Career paths, responsibilities, barriers, and affirmations of exemplary female elementary school principals

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Career paths, responsibilities, barriers, and affirmations of exemplary female elementary school principals

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Education Administration
in the Department of Educational Leadership

Mississippi State, Mississippi
April 2020
The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of exemplary female elementary principals. The qualitative phenomenological study investigated the career paths, job responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations of exemplary female principals practicing in elementary schools in the United States. The participants were required to have at least 5 years of experience in education and at least 3 years as an elementary school principal. Interviews were conducted by the researcher to acquire explanations about the participants’ perceptions, perspectives, and feelings based on their experiences as exemplary elementary principals. The investigation focused on the females’ career paths, job responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations as exemplary leaders. Further, the females provided advice and guidance for aspiring female leaders in education. In general, the exemplary female principals started their careers as teachers, married, had children, and obtained advanced degrees and training in educational leadership as they moved to positions as elementary principals. The job responsibilities of the female principals included supervising instruction to improve instructional practices as the instructional leader, monitoring data, implementing policies and procedures, hiring as well as placing personnel, preparing budgets, maintaining a safe environment for
students and staff, managing facilities, and purchasing equipment/resources for the organization. The major barriers/challenges faced by the female principals were lacking resources, managing time, prioritizing tasks, and managing tasks for work and home. Advice and guidance for aspiring female administrators centered around the personal, professional, and public service responsibilities that contributed to their success and recognition as exemplary principal.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is being dedicated to my family. With sincere appreciation, thank you for the words of encouragement and reassurance through this process. To my mom, thank you for the prayers and constant reminders that Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.” To my love ones, thank you for reading chapters for clarity, for listening when frustrated, for the prayers, phone calls, positive affirmations, and for believing in me and my ability to achieve this great honor. Family and love ones are the best support system, and I love each of you.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Female principals have been recognized and celebrated as both effective and successful at managing schools (Oboegbulem, 2013). Over the years, the exploration of celebrated women’s leadership led to further research on women’s success, gender differences, and leadership challenges of women (Bligh & Kohles, 2008). Research conducted by the Pew Research Center found that women in executive roles created work environments that were safe, exhibited respect for others, and found value in the diverse backgrounds of the people within their organizations (Parker, Horowitz, & Igielnik, 2018). Success of the organization was believed to be linked to attributes such as ability to listen attentively, notice details, be respectful, build relationships, and exhibit care and concern for others (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Helgesen, 1990).

Kirton and Healy (2012) explored the practices used by women considered as “good” leadership. They found “good” leadership exemplified by women was empowering and influential in the process of building relationships with members within the specific organizations. Kirton and Healy (2012) stated, “American women revealed a common presence of empathic and caring characteristics in the leadership styles believed to contribute ‘good’ leadership” (p. 991). The act of demonstrating compassion and empathy were believed to create a positive culture within an organization and confirmed the need for more opportunities for leaders who possessed these qualities (Gilligan, 2011). Kirton and Healy (2012) defined
feminine leadership practices as being interpersonally oriented, democratic, collaborative, and transformational.

Historically, studies of gender and leadership revealed gaps, stereotypes, and barriers that were typically associated with male management styles (Morgan, 2006; Schein, 2001). Major findings showed the battle of masculinity versus femininity posed challenges for women when discussing roles of leadership (Metha, 2015). Northouse (2016), as well as Eagly and Carli (2004, 2007), described a leadership labyrinth being based on human capital differences, gender differences between women and men, and prejudice and discrimination against females. Further, the effectiveness of male versus female leaders was studied for a number of years in what was referenced as a male-dominated field (Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Northouse, 2016). Gender-based stereotypes created the idea that the attributes typically found in men were once preferred as the leadership style of choice (Northouse, 2016). Moreover, these stereotypes were described as task-oriented, authoritarian, controlling, and transitional (Kirton & Healy, 2012).

In general, Lunenburg (2010) believed successful school management was a direct result of the principal’s effective leadership. According to the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) National Distinguished Principal’s Program, principals who achieved recognition for excellence within their organizations exhibited praiseworthy instructional practices, student achievement, school climate, and learning opportunities for faculty and staff. Such accolades were usually bestowed after going through selection processes organized by local school districts, state departments of educations, and/or educational organizations such as the NAESP.
Statement of the Problem

The underrepresentation of women in positions of middle and upper level school leadership has been identified as a global phenomenon (Northouse, 2016). Bligh and Kohles (2008) stated, “While women are becoming more visible in leadership roles from local to state and from state to national levels, they are still labeled and considered a distinct minority when it comes to power and high ranking leadership positions” (p. 381).

In the report by the Center for American Progress, Warner and Corley (2017) highlighted the Women’s Leadership Gap and showed that women made up approximately 51% of the population in the United States and 47% of the labor force. The researchers reported that women held 60% of undergraduate and 60% of master’s level degrees (Warner & Corley, 2017). The findings showed women were lagging behind men when securing middle and upper level leadership positions (Warner & Corley, 2017). The United States Bureau of Labor (2017) reported gaps based on ethnicity as well as wages earned by women in comparison to those of their male counterparts.

The National Organization for Women (2017) reported that women made up approximately 47% of the United States labor force, but only 14% held executive offices while only 8% were considered top earners in their organizations. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2018) and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA; 2018), a large number of females were employed in the Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade (P-12) setting in public education, but males dominated chief executive positions. For women in roles of leadership in P-12 education, the underrepresentation was recognized as one of the most gender-segregated in the profession (Walker, 2013). Research studies showed that women were disproportionately represented in lower-level positions with limited authority in
comparison to men (Leopold, Ratcheva, & Zahidi, 2017; Northouse, 2016; Powell & Graves, 2003).

The AASA’s (2011) findings showed women were underrepresented in leadership roles in educational settings and accounted for less than a quarter of all superintendents, which was a slight improvement from 13% identified in 2000 (Superville, 2016). Nevertheless, women made up 76% of teachers, 52% of principals, and 78% of central office administrators based on federal data and results from national surveys (AASA, 2011).

Notably, Morrison’s (2018) study found that teachers in school settings for children ages 4 to 11 were approximately 85% women, and 73% of women held leadership roles such as head teachers or principals. However, there was great discrepancy at the secondary level with 62% of women in roles as teachers and only 38% as head teachers or principals (Morrison, 2018). These data suggested that opportunities for women to hold leadership positions increased, but there was still room for improvement when addressing equity in roles of middle and upper levels of leadership for females (Morrison, 2018).

**Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of exemplary elementary female principals. The first goal of the study was to investigate the career paths and career experiences of the exemplary elementary female principals. The second goal was to examine how the female principals described their current job responsibilities. The third goal of the study was to examine major challenges/barriers related to the exemplary elementary female principals’ professional success. In addition, the study explored affirmations and advice related to achieving an exemplary status as described by the exemplary female principals to help provide guidance for aspiring female principals.
Research Questions

The overarching research question for the study was the following: How do exemplary elementary principals describe their experiences related to their career paths, professional responsibilities, barriers and challenges, and affirmations?

Further, secondary research questions were used to guide the investigation. The secondary research questions were used as semi-structured interview questions.

1. How do exemplary elementary female principals describe their professional career paths in relation to their personal, professional, and family experiences?

   a. What educational/leadership training and academic preparation have exemplary female elementary principals participated in to prepare them for their professional positions?

   b. What work experiences, job titles, and responsibilities did exemplary female elementary principals have prior to their current positions?

   c. How do exemplary female elementary principals describe relationships with their families as they moved through their career paths (single/married/divorced, children/no children, living with parents and/or providing care for family member, etc.)?

   d. What advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals offer aspiring principals related to their career paths?

2. How do exemplary female principals describe their current job, personal/public service leadership roles, and family responsibilities?
a. What are the current job responsibilities of the exemplary female elementary principals?

b. How do the exemplary female elementary principals describe their personal/public service leadership roles and responsibilities (professional associations and organizations)?

c. How do the exemplary female elementary principals describe their family responsibilities?

d. What advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals offer to aspiring principals related to the job responsibilities, personal/public service, and family responsibilities?

3. How do exemplary female elementary principals describe the major challenges/barriers they encountered along the way during their career paths?

   a. What are the major challenges/barriers exemplary female elementary principals encountered during their career paths?

   b. What are the major challenges/barriers exemplary female elementary principals face in their current job responsibilities?

   c. What are the major challenges/barriers exemplary female elementary principals face in their personal/no public service responsibilities?
d. What advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals offer to aspiring females for dealing with challenges/barriers faced during their careers?

4. How do the female elementary principals describe the exemplary events/experiences and affirmations as an elementary school principal?

   a. What are the affirmations (satisfying aspects) of their roles as exemplary female elementary principals as related to their professional and personal contexts?

   b. What overall advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals have to offer to aspiring administrators?

**Definition of Key Terms**

The following terms were used in the study. Definitions of the terms are presented to help clarify meanings and assist with the development of a conceptual understanding of the study.

1. Affirmation refers to the recognition and celebration of accomplishments (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

2. Artifacts refer to visible, tangible, and audible results of activity in values and assumptions (Hatch, 1993; Schein, 1985).

3. Assumptions represent the taken-for-granted beliefs about reality and human nature (Hatch, 1993; Schein, 1985).
4. Career development refers to an ongoing series of themes or tasks that prepares an individual for his/her future career path (Corazon & Loyola, 2016).

5. Career path refers to the lifelong process of work-related activities that prepares an individual for multiple positions within his/her chosen career field (Corazon & Loyola, 2016).

6. Culture refers to a combination of hidden assumptions about how things have been done, feelings about others, and identity routines and procedures to improve the organization (Marzano et al., 2005; Schein, 2017).

7. Exemplary is an adjective used to describe an individual/instance serving as a highly achievable example or illustration (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

8. External barriers refer to hindrances caused by outside factors such as society (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013).

9. Internal barriers refer to hindrances from within the individual organization (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013).

10. Leadership refers to the ability to influence change and to provide guidance and support to others during a time of peace or turmoil to achieve a common goal (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015; Northouse, 2016).

11. Phenomenology refers to a study of people’s continuous experience of their “everyday life and social action” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 26).
12. Transformational leadership refers to a style of leadership wherein the leader works with teams to set goals, make decisions, and innovate the organization (Eagly & Carli, 2003).

13. Values refer to social principles, philosophies, goals, and standards considered to have intrinsic worth (Hatch, 1993; Schein, 1985).

**Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Nodding’s (2010, 2013) ethics of care and Schein’s (2004) culture theory were selected to help explain the behaviors of women associated with their career paths, responsibilities, challenges, and affirmations. Nodding’s (2010, 2013) ethics of care emphasized the importance of caring relationships in education. In a caring environment, the leader displays attributes in an on-going effort to build relationships, establish trust, collaborate, pay attention to details such as work habits, interests, etc. (Noddings, 2010).

Schein’s culture theory (2004) helped to emphasize the behaviors associated with the lives of female principals based on their personal behaviors/traits, family responsibilities, and professional accomplishments. Schein’s (2004) culture theory focuses on the effects of relationships, beliefs, and responsibilities in terms of environmental demands and success. Culture plays a role in one’s external career, prestige/recognition associated with their career, legitimacy of rudimentary motives, criteria for success, and the importance of career versus family and self-development (Schein, 1983). Beer, Burke, Schein, and Zand (2012) explained the following related to organizational culture and how it changed over the years.

Since the 1980s, we are no longer dealing with a mix of national, organizational, and occupational cultures. Leaders are now required to develop a new kind of relationship
with subordinates that is more personal, trusting, and open than the traditional
professional models due to the new cultural and technological realities. (p. 67)
Therefore, the leader of an organization must be aware of the hidden assumptions that can impact
the overall behavior of individuals within the organization (Beer et al., 2012).

**Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Figure 1 provides a visual display of the conceptual framework of the study. The study
addressed career paths, current job responsibilities, barriers/challenges, advice/guidance, and
affirmations of the exemplary elementary female principals.

The career paths, current responsibilities, barriers/challenges, affirmations and guidance
of the exemplary female principals were explored during the study. The researcher described the
data collected based on the personal, professional, and family tenets as suggested with Schein’s
(2001) culture theory.
Exemplary Female Elementary Principals

Career Paths

Current Responsibilities

Barriers/Challenges During Careers

Affirmations and Guidance

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study.
Overview of the Methodology

The research design selected for the study was a qualitative approach. The phenomenological research design was selected to explore the lived experiences of the exemplary female elementary principals. Phenomenological research is defined as a qualitative method of research used to describe the life experiences of an individual (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenological research includes the voices of the participants about their lived experiences and eliminates biases and assumptions about human experiences in the specific situations or phenomenon (Giorgi, 2012). Interviews were conducted by the researcher to obtain explanations about perceptions, perspectives, and feelings experienced by the participants as exemplary elementary principals. Data were analyzed using recommended steps for coding and member checking along with using narratives to provide rich, thick descriptions with emergent themes.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was restricted to exemplary female elementary principals with at least five years of experience in the field of education and at least three years as a principal of an elementary campus. The participants in the study were deemed exemplary based on recognition by state or national organizations for work during their careers as principals of elementary schools in the United States.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study may provide insights for aspiring females with the desire to excel and advance in the field of educational leadership. Ideas and helpful tips for overcoming obstacles/challenges encountered by female principals may be shared with aspiring female leaders. Exemplary female elementary principals shared their personal stories about their career
paths, career responsibilities, and affirmations experienced in their personal and professional lives. The participants revealed strategies for success, ways to overcome challenges, and affirmations of balancing family, career, and personal aspects of their lives.

**Organization of the Study**

The study contains five chapters. Chapter One provided the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, theoretical framework, conceptual framework, research questions, research methods, definition of terms, delimitations, and significance of the study.

The review of literature is included in Chapter Two. This chapter contains an overview of the literature that supports feminist theories as well as Schein’s culture theory. Furthermore, the chapter provides a summary of both previous and current research in relation to the career paths and responsibilities of female leaders in the field of education.

Chapter Three contains information about the processes and procedures for conducting the research study. This chapter includes a description of the research design and general methodology associated with the study. In addition, the chapter presents the research design, research questions, criteria for participants, instrument for collecting data, procedures for the collection of data and data analysis, and a summary of the methodology.

Chapter Four contains an analysis of the data and emergent themes derived from the investigation. The findings include a rich, thick description and emergent themes in a narrative format.

Finally, Chapter Five contains a summary and discussion of the major findings in the study. This final chapter also provides recommendations for school administrators, aspiring women, and policy makers. Recommendations for future research studies are provided at the end of the chapter.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the research literature related to career paths, current job responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations experienced by exemplary female elementary school principals. The literature related to the study explored school leadership associated with gender, career paths, advancement, and achievement.

