, cultural background, personal circumstances and geographical locations created an individual voice for each participant, common barrier themes did materialise.

Direct quotations have been intentionally used to illustrate the perceptions of the participants being interviewed. Because the data collected constitutes the perceptions of the deputy principals, constant identification of data as perceptions is not required. While this research focuses primarily on the perceived barriers to principalship held by current female deputy principals, it was also necessary to gain insight into the reasons why research participants are interested in pursuing principalship in order to provide a context for the study. Furthermore, data concerning the approaches participants adopt in order to contend with the perceived barriers was collected and analysed.

4.2 “The Draw of the Big Chair”: Motivations for Aspiring to Principalship

It is important to frame this study with an inquiry as to why the participants aspire towards principalship. By exploring their motivations, connections may be drawn between the perceived barriers and how the participants respond to them.

Desire to directly impact upon student learning and be responsible for the creation and guidance of a learning community presented as the main reasons for aspiring to principalship. As Kristina states, “I like the idea of leading a learning community along a pathway that is predominantly my vision.” Zoe describes the appeal of principalship as:

Being that lead learner and being able to be the leader of a school. Leading what I believe is a good educational platform for the students there. Being the ‘buck stops here’ person and being able to put a final stamp on the school direction. I think that is really appealing.

The opportunity to facilitate change and guide progression featured strongly in many of the participants’ responses. Tania commented that “essentially, it’s a place that changes can be made. I believe that I want to be in that position where I can lead change....a principal has the ability to bring about that positive change.”

All of the participants maintained they had myriad skills to offer students and their communities. Three specifically identified the challenge of principalship as a motivating factor for them to apply for the position. Ngairé states that:

I think the challenge is at a different level. It’s very diverse...you can plan for various things that you want to achieve or cover in a day, a week, a term. But it’s the unknown that gives that challenge or something to get your teeth into. It takes you into areas or it makes you work at levels that you possibly wouldn’t have thought that you could.

There is also the motivating element of aspiring to principalship as a natural step in career progression as a traditional hierarchical career pathway exists in the field of education. The commonly acknowledged progression step for career-motivated deputy principals is to seek principalship. Kristina notes that, “once I am ready to move on from being a deputy, it is only natural for me to look at principalship as a career move.”

While there are aspects of principalship that appeal to the participants, there are also elements that can create reluctance towards aspiring to a principal's position.

4.3 “The Flipside”: Deterrents in Aspiring to Principalship

While not necessarily perceived to be barriers themselves, certain aspects of principalship were identified by the participants as unappealing. The purpose for highlighting these is to establish the link between the parts of the role that deter potential applicants and the actual perceived barriers.

Some of the identified deterrents in aspiring to principalship were: the amount of personal energy required, the emotive demands dealing with personnel issues, contending with the community and clashing personal values with school beliefs. Each of these has been cited by at least one participant and while they are not perceived as an obstacle in the pursuit of principalship, they do contribute to some of the barriers that have emerged through the data analysis.

Having reviewed the elements of the principal's role that are unappealing to aspiring leaders, the next section will identify and analyse the six most commonly cited barriers that emerged from the participant's interviews.

4.4 The “X Factor”: The Role of Gender

The role of principal is traditionally viewed by many as a “male” one. This is a commonly held perception by the community at-large and is confirmed in the studies of numerous researchers (Brooking, 2003; Coleman, 2005; Schein & Mueller, 2000). Additionally, the distribution across education shows women underrepresented in leadership roles relative to the number of woman in education as a whole.

The participants were asked to contribute their thoughts as to the significance of gender in regards to their aspirations for principalship. Aside from her family, one participant states that, “I would say the biggest barrier for me would be being a female.” The influence of gender as a barrier for the participants can be further disseminated into three sub-categories.

4.4.1 Community Perceptions

The presence of bias held by Boards of Trustees and school communities towards the appointment of male principals was commonly perceived by participants. Kristina maintains that “the old adage of the males at the helm of the ship is still prevalent.” There is also the belief amongst participants that communities perceive males to be better suited to principalship than women. Zoe notes that, “I think that in the community the perception is still one that believes males are better suited to being a principal than a female and perhaps communities feel more comfortable with a male principal as opposed to a female.” Ngairé personally encountered this perception:

I think there is still a belief in society now that the principal of a school is going to be a male...while I was an acting principal, parents would still want to see the Principal, who they perceived should be a male.

Participants contend that males are often successful over female counterparts, solely due to their gender. The perception held by Marg is “that if a male puts themselves forward and you’ve got two people on equal footing, my belief is that the male would be taken first. The man would get the nod.” In Kristina’s experience, “I have seen really competent female potential principals and current female principals, go in and be short listed, go to an interview and then miss out to males. I’ve seen that happen in lots and lots of instances.”

The concept of the male principal being desired as a role model for male students was frequently cited by the participants. Marg believes:

There is still the perception that we need male role models. We need male leaders. That males are stronger. That boys perhaps relate better to males and are better suited to an authoritative position rather than women.

Many participants believe that communities make the presumption that by providing a male in a senior leadership role, it will support male students and assist them in raising their academic achievement levels. Emily contends that the community retains

that belief “because so many kids don’t have a male role model in their home life that it is the school that needs to provide it.” Kristina also identifies with this concept as she comments:

Some people, I believe, think that providing a male role in a leadership capacity will support them to lift their game. You know boys seeing a positive role model in the form of a principal; I think that’s a perception that is quite alive and well.

There is also the additional element of geographical location. The four participants from the Western Bay of Plenty all felt there was a “glass ceiling”, in contrast to only two in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. One participant believes that “being a female is certainly a barrier, particularly if I wanted to pursue principalship in this area.” It was primarily the geographical location of the participants that determined their suppositions. For participants in the Western Bay of Plenty, the perception was that principal vacancies are consistently filled by males.

4.4.2 Male Approach to Leadership

The perceived attitudinal advantage men appear to have over their female counterparts was another perception that appeared as a barrier for aspiring female leaders. Many believed that a female attitude is neither competitive, nor aggressive enough to compete with male peers in seeking out principals’ positions. Male aspiring principals are viewed by their female counterparts to be “more cocky” and “are more likely to learn on the job.” Marg maintains “that often men are more ambitious than women.”

Amongst some of the older participants over the age of 45, there was the belief that the principal’s job is inherently a male one due to the more nurturing nature of teaching, which is better suited to a woman’s approach. As Tania stated:

Looking at where my role sits as a woman, the deputy principal role seems to actually look like it’s a role that suits a woman if a man’s at the top. I guess

women, being the multi-taskers that we're stereotyped to be and being the people who are nurturing the development of children, we could be quite typically stereotyped in DP roles.

Cheryl states that "traditionally that was the male role, to lead. Males were pushed into that leading role, that principalship role." Zoe believes that "people like to be liked and sometimes, not everyone's going to like you or agree with you and that's an uncomfortable feeling for females in particular perhaps." Emily queries whether there is a gender difference in the challenges that face principals, "but then I'm sitting here saying I don't want to get involved in property because that's a boy thing." With regards to the management and finance aspects of the principal's role, Kristina comments that "the perception is very much that men do that sort of thing better, the business side of things."

With regards to gender-specific characteristics, Kristina maintains that:

In many cases people perceive that a male has strength and that is on account of his maleness. Being a male gives them a better position to deal with the tensions and challenges that are part and parcel of being a principal and that they are less inclined to be compromised by emotional aspects.

Emily discusses the evolution of gender perceptions:

I think changing people's beliefs that you need a man at the top is only just starting to happen. It's not just about whether women are aspiring to or applying to, it's whether they're chosen and I think in a lot of cases, the men were being chosen over women just because they are a man.

However, when asked if the paradigm of males as principals prevails within the educational community itself, most participants believe that mindset was not maintained by educators. Emily felt that "you hear more and more now people saying

it's the right person for the job, regardless of what size, shape, colour and gender they are.”

While she believes gender is viewed as a potential barrier for some women, Cheryl maintains that “if you are good at what you do and you are passionate about what you do, that will be seen and you will be promoted...so the gender thing, I don't think that is always a barrier.”

4.5 “The Main Business”: Leading the Learning or Management?

Balancing the learning aspects with the administrative requirements of the job was a consistent concern amongst the participants. As Kristina says, “the tension between the leadership and the management aspects are what I envisage as being internal barriers for me.” Many felt that in order to fulfil managerial obligations, their role in leading the learning would be compromised. Zoe notes that:

The size of the job has become very huge ...it's all very well being a pedagogical leader and leader of school culture and climate, but the administrative structures and systems and managing of the plant is huge as well. So you need to have quite a huge skill base level.

As stated in *Kiwi Leadership for Principals: Principals as Educational Leaders* (Ministry of Education, 2008b), in addition to being pedagogical leaders, “principals are responsible for the day-to-day management of a broad range of policy and operational matters, including personnel, finance, property, health and safety, and the interpretation and delivery of the national curriculum” (p. 7). The perception held by all participants is that the demands expected of a principal are extensive, thus making the role of principal appear much less appealing to aspiring applicants.

Kristina would be encouraged to pursue principalship more “if I could see something being done to address the workload issues that are relevant, particularly with the management side to being a principal.” The primary motivation for all participants to enter the field of education was to work with children and to affect their learning. The

concern is that, not only is the expectation list of a principal growing regarding both the management and leadership demands, but the time spent with students is reducing as a consequence.

4.5.1 Distance from Learning

Participants acknowledge that administrative requirements are a necessary and significant component of a principal's work. However, they were concerned about the increased distance from the "chalk face" once principalship was attained. One participant had experience in her current context, commenting that "towards the end of last year we had a building project and I think our principal, for that month, barely saw a child and certainly was absent from our professional learning community." In her observations of her own principal, she notes he has difficulties balancing the management aspects of his job with leading the learning of students: "He'd be lucky if 20% of his day was about learning."