The Underrepresentation of Females in Leadership Positions

The underrepresentation of females in leadership positions has received attention from researchers and resulted in studies that examined the possible reasons for the gap in the advancement of females (Northouse, 2016). Morgan (2006) examined the organization and the patriarch of the family as a “bureaucratic approach to organizations” that fostered traits and “characteristics associated with Western stereotypes of maleness” and sought to degrade the abilities that were often associated with females (p. 218). The hierarchy of patriarchal values (protect, help, and mentor those in need of protection) and matriarchal values (unconditional love, trust, compassion, creativity, and happiness) illustrated bias and dominance of what was believed to be the ideal leadership based on gender (Morgan, 2006). During the earlier times, organizations found favor in the leadership style and abilities of one sex over the other (Morgan, 2006). However, as family structures changed over time, there were also changes within the proposed organizational structures which provided an increase in opportunities for women to excel into roles of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2003). The organizational changes became more
inclusive of women and embraced the values of females as being beneficial to organizations (Morgan, 2006). Over the years, Eagly and Carli (2003) found that women began to “shift more of their time from domestic to paid labor” work (p. 826).

Morrison (2018) explored the over-representation of White males in school leadership positions. While teaching was long identified as a female-dominated profession, men were known to occupy most roles of leadership in school settings (Capper, 1993; Morrison, 2018). Morrison (2018) noted that men tended to progress into leadership roles at a faster rate than women because gender inequality existed. From a feminist perspective, prior studies implied that males were assertive, controlling, and independent which were once considered the norm for effective leadership (Metha, 2015; Wood & Eagly, 2015). The studies also showed little support that gender alone determined the effectiveness of a leader (Katila & Eriksson, 2013).

Hawkins (1995) examined the effects of gender and communication on leadership. The findings from Hawkins’ (1995) study revealed that males engaged in more task-related communication than females and presented no significant evidence that gender differences emerged in leadership.

**Career Paths of School Administrators**

An abundance of the literature suggested that the career path of a principal was one of continuous learning and often led to the position of superintendent at some point in one’s career (Robbins & Alvy, 2009). Aspiring individuals seeking upper level leadership roles could follow either a traditional path of moving through the ranks as a teacher/principal/central office employee to becoming a superintendent or a teacher/principal/superintendent (Glass, 2000; Polinchock, 2014). There were also cases where the role of principal was bypassed and
individuals went from teaching to central office and then on to hold the title as superintendent (Polinchock, 2014).

Advanced-level degrees, more specifically master’s degrees, were commonly held by candidates for principal and superintendent positions (Reeves & Berry, 2009). Educational specialists and doctoral degrees were not commonly required for individuals to secure superintendent positions (Reeves & Berry, 2009). Domenech (2009) found that the career paths of principals and superintendents tended to vary based on gender and the size of the districts. For smaller districts, superintendents often came from within the school system, usually having served as principal within the district. For women, the leadership and career paths usually ran from a principalship to central office positions within small school districts (Domenech, 2009).

According to Domenech (2009), securing the role of principal required academic preparation and professional development as key components identified by both the National Association of School Administrators (NASA) and the School Superintendents Association (AASA). The National Center for Education Evaluation (NCEE) and Regional Assistance (2017) examined the demographics, educational attainment, licenses, and career paths of school principals. The study found that 75% of principals held master’s degrees as the highest level of education obtained and the majority had a background as a classroom teacher before advancing to the role of school leader. Interestingly, studies from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017) and the Pew Research Center (Parker et al., 2018) showed evidence that women in comparison to men were more academically accomplished in terms of formal training and held advanced degrees in their fields of study, but lacked adequate representation in upper level leadership positions in the educational setting.
While women were found to be academically accomplished and qualified for advanced roles in leadership, research literature showed an imbalance in their ability to manage their professional and personal responsibilities (Havice & Williams, 2005). As a result of management challenges and family obligations, some women were forced to make a choice between providing care for their families and advancing in their careers (Havice & Williams, 2005; Madsen, 2008). Thus, decisions may have resulted in women postponing and/or choosing to decline opportunities for professional advancements in middle and upper level leadership roles (Madsen, 2008).

For some school principals, the career path was a non-traditional route because individuals did not enter college on an educational track (Tyre, 2015). However, these individuals happened upon the career in education as an effort to fulfill requirements for substantial financial aid packages awarded during college studies and/or joined Teach for America (Tyre, 2015). For example, in one case, the career path to school leadership began with a two-year experience as a teacher followed by a position as an instructional coach and later an assistant principal before securing a position as principal in a charter school (Tyre, 2015).

Studies conducted by Krivkovich, Nadeau, Robinson, Robinson, Starikova, and Yee (2018) undertaken by LeanIn.org and McKinsey & Company revealed that women of color had a greater ambition to achieve upper levels of leadership, but were often faced with more challenges in the workplace. The researcher concluded a need for future studies to determine why women of color were significantly underrepresented and lagged behind White men, men of color, and White women in their representation in upper level leadership positions (Krivkovich et al., 2018).
Meador (2018) found that becoming a school administrator was identified as a rewarding but stressful job. Meador (2018) described school building leadership as a career option that carried a median annual salary of $103,217. Further, Meador (2018) noted that experiences of success were based on the performance of others. According to Meador (2018), school leaders made a difference in the lives of students, teachers, and the school as a whole by providing constructive feedback and motivating others. Positive relationships were emphasized as being essential to the general well-being of others (Shankland & Rosset, 2016). Helterbran and Rieg (2004) advocated the importance of knowledge, attitude, dedication, and stamina needed to survive and flourish when providing the service of educating and serving children.

**Responsibilities of Elementary Principals**

**Principal’s Role**

Researchers Garcia, Duncan, Carmody-Budd, & Ree (2014) described school leadership as being “vital to education because leadership sets the foundation for learning” (p. 205). Therefore, the principal is directly responsible for health of the school as it refers to the culture and climate of the organization (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). The role of the principal has changed over the years from being a manager of the organization to being an instructional leader (Grobler, 2013). With the shift in organizational focus, school administrators must maintain the day-to-day operational tasks, while also providing specific instructional feedback and coaching that will enhance the growth and development of teachers’ instruction to improve achievement (Grobler, 2013). Hoerr (2015) referred to the role of the principal as “lead learner” because of the responsibility for ensuring high quality teaching and learning. Coelli and Greene (2012) studied the impact of instructional leadership and instructional activities on student achievement. In their
findings, teacher coaching, evaluations and working to improve knowledge of the curriculum all led to growth in student achievement (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013).

Job responsibilities for elementary principals require administering and supervising all activities and personnel within the school (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000). The responsibility of the principal is to create and communicate a shared vision to stakeholders for the organization (Harris, Ballenger, & Jones, 2007) as well as ensure the environment has a positive and safe culture and climate for learning. Principals were identified as influencers with the power to change a school’s culture and image by creating and sharing the school’s vision and goals (Grobler, 2013). A shared and purposeful vision was noted in the literature as a key contributing factor to the success of exemplary leaders (Harris et al., 2007). Further, the job responsibilities of elementary principals are made up of tasks that fall within seven core functions (Harris et al., 2007). These seven functions of leadership are instructional, cultural, managerial, human resources, strategic, external development, and micro political (Harris et al., 2007).

The responsibilities of an elementary principal differ based on the size of the school (Lunenburg, 2010). Lunenburg (2010); Lunenburg & Ornstein, (2000) shared the following responsibilities as that of the principal with little regard to the size of the school when it comes to curriculum-instructional and managerial tasks. The responsibilities included

1. Supervising instruction to improve instructional practices as the instructional leader,
2. Implementing board policies, rules, and regulations,
3. Hiring and determining work assignments for personnel,
4. Planning, budgeting, and conducting meetings,
5. Observing and providing feedback on performance of all personnel,
6. Providing counseling and encouragement,

7. Approving and initiating purchases for equipment,

8. Inspecting the facility and grounds, and

9. Supervising as well as preparing reports (Lunenburg & Orenstein, 2000, p. 520).

Lunenburg and Luneburg (2013) found research supported previous beliefs that principals of effective schools possess strong instructional skills in curriculum as well as exhibit the essential skills for management of the organization. Meadors (2019) described a good principal as one who is balanced in her responsibilities and makes decisions based on what is best for all constituents.

A shift related to the principal’s role and instructional leadership was in the area of promoting and encouraging professional development (Davis, Hammond-Darling, LaPointe, & Meyereon, 2005). The State of School Leadership study (Davis et al., 2005) was a beginning indicator of the shift towards professional learning communities in place of professional development as a means to improve instruction because of the potential for embedded practice and support. With continued emphasis on the state accountability requirements and assessments, principals must be aware of the academic demands and requirements in order to provide support to staff on an instructional level (Davis et al., 2005).

Kark and Eagly (2010) reported women generally possess more traits of the transformational leadership style. Female principals were noted for empowering others and developing effective leaders within their organizations, while nurturing and giving care to those in their charge (Hayes, 2013). The values, motivation, and leadership of a principal can impact student achievement (Calman, 2010). Obeogbulem’s (2013) research on the effectiveness of women as principals identified female principals as both effective and successful at managing
schools with challenges. Naidoo and Perumal (2014) reported female principals lead successful schools. Haynes (2013) found principals lead successful schools with limited resources in low-income communities. Principals in successful schools empower and develop leadership skills in their teachers so they become leaders within the organizations (Habegger, 2008). Habegger (2008) reported the type of environment created by these leaders provides a sense of belonging, creates harmony, and produces results for the students and teachers as well as the parents and community. Dufour and Eaker (2006) characterized schools with an inclusive culture as intentional communities that produce environments with shared mission/vision and values (Habegger, 2008).

**Leadership Practices**

Numerous research studies focused on the leadership styles and practices of successful principals, including those identified as practicing transformational and transactional leadership (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2003; Northouse, 2016). Eagly and Carli (2003) examined the debates between men and women on transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. The transformational leadership style was defined by Northouse (2016) as “one of the most encompassing approaches to leadership” (p. 190) often associated with female leaders. The works of Bass and Riggio (2006) placed emphasis on the intrinsic motivation and development of follower skills as a means for empowering others. Northouse (2016) reported that leaders possessing transformational leadership skills are goal oriented and innovative, and they find concern with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. The transformational leadership style often associated with female leaders supports the characteristic of the ethics of care theory (Zulu, 2016).
Eagly and Carli (2003) looked at the similarities and differences represented in the transactional and transformational leadership styles using a Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). In the comparison of results, it was determined that the transactional leader displayed traits that supported management of responsibilities, the process of rewarding accomplishments of tasks, and the methods for addressing and correcting failure to meet objectives (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Some studies on the transformational leadership style indicated that the traits were best suited for female leaders because of their nurturing maternal instincts and ability to motivate followers (Zulu, 2016). Other studies deemed the leadership style as being gender neutral (Kark & Eagly, 2010).

Another important aspect often discussed with women and leadership roles is that of family responsibilities. The extant literature showed family was an important aspect of the “lived experiences” of female leaders (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers found women negotiate roles and expectations for family members and colleagues (Northouse, 2016). Eagly and Carli’s (2003) research indicated women have advantages as well as disadvantages as leaders. Women’s leadership traits are valued and their attributes of caring, nurturing, inclusiveness, and attentiveness are also assets for leaders in today’s society (Growe & Montgomery, 2000). Lunenburg (2010) reported elementary principals present a more sensitive approach to needs often centered around curriculum and instruction, as well as views and priorities of parents and community members.

**Barriers/Challenges of Female Principals**

Barriers that contributed to the underrepresentation of females in leadership positions were generally centered around responsibilities and decision-making (Eagly, 2003; Northouse, 2016). Women were often faced with challenges that impacted their opportunities for career
advancements and the desire to find balance among personal needs as well as family and work responsibilities (Havice & Williams, 2005; Morgan, 2006).

Lynch (2016) explored the barriers faced by school leaders in achieving sustainable school improvement. Lynch (2016) found the key to improvement lies within the school leader. For example, motivation and ability to empower staff members were used to build capacity among teachers (Lynch, 2016). As a result of these practices, school leaders were more likely to achieve positive outcomes for students and sustain school improvement (Lynch, 2016).

Researchers continue to iterate that principals set the tone for the organization and were instrumental in determining the “effectiveness of a school” when it came to performance and student achievement (Banjarnahor, Hutabarat, Sibuea, & Situmorang, 2018). Meador (2018) described the role of a principal as a rewarding job but stressful job.

Wise (2015) surveyed principals in public schools and reported the following as common challenges impacting education and complicating the work of school leaders: effects of poverty, pressures associated with accountability for student achievement, lack of funding, and environmental factors that cause breakdowns within communities. Wise’s (2015) findings suggested a need for preparatory programs to rethink the process for educating and preparing school administrators so they will be equipped to tackle these challenges. According to Northouse (2016), barriers/challenges play a role in the underrepresentation of women serving in middle and upper level positions of school leadership (Northouse, 2016).

Helterbran and Rieg (2004) conducted a qualitative study of female administrators and explored the growing number of female principals and the challenges faced during their quest for advancement in roles of school leadership. Results from the interviews revealed strategies women used to cope with and overcome common barriers associated with the role of leadership
Helterbran and Rieg (2004) studied challenges of women as principals. The researchers suggested women overcome challenges by possessing confidence, courage, and determination when seeking leadership roles in a male dominated field (Helterbran & Rieg, 2004). In addition, finding an effective mentor with whom one can collaborate and commiserate ideas, networking with other female administrators, and delegating responsibility to achieve balance and manage the demands of home and school were beneficial in overcoming challenges (Helterbran & Rieg, 2004).

Growe and Montgomery (2000) and Peters (2012) reported findings that referenced women as domestic leaders who were supportive and inclusive. Women’s attributes of being nurturing, showing empathy, following their intuition, demonstrating caring, being cooperative, and being accommodating were found to play a part in effectiveness as leaders (Growe & Montgomery, 2000).

Pankake and Beaty (2005) garnered stories of successful female educational leaders. The researchers found 12 women who were models of resilience because of their efforts to move forward when faced with challenges and adversity (Pankake & Beaty, 2005). Bass and Avolio (1990) found evidence of improvement in on the job performance when leaders and potential leaders were faced with challenging experiences and/or encounters of dealing with adversity in the workplace.

A national study called *Generation X Women and Career Advancement* was conducted by Flippin in 2017. Data were collected from various sources to determine the benefits and barriers faced by women in upper management levels of leadership (Flippin, 2017). Flippin (2017) sought to create a better understanding of how Gen X women excelled as well as explored the barriers and influences of progression in their career choices. Flippin’s (2017) study
identified three key aspects: (1) career planning and development, (2) organizational empowerment, and (3) networking. Women were obtaining higher levels of education, bringing about diversity in the workplace, and creating innovative, high performing organizations (Flippin, 2017).

**Affirmations**

Marzano et al. (2005) recognized the need for acknowledgement of failures and successes as part of the process for identifying and overcoming barriers and challenges in the role of leadership. Marzano et al.’s (2005) study revealed that one of the largest challenges for school leaders was to address both positive and negative performance issues. Recognition of negative performance was reported to be more difficult than recognition of positive performance (Marzano et al., 2005). Marzano et al. (2005) suggested the importance of accountability as a means for getting results in a fair and consistent manner, but consequences must be results/data driven.

Bollinger and Grady (2015) conducted a study focused on female superintendents from across the 50 states to explore job satisfaction and retention. Major affirmations of satisfaction included rewarding experiences, including making a difference in communities by building positive relationships, and effectively communicating with others (Bollinger & Grady, 2015).