Awareness of the managerial demands of principalship is clearly present amongst the participants, yet it contrasts with their personal philosophies of educational leadership. Ngaire observes there is "a lot of paper work, which I realise there is a need for, but sometimes it can be all overwhelming and take away from the core reason of why schools exist." Kristina continues this sentiment, "the management aspect takes you away from the learning...leading learning, that is my priority and everything else is secondary."

There is the emerging sense that the evolving role of principalship is gradually losing focus on the educational core job of teaching. Despite the principal being expected to be the "lead learner" in a school, Cheryl feels that principalship in today's schools "really has not a lot to do with teaching and learning. That scares me." It is not only the reduction of the teaching component that is unappealing to potential aspirants; it is the reduction of student contact.

4.5.2 Lack of Child Contact

Many participants stated that the primary motivation in becoming an educator was the opportunity to work with children. With the current expectations of principals, the perception is that children are no longer a significant component of the job. This appears to compromise the motivations participants had for entering the educational field. Zoe believes this to be the case as “the further you get away from the classroom, it feels sometimes like a compromise because I guess most of us came into the job because we just liked being with the kids.” Ngaire identifies “a lack of contact with children, which in essence, that is why I became a teacher. It’s nice to have that contact.” It was noted by Marg that the principal’s role:

Appears that it is taken up with financial management and Ministry paperwork and I find it difficult to link it back to that kids thing again. It just seems to be a lot of time taken away from working with children.

The lack of student interaction and resentment towards the managerial aspects responsible for the distance from student contact, contribute to the tension the participants experience between leadership and management. More specifically, there are elements of the managerial side that were identified by participants as clear challenges in their pursuit for principalship.

4.5.3 The Spectre of Property and Finance

Three participants cited lack of knowledge of finance and property as one of the most significant barriers they face. All of the participants who had never had the opportunity to be an acting principal identified the areas of property and finance as barriers for them. Emily comments that “I’m not interested in finance or property. That’s, to me, a barrier.” Ngaire states that “I wouldn’t want to touch property; well I would if I had to, but the whole property thing...it’s not a skill I have.” Zoe echoes this sentiment, noting that finance and property is “a skill base level that I’m not confident with and that would be the accountancy type side of the job which I haven’t had a great deal of exposure to.”

Finance and property are often cited by current principals as aspects of the principal's role that are challenging and hold little appeal. Yet, it is more than just the unappealing nature of these two areas that presents as a barrier for the participants. There are also underlying humanistic barriers that have emerged through the interviews. Establishing equilibrium between one's work and home sphere was also identified as a barrier.

4.6 “Finding the Balance”: Work and Life

The desire to balance the demands of a principal's job and a personal life is significant to the participants. Common perceptions held by the interviewees are that a principal's “job is too big for the hours” and personal compromises must exist in order to be an effective principal. To contend with the myriad tasks related to principalship, Zoe observes that “to do all of it really well, I believe the hours are almost unmanageable.” According to Wylie (2008), the average principal's work week is at least 50 hours. Kristina is “aware of the demands of the job and what I am and am not willing to compromise to get that job.”

Hargreaves and Fink (2007) maintain that incoming principals will negotiate their careers, manage their time and pursue work and personal life balance more so than the previous generation of principals. It is evident from the interviews with the participants that they are cognisant of the demands of the job and have an intention to maintain that balance. Marg demonstrates that awareness, “I have a life outside of school and I've seen some principals really get burnt up in going to that level, so part of it has to be a life balance.”

A significant portion of educators' personal lives involves families and relationships and the time commitment associated with a principal's position can impact on both. Cheryl thinks “it is about quality family time and weighing that up to how much of that are you able to give up to your career.” Relinquishing family time due to the demands of principalship was a common concern amongst the participants.

4.7 “Family Ties”: Familial Commitments

Six out of the seven participants identify family as one of the most significant barriers in aspiring to principalship. The one participant who did not identify it as a barrier for herself, does not have children. However, she views family as a barrier for others. Particularly for women, balancing the demands of a professional career with those of family obligations was cited by participants as “complex” and “limiting.”

4.7.1 The Impact of Broken Service

The concept of broken service was perceived by the participants to influence the career progression of female teachers. The withdrawal from teaching duties, primarily for the purpose of having children, was identified by three of the participants as a barrier to their career advancement. Marg mentions it as a significant barrier:

For people of my age group, it was the break in service. A lot of women took time out for motherhood, so that put you that far back behind. In the good old grading days, a lot of the promotion was based on grades. So if you had your break in service you didn’t get that opportunity to go through.

Placing one’s career on hiatus due to childbirth and the resultant absence of gradings led to a lack of progression towards senior positions of responsibility. Emily notes that “you don’t see many young women as principals and it’s because of the family. Women may take time out; I’ve had time for broken service myself.” Gender plays a key role as it is still primarily women who provide the home care for their children. Zoe comments that:

Females are still the lead caregivers for their families so they have broken service; the priority is not stepping through the profession as it is for males. I’d imagine they’d have a whole lot less broken service and care for their children, so the progression through leadership scales is more seamless.

There was also a substantial difference in the impact of motherhood on the younger participants, many of whom have assistance with childcare. As Cheryl explains, “we

are just really lucky at the moment” as there is family support at home for her children which allows both her and her partner to pursue careers. Another participant’s husband is “full time at home with our children.” There is also the introduction of funded day care schemes and the availability of childcare for working parents. Previously unavailable to older generations of working mothers, younger women now have access to external support systems which provide them with the option to pursue their careers. Emily highlights some of the societal changes:

Men have been able to take twelve weeks paternity leave and the woman has been able to carry on working. I think that’s made a difference. I’ve seen that impact on women who really want to advance their career towards principalship.

While family and parenthood is acknowledged to be a barrier for the majority of the participants, the impact of broken service appears to have primarily affected the older deputy principals. With the presence of supportive infrastructures to allow participants to continue to work without substantial absences for childcare, the younger participants have achieved their deputy principal positions at a substantially younger age than their older colleagues.

4.7.2 Influence of Partner on Career Path

Having discussed the effects of motherhood and children on their career progression, participants articulated the influence their partners have on their leadership opportunities. Marg explains her limitations, “I guess in the big picture, my husband’s employment has probably been a barrier in so much as he works in forestry, so we’ve been limited in where job opportunities have been for him.” Prioritisation of a partner’s career creates potential obstacles if one is limited to a specific geographical location. In particular, if the location is provincial or rural, the number of school and leadership opportunities may be limited.

There is also the impact of partners upon career progression in terms of limiting the participant’s potential personal and professional development. Cheryl explains that:

My partner, over the last year, is following through with a career move for himself and once he is settled and he's quite happy in his career, then we will both feel content for me to go onto further study to develop myself.

Similar to the geographical limitations, balancing the career aspirations of a partner has also been observed as a barrier to potential principals who are attempting to seek a professional and personal equilibrium between their careers and their families.

4.7.3 Family Well-Being/Hauora*¹

Speaking about the pathway to seeking principalship, Cheryl states, "I know it is a journey, I am not on a journey on my own." The maintenance and protection of their families, while pursuing their career aspirations, is of significant value to many of the participants. Kristina states:

Certainly, being a mum, the work load of a principal is certainly off-putting at this time, while my family is young. I wouldn't be looking to pursue principalship until they were a bit older because I know the commitment that it requires.

Within the concept of family well-being, geographical aspects play a role in participant's perceptual barriers. Zoe states that:

Another barrier would be location as I am a mother and have a family. My kids are happy at school. If I want to progress career wise, it would be best for my family if it was in this area. We don't need to move, so upping the family and moving for me is a barrier.

The overall impact on the family is an enormous consideration for the participants. The happiness of their children and concern for their social and educational well-

¹ Hauora - Māori concept of physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being.

being does influence decisions concerning career opportunities. Cheryl offers a suggestion to other female deputy principals: “the key thing for female aspiring principals would have to be drawing the line as their line, finding the compromise between family and leadership.”

While some of the identified personal barriers are externally influenced, others emerged from participant self perceptions. Although the influence of self perceptions was a limited theme within the selected literature, it was omnipresent within the interview transcripts.

4.8 “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall...”: The Influence of Self-Perception

Personal mindset, confidence, experience and abilities all featured as elements of participant’s self-perceptions which emerged via the interviews as a significant barrier for some aspiring female leaders. The prior barriers identified have been based upon external factors; gender, role expectations and time commitments are all extrinsically oriented. The concept of self-perception reflects an intrinsic barrier. Challenges presented were not from outside influences, but from participant’s own interpretation of themselves and their capabilities.

4.8.1 Lack of Confidence

The younger participants, those under the age of 45, did not display the same elements of self-doubt compared to their older colleagues. As a potential principal candidate, Cheryl maintains that:

I think I have a lot to offer. I think for me personally I value what I do. I think I am good at what I do and how I can support others...I have quite high self-esteem and self-confidence...I wouldn’t feel good enough about myself if I didn’t keep trying.

In contrast, older participants’ views show evidence of confidence as a significant barrier. In order to feel both successful and effective as a principal, Emily notes, “I’d have to go in feeling confident that I could do the job and I couldn’t go in there

thinking, ‘Oh, I’ll learn it.’ ” The need to gain an awareness of one’s own capabilities and embed a sense of self-belief is consistently present throughout the interviews with the older participants. Highlighting this concept, Ngaire identifies, “what I see as my biggest barrier is my own perception of my self-worth, the value I can bring to that position, so that’s probably for me the key thing.” Looking towards the future, Kristina hopes that her confidence will increase to such an extent that it will allow her “to ignore the aspects” she views as barriers.