**Theoretical Framework**

**Noddings’ Ethics of Care**

Historically, the female principal’s role was described as being diverse and fragmented, and it involved numerous decisions related to the achievement of students as well as performance within the school’s organization (Wesson, 1998). Katz, Noddings, and Strike (1999) found
women were often viewed as emotionally expressive, communal, and caring. In addition, women were nurturing, attentive, and worked well with others in terms of establishing positive relationships (Katz et al., 1999). In turn, caring relationships were often associated with personalities and character traits of women (Noddings 2013a, 2013b).

Noddings’ (2013a, 2013b) ethics of care and education theory emphasized traits associated with creating a caring educational environment. Noddings’ (2013a, 2013b) research explored relationships between the school and the community through teaching and learning. The impact of the experiences derived from school interactions help teach and develop a sense of empathy in the lives of young children (Noddings 2013a, 2013b). Based on Noddings’ (2013a, 2013b) research, these traits of care were determined as ideal characteristics for elementary settings and could impact the development of children into caring and loving adults.

**Schein’s Organizational Culture Theory**

Schein’s (2001, 2017) organizational culture theory supports behaviors that impact the environment of one’s professional, family, and self-oriented activities. Schein (1983) organized family, professional, and personal aspects of life into societal, occupational, and organizational cultures. Each culture plays a role in the external career, prestige/recognition associated with the career, legitimacy of rudimentary motives, criteria for success, and importance of career versus family and self-development (Schein, 1983).

behavior depends on the contextual variables such as the nature of a task and characteristics of the followers” (p. 808).

Over the years, shifts in female leadership and in organizational culture required leaders to develop relationships with subordinates due to the increase in technological advancements (Beer et al., 2012). Attributes commonly associated with females, such as ability to listen attentively, notice details, be respectful, build relationships, and exhibit care and concern for others now have a place in organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Helgesen, 1990; Noddings, 2012a, 2012b). Eagly and Carli (2003) found that “many organizations embrace the benefits of including women and minorities among their leaders” (p. 827) and women were recognized for their practices of caring, nurturing, being supportive, reassuring, and attentiveness.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter Two examined the research literature related to career paths, current job responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations experienced by exemplary female elementary school principals. The literature related to the study explored common issues associated with gender, careers paths, advancement, and achievement of women in roles of educational leadership. The researcher explored literature that addressed the underrepresentation of women in positions of middle and upper level school leadership which has been identified as a global phenomenon (Northouse, 2016). The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in P-12 education has been recognized as the most gender segregated in any field (Walker, 2013). Research studies showed that women were disproportionately represented in lower-level positions with limited authority in comparison to men (Leopold et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016; Powell & Graves, 2003).
The exploration of career paths and responsibilities of school administrators provided a road map for the advancement of school leaders to upper level leadership positions (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2010). Common job responsibilities were to provide instructional leadership, manage the grounds and facility, implementing board policies, budget, and hire employees to maximize strengths and productivity of the organization (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2010).

MacNeil et al. (2009) described the climate of a school as the means for measuring the health of the school. School culture and climate are a direct reflection of the principals’ leadership. Hoerr (2015) reported principals must be highly engaged in the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy as well as provide encouragement, motivation, and lead the initiative of growth for both students and faculty. Findings from the study conducted by MacNeil et al. (2009) revealed that a strong school culture impacts teacher retention, motivation, and student performance. Therefore, the behaviors and traits of care exhibited by the school leaders impact the overall environment and health of the organization. Within the school setting, the principal is viewed as the “lead learner.” As the instructional leader, the principal is responsible for knowing how children learn as well as what they need to learn. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that high quality teaching and learning are occurring daily in every classroom (Hoerr, 2015).

Women were often faced with barriers and challenges that impacted their opportunities for career advancement (Havice & Williams, 2005; Morgan, 2006). Major affirmations of satisfaction included being recognized, rewarding experiences, including making a difference in schools and communities by building positive relationships (Bollinger & Grady, 2015).
The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to investigate the career paths, job responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations of exemplary female principals practicing in elementary schools. This chapter provides information collected through phone interviews as it relates to the career paths, job responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations of exemplary female principals who had received recognition for their accomplishments at a state and/or national level.

Research Design

A phenomenological research design was selected for the study. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), phenomenology is “a study of people’s conscious experiences of their everyday life and social action” (p. 26). The primary purpose of phenomenological research is to understand human behavior through the voices of the participants in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The major objective of phenomenological research is to explicate the meaning and essence of the lived experiences of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

For the study, a series of “How” and “What” questions were asked to capture the lived experiences of five female participants who met the defined specifications of the study. Selected participants were required to possess at least three years of experience as a principal of an elementary school. In addition, the participants were required to hold recognition by a state or national organization for exemplary work in the academic setting. The researcher, also an
elementary principal, used semi-structured questions to conduct phone interviews in order to allow the female elementary principals to verbally express their personal experiences by sharing stories about their career paths, job responsibilities, barriers, and challenges. Schein’s theory of organization culture as well as Noddings’ theory of care ethics provided the lens for helping to explain behaviors of the participants and organizing the research investigation. The major components for each section of the study included personal, family, and professional aspects of the exemplary female elementary principals’ lives and experiences.

**Research Questions**

The overarching research question for the study was the following: How do exemplary elementary principals describe their experiences related to their career paths, job responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations?

Further, secondary research questions were used to guide the investigation. The secondary research questions were used as semi-structured interview questions.

**Secondary Question 1**

How do exemplary elementary female principals describe their professional career paths in relation to their personal, professional, and family experiences?

a. What educational/leadership training and/academic preparation have exemplary female elementary principals participated in to prepare them for their professional positions?

b. What early work experiences, years of experience, job titles, and responsibilities did exemplary female elementary principals have prior to their current positions?
c. How do exemplary female elementary principals describe relationships with their families at the time they began their career paths (single/married/divorced; children/no children, living with parents and/or providing care for a family member, etc.)?

d. What advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals offer aspiring principals related to their career paths?

Secondary Question 2

How do exemplary female principals describe their current responsibilities?

a. What are the current job responsibilities of the exemplary female elementary principals?

b. How do the exemplary female elementary principals describe their professional/public service leadership roles and responsibilities (professional associations and organizations)?

c. How do the exemplary female elementary principals describe their family responsibilities?

d. What advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals offer to aspiring principals related to the job responsibilities, professional/public service, and family responsibilities?

Secondary Question 3

How do exemplary female elementary principals describe the major barriers/challenges they encountered along the way during their careers?
a. What are the major barriers/ challenges exemplary female elementary principals encountered during their career paths?

b. What are the major barriers/ challenges exemplary female elementary principals face in their current job responsibilities?

c. What major barriers/ challenges exemplary female elementary principals face in their professional/ public service responsibilities?

d. What advice/guidance for exemplary female elementary principals offer to aspiring principals related to overcoming challenges/barriers in their professional, personal/public service, and family responsibilities?

Secondary Question 4

How do exemplary female elementary principals describe their affirmations and advice/guidance as an elementary school principal?

a. What achievements/experiences do you consider as affirmations (satisfying aspects) of the role as an exemplary female elementary principal as related to their professional and personal contexts?

b. What overall advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals have to offer to aspiring administrators?

Role of Researcher

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described the role of the researcher as “the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (p. 16). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommended interpreting the data immediately after collection of the data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued
that the primary instrument is human, and there are known possibilities of shortcomings and
opportunities for biases/subjectivity that could affect the study. In an effort to eliminate
opportunities for the shortcomings and biases to occur, the researcher must identify and monitor
circumstances as they relate to the theoretical framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By doing
so, the researcher can avoid the imposition of her personal beliefs when collecting and analyzing
the data. During the inductive process, the researcher collects data used to structure the theories
associated with the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As recommended by Merriam and Tisdell
(2016) for the qualitative process, the researcher used a rich description with words to convey the
phenomenon of lived experiences of the participants.

**Institutional Review Board Approval (IRB)**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasized the importance of ethics when conducting a
study to ensure the information is valid and reliable. The Mississippi State University’s IRB
approval was required before the researcher could begin collecting data using human subjects for
the study. The researcher submitted an application for review to the IRB committee prior to the
start of collecting data for the study. The purpose of the IRB approval process was to protect the
rights and welfare of human subjects involved in experimental research activities and to
determine whether or not participants were at risk of physical, psychological, social, economic,
or legal harm (Creswell, 2014). At Mississippi State University, the protocol for the Human
Research Protection Program (HRPP) promotes high ethical standards for conducting research
using human subjects. The online process for gaining IRB approval for conducting research was
successfully completed for the study, and it was determined that the methods of collecting data
for the study were safe and noninvasive. A copy of the approval letter is included in Appendix A
of documents associated with the study.
In a phenomenological research study, the researcher interprets the collected data following the interview and analyzes it immediately to eliminate opportunities for the shortcomings and biases/subjectivity to occur (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher then structures the findings based on the theoretical framework and creates a rich description using words and tables to convey the stories/experiences of the participants.

**Research Context**

Exemplary elementary school principals were identified from state departments of education and professional associations. Participants were selected and recognized by either state or national organizations for their exemplary roles as elementary school leaders. Printed articles and publications as well as web searches provided additional information for triangulation. Recruitment of participants was done by e-mail and by phone. Recruitment support was also provided by a male assistant superintendent in South Carolina who was recognized as an Administrator of the Year for the state of South Carolina. The assistant superintendent assisted with contact information for a recognized female Administrators of the Year within his state. The NISL EDP coordinator provided contact information for individuals recognized as Distinguished Principals within the state of Mississippi after identifying them through news publications.

**Selection of Participants**

In phenomenological research, Yin (2018) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) supported the use of a single subject research design for the purpose of obtaining information during the investigation process. A sample consisting of five exemplary female elementary principals based on specific criteria were selected to participate in the study. Participants were recognized by either state or national organizations for their exemplary roles as school leaders. The participants
were required to have at least five years of experience in education and at least three years as an administrator on an elementary public-school campus. They were current, former, or retired principals. Participants were recruited and selected from publications associated with the National Association of Elementary School Principals’ (NAESP) National Distinguished Principals, Mississippi Department of Education’s Principal of the Year, South Carolina Association of School Administrators, National Institute of School Leadership (NISL) Distinguished Principals, and Leadership Coaches. The participants received recognition from 2008 to 2018. Participation in the study was requested by e-mail. E-mails were sent to 97 potential participants from state education departments as well as state and national organizations that recognized distinguished administrative leadership requesting participation in the study. Follow-up was made with phone calls to individuals whose contact information was located through a Google search. Some e-mail responses were received from individuals who were no longer in leadership roles and some that had returned to the classroom as a teacher and did not desire to participate. Other responses indicated that the principals were unable to participate due to district policies that forbid participation without district approval. Personalized phone calls were also placed to individuals to personally request their participation in the study. As mentioned already, assistance was requested from an assistant superintendent from the state of South Carolina to gain access to potential participants meeting the criteria. Assistance was also requested from a central office administrator from the state of Tennessee for assistance to gain access to potential participants meeting the criteria. Five participants from Mississippi and South Carolina agreed to participate in the study.
Instruments and Materials

Structured interviews were conducted by telephone. A script was prepared to ensure a fair opportunity was given to each participant during the phone interview process. Questions for the interviews were derived from the list of semi-structured secondary questions that supported the primary and overarching questions. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Participants were provided with an opportunity to validate the transcript containing responses from their interviews via email.

The responses to questions asked during the individual interviews were recorded, transcribed, compiled, and analyzed to determine the emergent themes. REV Voice Recorder was used to record and transcribe the interviews. Then, transcripts were used to identify and code emergent themes derived from the interview responses provided by the participants. NVivo 12 Plus software was used to help compile, store, and code the participants’ responses as well as determine common themes.

Procedures Followed for Data Collection

Individuals who expressed the desire to participate were interviewed by phone at a time that was convenient for their personal schedules to obtain information about their career paths, responsibilities, challenges/barriers, guidance, and affirmations. Interviews with the five participants were conducted by phone using the semi-structured secondary research questions. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. At the beginning of each interview session, the researcher verbally notified participants that the conversation would be recorded and collected demographic information to establish a profile for each of the participants. The next set of questions helped establish the participants’ stories as they related to their career paths, job experiences and responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and guidance/affirmations. Once
participants confirmed their satisfaction with the interview, the researcher then began compiling the information into a narrative format to move to the next step of the process. Each participant was asked a series of semi-structured questions as stated in the secondary research questions. Time was allowed for each participant to respond to the questions and/or add to a previous question.

In addition to collecting responses for the research questions, demographic information was also collected to establish a profile for each participant. The following information was obtained from the participants to create a demographic profile consisting of the participants’ race, age, highest degree obtained, number of years served as an elementary principal, and number of years of experience in the field of education. Additional artifacts were researched such as news publications along with web searches using sites for educational organizations to collect additional information on individuals as well as to validate and triangulate the responses shared in the interview process.

The interview sessions were recorded and transcribed using the REV app. The REV app is a voice recorder available for iPhone and Android devices. The app allowed the researcher to capture audio directly from the phone during phone interviews. The recordings were then uploaded to the REV account and processed for transcription by a team of transcribers. The turnaround time for transcriptions was usually less than 24 hours after submission. The transcripts and voice recordings were sent back to each participant to preview and edit if desired.

Notes were taken about the responses as well as about each participant’s verbal expressions, (e.g., tone of voice or expressed feelings during the interviews). Precautionary measures were taken to protect the identity and names of individuals. Responses of the
participants were identified using the word “Principal” with the corresponding number that ordered their participation in the interview process, (e.g., Principal One).

**Data Analysis and Validation of Findings**

When analyzing the data obtained from the interviews, Merriam and Tisdale (2016) suggested the use of a step-by-step process for qualitative research where the researcher transcribes and analyzes the data immediately following the interviews. The researcher organized and analyzed the findings into categories derived from the conceptual framework used for the study. The researcher implemented the 8-step process of Creswell (2014) for collecting and analyzing data which included the following.

(a) The researcher used different data sources such as websites and articles to review and justify data collected. This process of triangulation was used to assist with determining common themes.

(b) The researcher conducted the member checking process with the participants to check for the accuracy of the qualitative findings and allowed the participants an opportunity to validate information accuracy.

(c) The researcher used rich, thick descriptions to report the findings by providing detailed descriptions of the setting and themes so that the results became realistic.

(d) The researcher put forth every effort to clarify bias using the process of self-reflection to ensure that the narrative was written in an open and honest format for readers.

(e) The researcher focused on negative or discrepant information included in the discussion of information collected to determine whether there was agreement/disagreement with the themes thus adding to the credibility of the information.
(f) The researcher reviewed and engaged in a prolonged inductive coding process over a period of time to develop an understanding of the experiences/phenomenon and convey findings through a narrative format. Common phrases were pulled from the responses and organized into categories resulting in emergent themes.

(g) Peer debriefing was conducted for the purpose of reviewing and asking clarifying questions to ensure accuracy of the encounters.

(h) The researcher’s major professor served as an external auditor and reviewed the project in its entirety to check and ensure “validity” and “reliability” of data collected during the qualitative study.