Some participants believe that there is a confidence disparity between male and female aspiring principals. Marg maintains that “often men are more ambitious than women, not always, but I think that sometimes that is the case.” Emily agrees, “men are more cocky. They are much more likely to apply for jobs before they know they can do it and then go in there and learn it on the job.” The participant responses indicate that females aspiring to principalship prefer to consolidate their skills and increase their confidence prior to applying for a principal’s position.

Some of the female participants did demonstrate an awareness of the impact of confidence on their career ambitions. As Zoe explains:

Self-doubt? Absolutely... there’s always the self-doubt of whether you are up to it or not, no matter what other people say to you or anything. I don’t want to just be a principal; I want to be a really good one. There’s a huge amount of self-doubt. Can you do, and can you be that?

When asked how she contends with her perceived barriers to principalship, Kristina commented, “hopefully I would have worked my way through those aspects and my experience and confidence would be at a point where I would feel good enough about myself.”

A direct link emerged between a participant’s confidence and their individual skill base. One participant stated her biggest barrier is “probably my own perceptions with my abilities and skills. If you are knocked back a few times that can be quite

demoralising and can make you question what you haven't got." Gronn and Lacey (2004) note the concept of "vulnerability" within the context of educational leadership and its impact on women's confidence. In some cases, the lack of knowledge or ability presents itself as a barrier.

4.8.2 *Lack of Knowledge/ Abilities*

Tania identified her biggest barrier in aspiring to principalship as "the lack of experience in the hot seat. If you're not in the job, you're never going to know." Without the opportunity to lead a school, access to developing a leader's skill base is limited. While professional development programmes in educational leadership are available, many participants maintained that these are not adequate preparation for a principal's position. Zoe felt she could "identify a skill set that I'd like to develop, but where can you gather those skills from?" When asked what reduces her desire to apply for principal's positions, Emily stated, "it's probably because I believe that I haven't got deep enough knowledge." A sense of being prepared is also significant in her desire to pursue principalship, "I need to know I can do it when I go in there." Zoe also commented on the breadth of skills that are required and "that's a huge barrier, having the skills set to be an accountant through to a pedagogical leader of learning." With regards to other female aspiring principals, Tania's view is that "a self-belief that they are the best for the job perhaps could be missing."

Participants' personal mindsets and sense of self-belief established itself as a significant barrier as it is emotive in nature and not easily qualified. When asked how other females demonstrate resilience to this barrier, Tania replied, "the fact that they just keep applying...that they're being true to themselves and they want the positions to make a difference." Participants' responses indicate that following one's own conviction also encompasses selecting the "right" job, in the "right" school for their first principalship.

4.9 *"The Ideal Match": Desirable School Characteristics*

A salient theme emerged in the predilection of participants to find the "right school" for their first principalship. Female aspiring leaders do not necessarily "chase the

name plate on the door,” as one participant described it. There is a very clear desire to match their skills, personality and philosophies with their ‘ideal’ school.

Older participants, over the age of 45 in particular, subscribe to this concept. Marg’s impression of the “right school” for her was one that already had “some semblance of a learning culture within the school, where there were staff who were at the school because they want to be there.” Emily prefers the idea of a school where the management aspects were minimised and “ideally, I would like to go into a school that has that really well sorted and that they would be looking for someone who could lead learning of teachers and children.” Each participant who raised the topic of a “best fit” possessed specific selection criteria. By maintaining such finite expectations, participants limit themselves to a smaller number of schools that match their set criteria.

Concepts of an ‘ideal’ school also vary from participant to participant. In Ngaire’s case, she is cognisant that her desire to be in an alternative school setting is limiting, “I want to be in a certain environment and so straight away I am narrowing down my opportunities.” For Cheryl, the “ideal school fit” would be “if there was an opportunity in a small community and something nice to bring up the family.” Ngaire summarised the views of other participants:

I’m just not going to apply for a principal’s position because I think ‘yes one day when I grow up I want to be a principal.’ There’s going to have to be something that draws me to wanting to actually apply for that position in that school.

4.10 Additional Barriers

The barriers examined in depth in this chapter were all identified by at least three participants. However, there is some validity in discussing those barriers mentioned on a smaller scale by individual participants. While not consistently identified across the participant field, the reporting of these barriers produces a more robust analysis of

the inter-connectedness of the barriers identified as a group and provides a detailed landscape of the perceptual barriers facing female aspiring principals.

Within the Western Bay of Plenty, two of the four participants identified the geographical locale of the area to present itself as a barrier in aspiring to principalship. Marg explained that the Western Bay of Plenty “is a desirable place to be and so you are up against people with a principal’s background who are looking to move up and move on and that that is also a barrier in this area.” Kristina mirrored Marg’s perception that the Bay of Plenty “is fairly popular in terms of loads of people wanting to work here and I know that the principal’s jobs, when they are advertised, are well and truly over-subscribed in many cases.”

With regards to the role of cultural background, Tania was the only Māori participant who cited cultural background as a potential barrier. She comments that there:

Is the fact that there could be the cultural challenge too. As a female Māori woman...do I have the ability to work successfully in the mainstream in a position of principal leadership? It shouldn’t be an issue, but certainly it does stand out to me when I look at the principals that are in my current local area. There are not many that are Māori.

4.11 Participant Responses to Barriers

Participants were asked to identify a range of actions they employ in order to respond to their perceived barriers. Personal development was cited as the most effective and frequently used approach in contending with the barriers identified. These developments include undertaking tertiary study, creating professional networks, building personal resilience and relocation.

4.11.1 Tertiary Study

Primarily, further study was identified as a crucial aspect in personal development by all but one participant. There is the common belief that the development of one’s own skills leads a female applicant to become more competitive. Kristina feels that “in

order to take the next step, I need to have really developed myself in other areas to be competitive....that's things like engaging in Master's study and any other leadership opportunities.”

Two participants are currently studying for their Master's degree, one has completed hers, one has a postgraduate diploma, one has done additional postgraduate papers and one has intentions to study. One participant wishes not to pursue study due to her age as she maintains there is no “relevance” for her.

There was no correlation between age and participation in postgraduate study. Ngaire believes that if a female aspiring leader engages in study, “you are showing that maybe you are a continuous learner, you know, a lifelong learner and that sort of thing and that may help you to be in a better position for becoming a principal.” The pursuit of higher education as a response to some of the barriers has prompted Tania to be “looking at a doctorate. I believe that by furthering my education, it will help make me more credible in achieving the role of a principal.”

Tertiary study is also seen as a method of developing one's leadership skills to better equip oneself for the position of principal. Zoe believes that:

Study makes me more well-rounded. I like being able to make links between theory and practice. It has also just challenged the way I think about things and I think it is really important to be a learner yourself. You know, if you want this from your students and your staff, I think it's important that you walk that talk.

Yet, study alone is not the sole approach that participants believe may assist them in eliminating some of the perceived barriers.

4.11.2 Networking

The skill and benefit of networking is mentioned by participants as a valid and effective manner in which to remove barriers. Tania explains, “I purposely have

surrounded myself with people who are in the principal role, primarily because I'm sort of wondering, 'How are you thinking? How are you operating?'" By gaining insight into the thoughts and actions of others, she is attempting to not only gain important knowledge, but also to establish a supportive and functioning network.

Networking provides aspiring female principals with access to a foundation of skills and experience from which they may draw upon when appointed as a principal. Zoe hopes that "creating those networks myself and formally through my own career pathway...would give me good advice and support." The aforementioned lack of skill base and knowledge that is perceived by the participants is potentially counteracted with participation in a professional network. Other educational leaders can be called upon to offer "advice and support when required."

Access to network development was identified through AP/DP associations, personal contacts and professional development programmes such as the National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP). Marg comments that the leadership development programme offered assistance in some skill-specific areas, but "the other thing it did too, was it developed a support network around you which I think is really, really important." Establishing professional contacts as a foundation for a supportive network was identified by the participants as one of the most significant ways to contend with the perceived barriers.

4.11.3 Emotional Resilience

Participants identified a series of responses to the perceived barriers; however one response was seen to be on a more personal level than the others. The participants discussed the emotional impact in preparing for principalship. Some of the emotive experiences they identified during the interviews have been contending with feeling; "under-valued, marginalised and frustrated." Due to emotional reactions, some participants responded by discussing the concept of emotional resilience. Marg explains that "I think I'm quite a positive person. I don't get hung up on things that I cannot change. I like to see the glass half full rather than the glass half empty. I think that's helped me at times."

Ngairé also demonstrates emotional resilience by stating, “I know that I have ability, that I have a lot of skills, that I will do that position and also gain from that position. I could do the job and do it well.” By maintaining a positive reflective approach, women can build emotional resilience to the challenges in aspiring to principalship.

4.11.4 Geographical Relocation

A traditional view exists in some New Zealand educational circles that in order to obtain a principalship, one must “work their way up from a smaller school.” For the participants, while relocation is not necessarily viewed as a progression necessity, it is seen as a possible alternative career pathway into principalship.

In her career, Marg noticed “that people who are prepared or able to move, particularly earlier in their careers, get that first step into principalship earlier and often then have the advantage.” Ngairé shared that, “I know of a female who moved to a much smaller area and applied for smaller principal’s jobs, thinking that was a way to get into it.” Participants believed that the willingness and ability to “move for promotion” was a potential response to the barriers for some women aspiring to principalship.

4.12 Participant Recommendations for Support

Having identified and discussed their perceived barriers, participants were asked what developments or programmes, on a systemic level, could be established to support them in overcoming the barriers identified.