Responses to the interview questions were organized based on similarities and differences of career paths, job experiences and responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations/guidance collected from the interviews. NVivo 12 Plus software was used to store the data and as a coding system to identify themes within the responses. Interview responses were analyzed until responses reached a state of saturation using the following steps prescribed by Creswell (2014). The researcher completed the following steps:

- Examined documents containing responses, took notes, and looked for commonalities.
- Revised all data collected and clustered topics.
- Abbreviated and coded topics while looking for new categories if applicable.
- Determined and categorized overarching themes from topics.
- Finalized the abbreviations used for each category and organized them in alphabetical order.
- Organized and stored data in a common location.
• Recoded additional data for clarification as needed.

Common themes emerging from responses were identified and categorized, and results were written as a narrative to describe the findings for the study. Data were collected from multiple sources—phone interview responses, notes, and demographic information. School Principals, National Institute for School Leadership, and state department of education recognition of Administrators of the Year to ensure accuracy of the information presented as result of this study.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were shared with participants via e-mail to ensure accuracy and to validate responses. A peer debriefing process occurred involving the dissertation chair before finalizing. Details of the data collection process were discussed. The dissertation chair performed an external audit on the project in its entirety and provided constructive feedback as well as recommendations. Upon completion of the study, a finalized copy of the study’s findings was provided to each of the interview participants.

Summary

Chapter Three provided information about the procedures used for conducting the research for the qualitative phenomenological study in an effort to provide aspiring and current females with strategies and helpful tips for overcoming barriers/challenges encountered during their career paths to success in the field of P-12 educational leadership. Data for the phenomenological study were collected through phone interviews using the primary and secondary research semi-structured questions. Responses were recorded and transcribed using the REV app and analyzed for common themes and stored using NVivo 12. Interview responses and data obtained from the study were cross checked using articles and online websites to validate the information as part of the triangulation process. Once the triangulation process was
completed, common themes emerged and saturation became evident with responses. The findings of the study were organized and presented using rich, thick narratives based on the secondary research questions.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Overview of Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a report of the findings after the collection and analysis of the data for this qualitative phenomenological study. The primary source of data included telephone interviews with five female exemplary elementary principals who were recognized for state and/or national achievements or accomplishments within the United States. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

Additional data were collected from websites and printed documents of the participants’ schools, their school districts, and state/national associations. Triangulation was achieved using historical data such as newspaper articles, magazine publications, and featured presentations of the awardees. Websites reviewed were the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), National Institute for School Leadership (NISL), and state departments of education recognition of Administrators of the Year to ensure the accuracy of the information included in the analysis of the data for the study.

The primary and secondary research questions were used to guide the interviews and to organize the findings. Further, the results were organized using elements of Schein’s culture theory (professional, personal, and family). Pseudonyms were used to identify the participants. An overall summary is provided at the end of the chapter.
Introduction to the Participants in the Study

Five exemplary female elementary principals participated in the study. Demographic information about each of the five participants is included in this section as well. Participants were from Mississippi and South Carolina. Participants are referenced in the study using the word "Principal," and a number 1-5 was assigned to each participant to protect her identity.

Participants in the Study

Principal One

Principal One is a 42-year-old Caucasian wife and mother of two daughters with eighteen years of experience in the field of education. During her career, Principal One served as a teacher, literacy specialist, and principal at two elementary school settings. The school where she currently serves as lead principal houses approximately 800 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 2nd grade. The demographics of the current school is 16% free and reduced lunch, 77% white, 15% African American, and 5% Asian. Her previous school housed approximately 700 students. Based on the demographic information found on the Mississippi Department of Education and the school digger website, her previous schools was 73% free/reduced lunch, 58% African American, 19% Hispanic, and 15% white. During the time of leading these schools, Principal One was able to move the first school to a successful “B” rated school and sustained an “A” rating for the current school. Principal One holds a Bachelor’s degree in Secondary English as well as Master’s, Educational Specialist, and Doctoral degrees in Curriculum and Instruction. She obtained the necessary credentials to become an administrator through an alternate route program. This academic program prepared her for the state licensure exam and provided an internship that prepared her for the role of a school administrator. Her career path did not include an assistant principalship before becoming a building level principal;
however, she had served as a teacher and literacy specialist prior to her first principalship. In 2017, Principal One received recognition from her school district, the Mississippi Department of Education, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals for exemplary work in a low-performing school in Mississippi. During her tenure as leader of the elementary school, the school became a model school for Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS) and writing instruction. A major accomplishment for Principal One was the introduction of a Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM) initiative to promote creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and cooperation among her students.

During her principalship, Principal One was able to make a significant impact on the culture of the organization and promoted the vision that "all students will learn and grow." Under her leadership, Principal One successfully moved her school from a performance rating of “D” to being a school rated “Successful” by the state of Mississippi. Principal One is active in her church as a Sunday school teacher for second graders. Her record shows participation in numerous training sessions such as the NISL Executive Development Program (EDP) and other NISL sponsored training programs that helped develop her leadership skills. Principal One was recognized as a National Distinguished Principal by the NAESP and NISL. The recognition was published in the local newspaper.

**Principal Two**

Principal Two is a 40-year-old African American wife and mother of one son with thirteen years of experience in the field of education. During her career, Principal Two served as a Pre-Algebra and Algebra I teacher, an instructional specialist at an elementary school, a district middle school math interventionist, and a principal of an elementary school that serves 234 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade. According to the demographic
information found on the MDE and school digger website, the school has a total of 94% free and reduced lunch, 4% while, 95% African American, and less than 1% Asian. The school has been rated as an “A” school for the past 3 years under the leadership of Principal Two. Principal Two holds a Bachelor’s degree in Secondary Math, Master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and an Educational Specialist degree in Educational Leadership. Her career path did not include an assistant principalship before becoming a building level principal. As a school leader, she is committed to “providing a safe and academically challenging environment for students that will empower them to become innovative thinkers and lifelong learners.” In 2014, Principal Two was recognized as Administrator of the Year in her district and earned national recognition as a National Distinguished Principal through NISL. The announcement was published in the local newspaper.

**Principal Three**

Principal Three is a 55-year-old African American wife and mother of three children with 21 years of experience in the field of education. During her career, Principal Three worked as a social worker and a middle and high school teacher as well as an advanced placement English teacher prior to becoming a building level principal. Principal Three is currently serving as superintendent of a rural school district in Mississippi. Principal Three obtained her teaching credentials through an alternate route program and holds an Associate’s degree in Office Administration, a Bachelor’s degree in Business Education, a Master’s degree in Educational Leadership, and a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership with an emphasis in adult education. During her career, Principal Three was a social worker, teacher, assistant principal, principal, and superintendent. Under her leadership as a principal, two elementary schools moved from “Failing” to “Successful.” Principal Three received the PREPS Added Value
Award, and she was chosen as Administrator of the Year twice in her district. In addition, she received the Panhellenic Education Award and the Mississippi Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Outstanding Administrator Award. Under Principal Three’s leadership, her school was recognized as a Golden Ribbon School by the Mississippi Department of Education.

**Principal Four**

Principal Four is a 58-year-old African American wife and mother of four children with 32 years of experience in education. During her career, Principal Four held positions as a teacher, grade chair, teacher evaluator, assistant principal, and principal. Principal Four holds a Master’s degree in Administration. She retired recently from the field. Under her leadership, a 96% African American rural elementary school was named an “A” rated school by the state of South Carolina. As a result of her leadership, she was recognized as the 2008 South Carolina Elementary Principal of the Year and her school received the Dispelling the Myth Award for becoming a high performing predominantly African American school.

**Principal Five**

Principal Five is a 41-year-old Caucasian wife and mother of one son with 20 years of experience in education. During her career, Principal Five held the positions of teacher, assistant principal, principal, and is currently Director of Student Assessment at the district level. Principal Five obtained her credentials through a traditional route. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Mathematics, a Master’s degree in Secondary Math, and an Educational Specialist degree in Administration. Principal Five believes in building relationships and served as the principal in an “A” rated elementary school in Mississippi. Principal Five worked continuously to create an environment where teachers would feel valued, supported, and empowered. She was described as
friendly and approachable according to the NAESP profile listed on the website. In 2015, Principal Five was recognized as the Principal of the Year in her school district and as a National Distinguished Principal for the state of Mississippi. According to her 2015, National Distinguished Principal profile found on the NAESP website, Principal Five abides by the “work hard, play hard” mentality. She is known for hosting annual kickball tournaments, ice cream parties, and other methods of celebrating successes.

Demographic Information

Table 1 provides a summary of the race of the participants in the study. The number and percent of the participants by race are shown in the table below.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three out of five of the participants were African American. Two out of five were Caucasian/White. The majority of the participants in the study were African American/Black.

Table 2 provides a summary of the participants’ demographic information: age, years of experience, salaries, and career paths to school leadership. The home states of the participants are also recorded below. The demographic information was used to create a personal profile for each of the participants.
Table 2

*Age, Years of Experience in Education, Salary, Career Path, and State of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Path to School Leadership</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>$95,106</td>
<td>Alternate Route</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>$89,603</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>32 years</td>
<td>$96,000</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>$88,000</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants in the study ranged in age from 40 to 58 years old of age with 60% represented in the category of 40 to 45 years of age, 20% in the 50 to 55 range, and 20% categorized in the 56 to 60 years-of-age range. The principals’ years of experience working in the field of education ranged from 13 years to 32 years with 20% representing 11 to 15 years, 60% from 16 to 20 years, and 20% in the over 30 category. The salaries of the participants ranged from $86,000 to more than $100,000 with 100% of participants earning more than $80,000. From the collection of data, it was determined that 80% of the participants followed a traditional degree program, while only 20% gained credentials through an alternate path to school leadership. Data within the table also show the state that each of the participants represented. Four of the participants resided in Mississippi and one participant resided in South Carolina.
Secondary Research Question 1 – Career Paths

The following secondary research question addressed how elementary principals described their professional career paths in relation to their personal, professional, and family services. Narratives and tables are provided in answering the research questions.

Secondary Research Question 1: How do exemplary elementary female principals describe their professional career paths in relation to their personal, professional, and family services?

a. What educational/leadership training and/academic preparation have exemplary female elementary principals participated in to prepare them for their professional positions?

b. What early work experiences, years of experience, job titles, and responsibilities did exemplary female elementary principals have prior to their current positions?

c. How do exemplary female elementary principals describe relationships with their families at the time they began their career paths (single/married/divorced; children/no children, living with parents and/or providing care for a family member, etc.)?

d. What advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals offer aspiring principals related to their career paths?

During the interviews, participants were asked to respond to four questions used to explore their career paths in terms of training and academic preparation, years of experience, current job responsibilities, relationships with families at the beginning of their careers, and
advice/guidance for the career path of aspiring female principals. Narratives and tables are provided in answering the research question.

**Secondary Research Question 1A**

What educational/leadership training and academic preparation have exemplary female elementary principals participated in to prepare them for their professional positions?

When the participants were asked about their educational leadership training and academic preparation, all of them identified the institutions they attended and the degrees they received during their career journeys. Findings from the interviews indicated that the majority of the participants in the study followed the traditional path for advancement by attending college and receiving a bachelor's degree in either a content area or in education. Each participant had one or more advanced degree in Educational Leadership. The data indicated that the participants made incremental moves through the ranks, which included serving as teachers first, then principals, central office positions, and one later advancing to become superintendent. Principal Three and others in the study are following a traditional paths of advancement in school leadership. All participants in the study held advanced level degrees with Principals One and Three holding doctoral degrees.

During the interview, Principal Four reflected upon her experience of starting her career after completing her undergraduate degree, getting married as well as having and juggling her children while going back to school and working on her master's degree. She recalled her experience of trying to get her degree and "leaving her children with their grandmas and studying late while working."
Table 3 provides a look at the various areas of study and academic preparation of the five participants prior to obtaining a role as a school administrator. Represented in the data collection are degree levels and areas of study.

Table 3

Academic Preparation of Exemplary Female Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Bachelor’s</th>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>Educational Specialist</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Secondary English</td>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</td>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</td>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Secondary Math</td>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</td>
<td>Educational Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>Educational Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Leadership with emphasis in Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Secondary Math</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the academic preparation of the exemplary female elementary principals. All of the participants held Master’s degrees plus additional credits. Two of the participants held Doctoral degrees.

Table 4 contains the emergent themes derived from the academic preparation of exemplary female principals. Degree advancement and concentrations indicated the individuals were highly qualified/highly educated and experts in their specified curriculum fields.
Table 4

Emergent Themes for Academic Preparation of Exemplary Female Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Preparation</td>
<td>Advanced degrees; Highly educated/highly qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experts in specific education/curriculum fields</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emergent themes for Secondary Question 1A for academic preparation for exemplary female principals included the following: advanced degrees, highly educated, and experts in specific education/curriculum fields. The degrees earned and specialized areas of study indicated that the participants were highly educated and highly qualified in educational leadership. All participants held degrees or educational credits above the master’s degree.

Table 5 shows the educational leadership training of the exemplary female principals. In preparation for their roles as school leaders, the principals earned leadership credentials/licensure through participation in either a traditional educational leadership program or an alternate route program to school leadership. Table 5 also indicates the state where the principals were residents.
Table 5 summarizes the leadership training of the exemplary female principals. Table 5 also shows the state in which the principals resided. One participant achieved her credentials by participating in an alternate route program to school leadership. The other four followed a traditional program to obtain credentials to become school leaders. The majority of the participants in the study were from Mississippi and one was from South Carolina.

Table 6 indicates the emergent themes derived from the data collected for educational leadership training of exemplary female principals. Leadership credentials were enhanced with advanced degrees and continued education.
Table 6

*Emergent Themes for Educational Leadership Training of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Path</td>
<td>Traditional Educational Leadership Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alternate Route Programs to Educational Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Leadership Credentials/Licensure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Leadership Training</td>
<td>Degrees in Educational Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emergent themes for educational leadership training of exemplary female principals included traditional or alternate route programs in Educational Leadership. The degrees earned were in educational leadership which in all instances included internships and field activities.

Table 7 includes the overall emergent themes for Secondary Research Question 1A. The major areas include academic preparation, academic paths, and educational leadership training.
Table 7

Overall Emergent Themes for Academic Preparation, Academic Paths, and Educational Leadership Training of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Preparation</strong></td>
<td>Advanced degrees; Highly educated/highly qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experts in specific education/curriculum fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Path</strong></td>
<td>Traditional Educational Leadership Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alternate Route Programs to Educational Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Leadership Credentials/Licensure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Leadership Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary Research Question 1B

What early work experiences, years of experience, job titles, or responsibilities did exemplary female elementary principals have prior to their current positions?

Participants carried a variety of titles prior to their current positions. The titles were teacher, literacy specialist, lead teacher/instructional specialist, academic coach, social worker, and assistant principal prior to their roles as elementary principals. Principal Three advanced into the role of Superintendent after 13 years as a building level elementary principal. Principal Five also advanced into a district-level position as the Director of Student Assessment after seven years as an elementary principal. Principals One and Two were still serving as principals in
elementary schools. Principal Four retired from her role as an elementary principal but chose to give back to the community by assisting her daughter with a daycare they opened near her former school. Some responsibilities/tasks associated with the early work experiences were teaching, literacy specialist, content area coach, helping students, working with other teachers, creating a safe learning environment, and monitoring student progress.

Principal One recalled her early work experiences and shared that after completing her bachelor’s degree, she taught in the same her college town for two more years before moving to her current city. While in the current location, she has served as a teacher, literacy specialist, and principal. Principal One also referenced to her NISL experiences during the interview and shared, “I’ve done a lot of work through NISL and was nominated as a distinguished coach/distinguished instructional leader. She is now a facilitator for NISL and has the opportunity to work with other principals, assistant principals, and aspiring school leaders.”

Principal Two shared that her early work experiences included starting her career out as a pre-algebra and Algebra I teacher and later as an instructional specialist. Principal Three recalled her early experiences in the career field and shared that she began as a middle and high school English teacher. Principal Three taught general English and accelerated English as well as advance placement English prior to becoming a principal.

The early work experiences of Principal Four were also reflected upon, and she shared information about her experiences as a teacher in a rural area for nine years before applying for her first assistant principalship. During her time as a teacher, Principal Four had the opportunity to evaluate teachers at other schools using the new evaluating instrument at that time. She also shared the insights that she received during her role as an assistant principal on a different campus within her district. She spoke about the insight she received from the experience because
this school was located in a suburban area verses the rural area that she taught in previously. Principal Four stated, “I was an assistant principal for seven years in a school across the district. The experience gave me a lot of insight. When the opportunity came to be a principal in a rural school in another district, I knew that was where I wanted to be as an administrator.” For Principal Five, her reflections on early work experiences included time as a high school math teacher and role as an assistant principal and later as a principal. She recalled the following, “One thing that I think was most important was providing opportunities for the feeder schools to collaborate about expectations.” Principal Five referenced how these opportunities helped her as a teacher and also found them valuable as an administrator.

Table 8 provides a summary of the early work experiences, years of experience, job titles, and responsibilities of exemplary female principals prior to their current responsibilities. All of the participants had early work experiences in the field of education as teachers.

Varied early work experiences were represented in the responses. When asked about early work experiences, years of experience, job titles, and responsibilities prior to their current positions, study participants listed a wide variety of content knowledge and experiences that covered a wide span on knowledge and experiences. Four of the participants started their careers as teachers and one started her career as a social worker. Two of the participants did not hold an assistant principal position prior to becoming an elementary principal. The data showed that all participants in the study had a minimum of 3 years to a maximum of 10 years of experience as a classroom teacher prior to becoming an administrator. The participants’ years of experience ranged from 8 years to a maximum of 23 years as an administrator. The total years of experience in the field of education for the participants ranged from 13 to 32 years.
### Table 8

*Early Work Experiences, Years of Experience, Job Titles and Responsibilities of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Early Work Experiences Job Titles Responsibilities</th>
<th>Years of Experience as a Teacher</th>
<th>Years of Experience has an administrator</th>
<th>Total Years of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Teacher, Library Specialist Helping student; working with teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Teacher, Lead Teacher/Instructional Specialist, Math Coach, Interventionist Ensuring safety and being an instructional leader</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Social Worker, Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal Revitalizing school culture and guiding instruction</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal Monitoring academic and instructional practices</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal Connecting with parents and creating a safe learning environment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9 summarizes the emergent themes formulated from the interviews with the participants. The table includes early work experiences, years of experience, job titles, and responsibilities of exemplary female elementary principals prior to their current positions.

**Table 9**

*Emergent Themes for Early Work Experiences, Years of Experiences, Job Titles, and Responsibilities of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Work Experiences</td>
<td>Leaders of instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>Ranged from 3 – 10 years for teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ranged from 8 – 23 years for administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Titles</td>
<td>Former Teachers, Literacy Specialist, Interventionist, Assistant Principals, Principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>Leadership roles, helping students, working with teachers, creating a safe learning environment, revitalizing school culture, guiding instruction, monitoring data and academic/instructional practices, connecting with parents, physical management, managing day-to-day operations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emergent themes from Secondary Research Question 1B were leader of instruction, learning environment, tasks of an educator. The participants had early experiences as teachers prior to becoming administrators and one was a social worker. Other job titles held by the participants were instructional specialist, academic coach, and director of students. The participants had 3 to 10 years of experience as classroom teachers and 8 to 23 years as school
administrators. Major job responsibilities included maintaining a safe learning environment for all students; being instructional leaders and managing the organization’s day-to-day operations.

**Secondary Research Question 1C**

How do exemplary female elementary principals describe relationships with their families at the time they began their career paths (single/married/divorced; children/no children, living with parents and/or providing care for a family member, etc.)?

When participants described their relationships with their families at the time they began their career paths, 60% of the participants were single and 40% were married. All attended graduate school while working full-time jobs and the majority were running households, and/or caring for a spouse and children. Principals One, Three, Four, and Five spoke of the support they received from their spouses and family members (parents and grandparents) who stepped up to share the tasks and responsibilities associated with taking care of household tasks as well as caring for the children and the needs of the family. Principals One, Two, and Four had spouses with jobs that required traveling but were also supportive and shared the role of parenting. The children of Principals One through Five will attend, currently attend, or attended schools in the districts where the mothers work or worked. As a result, the participants and their children could spend time together on the commutes to and from schools.

Principals One and Two were not married at the beginning of their careers. Principal Two stated in the interview that at the beginning of her career, “she was living on her own and her attention was focused on her career.” Both principals married several years into their careers and now have the responsibilities associated with caring for a household, spouse, and children.
Principal Three shared that she had small children when she decided to make a career change to education after six years in the field of social work. Her spouse said, "Hey, I've got you. I've got your back. I'll take care of the home while you do these things."

During the interview responses, Principal Three stated that her husband was her support system. As a family, they make every effort to ensure that all of the routine things are taken care of so when they are all home together their focus is on family time. She spoke repeatedly about "faith, family, and prioritizing". Principal Five reflected upon the beginning of her career. She got married about the same time that she started her first job. Principal Five had her first child some years into her career which was during her first year as an administrator.

Table 10 indicates the participants’ family relationships when they began their careers and family responsibilities. Participants were either married or single at the beginning of their careers.

Table 10

*Family Relationships and Responsibilities at the Beginning of Career Path of Exemplary Female Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Family Relationship</th>
<th>Family Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Focused on career and caring for self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Focused on career and caring for self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Married with children</td>
<td>Care given to family &amp; household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Care given to spouse &amp; household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Care given to spouse &amp; household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the principals was married with children, caring for household and family members while working a full time job. Two were married a short time after starting their career paths. The two single participants admitted they were career focused and did not have family responsibilities.

Table 11 summarizes the emergent themes associated with family relationships and responsibilities at the beginning of their career paths. The following themes were evident after the analysis of the responses.

### Table 11

*Emergent Themes of Family Relationships and Responsibilities at the Beginning of the Career Paths of Exemplary Female Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Relationship</td>
<td>Single; married with children; married no children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Responsibilities</td>
<td>Care given to family &amp; household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care given to spouse and household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emergent themes in Table 11 for secondary research question 1C provides descriptors of the relationships with the exemplary principals’ families at the time they began their career paths. Participants were either single; married with children, or married with no children. For individuals with no children, their focus was on their careers and taking care of themselves when they began their careers. For individuals with children, their family responsibilities involved caring for family or spouse and maintaining household tasks.
Secondary Research Question 1D

What advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals offer aspiring principals related to their career paths?

Participants offered the following advice/guidance to aspiring female principals related to their careers. Principal One’s advice to aspiring female principals was to “find a position that allows you to use your passion and expertise and know-how to make a difference. If you are doing something that you are passionate about, you will find success.” Principal Two stated in her advice to aspiring female principals, “Make sure you are confident in curriculum resources. You can’t lead if you don’t know your content.” Principal Four’s advice for aspiring females interested in becoming school administrators was “try to get advanced degrees completed before starting a family and make time for self-care physically and mentally.” Principal Four stated, “Remind young ladies that “they have to carry the babies and be the main nurturer in their life so get all of that out of the way first”. As Principal Five reminisced over her years as an elementary principal, her advice for aspiring administrators was that “the most important thing is not the numbers.” She recalled and stated that as a math person, "Driving for results was my goal when I first became an administrator. I quickly realized that those results didn't matter if the people inside my building were discontent.”

Table 12 contains the advice/guidance exemplary female principals shared for aspiring female administrators in regard to career paths. Based upon their personal experiences, the participants in the study were passionate about the advice/guidance they were giving.
Table 12

*Advice and Guidance for Career Paths of Exemplary Female Principal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Advice/Guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Find your passion/live your passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Know your curriculum content area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Keep faith, love family, prioritize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Complete graduate degrees before starting a family; make time for physical and mental self-care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Build and nurture positive relationships with faculty, students, and staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants were all sincere in sharing their advice for aspiring principals. Knowing the curriculum content, focusing on family and staff relationships, and completing graduate degrees before starting a family were identified as essentials to career advancement.

Table 13 shows the emergent themes for advice/guidance shared by participants for aspiring administrators. The responses are intended to help aspiring administrators.

Table 13

*Emergent Themes for Advice/Guidance Given for Career Paths by Exemplary Female Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice/Guidance</td>
<td>Know your curriculum content area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete graduate degrees before starting a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build and nurture positive relationships with faculty, students, and parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall Emergent Themes for Secondary Research Question 1

How do exemplary elementary female principals describe their professional career paths in relation to their personal, professional, and family services?

The overall emergent themes for secondary research question 1 are presented in Table 14. The table summarizes the overall emergent themes that were derived from responses for secondary research questions 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D to answer secondary research question #1: How do exemplary elementary female principals describe their professional career paths in relation to their personal, professional, and family experience?

Table 14

*Overall Emergent Themes for Professional Career Paths in Relation to the Personal, Professional and Family Experiences of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Preparation</td>
<td>Advanced degrees; Highly educated/highly qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experts in specific curriculum fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alternate Route Programs to Educational Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Leadership Training</td>
<td>Traditional Educational Leadership Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alternate Route Programs to Educational Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership Credentials/Licensure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Work Experiences</td>
<td>Leaders of instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Emergent Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>Ranged from 3 – 10 years for teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ranged from 8 – 23 years for administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Titles</td>
<td>Teacher, Instructional Specialist, Social Worker, Assistant Principal, Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>Helping students, working with teachers, creating a safe learning environment, revitalizing school culture, sharing vision and goals, monitoring data and academic/instructional practices, connecting with parents, managing day-to-day operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Relationship</td>
<td>Single; married with children; married no children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Responsibilities</td>
<td>Caring for family/spouse and household tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice/Guidance</td>
<td>Know your curriculum content area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete graduate degrees before starting a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build and nurture positive relationships with faculty, students, and parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall emergent themes are from the responses to Secondary Research Question one: How do exemplary elementary female principals describe their professional career paths in relation to their personal, professional, and family experience?

Participants were leaders of instruction and began their careers with teaching in their early work experiences. The years of experience as a teacher ranged from 3-10 years and as an administrator ranged from 8-23 years. The career paths to educational leadership training were
either traditional or alternate route programs that enabled participants to receive leadership
preparation and licensure to become school administrators. Some of the early work experiences
and job titles were teacher, lead teacher, instructional specialist, interventionists, assistant
principal, and principal. Their responsibilities included but were not limited to providing
instructional leadership, working with parents, students, and teachers, creating a safe learning
and working environment for staff and students, and revitalizing school culture by establishing a
clear vision and communicating the mission and goals to stakeholders. The family relationships
and responsibilities included those of being married and single during early careers. Participants
in the study offered the following career path advice and guidance to aspiring school
administrators: know content area curriculum, build positive relationships with parents, students,
and teachers, and complete graduate degrees before starting a family when possible.

Secondary Research Question 2–Current Job Responsibilities

The following secondary research question addressed how exemplary female principals
described their current job responsibilities. Additional questions associated with the secondary
research question are included.

Secondary Research Question 2: How do exemplary female principals describe their
current job, personal/public service leadership roles, and family responsibilities?

a. What are the current job responsibilities of the exemplary female elementary

   principals?

b. How do the exemplary female elementary principals describe their

   professional/public service leadership roles and responsibilities (professional
   associations and organizations)?
c. How do the exemplary female elementary principals describe their family responsibilities?

d. What advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals offer to aspiring principals related to the job responsibilities, professional/public service, and family responsibilities?

During the interviews, participants responded to four questions used to explore their current job responsibilities. Each of the featured principals had schools rated “successful” and had success at increasing and sustaining performance levels over time while maintaining a healthy balance between caring for their families and running effective and productive schools even through challenging times.

Secondary Research Question 2A

What are the current job responsibilities of the female elementary principals?

Findings from the secondary research question showed that all five of the principals in this study spoke of common current job responsibilities. The participants discussed being data focused when addressing accountability and test scores. Common practices of distributing leadership were also evident in their efforts to empower others and to develop leaders within their organizations. The principals spoke of having a passion for leading and growing others. Moreover, this sentiment emerged from the heartfelt and reflective responses when the principals spoke of their experiences and responsibilities. Some commonalities in job related responsibilities were monitoring the data, being the instructional leader (monitoring instruction, monitoring Professional Learning Communities, making sure instructional supports were available when needed, evaluating, and providing feedback), being data focused (monitoring,
analyzing, and discussing), and sharing and/or distributing leadership (effort to grow and develop leadership abilities within the organization).

All five of the principals in this study spoke of practicing ethical behaviors and promoting equity within the schools. The participants discussed being fair, firm, and direct in expectations and the communication of goals as well as being data focused when it comes to accountability and test scores. Empowering others and distributing leadership were common practices cited by the principals. In turn, the empowerment led to the development of leaders within their organizations. A passion for leading was saturated in the principals’ responses consistently.

When describing their practices, participants talked about motivating others and being confident, honest, and collaborative. The principals appeared nurturing, kind, and held high expectations for the performance of their schools. They strongly believed in empowering their staff to lead and assist in making decisions for the school.

Principal One talked about her current job responsibilities and the enjoyment that she found in her responsibilities which included helping students and teachers, analyzing data, and developing teacher leaders. As she reflected upon work related tasks and shared how the responsibilities motivated her, she stated, “The job responsibilities motivate me because I am helping students, analyzing data, working with teachers, working to create a vision for a school.” Principal One spoke about empowering others to be leaders, and how she practiced shared leadership. She stated the following about her role and responsibilities: "I try to distribute leadership whenever I can--to grade level teams, the leadership team, and the assistant principals. That way we're developing a lot of leaders within the school. I ultimately want to develop a lot of teacher leaders because each teacher is a leader in his/her class."
Principal Two emphasized the importance of being confident, knowing the content, and giving teachers autonomy. Principal Three discussed the importance of establishing the culture and climate in a school as well as having people in the right place for instructional leadership. Principal Three shared information about her role as the instructional leader in her building. Principal Three stated,

Guiding the instruction as well as making sure I had people in place to guide instruction were also my responsibilities. Accountability was one of my responsibilities, so I made sure we held timely meetings or academic focus meetings. I assisted with our Professional Learning Communities. I observed teachers and provided feedback to them regularly.

Principal Four described her leadership style and personality as one who believes in shared leadership which led to the development of leaders within her organization. Principal Four went on to discuss her other duties such as evaluating teachers, monitoring data, monitoring the administrative assistant and overseeing the total operation of the school which included the academics, physical plant, etc. Principal Four stated, “In a small district, most of the responsibility for operating the school falls on me.”