4.12.1 Principal Preparation Courses

Some of the women had participated in various leadership development programmes such as the National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP). While acknowledged as a valuable programme, many felt the programme did not address the areas they wished to develop. Marg commented that “on some levels it was great, but I think that a bit more training with the nuts and bolts of the Ministry and finance stuff and also that horrible banking and staffing system,” would be beneficial. It was commonly acknowledged amongst the participants that more job-specific training

was needed in order to effectively prepare aspiring leaders for principalship. Zoe highlighted the need for “some type of training and learning around what the systems and checkpoints are and what needs to get done. Also how do we access information and how do we access support?”

The participants recommended the creation of participant-identified, needs-based specific skills courses. Zoe remarked, “I’d love something about the accountancy and how to do the books and that sort of stuff. Until you get to be a principal, how do you learn or even know what those challenges are?” By providing courses that are relevant to the needs and contexts of aspiring female leaders, barriers such as the lack of confidence and skills have the potential to be eliminated. Ngaire suggests asking female deputy principals:

What would you like, what would be really useful to you, what could we do to help you develop? Rather than having just the odd leadership type workshop which I do not think is getting to the core of each person.

The opportunity to interact with current principals was also suggested as they are presently in the position and aware of the “reality of the job.” Their perspectives, experiences and recommendations would be of benefit according to the participants. Zoe notes that they have “their own ways of dealing with and managing money. So I think getting some different perspectives would be good and also models that work well.”

In contrast, two of the participants stated that within their current educational context they were receiving what they deemed to be adequate leadership development to prepare them for potential principalship. Emily says, “I’m in an environment where I am getting the chance to learn.” Cheryl comments, “I think I am continually challenged and I love it, I really enjoy it. I am motivated because things do not stay stagnant with us. We continually strive with something different.” Having access to a principal who was willing to share and mentor was significant to the two participants as they felt they were receiving “authentic” training.

While some participants mentioned the opportunities to listen to current principals speak at various professional development courses, five of the seven participants suggested that a coaching and mentoring approach using current “respected” principals as mentors would be an effective method of principalship preparation.

4.12.2 Mentoring Network

There are currently two programmes offered by the Ministry of Education that have a mentoring component. The First-time Principals Programme pairs a first-time principal with an experienced principal for the first eighteen months of their principalship. The National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP) has participants apply to enrol and has a mentoring component as part of its overall programme. With regards to aspiring principals not currently enrolled in the NAPP, Zoe suggests “perhaps a formal mentoring relationship that the Ministry encourages to happen where there is that person located outside of your work environment that you can talk to and they can be a critical friend.”

She notes that at the present time, “you sort of have to find your own mentors with people you work with and know, but there is no formal type of structure or support network at a national level.” An absence of professional mentors is acknowledged by Ngarie:

If you have no knowledge or no one there to mentor you doing it, then I guess that is something I probably need to seek. Someone that can guide me to my next steps if it is to go down the principal pathway.

Kristina mentioned that she is utilising her own personal professional contacts and “networking with other principals as support people in that mentor and coaching type role.” On a national scale, Ngarie believes that by formulating an inquiry into the needs of female deputy principals aspiring to principalship, the Ministry of Education could use experienced individuals to guide aspirant leaders and “bring into it that mentoring and coaching component.”

The participants' suggestions for leadership development were not limited exclusively to aspiring principals. Further recommendations were made for the training of the individuals responsible for the appointment of aspiring leaders.

4.12.3 Appointment Process Training

Boards of Trustees are the governing body responsible for the selection and appointment of a principal in New Zealand. Participants believe that individual Boards of Trustees member's perceptions of what makes a successful principal can affect their decision-making processes. Kristina advocates for the training of Boards of Trustees members in hiring practices.

Identified previously in the literature as a barrier, community preference for male principal applicants is prevalent as males are perceived to be better principal candidates. As Kristina states, "so who are these people with the perceptions? Actually they are the people that sit on the Board of Trustees." She believes that training programmes for Boards of Trustees is essential "so that they go into appointments with an open mind and that their perceptions, which aren't necessarily accurate, are quashed."

4.13 Conclusion

Participant voice highlighted a multitude of perceived barriers facing female deputy principals in aspiring to principalship. While many were identified through thematic data analysis, three common barriers to principalship emerged as the most significant.

All participants identified gender as a substantial barrier for either themselves or aspiring female leaders as a whole. Gender-related barriers include: community preferences, skill perceptions and gender-specific leadership styles. Familial influences were also determined as a significant barrier due to the necessity to balance the needs of family with career aspirations. Finally, lack of job-specific knowledge and preparation presented as a considerable barrier for the participants as a result of insufficient professional development opportunities and the significant difference between the job characteristics of a principal and those of a deputy

principal. Potential solutions to eliminate these perceived barriers were suggested by participants and echoed the research in the related literature.

In the next chapter, the research findings will be analysed in light of the research literature.

CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

~ Eleanor Roosevelt

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the research findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. It will highlight the congruence and dissonance between the findings and literature review, in addition to identifying silences.

The findings have implications for the work of aspiring principal preparation on both personal and systemic levels. Analysis of the research findings indicates approaches that may benefit other aspiring leaders in their personal preparations and proposes ways in which this body of knowledge can be utilised to enhance existing or new programmes.

The six commonly identified barriers to emerge from the interview sessions will be discussed using a broader thematic approach: the role of gender in perceptual influence, the extensive nature of principalship, personal barriers and the desire to lead a school with specific characteristics.

5.2 “*Holding Out for a Hero(ine)*”: Perceptions of Female Leaders

Gender was the most common and significant barrier identified by the participants. All participants maintained that there was a predilection towards male principals amongst members of their general communities and consequently contended that there was a pre-determined obstacle in their path towards principalship.

5.2.1 Gender-Specific Skills

Many participants expressed the view that principalship is perceived by the general public as a male domain requiring a myriad of what are viewed as, “male-oriented” skills. The literature reflects a distinct gender dimension to leadership approaches (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009; Harris et al., 2002; Miklos, 1988; Neville, 1988;

Schein, 1976; Shakeshaft, 1993; Young & McLeod, 2001). The participants themselves echoed the literature by affixing gender-specific traits to both teaching and leadership roles. Emily deemed property and finance to be “a boy thing” and Tania commented that, by “women being the multi-taskers that we’re stereotyped to be and being the people who are nurturing the development of children, we could be quite typically stereotyped in deputy principal roles.” This resonates with the notion that men lead and women teach (Neville, 1988).

It is evident in the literature that gender-based stereotypes and perceived male dominance in educational leadership create barriers to career progress for women (Brooking, 2003; Coleman, 2002; Court, 2002; Edson, 1988; Schein & Mueller, 1992). However, as Bassett (2009) notes, it is essential that female leaders engage in critical self-reflection to review their role in perpetuating the stereotypes that serve as barriers to advancement. The participants’ propensity to identify with gender stereotyping themselves, further substantiates the conventional archetype of gender-specific roles in education.

A non gender-specific criteria for effective principalship is provided by Robertson (2005) who contends that we require “leaders who can work in a complex, ever-changing educational context, who are aware of the social and political influences on their work and who can draw on this knowledge to create necessary changes to systems and practices” (p. 41). It is imperative that women themselves adopt a gender-less perception of principalship to ensure the sustainability of educational leadership, as women constitute the largest pool of potential principals. By perpetuating gender stereotypes, women may be contributing to their own barriers.

5.2.2 Number of Women in Leadership Positions

The participants noted that in a field where the majority of the workforce is female, female educational leaders are underrepresented. Over the last few decades, research on gender and educational leadership has provided insight into this situation. Many researchers (Brooking, 2004; Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Schmuck et al., 1983; Shakeshaft, 1989; Wylie, 2008) acknowledge the disparity between women’s

involvement in the teaching profession and their limited representation in educational leadership in different countries. However, the belief that the educational landscape is in the process of change is held by some participants. Cheryl maintains that education is currently “working through the generation of change.” Some researchers agree with this statement (Brooking, 2003; Cardno, 2005; Christman & McClellan, 2008), while others refute it (Court, 1994; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Young & McLeod, 2001).

Although some participants may feel a paradigm shift is occurring with regards to public perceptions of principalship, there is also the conjecture that some female aspiring principals are encountering a “glass ceiling.” The prevalent view amongst the participants is that the wider community still believes males are stronger candidates for principalship. As representatives of the wider community, the Board of Trustees is responsible for the selection of a principal. With the communal impression being one of male preference, the result is the appointment of more male principals than female principals. A substantial body of literature indicates that the difficulties for women gaining access to principalship are exacerbated by selection panels’ preferences for male applicants (Blackmore et al., 2006; Brooking, 2003, 2007; Brooking et al., 2003; Coleman, 2002, 2005; Schein & Mueller, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1987; Strachan, 2009). Ironically, Fullan (1991) believes that women, as a group, are more likely to demonstrate behaviour associated with effective leadership.

5.2.3 Location Differences

Geographical comparisons yielded results that substantiated the views of some participants. While all participants perceived a public preference for male principals, progressive acceptance of women in the principal’s role appears to be more prevalent in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. The statistics, at the time this study was undertaken, show that out of 34 mainstream primary schools in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, 15 were led by female principals. In comparison, the Western Bay of Plenty-Tauranga Region has 25 schools, with only five led by female principals. Within the Western Bay of Plenty region, Tania highlighted the presence and strength of an “active old boy’s network.” There was a common belief amongst the Western Bay of Plenty

participants that the established group of males in leadership positions reflects the community culture of gender bias. However, without information regarding applicant numbers and gender in either region, these assertions are perceptual.

5.2.4 Influence of Age

The literature indicates that there is considerable evidence to support the hypothesis that gender presents itself as a potential barrier to female aspiring principals.

However, one area that is not examined in depth in the selected literature is that of younger aspiring female leaders who do not perceive gender to be a significant barrier.

While all younger participants acknowledged that public perceptions may influence Boards of Trustees' decisions, one did not believe being female to be one of their most substantial individual barriers. A possible reason for the variance in perception and confidence levels between older and younger participants could be the change in the educational climate since the introduction of the Education Act in 1989. Older participants experienced grading systems and breaks in service affected those gradings. Longevity in a position was a significant requirement for achieving promotion. In the current educational environment it is not uncommon to see female deputy principals under the age of 40. Prior to 1989, limited numbers of female deputy principals would have been in their 30's due to breaks in service attributed to childbirth and the resultant lack of grading achievement.

With the complexities associated with gender having been identified as a perceived barrier, a second category emerged through the interview data, that of the role and responsibilities of principalship.

5.3 “Reality Bites”: The Role and Responsibilities of Principalship

All participants acknowledged that the position of principal demands a comprehensive skill base and requires a prodigious breadth of knowledge. The introduction of the 1989 Education Act and subsequent neo-liberal influences, have created a leadership position with extensive requirements. The literature reflects the

evolution and increasing demands of educational leadership (Gewirtz, 2002; Power et al., 1997; Wylie, 1997). By being in the secondary position to the principal, deputy principals have some insight into the expectations and responsibilities associated with the role. For some participants, the principal's position is simply unappealing (Brooking et al., 2003; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Pounder et al., 2003; Wylie, 1997).

5.3.1 Leadership and Management

Oplatka and Tamir (2009) view principalship as all-encompassing, overwhelming, energy consuming, remote, and politically embedded. The participants voiced concern over the necessity to balance management requirements with leadership aspects. They articulated similar views to Hall (1996) who views management and leadership as an integrated unit. The apprehension of the participants is reflected in the work of Wylie (1997), who queries whether the role of the principal should be primarily that of an administrative manager or a leader of learning. Emily gave voice to other participants' opinions by stating, "the opportunity to lead learning would be one of the factors that makes principalship appealing."

The desires to effect change and impact on student learning were both described as motivations for becoming a principal. Yet, the reluctance amongst the participants to relinquish learning as the primary focus created a second significant barrier, the multitudinous responsibilities of principalship. This information is supported by Strachan (2009) who notes that women are resistant to managerialism.

5.3.2 Specified Skills

Elements of managerial leadership construct another barrier for the participants in this study. The requirements of current principals to manage staffing, property, finance and reporting to the Boards of Trustees, create the need for a specific skill set that is not typically part of a deputy principal's role. Wylie (1997) asserts that "management of the school's roll, its reputation and its buildings and grounds is more central to principal's work and concerns now than they were before decentralization" (p. iii).

Participants acknowledged that a lack of skills preparation for principalship was a barrier to them. While the literature briefly identified the lack of formal qualifications as a potential barrier for aspiring female leaders (Coleman, 2005), there was little acknowledgement of the impact of a managerial skills deficit.

Participants felt they could identify the skills that required development, although there was concern that minimal development opportunities existed in order to address these needs. The areas of property and finance were highlighted by participants as dimensions of principalship that require additional training. Marg labelled it as the “nuts and bolts” of daily operations. Specific areas of desired improvement are what Zoe termed as “the accountancy type side of the job...which I haven’t had a great deal of exposure to.” They were also identified as areas of disinterest. As Emily explained, “I have no interest in finance or property.”

In addition, the acknowledgement of lack of expertise in these areas prevents female applicants from applying for principalship as a result of feeling “ill-prepared,” as Kristina commented. Female deputy principals wish to possess a broad skill base and the knowledge associated with the job, prior to their application for a principal’s position. While there are support systems currently provided by the Ministry of Education for first time principals concerning areas such as property and finance, there are limited options available to develop the associated skills at the deputy principal level for both male and female aspiring principals.

5.3.3 Distance from Students

For many of the participants, the primary reason for selecting teaching as an occupation was the desire to work with children and the literature concurs that women typically enter teaching to interact with students (Shakeshaft, 1987). The transcripts of this study suggest that by applying for principals positions, participants believe that they are distancing themselves from students. This adds emphasis to the perceived priority of management over the leadership of learning due to the distance between educational leaders and student contact (Brooking et al., 2003; Livingstone, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1993; Wylie, 1997).

Four of the seven participants voiced substantial concern regarding the perceived disassociation between leadership and student contact. This directly reflects the literature that maintains women are more concerned with student contact, development and achievement than their male counterparts (Eagly et al., 1992; Shakeshaft, 1987, 1993).

The connection between the aforementioned stereotypical gender traits and this particular barrier is substantial. The participants' responses are reflected in research that characterises female leaders as nurturing and highly involved in instructional learning (Coleman, 2007; Harris et al., 2002; Neville, 1988; Schein & Mueller, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1993). Female leaders do not want to compromise student contact in order to achieve principal status.

A response to this concern would be for principals to distribute selected management-oriented tasks across their leadership team. By utilising a distributed leadership approach, two substantial benefits would emerge. Principals could utilise the time previously allocated for those managerial tasks to engage in student contact. Secondly, deputy and assistant principals would gain exposure to elements of principalship that have been identified in this study as knowledge and confidence barriers.

Throughout the interview process, it became evident that the participants were not going to compromise in any areas significant to them, purely to obtain the position of principal.

5.4 “I Will Survive”: Personal Barriers

Participants discussed various personal factors which constitute potential barriers to either themselves, or female leaders in general.

5.4.1 Workload and Life

Educational leadership in New Zealand has undergone significant transformation in recent decades (Brooking et al., 2003; Wylie, 1994). There has been a change in perception regarding the role of the principal and their responsibilities. In an educational context that faces demands from a variety of stakeholders, principals now must adopt a multi-faceted approach to leadership. Consequently, principals are now confronted with numerous issues connected to the emergence of a market-driven paradigm.

Gewirtz (2002) argues that, “the development of financial literacy is a key skill effective leaders now need to possess” (p. 39). In addition to sound business acumen, principals contend with expectations of pedagogical improvement and an increase of student achievement. The demands associated with being a principal are extensive and participants recognise the requirement to balance work and personal life. Wylie (2008) observes that there are obvious stress levels related to the job and the participants are cognisant of the potential physical, mental and emotional demands of the position. Zoe felt “that managing all those balls in the air is a really huge job and to do it well, I can’t see how you do it in a forty hour week or an even a sixty hour week.” A major motive of many potential candidates not to apply for principalship includes issues of job satisfaction, high levels of well-being, or a sense of self-fulfilment (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009).

Reluctance to sacrifice elements of personal life for a principal’s position leads participants to continually reflect and question whether or not the role and time is right for them to apply. For aspiring leaders to question the path of principalship is not uncommon (Hargreaves & Fink, 2007; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Because the demands of a current principal’s position are multitudinous, Hargreaves and Fink (2007) maintain that incoming principals will negotiate their careers, manage their time and pursue a work/life balance more so than the previous generation of principals. While there is general acknowledgement of the demanding nature of the first year of principalship due to new portfolios and increased responsibility to various stakeholders, the participants were clear that they would not compromise

personal time. Kristina was emphatic in stating that she was not willing to “lose herself to the job.”

Coleman (2005), Neville (1988) and Shakeshaft (1987) all maintain that the work/life balance issue impacts more upon female leaders than males. The distinction between the genders is due to the capacity of the woman to be the primary caregiver in the family. Furthermore, Strachan (2009) argues that the fact women tend to work in smaller schools where they must balance a teaching component with principal responsibilities, makes work/life balance even more difficult to achieve.

5.4.2 The Significance of Family

According to all participants, the influence of family was a substantial barrier in aspiring to principalship. There is extensive evidence in the literature that indicates the significant impact of familial responsibilities upon female leaders' careers (Coleman, 2005, 2009; Court, 2004; Edson, 1988; Fitzgerald & Moore, 2005; Ouston, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1987, 1989). Every participant noted family and children as a barrier, either for themselves or as a perceived barrier for other female leaders. In contrast to the participants' views, Ouston (1993) cited work overload as the most significant problem facing female leaders and balancing the responsibilities of home and work as second. One of the key elements of balancing family and work demands is the care of the children. Traditionally, women have been viewed as the core of the family unit. Coleman (2005) maintains that male leaders are heavily dependent on their wives or partners to take responsibility for the children, whereas female leaders are required to find childcare alternatives.

In this study, two participants receive childcare support from a family member in the home, two have their children at school, two have children in adulthood and one has no children. The support structures for families have altered over the past few decades. With the advent of 20 hours per week free childcare and an altered societal perception of working mothers, women are no longer expected to choose between family and career. However, familial roles still remain.

The concept of incurring a break in service due to childbirth is interpreted as a barrier by some participants. “Females are still the lead caregivers for their families... priority isn’t stepping through the profession as it is for males,” comments Zoe. Career breaks and the return to work are of vital significance to a large proportion of women and have a considerable impact on their career progress (Coleman, 2005). One of the older participants with grown children discussed how she was relatively new to a senior management position because she had a break in service to care for her family. None of the three participants with school age children had taken longer than a year’s maternity leave, evidence of the shift in societal perceptions and expectations of working mothers.

Coleman (1994), Ouston (1993), Ozga (1993) and Shakeshaft (1989) all comment on the issues of domestic responsibility, child-related career breaks for women and how these are treated with discrimination in the workplace. However, none of the participants expressed any experience with perceptible discrimination due to familial responsibilities. Perhaps the limited current literature on this topic also indicates a societal paradigm shift.