Principal Five reflected upon experiences of dealing with upset parents. Principal Five stated,

Parents sometimes come in and act ugly or fuss about something that was going on at the school, but as a principal, it was my responsibility to say, ‘Here are the things that we're doing in supporting the work that you're doing at home.’ Then, the family sees school as a partner rather than just an outside agency.
Table 15 summarizes information describing the participants’ day-to-day responsibilities and practices as exemplary school principals. All of the principals spoke about accountability and focusing on student data. Job responsibilities were separated from leadership practices based on the nature of the responses given by the participants.

Table 15

*Current Job Responsibilities and Leadership Practices of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Job Responsibilities</th>
<th>Leadership Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Helping students, analyzing data, working with teachers, working to create a vision for a school, supervising the safety of staff and students; being the instructional leader; setting high expectations for students and staff, ensuring school is a nurturing environment for kids</td>
<td>Distribute leadership&lt;br&gt;Develop leadership skills in others&lt;br&gt;Focus on data&lt;br&gt;Be blunt and honest while being kind&lt;br&gt;Inspire and motivate adult learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Being an instructional leader, making sure environment is safe for kids, being familiar with accountability standards and best practices</td>
<td>Give teachers autonomy&lt;br&gt;Focus on Data, Be flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Implementing plans, being a strategic planner, revitalizing school culture, guiding instruction, assisting with academic focused meetings (PLCs), observing teachers/providing feedback, maintaining general school operations, handling some disciplinary issues, maintaining the school budget, assembling district reports</td>
<td>Build relations with individuals&lt;br&gt;Provide Guidance&lt;br&gt;Focus on Data&lt;br&gt;Motivate teachers and students&lt;br&gt;Be firm, but fair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Job Responsibilities</th>
<th>Leadership Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Monitoring test scores, evaluating teachers, monitoring total operations of school’s physical, academic and instructional practices, monitoring administrative assistant</td>
<td>Practice shared leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Ensuring environment is conducive to learning, and well maintained, overseeing PLCs, building positive relationships with parents, student, and staff</td>
<td>Communicate expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be direct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The job responsibilities and leadership practices of exemplary female principals included building and nurturing relationships in terms of connecting with parents, students, and faculty within the organization. All of the participants talked about focusing attention on data, monitoring test scores, evaluating teachers and instructional practices to ensure faculty and staff members were held accountable for utilizing best practices and improving student achievement. The participants acknowledged that they invested in developing leaders within the organization skills by sharing and distributing leadership. The principals implemented the visions for their organizations and created environments that were safe and conducive for learning.

Table 16 displays the emergent themes for secondary research question 2A. In this section, the job responsibilities and leadership practices associated with teachers and students are presented. Exemplary female elementary school principals were student focused and accountability-data focused. The principals practiced distributed/shared leadership, empowered teachers and staff, and built relationships.
Table 16

Emergent Themes Related to Current Job Responsibilities/Leadership Practices of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Job Responsibilities</td>
<td>Being the instructional leader; creating and sharing the vision, mission, and goals; supervising safety of environment for staff and students; focusing on accountability and data; implementing school wide strategic plans; evaluating teachers, rejuvenating school culture; monitoring total operation of the school; hiring staff; monitoring school budget’ monitoring professional learning communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Practices</td>
<td>Distribute/share leadership to empower others to lead; build positive relationships with staff, students and parents; motivate and encourage students and staff; be fair, firm, honest, and flexible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emergent themes for current job responsibilities of the exemplary female principals were providing instructional leadership to staff, ensuring the learning environment was safe, well maintained, and conducive for learning. The principals’ responsibilities included helping students, supervising safety of students and staff, inspiring and motivating adult learners, being familiar with best practices and accountability standards, implementing plans, planning strategically, monitoring school budgets, and assisting with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The leadership practices with teachers included focusing on accountability data, empowering teachers through shared/distributed leadership, and building relationships with parents, students, and faculty. In addition, leadership practices included communicating
expectations, providing motivation and encouragement while building positive relationships with students. An additional theme derived from the responses was establishing leadership expectations while being fair, firm, honest, and flexible.

**Secondary Research Question 2B**

How do the female elementary principals describe their professional/public service leadership roles and responsibilities (professional associations and organizations)?

When the participants were asked to describe their personal/public service leadership roles and responsibilities (professional associations and organizations), all five of the participants responded that they belonged to organizations that provided service to the professional/public/community. Each of the women held memberships in professional education organizations at a state and/or national level. Findings from the interviews suggested the women were involved in organizational activities that were inclusive of their family members such as church or support groups that worked with local schools. The principals served on college advisory committees, held leadership positions in sororities, and other professional organizations. While some participants in the study were actively involved in these service oriented organizations, others found it necessary to be visible and in attendance at events as a means of public relations for their schools. While their job and family responsibilities were both time consuming and demanding, the participants found it difficult to juggle a lot of service responsibilities even though they admitted this was important and needed.

Each of the participants spoke of being actively involved in her community and her involvement in her respective church. Principal One spoke about co-teaching the second grade Sunday School class with her husband and noted that she was active in educational organizations. Principal One stated,
I’m really doing a lot during the day and on weekends. I try to contribute as much as I can to church. If I were going to add any more responsibilities, it would be to church because there’s still a lot of needs in the church, and I think some of my gifts, like working with students would allow me to help more in the children’s ministry.

Principal Two discussed her membership in a sorority and other community organizations where she held leadership positions. Principal Three serves on two college/university advisory committees that work to bridge gaps between the Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL) and the K-12 schools. She is also an adjunct professor and shares her experiences and knowledge with aspiring future administrators and educators. Principal Three shared the following in her response to describing her professional and public service responsibilities, “I believe in support. I do a lot in the community.” As an elementary principal, her district required participation and/or presence in at least three community engagements. Principal Three stated that she did more than required. Principal Three responded with the following: “I participated in a lot of things just because I was a part of that community. I am actively involved in a community service organization where the schools are traditionally African American. I attend city council meetings being a face in the community while providing public relations for the schools.” Principal Three found a need in letting people know she has a role in the education setting as well as letting them know where her school was located and inviting people to come into the school.”

Principal Four reflected upon her involvement, and she stated, “I really wish that I could do more public service.” Principal Four shared that she was very active in her church with the women’s group and the young people’s department. Principal Four said she was a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) but wasn't active.
Principal Four stated, “Professionally, I was in the elementary principal’s organization, and I did some work for the South Carolina Education Administration Association, i.e., planning conferences and stuff like that.”

Principal Five served in her church, but did not do any civic volunteering. As she reflected and responded to the question about her role as an elementary principal, she said, "As the school principal you're the face of the school and so there's lots of community events that you go to as a representative for the school and this was one of my professional responsibilities when I was the school principal."

All five of the participants found value in being involved in personal/professional/community service organizations but may not have participated in as many activities as they would have liked or played a more active role due to time and other responsibilities. They also realized that as elementary principals, it was necessary to be involved and be visible at functions to present as well as to speak and share information about their schools.

Table 17 displays the professional/public service leadership roles and responsibilities of exemplary female principals participating in the study. All of the participants were involved in some sort of community/public service or social organization within their communities and some held roles of leadership.
Table 17

Professional/Public Service Leadership Roles and Responsibilities of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Professional/Public Service Roles and Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Principal One | Active Member of Church (serves as 2nd Grade Sunday School Teacher with her husband)  
Member of Educational Organization – National Association of Elementary School Principals |
| Principal Two | Member and leader of Sorority and community organizations with leadership roles |
| Principal Three | Church  
Serves on two advisory committees with local Universities/colleges to bridge gaps between IHLs and the K-12  
Serves as an Adjunct Professor  
Participates in service projects with community organization  
Participates in Public relations activities for school in community  
Member of Educational Organizations – Elementary Principal’s Organization, Education Administration Association |
| Principal Four | Member of Church (Women’s Group, Youth Department, Young People’s Department)  
Member of Local Organizations – NAACP  
Elementary Principals Organization; South Carolina  
Education Administration Association (SCASA) |
| Principal Five | Member of Church  
Serves in public relations role for school in her community  
Participated in state organization for educational leadership |
All of the participants in the study were involved in church, professional organizations, and other service oriented organizations. All participants agreed that professional/public service involvement is important. Some members were more actively involved than others in the organizations and held leadership positions. Active involvement in community service projects and church activities provided opportunities for these principals to build relationships with stakeholders and share their vision and goals while representing their schools.

The participants in the study were involved in activities or organizations outside of school. Some participants were more active than others in their respective groups based on the amount of time available after tending to their families.

Table 18 summarizes the emergent themes gleaned from the responses of the participants regarding their professional/public service roles and responsibilities. The emergent themes were revealed from their responses.
Table 18

*Emergent Themes for Professional/Public Service Leadership Roles and Responsibilities of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Member of Educational Organizations – Elementary Principal’s Organization, State Education Administration Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serves in public relations role for school in the community, shares vision of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serves on advisory committees with local Universities/colleges to bridge gaps between IHLs and the K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serves as an Adjunct Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Active Member of Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actively engages in community service projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Member and leader of Sorority and community organizations with leadership roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community service partnership with school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emergent themes for secondary research question 2B were derived from the participants’ interview responses. Participants’ professional and public service roles and responsibilities indicated the principals were visible in their respective communities. This allows opportunities to share the school’s vision and mission, participate in community projects, and improve public service relations for the school.
Secondary Research Question 2C

How do the exemplary female elementary principals describe their current family responsibilities?

When the participants were asked to describe their family responsibilities, the responses revealed that all participants were married with children. As mothers and wives, their personal responsibilities required them to assist with homework, transport children to practices or events, do laundry, and tend to other household tasks such as preparing meals, cleaning, etc. Principal Four reflected upon times with her children and shared,

My husband was a construction engineer. So we spent 80% of the time alone. My kids went to the same school where I worked which made it easier because we were there together. Life was staying after school with mom, so homework was normally done in my office or one of the teacher’s rooms with other kids.

These tasks were in addition to the job related responsibilities associated with their roles as elementary principals. The make-up of the families of the exemplary principals in the studies was the traditional husband and wife teams. Each family consisted of at least one child with four being the maximum. Some of the principals were fortunate enough to have parents/relatives living close to them who offered assistance and support when needed.

Principal Three stated, “I am very family oriented, and I have a very supportive husband so my responsibilities at home are relatively easy.” Two of the participants’ parents were deceased and another had relatives who lived away from the current location of the family.

Table 19 represents the current family structure and responsibilities of the participants. All participants are currently married with at least one child.
Table 19

*Current Family Responsibilities of Exemplary Elementary Female Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Family Relationship</th>
<th>Family Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Married with children</td>
<td>Care given to family &amp; household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Married with child</td>
<td>Care given to family &amp; household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Married with children</td>
<td>Care given to family &amp; household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Married with children</td>
<td>Care given to family &amp; household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Married with child</td>
<td>Care given to family &amp; household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19 shows all of the participants were married with children. Current family responsibilities consisted of caring for the family and taking care of household tasks.

Table 20 summarizes the emergent themes for the current family responsibilities of Exemplary Female Principals. It is composed of both the family structure and related responsibilities.
Table 20

Emergent Themes for Current Family Responsibilities of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Responsibilities</td>
<td>Getting married and having a child/children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working wife/mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring for family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tending to household tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to secondary research question 2C, all participants were married with families. Their current family responsibilities included household tasks while being a working mom/wife. The tasks included caring for family and tending to household tasks such as doing the laundry; cooking/clean and doing homework.

Secondary Research Question 2D

What advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals offer to aspiring principals related to the current job responsibilities, professional/public service, and family responsibilities?

When the participants were asked to give advice/guidance for aspiring principals related to the current job responsibilities, personal/public service, and family responsibilities, the majority of the principals advised on the importance of managing time and prioritizing tasks for the job related responsibilities. Principal One’s advice for aspiring young females related to personal and professional responsibilities included the following: “Find a position that allows
you to use your expertise and passion to make a difference.” Principal Two’s advice was from a professional viewpoint, and she stated, “Make sure you are confident in providing curriculum resources. A lot of times we just think about leading, which you can’t lead if you don’t know your content.” Principal Three encouraged females to “make sure they are ready to invest the time and remember to address issues immediately, focus on culture and climate, work on time management, organization skills, prioritize, and be courageous.” Principal Four’s advice was to “prioritize and be visible.” Further, Principal Four stated, “Deal with problems immediately.” She recalled working long afternoons and hearing her children ask, “Mama, when are we going home?” Principal Four’s children were ready to go home, but she was trying to catch up on everything that remained undone at the office. Principal Four stated, “While you are working hard, you must remember to work smart. Set aside time in the day to work on paperwork so you don’t have to take it home.”

Principal Five reflected upon being a new mother and shared advice to help with personal responsibilities. Principal Five said, “Take time to rest! Without rest you are not your best self for the next day.” Principal Five went on to share, “There will always be something to do and a lot of things still on your desk, but at some point, you do need rest.”

Table 21 provides a summary of the advice and guidance each participant offered to aspiring female administrators. The participants offered advice and guidance related to job responsibilities, professional/public service responsibilities, and family responsibilities.
Table 21

Advice and Guidance Related to Current Job Responsibilities, Professional/Public Service, and Family Responsibilities of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Advice/Guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Use your expertise and passion to make a difference; be in a good place mental health wise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Be confident in curriculum - You can’t lead what you don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be willing to learn once you get the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Prioritize and be courageous; address issues immediately; invest in people and build relationships; work on time management and organization skills; don’t get overwhelmed by paperwork; focus on culture and climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Pursue advanced degrees before family when possible; manage time wisely; prioritize family before work; don’t save all the paperwork to take home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Take time to rest – without rest you are not your best self for the next day; build positive relationships with staff, parents, and students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The advice and guidance offered by exemplary administrators would be helpful to aspiring female administrators along their career paths. The exemplary female principals emphasized the importance of prioritizing tasks and managing time when it comes to family, paperwork, and taking time to rest so you will be at your best the next day. Advice also included investing in people, being visible, and being confident in curriculum matters for professional dealings. The participants recommended building positive relationships with staff, family, and students in all situations.
Table 2 provides the emergent themes derived from the advice and guidance obtained from participants in the study. The emergent themes are related to current job responsibilities, professional/public service, and family responsibilities.

Table 2

*Emergent Themes for Advice and Guidance Related to the Current Job Responsibilities, Professional/Public Service, and Family Responsibilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice and guidance related to current job responsibilities</td>
<td>Do not save paperwork tasks for home; be passionate about your job; be proactive with problems; be willing to learn after getting the job; demonstrate expertise in curriculum matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice and Guidance related to professional/public service responsibilities</td>
<td>Be of time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be lifelong learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice and Guidance related to family responsibilities</td>
<td>Spend quality time with family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emergent themes for Secondary Research Question 2D include putting family first and managing time. Participants encouraged future/aspiring administrators to find jobs they are passionate about and be proactive when dealing with problems. Aspiring administrators should be committed to being lifelong learners and manage their time wisely.