Coleman (2002) and Hall (1996) both explore the concept of guilt with regards to female leaders with families; yet the participants with children in this study indicate that they consider the needs of their children concurrently with their career aspirations. As Kristina comments, “I could not give the job the commitment that it needs, while I have a young family.” Zoe explains further, “I don’t think it is fair on my family yet, because the commitment it would take for me to be good at that job would impact on their time considerably.” Shakeshaft (1987) maintained that many female career educators found the demands of work and marriage to be incompatible. Two decades later, the participants in this research would disagree. They are complex, but not incompatible.

There is the need for a cultural and systemic paradigm shift that would provide further support for women with familial responsibilities, thereby allowing them to focus on their leadership work. While current childcare infrastructures have

expanded; perceptions of the professional capacity of working mothers are still developing. As Kristina noted, “I know principals who actively avoid hiring young mothers due to their family commitments, so why would the people who select principals think any differently?”

Further investigation into the perceptions of female aspiring leaders without children would garner potentially different results with regards to the barriers identified. However, children were not the only familial consideration concerning potential barriers. The influence of partners was also significant.

5.4.3 Influence of Partner

Coleman (2002), Edson (1988) and Hall (1996) all identify the importance of a supportive partner regarding career pursuits. However, only one of the participants acknowledged her partner as a significant support to her career. Two of the participants commented on their career development having been influenced by their husbands. In one case, the geographical location was predetermined by the husband’s career and in the other, the participant’s further study is on hiatus during her husband’s career establishment. Coleman (2002) acknowledges the proclivity for the male’s career to take precedence over the females.

Familial responsibilities require female leaders to make decisions relating to their career path and domestic life, which ultimately influence their potential success in both spheres (Fitzgerald & Moore, 2005). However, the element of choice factors into this arena. Participants may choose to place the needs of their partner and family ahead of their own career aspirations, therefore perhaps it is not a pre-existing barrier in aspiring to principalship; individual choices create individual barriers.

Working within the family realm uses a co-operative approach which contrasts with the more individualistic and competitive approach of career pursuit. Once priority has been given to others in their personal sphere, an aspiring female leader’s career momentum may be lost which could result in a loss of confidence in her own abilities to achieve principalship.

5.4.4 Confidence and Self-Esteem

Fink (2008) views confidence as crucial to success in educational leadership. However, confidence has emerged from this study as a significant barrier for women aspiring to principalship. While the system-oriented skills that may allow a principal to be gauged as effective are often seen as simplistic and task-based, they have much larger implications for mass scrutiny. Being assessed by the public and their peers was a concern for some of the applicants. One participant is concerned she “lacks the confidence to deal with negative community feedback.” Covey and Gullede (1992) highlight the importance of leadership confidence by noting that those in leadership “can lose the trust and confidence of their direct reports if they lack sufficient competence or consistently exercise poor judgment in making decisions” (p. 74). If a principal lacks sound knowledge and confidence concerning the daily operations of their job, the effect can be detrimental and staff support will decrease.

Shakeshaft (1987) states that the internal barriers most often cited as contributing to women’s lack of achievement in leadership are “low self-image, lack of confidence and lack of motivation or aspiration” (p. 83). Ouston (1993) further contends that capable female leaders often consider themselves average and are loathe to promote themselves or their achievements.

Analysis of the research data replicated this contention to a certain extent. There was clear evidence of participants who lacked confidence. One participant identified “my own perceptions of my abilities and skills” as one of her most significant barriers in aspiring to principalship. Some of the literature suggests that female leaders lack confidence regarding the elements of a more managerial leadership (Blackmore, 1993; Court, 1998; Strachan, 1999b). Parallels can be drawn between this view and participant responses that confirm their lack of confidence in relation to management and administrative aspects of the job. Lacking the skills that are position-specific to principalship created anxiety amongst the participants. The fields of property, budgeting and staffing were identified as necessary areas for development. The reduction of confidence in their ability to perform effectively in the principal’s role creates a perceived distance between being a deputy principal and principal (Oplatka

& Tamir, 2009). Rarely are deputy principals required to contend with managerial duties such as property and finances, therefore the creation of a skill base in these areas is problematic.

Confidence did not impact on the younger participants to the same extent as it did the women over the age of 45. Two of the younger participants commented on their high levels of confidence and self-belief. This is reflected in the literature as younger women demonstrate increased confidence levels (Ouston, 1993). Connections can be drawn between the ages of the women and their attitudinal approach to leadership. In the New Zealand context, women now in their 50's have generally experienced periods of long service breaks and an educational climate in which discriminatory attitudes have been prevalent. In this study, the gap between the number of years of teaching service and the number of years in a deputy principal role varied greatly. The younger participants became deputy principals after an average of 5 years of service, as opposed to the older participants for whom the average is 18 years of service. The data indicates that women are now entering senior management positions at an earlier age and with less teaching experience than their predecessors. The faster accession through the ranks may contribute the increased confidence in the younger participants.

Shakeshaft's (1993) studies indicate women have lower confidence levels than their male counterparts. This may explain why male applicants are more likely to apply for principalship regardless of skill base and why women tend to wait until they feel adequately qualified. Hall (1996) notes that women are as career ambitious as male colleagues, yet estimate their chances of success as lower. This strongly resonates with the interview data. The participants all possess the desire to become a principal, yet believe that women have more barriers to success than men.

With regards to principalship preparation, participants were not prepared to apply for principal's positions until they had acquired the necessary skill base. In comparison, participants viewed male aspiring principals as motivated to apply for principalship without the knowledge base. Males were perceived to be more ambitious, focused on

leadership and even “cocky” as termed by Emily. Speaking from their experiences, participants maintained that younger males were often placed into principal’s positions, despite their lack of teaching experience and leadership acumen. New Zealand research confirms age and gender play a role in the appointment of young males to principals positions (Brooking, 2008). Additionally, Coleman (2005) maintains that men are confident to relocate, gaining more varied experience than their female colleagues thus providing them with a broader experience base making them appear more qualified.

However, a conclusion could be drawn that female aspiring applicants are better prepared than men for the demands of principalship due to the fact that, by the time they apply, concerted effort has been made to develop the skills necessary to become an effective principal.

5.4.5 Ethnicity

Four participants in the study identified as Māori and were equally represented between the Eastern and Western Bay of Plenty. Only one participant mentioned the potential influence of cultural background on aspiring to principalship, yet it was not identified as one of her significant barriers. Due to lack of participant voice concerning this area, one can surmise that for this study’s participants, cultural background is not perceived to be a significant barrier in aspiring to principalship. While it did not emerge as a barrier in this small-scale study, the potential of cultural background as a barrier is contextually-specific. This study was conducted in the Bay of Plenty with a strong element of bi-culturalism present in many areas. There is the awareness that had the study been conducted in another area of New Zealand, cultural background may have emerged as a barrier.

5.5 “The Golden Egg”: The Characteristics of the ‘Ideal’ School

Another common theme that was shared amongst participants was the concept of the quintessential school. A complication lies within the notion of a characteristic-specific checklist, as a barrier is created through the reduction of schools that will be viewed as potential places of employment. While criteria such as the location, size,

decile and philosophies differed for each participant, three common criteria that constitute an “ideal” school did emerge.

5.5.1 Presence of a Professional Learning Environment

Stoll and Fink (1996) maintain that for a school to sustain organisational change and to “be effective a school must become a learning organization” (p. 151). Effective leaders resist the pull of managerial tasks, assume a pedagogical leadership role and are concerned with the promotion and development of their schools as professional learning communities. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) maintain that the creation of learning communities in schools creates a strong sense of affiliation for all staff and students and “is crucial to engaging and motivating students to learn” (p. 10).

The desire to move to a school that has an established professional learning environment was specifically identified by two participants. An educational environment in which there was the “semblance of a learning culture” and a requirement for “someone who could lead learning of teachers and children” was seen as a priority. There is extensive evidence in the literature supporting the notion that female leaders prefer to retain the teaching and learning aspects of their jobs while in a leadership role (Eagly et al., 1992; Gleeson & Knights, 2008; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1987, 1993).

Hord (1997) believes that the transformation of a school organisation into a learning community can only be achieved with the active nurturing of the entire staff's development as a community. However, participants discussed their preference for having an already established community in place. Emily exemplified this view by stating, “ideally, I would like to go into a school that has a learning community really well sorted.” There was reluctance on the part of the participants to be the catalyst to initiate the growth and development of a learning community. While the desire to participate in and acknowledge the value of professional learning communities was present, participants preferred to pursue a principalship in a school in which this type of learning environment was already established. This resonates with the earlier exploration of the significance of confidence as an identified barrier.

5.5.2 Location

There is the contention held by Strachan (2009) and Wylie (1998) that female leaders have been 'ghettoised' into schools of a smaller size, which are often of a lower-decile and generally seen as less desirable in the pursuit of principalship. The findings of this study contradict these views in that the participants emphasised they will apply for principalship of the "right school" for them.

Edson (1988) and Miklos (1988) both suggest that aspiring female leaders will move geographically to broaden their potential career opportunities. However, the majority of New Zealand teachers are based primarily in urban or regional centres. The complexities of family relocation and geographical distance from social and professional networks may prevent many female leaders from considering relocation as a leadership option. Many of the participants prioritise the needs of their family over their career aspirations, thus the factor of the aforementioned participant choice plays a significant role. Zoe explains that family commitments mean that "moving for me is a barrier." Therefore, the location of a potential school can play a critical role in determining whether or not that school is 'ideal' or not. In some cases, participants did not see moving as a viable option because, as Tania stated:

I actually want to be in a principal's seat here. I don't want to travel outside in order to discover myself. I actually want to be here to make the difference and I think I'm at an age where that's another thing that I'm quite clear about. I want to make a difference locally.

School location also impacts on the principal selection process, Brooking et al. (2003) observe that gender interplays with locality and according to Blackmore et al. (2006), conservatism is evident not only in rural communities, but also in the more traditional academic/elite school communities, where masculinity is intrinsically linked to leadership. Participants are aware of the idiosyncratic principal preferences of the specific areas they work and live in. They acknowledge they will apply to schools accordingly.

5.5.3 Gender Inclusive Board of Trustees

A crucial component for the “ideal” school would be the governance of a gender-inclusive Board of Trustees. Both Coleman (2005) and Shakeshaft (1993) indicate that one of the most significant barriers to female advancement is the negative attitudes toward women held by those who are responsible for the hiring process. Female underrepresentation in the principal’s position highlights the fact that primary school appointment committees tend to favour men. Participants frequently noted the perceived preference for male applicants for principal’s positions. In her experience, Kristina has observed competent female candidates “be short listed and go to an interview and miss out to males.”

In her qualitative study of primary school Boards of Trustees’ selection practices, Brooking (2003) found a gender preference for male principals, because of their “community fit” (p. 4). Some Boards of Trustees have concerns over the lack of male role models due to the gender imbalance in New Zealand schools and contend that hiring a male establishes equilibrium within the school community (Brooking, 2003; Strachan, 2009). Cheryl wants “to be supported as principal and the right Board of Trustees won’t care that I am a woman.” As Stoll (2003) notes, the external factors of the local and broader community influence a school’s learning context. The appointment philosophies of Boards of Trustees are crucial to the advancement of female leaders.

Additionally, Blackmore (1999) intimates that high performing schools with high performing students are most likely to be led by white, middle class and well educated men. This is problematic in that what constitutes ‘good school leadership’ has been closely connected with models that associate masculinity with accountability, efficiency and administrative expertise. Kristina articulates her optimal leadership experience, “having a board’s support of me as a leader, not just as a female leader, but as an effective leader, would be an ideal scenario.”

Crawford (2007) views leadership as a social process that “depends on the relationships that are built both within the school, and also in the wider community”

(p. 524). It is essential that aspiring female leaders develop these relationships within their current deputy principal roles as a way of counteracting community preference for male principals. By cultivating a reputation for being capable, confident and competent, perceptual barriers may begin to diminish.

5.6 Participant Responses to Perceived Barriers

When invited to comment on possible approaches to contending with the barriers they identified, participants articulated four key responses.

5.6.1 Further Study

Because “teaching and maintaining a successful school is predominantly an intellectual activity” (Stewart, 2000, p. 92), tertiary level courses are perceived to be beneficial for leaders. Study allows the linking of theory with practice. The majority of the participants identified tertiary study as a method of addressing some of the barriers in aspiring to principalship. While the limited literature predominantly focuses upon the pursuit of specific qualifications, the participants’ responses were based on the motivation for study and the learning content. Through further study, the barriers of confidence and skill deficiency could be addressed. Cheryl explains that she plans to pursue, “something in educational leadership. I think there is just so much information out there, but I wouldn’t want to go into principalship with just a Bachelor of Education. I personally think that that wouldn’t be enough.”

Hall (1996) observes that further study may provide career-driven individuals with potential promotional opportunities. Each participant in this study possesses a teaching degree and all but the oldest participant, have either undertaken postgraduate study or intend to in the future. Participants believed postgraduate courses provided a “strong theoretical foundation” from which to build their leadership skills. In New Zealand there are currently no formal academic requirements necessary to apply for principalship. New Zealand is unique in this respect as it lacks regulation pertaining to principal supply and quality. Due to the absence of tertiary requirements, six of the seven participants believed acquiring a postgraduate qualification provided depth to their potential principal applications. Postgraduate qualifications were also viewed by

the participants as a way to legitimize their leadership amongst their male peers and the community.

5.6.2 Establishment of Networks/Mentors

A lack of adequate professional development opportunities for aspiring principals is a significant concern for the participants. The literature echoes this issue as it is commonly accepted that there is a need for more developmental support for pre-principalship applicants (Court, 1994; Sherman, 2005; Stewart, 2000). The desire for professional networking was expressed by a few of the participants. The opportunity to share and learn from a network of peers was considered a valuable and accessible development option for aspiring leaders.

Some participants had explored the creation of their own network through professional contacts and local associations in order to assist them in building a foundation of knowledge. Others pursued more formal pathways such as involvement in the National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP). All participants emphasised the importance of collegial guidance and support in preparation for, and during, principalship.

The concepts of peer-coaching and mentoring were also discussed by participants. Many researchers advocate the use of mentoring in the development of aspiring leaders (Coleman, 2002, 2005; Edson, 1988; Grogan, 1996; Miklos, 1988). More specifically, the literature argues that mentoring is particularly beneficial for female aspiring leaders and may accelerate their pursuit of principalship to equal that of their male counterparts (Coleman, 2002, 2005; Edson, 1988; Grogan, 1996).

These approaches can provide support for aspiring female leaders and have the potential to raise confidence levels and lower the isolation associated with the principalship (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Through her participation in the National Aspiring Principals Programme, Marg was provided with exposure to mentoring and stated that “for me personally that was probably one of the big positives coming out of that experience.” However, the underrepresentation of

women in principals' positions results in a lack of leadership role models for female deputy principals. The literature also notes the dearth of women in senior leadership positions who are able to act as mentors (Coleman, 2002; Edson, 1988; Hall, 1996). Without women to provide role models to aspiring leaders, one of the most desired and effective methods of professional development, is unavailable to females wanting to develop themselves prior to applying for principalship.

5.6.3 Reflection and Resilience

On a personal level, participants responded to the barriers by developing resilience through reflection. Barnett, O'Mahony and Matthews (2004) define reflection as "the process through which leaders ensure effective professional practice, protecting against the constant demand for an answer now, a decision yesterday, absent of thoughtful application of knowledge" (p. 7). Robertson (2005) further supports reflection as a tool for development as "reflecting on experiences and actions related to them helps leaders become more receptive to trying out new strategies and behaviours" (p. 53). Considering events, responses and interactions retrospectively has assisted participants in formulating new approaches to contending with the challenges in their field.

Establishing a positive and assiduous attitude was seen as imperative for participants. Cheryl commented on the importance of "high self-esteem and self-confidence" and when asked why other female leaders struggle with the various barriers, Tania noted that perhaps they lack a sense of "self-belief." Hoyt (2005) observes that women with high levels of leadership efficacy demonstrate resilience when confronted by challenging comments or queries.

5.6.4 Geographical Relocation

While the possibility of relocation was identified as a way to mitigate some of the barriers, the participants acknowledged the complexity of moving a family to a rural setting in order to pursue opportunities for principalship. Participants cited this as a factor that may prevent some female leaders from considering geographical

relocation as a potential leadership option. Although three of the participants identified that they do not wish to move from their local area, they believe it is an effective option for the “right woman.” An aspiring female leader without a partner and/or family may find relocation a feasible and efficient approach to acquiring a principal’s position as they are able to pursue jobs that interest them.

5.7 Participant Recommendations

Participants were invited to offer recommendations for systemic developments that could be implemented to surmount the barriers identified. Three suggestions for development emerged from the interview data.

5.7.1 Professional Development

Stewart (2000) suggests that professional development for aspiring leaders is vital to ensuring high quality education. In order to counteract practices and structures that continue to marginalise female leaders, it is essential that aspiring female leaders create a development plan to strengthen their administrative and leadership skills (Strachan, 1999b). Participants expressed interest in courses that were skill-specific to the unfamiliar aspects of the principal’s role. Traditionally, deputy principals do not have deep involvement in the areas of finance and property. Therefore, when applying for principalship there is a knowledge and skill deficit in those areas. Unless one has a principal who shares their skills and knowledge, most deputy principals only gain a full awareness of these areas once they are in the position. Because of this sharp learning curve, the participants recommend that courses are made available to aspiring leaders in fields such as property, finance and staffing.

While the creation of the National Aspiring Principals Programme has been designed to prepare participants for principalship, it is limited to 230 places nationally and involves a year-long commitment from participants. The Ministry of Education in New Zealand may wish to consider the establishment of additional preparation programmes and in-service training that focuses on the development of particular tasks and skills identified as areas of need by deputy principals. This will lead, among other things, to role clarity and greater understanding of the principal’s

responsibilities in an era of managerialism and accountability. The concept of gender-specific training for female aspiring leaders was also raised as an approach that could be taken to cater for the needs of the largest group of potential principals. If gender discrepancies exist with regards to leadership styles and attitudes, would it not benefit women to develop their skills in a learning context that suits them specifically?

5.7.2 Mentoring

A mentoring approach was identified by six of the participants as an effective and inclusive method of principal preparation. There is widespread agreement amongst both researchers and practitioners that those aspiring to educational leadership positions will benefit from relationships with mentors or participation in more formalised mentoring processes such as leadership programmes (Daresh, 1995; Mertz, 2004; Ryder, 1994; Sherman, 2005).

Mentoring offers a personalised and contextually-based approach which is authentic and relevant to the participant. By working closely with someone with more experience, learning is often less threatening and can be achieved incrementally at one's own pace. The intimate nature of the professional relationship enables the mentor to create deliberate acts of learning which cater to the strengths and identified development needs of the participant. Women, in particular, appreciate the personal approach to learning and the literature supports this viewpoint (Edson, 1988).

5.7.3 Inclusivity Training for Boards of Trustees

On the surface, this recommendation appears beneficial, however there are complexities associated with this approach.

Current training for Boards of Trustees is brief, both in time and in depth. Board members are often employed full time and have career demands. As they work on a volunteer basis, they may not prioritise, nor see the relevance of the training associated with being on a Board of Trustees. There is the potential that professional learning could be perceived as an unwarranted demand.