**Overall Emergent Themes for Secondary Research Question 2**

How do exemplary female principals describe their current job, personal/public service leadership roles, and family responsibilities?
Overall emergent themes for Secondary Research Question 2 were derived from responses of the exemplary principals in Table 23. The findings were focused on accountability data and empowering teachers through shared/distributed leadership. In addition, building relationships with parents, students, and faculty was an important responsibility of the participants. Leadership practices included providing motivation and encouragement for faculty and students. The study’s findings emphasized the importance of leading by example and finding a job that you are passionate about doing daily. Principal One encouraged an aspiring administrator to find her niche, and do work she is passionate about when searching for the perfect job. Aspiring administrators must be willing to learn and become confident in curriculum matters. When balancing work and family, the aspiring administrators must prioritize tasks, manage time, be organized, spend quality time with family, and get an adequate amount of rest.

Table 23

*Overall Emergent Themes for Current Job Responsibilities of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Job Responsibilities</td>
<td>Be the instructional leader; create and share the vision, mission, and goals; supervise safety of environment for staff and students; focus on accountability and data; implement school wide strategic plans; evaluate teachers, rejuvenate school culture; monitor total operation of the school; hire staff; monitor school budget; monitor professional learning communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Practices</td>
<td>Distribute/share leadership to empower others to lead; build positive relationships with staff, students and parents; motivate and encourage students and staff; be fair, firm, honest, and flexible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 23 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Build positive relationships with students, parents, and staff; motivate and encourage students and staff; be fair, firm, and flexible; share vision and mission of school in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Active Member of Church; active in community service projects and partnership with school; active member and leader of educational, sororities and community organizations with leadership roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Responsibilities</td>
<td>Married with child/children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be a working wife/mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care for family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tend to household tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice and guidance related to current job responsibilities</td>
<td>Be passionate about your job; be willing to learn; be proactive with problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice/Guidance</td>
<td>Be mindful of time management and prioritize tasks; know when to say “No”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spend quality time with family to family responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall emergent themes for current job responsibilities include the following: instructional leader, create and share the vision, mission, and goals, supervise safety of environment for staff and students, and focus on accountability and data. The leadership practices were distributing leadership to empower others, holding everyone accountable, building positive relationships with staff, students, and parents, and managing time and tasks within the
schools. Participants were active members of their respective churches, communities, and educational organizations. In some cases, the participants held leadership positions within the organizations. All participants were married with children and were responsible for providing care for their families as well as tending to household tasks while working in their current job positions. Advice/guidance offered to aspiring leaders included the following: be passionate about your job, be willing to learn, be proactive when addressing problems, manage time, prioritize tasks, and know when to say “No”.

**Secondary Research Question 3 – Barriers and Challenges**

The following includes the data analysis for the third secondary research question addressing how exemplary female elementary principals described the major barriers/challenges they encountered along the way in their careers. Additional questions were associated with the third secondary research question.

Secondary Research Question 3: How do exemplary female elementary principals describe the major challenges/barriers they encountered along the way?

a. What are the major barriers/challenges exemplary female elementary principals encountered during their career paths?

b. What are the major barriers/challenges exemplary female elementary principals face in their current job responsibilities?

c. What major barriers/challenges exemplary female elementary principals face in their professional/public service responsibilities?
d. What advice/guidance for exemplary female elementary principals offer to aspiring principals related to overcoming challenges/barriers in their professional, personal/public service, and family responsibilities?

During the interviews, participants responded to four questions used to explore the major barriers/challenges they encountered during their career paths. The participants shared the following life-changing events/experiences.

**Secondary Research Question 3A**

What are the major barriers/challenges exemplary female elementary principals encountered during their career paths?

The major barriers/challenges encountered by exemplary female principals during their career paths included some questionable cases of potential bias because of age and gender as well as a sense of selfishness where one participant was not afforded an opportunity to advance into a different role because of the success she created in her elementary school. All of the participants talked about their experiences with motherhood which created discomfort in their regular work routines and required some adjustments over time. Two participants were first-time new mothers in principal roles. One participant experienced the death of her husband and son during her career as an elementary principal. One participant decided to make a career change that she acknowledged as a slight challenge in her life.

When the participants were asked about the barriers/challenges they encountered during their careers, several mentioned the challenge of finding a balance between work and motherhood. Data also revealed there were concerns about paperwork and the pressure associated with test scores.
During the interview, Principal One shared that as a working mom it was challenging to balance work and home. She also spoke of the challenges she encountered in her role as principal in a Title I school with 85% of her students receiving free/reduced lunch. Her challenges were based when addressing the needs of the students as well as their parents. She reflected upon the stresses demonstrated by parents and the “trauma” characteristics that the children displayed. Principal One noted that she sought outside resources to help both the children and parents.

Principal Two reflected upon her experience of entering the role of principal in a rural Title I school and the “mindset” challenges she encountered. She shared her experience with age bias where the staff had a misconception about her because they thought she was too young and was not as prepared as she could have been.

Principal Three emphasized the importance of prioritizing time and managing paperwork tasks. Principal Five’s experience with potential gender bias came from an encounter with a couple of dads that told her, “Hey, if a woman puts herself in the place of a man, then she should be treated like a man.” Principal Five did not consider this as a challenge based on gender. Instead, she referred to it as an act of ignorance on the part of the individuals involved.

Table 24 provides a summary of the data collected on major barriers/challenges encountered by exemplary female principals during their career paths. Participants shared several common responses, especially when it dealt with balancing work and task related to motherhood and home during their career paths.
Table 24

*Major Barriers/Challenges in Career Path of Exemplary Female Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Barriers/Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Trying to find community resources to help stressed parents and traumatized students in a Title I school; trying to find a balance between work and motherhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Challenges associated with mindset of leading in a rural Title I school; experienced challenge of misconception associated with age bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Taking on too many tasks and failing to prioritize and managing paperwork tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Adapting to being married and having a full-time job; taking care of yourself; being denied an opportunity for advancement due to the consistent success that her elementary school received under her leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Dealing with potential gender bias; getting caught up in the numbers and forgetting about your people in the trenches that are teaching; dealing with disgruntle parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The compiled responses for secondary question 3A summarizes the major barriers/challenges experienced by exemplary female principals during the course of their career paths. For the most part, participants identified barriers/challenges in their career paths related to school demographics and socio-economic status.

Table 25 provides the emergent themes derived from the data collected on major barriers/challenges encountered during the participants’ career paths. These major barriers/challenges offer a look into the lives of exemplary female principals and some commonalities they shared during their career paths.
Table 25

*Emergent Themes for Major Barriers/Challenges During Career Paths of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barriers in Career Paths</td>
<td>Failing to prioritize tasks; failing to take care of yourself – physically and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mentally; lacking resources to support the needs associated with leading in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rural Title I schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time for building career and completing advanced degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges During Career Paths</td>
<td>Taking on more tasks than you can handle; allowing paperwork to consume your time;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dealing with bias and being looked over for promotions or advancements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above themes emerged from the responses to Secondary Research Question 3A about major barriers/challenges experienced by exemplary female elementary principals during their career paths. Participants in the study noted circumstances that tended to stop or slow down production of one’s career path within the organization. These barriers were taking on more tasks than you can handle, failing to prioritize tasks, and failing to take care of yourself – physically and mentally. Participants also expressed challenges of leading in rural Title I schools especially when dealing with inadequate resources and attempting to change the culture.

**Secondary Research Question 3B**

What are the major barriers/challenges exemplary female elementary principals face in their current job responsibilities?
When participants were asked about major barriers/challenges exemplary female principals faced in their current job responsibilities, some common responses were dealing with accountability issues. The principals spoke about their current job responsibilities and late work hours in relation to responsibilities at home. Several principals discussed their personal feelings in regards to not being able to address all work obligations.

Table 26 summarizes the major barriers/challenges encountered by exemplary female principals during their current job responsibilities. These barriers/challenges were centered around the ability to provide proper support and resources for students and their families that have experienced social emotional/ trauma, change the mindset of children and their families in rural low income area, and manage paperwork tasks.

Table 26

*Major Barriers/ Challenges in Current Job Responsibilities of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Major Barrier/Challenges Faced in Current Job Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Demanding need for resources to help with social emotional/trauma to help students and parents in a Title I school: lacking necessary resources to support social/emotional needs of students exposed to trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Demanding need for change of mindset of children and families in a rural Title I school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Demanding need for manage time and paperwork; establishing cohesive team building efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Managing paperwork and other work related tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Dealing with parents issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 27 contains the emergent themes associated with major barriers/challenges related to current job responsibilities of the exemplary female elementary principals. The content in this table reflects barriers/challenges that impeded the productivity of exemplary female elementary principals in the current job responsibilities.

Table 27

*Emergent Themes of Major Barriers/Challenges of Current Job Responsibilities of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to current job responsibilities</td>
<td>Managing time, prioritizing tasks; finding resources to support tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dealing with school accountability issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with limited resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Failing to work on paperwork tasks during day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in rural school settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with low student achievement/performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to current job responsibilities</td>
<td>Distributing leadership responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dealing with parent issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achieving high student performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emergent themes from the participants’ responses to Secondary Research Questions 3B were in reference to barriers and challenges participants experienced in their current job responsibilities.
responsibilities. Some of the barriers were working efficiently by managing time, prioritizing tasks, and finding resources. Some of the challenges were distributing leadership responsibilities, dealing with parenting issues, and achieving his student performance. The effects of the noted barriers and challenges were identified as having a negative impact on a school leader’s ability to work efficiently.

**Secondary Research Question 3C**

What major barriers/challenges exemplary female elementary principals face in their personal/professional/public service responsibilities?

When the participants were asked about the major barriers/challenges they faced in their personal/professional/public service responsibilities, several answers were consistent. Common responses were about taking on too many tasks and not prioritizing tasks, failing to manage time and balancing home and work responsibilities. Findings showed that time posed a challenge for all of the principals when it came to work tasks and public service opportunities. This challenge resulted in a limited amount of time for participation in community services and events due to personal obligations to their families. Likewise, daily activities required a lot of physical energy as the principals worked to maintain the requirements and responsibilities for supervising instruction, safety, and management tasks. The participants often found it challenging to balance work and home responsibilities especially with a newborn during a principalship.

The findings from the interviews revealed Principal One’s sentiments about her Title I school with students receiving 85% free and reduced lunches. Her school has a lot of community as well as family needs. She described the school as a "large school with 900 kids and it was difficult to meet all of the needs.” Principal One also shared during the interview that she encountered some personal challenges of balancing work and family.
As for Principal Three, she served her community not only by being visible, but also by being actively involved in the community. Principal Three provided services to others by assisting with a program which served traditionally African American schools in the community.

Principals One, Two, Four, and Five experienced challenges with balancing work and family from time to time due to the adjustments of managing small children and having working spouses. After thinking for a moment, Principal Three made a gender comparison of males to females in relation to family obligations and professional/public service responsibilities.

Principal Three stated,

Sometimes it’s easier for men to do things especially if they have children and they have wives or if the children don’t live with them. It’s easier for them than for females to do things. Sometimes we (females) have to nurture more. Therefore, males may be able to attend more functions in the community and be visible more frequently.

At the beginning of her career in education, Principal Three had small children when she decided to make a career change after 6 years in the field of social work. Principal Three deemed the career change as a slight challenge because she was stepping out into a new field of study.

Principal Three also shared an emotional and heartfelt personal experience involving one of her colleagues who was a 46-year-old female principal in her district who passed away. Principal Three stated,

The young lady was a principal and still working. She had not been sick but went in for surgery and just did not overcome it. The young lady still worked in the district at the time of her death, but the district didn’t close. The district did not shut down. Nothing stopped because the young lady was gone, but things stopped with her family. The
principal had two young girls that were in school (high school and junior high) and a husband. Something changed for them and it may have changed somewhat in the school, but it kept going.

As Principal Three reflected upon this incident, she stated, “So, I think about those kinds of things, and I don't want to lose my family. I do the job, achieve at the job, and I will work to the best of my ability, but you have to understand that there is a stopping point.”

Another example came from Principal Four as she shared her personal story about the loss of her loved ones. Within the conversation, she reflected upon how she would do things differently as she looked back upon her experiences. Principal Four experienced the loss of her spouse and a child during her reign as principal. Principal Four had a slight quiver in her voice as she recalled the moments and spoke about the emotional and challenging life-changing events. Principal Four opened up and shared,

I think one of the hardest times occurred five years into the principalship. My husband was killed in a car accident. What was so odd about the whole situation was the person driving the 18-wheeler that killed my husband was someone I knew. The driver was the husband of my youth counselor that worked at my school. The counselor had two kids at the school and she stayed for after school work, and so her kids played with my kids. It was different--because like I said time and time again, it could have been anybody on the East Coast, and it was her husband. So, I had to show my forgiveness, and we continued to work together.

Our kids kept playing together, but that was really hard.

Principal Four went on to say, “Then a year and a half later, my son was killed.” For her, those experiences and her time spent away from her school reinforced the strength of her
leadership and her efforts to distribute leadership. Principal Four reminisced over these events and stated, “I think it showed me the importance of shared leadership, because I was out a lot both times. It showed me that the preparation, and what I had done in preparing and empowering my teachers kept everything going like I was there.” Further, Principal Four stated, "I can remember when the superintendent and assistant superintendent came to my house. The Superintendent said, 'They are working like you are there.' At that moment, I knew they worked hard because they wanted to make me proud while I was going through so much." Principal Five shared a challenge she experienced in her role as an administrator,

   So, one of the things that I think I struggle with as a mother is that there are days that I feel like I give more of myself to the students that I serve and my family ends up on the short end of the stick because I am tired when I get home. I think they’ve eaten more take out than a normal family has encountered and clothes stay on the couch much longer than probably happens in most families.

Principal Five stated, “The hours are long because teachers call at night and after school hours, and I deal with things on the weekends.” She went on to say, “I do think there are challenges to a family if the mom is a principal that men may not encounter because their responsibilities outside of the job may be a little different from that of mom.”

Principal Five also reiterated her thankfulness for her support system, and how much she appreciated having a supportive husband.

   Principal Five began her career and got married all along the same time. She started her first job while being a newlywed wife. She had her first child some years into her career and during her first year as an administrator. Principal Five reflected upon the trust that she had in
her staff and the joy she experienced during this time of being a new mom. She said, "Being a mother changed me as an administrator because it made me a better educator." Principal Five continued to talk about pregnancy, maternity leave, and work. Principal Five stated, "So there were two things that happened that were big life events that happened while I was a school principal. The first one was in 2013 when I became a mother and the relationship between myself and my staff was positive, and they were really great to me during this time.” She further stated,

They supported me through a pregnancy, and then the maternity leave, and then coming back to school. I came back to school after maternity leave in May, right in the middle of testing season and had trust in the staff, knowing that I had not been there, but that I trusted they carried on and were doing the work to get us ready for testing.

As a result, Principal Five shared that the school had a successful testing season which was a testament to their work. Three years after having the baby, her family experienced the loss of their home to a house fire one summer. Recalling this event, Principal Five stated,

Three years after my child was born, my home burned. We--my family, my husband and my child, were not at home but our home did burn to the ground. So while that was on the opposite end of a happy event, it also was a time that my staff supported me through a really difficult situation. And while being a mom is a lifetime commitment, this (the fire) was a hurdle for us as a family and it was going to take some time to get my feet up underneath me again. By the time school started back, my family was situated again but my staff was very supportive and all was taken care of for restarting school.
There was an outpour of support from Principal Five’s staff during these life events. The trust and efforts to develop leadership skills and to build relationships with the staff helped ensure her school continued on a successful path in her absence.