The motives board members possess for standing for the Board of Trustees can vary from member to member. For some members, it is a casual interest and they may not wish to contribute more personal time for further professional development. Others may wish to contribute their own sphere of skills to the school, but hold little interest in other areas of development. Regardless of motivation, education is rarely their sphere of expertise.

The personal mindset of board members is also a factor in the success of inclusivity awareness training. In some cases there may be ignorance of need. If Boards of Trustees are openly discussing the merits of male appointments and ignoring the legal aspects of equal opportunity employment, an awareness of their own narrow paradigms may be lacking.

Dependent upon community viewpoints, resistance to such training may be encountered. Overall acknowledgement of the issue and a willingness to participate in further development is required in order for change to truly be embedded.

5.8 Omissions and Silences

A review of the literature and findings indicates omissions and silences with regards to certain aspects of the barriers females perceive to exist in aspiring to principalship.

There was a lack of acknowledgement in the New Zealand literature of the disparity between the strong curriculum and pedagogical knowledge of aspiring principals and the need for managerial skills development. Having been identified as one of the more significant barriers for participants, it was surprising that the knowledge gap has not been explored in further detail.

Current societal family norms contrast with those of 10 or 20 years ago. With the modern family having evolved from a predominantly patriarchal structure to a less gendered one, the literature omitted exploration of the role of the male as the primary caregiver in some family contexts. Family life is examined in depth from the perspective of the female as the primary caregiver. In this study, two participants are

the primary income earners for their family and there was no literature to further explore that facet. What impact have recent societal changes and the advent of the stay-at-home father had on women's pursuit of promotion?

In relation to personal and familial influences, further exploration of the barriers facing aspiring female leaders who are single and without children would provide another piece to the tapestry of female leadership. How does the absence of primary relationships involving partners, husbands and children impact on women's aspirations towards principalship?

The role of qualifications and study in women's principalship aspirations receives limited acknowledgement in the research. With more women pursuing post-graduate qualification than in the past, how does this affect their application for principalship? Does acquisition of a Masters degree garner more success in principalship applications?

A potential barrier that did not emerge from the interviews was the impact of the relationship between the principal and the Board of Trustees. While mention was made of the Board of Trustees' gender preferences regarding principal appointments, not one participant commented on the potential stress that can result from a challenging relationship between the principal and their board. This is may be potentially due to the lack of insight into the nuances of Board of Trustees/principal interactions. Unless deputy principals are the staff representative on the board, or acquire knowledge through discussions with their principal, the potential quality of relationship between a principal and their Board of Trustees can remain unknown.

With further regards to Boards of Trustees, there is a silence in the literature concerning potential solutions to the perceived barrier of gender preferences in appointment practices. Participants observed this to be one of the most significant barriers they encounter in aspiring to principalship, however there is only limited research available to provide recommendations which might begin to address this issue.

Within a New Zealand context, limited scholarly information was available regarding the influence of Māori culture on aspiring female leaders. While this small-scale study included the region with the largest Māori population in New Zealand outside of Auckland, the transcripts yielded minimal acknowledgement of culture or race as a barrier. Due to the greater Māori population in the Bay of Plenty, potential cultural barriers that may exist in other less bi-cultural areas appeared not to influence participant's perceptions. Further exploration into the field would be beneficial as the geographical context of this study potentially impacted on both self and community perceptions of the significance of culture and its role in the barriers to female leadership. Additionally, potential barriers for other minority groups based upon race or sexual orientation receive little attention in the literature.

Finally, gender-specific vocabulary with regards to leadership is not explored in depth. Concepts such as ambition, that are often viewed as derogatory by women in education due to negative connotations of competitiveness, are not supplemented with vocabulary indicative of the female leadership experience (Adler et al., 1993).

5.9 Conclusion

The perceived barriers in aspiring to principalship identified by the participants were echoed in the selected literature. The barriers that influence women's decisions regarding the pursuit of principalship appear to be globally homogenous. However, while some perceived barriers are systemic in nature, reorienting aspiring female principals' mindsets from a deficit schema to one of confidence and competency could assist in eliminating some of the identified personal barriers. In addition, it may prevent female aspiring leaders from continuing to feel vulnerable to the socially constructed norms of gender.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

~Muriel Strode

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions held by female deputy principals of the barriers they face in aspiring to principalship. This chapter makes concluding statements regarding the participants' perceptions, acknowledges the limitations of the study and offers recommendations that may assist in strengthening preparation for principalship for aspiring female leaders.

Recommendations are for the Ministry of Education, those responsible for the delivery of the National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP) and finally for those considering principalship.

6.2 Implications of Study

It is evident that female deputy principals perceive there to be a myriad of barriers in aspiring to principalship. Some barriers are developed from deep-seated gendered structures that permeate the experiences of aspiring female leaders. Others are derived from systemic and infrastructural limitations or personal choices and perceptions of self. Regardless of categorisation, all barriers contribute to the underrepresentation of women in primary principalships in New Zealand. The findings of this study indicate that the most significant perceived barriers facing aspiring female principals are those of gender preconceptions, familial influence and job-related knowledge.

Analysis of the data highlights the influence of personal prioritisation. Perceived barriers such as geographical limitations, the "ideal" school, family commitments, and workload concerns are the result of participant choice and prioritisation. While all present themselves as tangible barriers, it is the importance placed upon them by the participant that determines their impact in countering aspirations to principalship.

Self-confidence also emerged from the data as a considerable barrier. Some participant-identified barriers would dematerialise with higher participant confidence levels. Issues regarding lack of job-specific knowledge and concerns of public and self-perception would be minimised.

6.3 Recommendations

Based upon the findings of my research and the views of this study's participants, the following recommendations are offered as approaches that may assist in eliminating some of the perceived barriers facing female deputy principals who aspire to principalship. These involve a two-pronged approach, one practical and one theoretical (Stewart 2000).

Formal mentoring programmes: The establishment of a formal nationwide mentoring programme for interested aspiring female leaders would allow the establishment of close links between a current female principal and an aspiring female leader. While there is currently a mentoring programme as part of the Ministry of Education's First-time Principals Programme delivered by the University of Auckland Centre for Educational Leadership, its focus is on principals, not developing aspirant principals. The aforementioned National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP) also has a mentoring component, but only for the selected candidates who engage in the year-long programme. The development of a mentoring system for all interested aspiring female leaders would create a more inclusive and less-time consuming approach to gaining the necessary skills and confidence associated with the progression to principalship.

Associated annual conferences would provide further networking opportunities that the participants in this study identified as an effective method of building a knowledge base. By establishing professional networks, some of the identified barriers such as self-confidence and specific job-related skills can be addressed within the construct of a collegial and collaborative environment.

Needs-specific professional development courses: The provision of leadership development by local and regional Ministry of Education offices and private providers, in specific areas associated with low participant confidence and ability, would assist in the elimination of the knowledge gap for aspiring principals. Assessing learning needs via on-line national questionnaires would start to establish a framework from which pre-principalship education could address the needs of a substantial pool of potential principals.

6.4 *Limitations to Study*

This small-scale qualitative study has some limitations. One of the primary limitations of this study is the size and nature of the sample. A larger number of participants from across New Zealand would enable more detailed and comprehensive conclusions to be established. The study also focused primarily on deputy principals' perceptions of the potential barriers due to the small-scale nature of this study. The views of female aspiring principals in other positions such as Assistant Principals and Senior Teachers were not included as it is commonly accepted in the educational community that career progression for a deputy principal is towards principalship.

Another limitation is the limited geographical area from which the research participants were drawn. Data gathered from one geographically-specific area will reflect the perceptions and beliefs of the participants in that one context, not provide a national perceptual representation.

6.5 *Further Study*

While the theoretical and empirical research is well-established regarding the global barriers facing female aspirants, there are silences in the literature concerning more specific sub-groupings.

Broadening the participant base to be more inclusive within a New Zealand context may provide a more comprehensive national representation of the perceived barriers women encounter in aspiring to principalship. Could further research into the

perceptions held by aspiring female leaders in Kura Kaupapa Māori and secondary schools produce a panoptic analysis of the barriers? Additionally, by extending the study to include participants of ethnicities other than Māori and Pakeha, would a national perspective emerge? What significance does a rural or urban setting have on perceived barriers? Inclusion of a wider sample of female deputy principals without children could generate previously unexplored barriers, particularly as family was identified as one of the most significant barriers in this study. In a similar vein, a comparison of participants who have engaged in recent tertiary level study with those who hold no further qualification may elicit different perceptions of barriers.

One of the most substantial platforms for further research could be the exploration of the perceptions of barriers from a male deputy principal's viewpoint. By comparing the data gathered by both groups, a common set of perceived barriers could be established and further recommendations made for programmes to better address the needs of all aspiring principals.

6.6 Conclusion

Deeply held stereotypes and beliefs continue to hinder the progress of aspiring female leaders. Traditional attitudes are evolving, yet some aspects of societal culture and structure still produce barriers for women aspiring to principalship. Women's career advancement should not be focused solely on barriers and impediments, but rather on leadership and personal development. Efforts must be made to bring the number of women in principalship into closer proportion with the number of women in education. A new conception of leadership development needs to be created and an awareness promoted that it should not always produce traditionally accepted norms in educational leadership (Southworth, 1995b).

Despite the small scale of this study, this report offers valuable insights which emphasise the importance of creating needs-based and gender-specific principalship development programmes to further enhance the preparation of future principals. Given that women constitute 82% of the primary teaching workforce, it is imperative that solutions are found to support female leaders on their pathway to principalship.

Systemic changes must be made in order to cater to the needs of the “ladies-in-waiting” in educational leadership. In the face of principal recruitment and retention concerns in New Zealand schools, it is time to create a dynamic and sustainable leadership development strategy to cater for the largest potential source of future leaders - women.

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