Table 28 shows the major barriers/challenges the exemplary female elementary principals faced in their personal/professional/public service responsibilities. The following are the most common barriers/challenges the participants experienced in their personal/professional/public services.

Table 28

*Major Barriers/Challenges Faced in Personal/Professional/Public Service Responsibilities of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Barriers/Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Demanding need for being visible in the community; resources needed to address the civic needs in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Demanding need to change the mindset of the community; to find someone who believes in you and your ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Demanding need to balance work; need to find someone you trust to confide in as a mentor; need to prioritize more after life changing experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Demanding need for time for self-care; to prioritize family and career; need for support during the death of her husband and son</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 28 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Barriers/Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Demanding need for balancing responsibilities in community and being the spokesperson for the school; need for support during the loss of personal belongings during a house fire; failing to find balance in being a new mom with new responsibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The major barriers/challenges related to the personal/professional/public service responsibilities of exemplary female elementary principals created demands that affected the operation and success of their schools. Failing to find balance between work and home, failing to manage time wisely and prioritizing tasks, and failing to balance personal responsibilities with families had negative effects on the principal’s ability to work efficiently. Grief was challenging when it affected the family of the principal.

Table 29 summarizes the emergent themes associated with the Secondary Research Question 3C. Participants in the study reflected upon major barriers/challenges they experienced in their personal/professional/public service responsibilities.
Table 29

Emergent Themes for Barriers/Challenges Related to Personal/Professional/Public Service Responsibilities of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barriers in personal/professional/public</td>
<td>Away from school during bereavement and personal losses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited time for involvement in professional activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in personal/professional/public service responsibilities</td>
<td>Grieving the loss of loved ones/friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing tasks for work and home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing demands for being visible in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding someone to trust and provide support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emergent themes for Secondary Research Question 3C focus on major barriers/challenges related to the personal/professional/public service responsibilities of the exemplary female elementary principals. Participants identified barriers as time missed from work during bereavement and personal losses and having limited time for involvement in professional activities. Challenges given by the participants included grieving the loss of loved ones or friends, managing tasks for work and home, managing the demands for being visible in the community, and finding someone to trust and provide support as a mentor in the field.
Secondary Research Question 3D

What advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals offer to aspiring female principals related to overcoming barriers/challenges in their career paths, current job responsibilities, professional/public service, and family responsibilities?

When the participants were asked about advice/guidance related to overcoming barriers/challenges in their career paths, current job responsibilities, professional/public service and family responsibilities, their responses emphasized the need to manage time wisely and know when to say “no.” The participants advised not accepting additional tasks, finding comfort in one’s faith, finding mentors you trust, prioritizing tasks, and spending quality time with family.

In the interview, Principals One, Three, and Five spoke often about prayer, faith, and a higher power. Principal Three emphasized the importance of trusting in God, engaging in prayer, and surrounding yourself with positive quotes and affirmations. At the conclusion of the emotional discussion about her former colleague who passed away at age 46, Principal Three shared the following advice, "Make sure you focus on giving time to your family; separate work from home; and don't let the job overshadow your family.” In addition, Principal Three stated, “Spend quality time with family because if something happened on the job, you can be replaced."

Principal Four recommended advice to aspiring young females centered around meeting family obligations. Principal Four stated, “Take care of family stuff first if at all possible because the principalship takes a whole lot of time. You are going to have to prioritize and your family should come first.”
Principal Five’s advice to aspiring female principals related to personal and public responsibilities. Principal Five suggested leaning heavily on faith. She stated, “Pray for families and situations because there are a lot of things going on in school that you don’t have the power to help.”

Table 30 shows the emphasis on the women’s faith and belief in the power of prayer. These women shared their experiences for prioritizing and managing time so their families would not suffer because of their work responsibilities. The most common strategy for dealing with barriers/challenges identified in the study was the act of balancing the responsibilities of work and home.

Table 30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Advice/Guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Advocate for school resources; empower others; pray and God will put you where you need to be; work to be the best at the job you have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Always be willing to learn; create safe learning environments for children find someone who believes in you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Focus on culture and climate of school; handle problems immediately; organize, manage, and prioritize time; Trust in God; surround yourself with positive quotes; focus on family first; work on time management; establish cohesive teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Focus on culture and climate of school; handle problems immediately; organize, manage, and prioritize time; Trust in God; surround yourself with positive quotes; focus on family first; work on time management; establish cohesive teams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All participants spoke of overcoming barriers/challenges through faith and prayer as well as having a mentor or someone to confide in when needed, prioritizing tasks, and taking care of one’s self. Participants also emphasized the power of creating a positive culture and climate in the organization.

Table 31 summarizes the advice/guidance offered for overcoming challenges/barriers personal/professional/public service responsibilities by participants. The advice/guidance offered by the participants was to find someone to confide in and act as a mentor, to believe in a higher power, and meditate and pray about situations. Most importantly, know when to say “No.”
Table 31

Emergent Themes of Advice/Guidance for Overcoming Barriers/Challenges Related to Personal/Professional/Public Service Responsibilities Offered to Aspiring Female Principals by Exemplary Female Elementary Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice offered to aspiring females</td>
<td>Advocate for resources; take time for self-care; know when to say “No”; build relationships and establish cohesive teams; focus on school culture and climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete advanced degrees before having children;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance offered to aspiring females</td>
<td>Trust in God; focus on faith, meditate, and pray; find a mentor or someone you trust;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emergent themes provide insight for aspiring female administrators. The advice and guidance offered include trusting in God and focusing on one’s faith. Aspiring administrators are encouraged to advocate for resources, take time for self-care, and know when to say “No.” Other emergent themes include build relationships and establish cohesive teams in the work setting. In addition, the participants suggested aspiring administrators should focus on the school’s culture and climate. All of the participants advocated for completing advanced degrees before having children.

Overall Emergent Themes for Secondary Research Question 3

How do exemplary female elementary principals describe the major challenges/barriers they encountered along the way during their careers?
Participants in the study emphasized the importance of knowing how to find a balance between home and work by prioritizing tasks as well as finding comfort after the loss of a loved one or friend and recovering from a life-altering event such as a house fire. When female principals do not work toward establishing balance in their lives, it creates a lack of structure and organization that leads to frustrations.

Table 32 represents the overall themes from the third secondary research question. Participants shared their major barriers/challenges encountered along the way during their careers.

The overall emergent themes associated with barriers/challenges during the careers of the exemplary female elementary principals focused on those circumstances/situations related to their early careers, current job responsibilities, and personal/professional/public responsibilities. In addition, the participants gave advice and guidance for those aspiring to become exemplary school administrators. The overall emergent themes included the women’s resounding voice indicating advisement to trust in God as well as their conversations about faith, fortitude, and steadfastness.
Table 32

*Overall Emergent Themes for Major Challenges/Barriers Encountered Along the Way During Careers by Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career paths--barriers/challenges</td>
<td>Limited time for building career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lacking resources in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to prioritize tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to take care of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current job responsibilities</td>
<td>Managing time, prioritizing tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lacking resources in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School accountability issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low student performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent issues related to school culture and climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distributing leadership responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/professional/public service</td>
<td>Away from school during bereavement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Away from school during personal losses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited time for involvement in professional activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grieving the loss of loved ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing tasks for work and home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 32 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice/guidance</td>
<td>Advocate for resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take time for self-care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know when to say “No”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build relationships and establish cohesive teams;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on school culture and climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete advanced degrees before having children;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust in God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on faith, meditate, and pray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Find a mentor or someone you trust;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Secondary Research Question 4 - Affirmation/Advice/Guidance**

The following secondary research question addresses how exemplary female elementary principals described their affirmations and guidance as an elementary school principal.

Additional questions associated with the fourth secondary research question are included.

How do exemplary female elementary principals describe their affirmations and guidance as an elementary school principal?

a. What achievements/experiences do you consider as affirmations (satisfying aspects) of the role as an exemplary female elementary principal as related to their professional and personal contexts?
b. What overall advice/guidance do exemplary female elementary principals have to offer to aspiring administrators?

Participants were asked two questions in order to explore the advice and guidance they offered to aspiring female principals as it related to their personal, professional, and family contexts. The narrative below reflects the findings from the research questions.

**Secondary Research Question 4A**

**What achievements/experiences do female principals describe as affirmations (satisfying aspects) of the role as a female elementary principal?**

During the interviews, participants shared information about the numerous recognitions they received for their leadership as elementary principals. The narrative reflects the special recognitions the principals received during their time as elementary principals. All of the participants served as leaders at successful schools. Each of the participants in this study was recognized at the state and/or national level for her leadership.

In 2017, Principal One received recognition by her school district, the Mississippi Department of Education, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals for exemplary work in a low-performing school in Mississippi. In 2014, Principal Two was recognized as Administrator of the Year in her district and earned national recognition as a National Distinguished Principal through NISL. Principal Three received the Program of Research and Evaluation of Public Schools (PREPS) Added Value Award, and she was named Administrator of the Year twice in her school district. She also received the National Panhellenic Counsel’s Educator of the Year Award and Outstanding Administrator award from the Mississippi Association of Colleges Award for Teacher Education. Principal Three’s school was
recognized as a Golden Ribbon School by the Mississippi Department of Education. Principal Four received the 2008 South Carolina Elementary Principal of the Year award and her school received the Dispelling the Myth Award. This award was highlighted on the website for The Education Trust. Dispelling the myth awards are given to schools that are doing the right things for children. These schools are providing children with “a rich, coherent curriculum and making learning interesting and engaging.” The significance of the award is that the recipients are recognized for becoming a high performing school. In this case, Principal Four was leading a school which had a high poverty level school that was a predominantly African American school. In 2015, Principal Five was recognized as a Principal of the Year in her school district and received the National Distinguished Principal award for the state of Mississippi.

In addition to the awards, several of the principals shared additional success, but realized meaningful accomplishments may not have resulted in the process of receiving an actual award. In the interview, Principal Two reflected upon her success of leading an “A” school for the past 7 or 8 years. Principal Two shared, “My school has received a Title I Distinguished School Award. In 2018-2019, my school ranked fourth in the state for Mississippi Academic Assessment Program scores. That was awesome for me!”

Principal Three reminisced over her moments of success and stated, "For me, my most successful event is when I can see that I made a difference. Seeing a parent make a connection with you and know that you actually care about them and you actually care about their children." Principal Three then went on to say,

I’ve worked in two schools that were failing schools and were able to move to a status of being successful. I’ve gotten accolades for that, but that’s not what I
consider to be my greatest success. My greatest success is getting people to work together.

Principal Four described her success in the midst of talking about leading an "A" rated school, which she described as an award within itself. Then she went on to tell about the prestigious "Dispelling the Myth Award" and its distinct representation.

Table 33 represents the affirmations from the achievements/experiences of the exemplary female elementary principals. The tangible affirmations included presentation of certificates of recognition and awards received by each participant while serving as an elementary principal.

Table 33

*Affirmations Related to Achievements/Experiences Received by Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>State and/or National</th>
<th>Award/Recognition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>State/National</td>
<td>MDE / NISL Distinguished Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National Distinguished Principal for Mississippi NAESP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>NISL Distinguished Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>State; National</td>
<td>PREPS Added Value; Panhellenic Education Award; Mississippi Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; Outstanding Administrator Award; Golden Ribbon School by Mississippi Department of Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 33 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>State and/or National</th>
<th>Award/Recognition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>State; National</td>
<td>South Carolina Elementary Principal of the Year; Dispelling the Myth Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>State; National</td>
<td>National Distinguished Principal for Mississippi NAESP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the principals featured in the study received recognition for roles as leaders while serving in the administrative role as principal of an elementary school. Four out of five received both state and national recognition for their exemplary leadership. Their awards and recognitions were heavily associated with the performances of academic achievements based on their respective state accountability models and national affiliations with elementary school principal associations.

Table 34 presents the emergent themes derived from the achievements/experiences of affirmations. Participants received recognition at both the state and national levels.
Table 34

Emergent Themes of the Achievements/Experiences of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Leader Achievement</td>
<td>Academic recognition at state and national levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distinguished School at the state and national levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Service Recognition at state level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal of the Year at state and national levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distinguished Principal at state and national levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emergent themes resulting from the awards received by the principals indicated that participants received recognition for their academic success, being a school of distinction, and community service. These awards and recognition were given at the state and national level.

Table 35 categorizes the affirmations associated with achievements/experiences of the five participants shared during the interviews. The affirmations in most cases were milestone experiences in achievement that were meaningful to each of the participants.
Table 35

**Affirmations Associated with the Achievements/Experiences of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Affirmation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Encouraging others and connecting with student experiences that let me know I made a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Accountability – ranked 4th out of all the state school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Accountability – Moving two failing school to “Successful” Seeing parents make a connection and know that we care about your child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Leading an “A” school; receiving the “Dispelling the Myth” Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Building relationships, investing in people, and establishing a hard working team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When interviewing the participants about their affirmations associated with their achievements/experiences, it was interesting to know that with all of the special recognitions and awards received by these women. They were very humble and sincere in what was most meaningful to them during these times. The researcher sensed the participants were proud of their accomplishments but were not narcissistic about the tangible certificates of recognition or the plaques they added to their walls of fame. The affirmations that were most meaningful to each of the participants were celebrated as silent victories of personal challenges. Victories that they did not fully verbalize the meaning of the accomplishment in its entirety to faculty and staff, but celebrated intrinsically as a personal accomplishment. These affirmations were based on feelings of accomplishments in meeting personal goals and overcoming challenges. An example
was moving a majority African American school to an “A” status and sustaining this rating over multiple years. One participant stated,

It was seeing the rankings released and confirming that your school was listed as number 4 in the top 10 out of your state. The feeling of knowing and seeing parents make the connection that school officials care about the well-being of their children and knowing that you made a difference.

Table 36 summarizes the emergent themes derived from the interviews and discussions related to the affirmations associated with the achievement/experiences of the participants. The affirmations were the expressions of the feelings of satisfaction in knowing that as school leaders, the women had achieved success in their respective schools along with their students and staff.

Table 36

*Emergent Themes of Affirmations Associated with the Achievements/Experiences of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affirmations</td>
<td>Achieving a ranking in the Top 10 highest scores in the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moving a failing or low performing school to successful rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustaining a successful rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making connections with parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing a cohesive team to accomplish goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silent victories of successful schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants in the study were well-decorated with accolades of achievement. Participants shared their feelings of joy and satisfaction in knowing that they led their schools to success, achieved notable milestones, and sustained these successes. They attributed these successes to the practices of establishing cohesive teams as well as building and nurturing relationships with students, staff, and parents.

Table 37 provides overall emergent themes of the affirmations associated with the achievements of the exemplary female elementary principals. The emergent themes are provided for achievements/experiences and affirmations.

Table 37

*Overall Emergent Themes of Affirmations Associated with the Achievements/Experiences of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievements/experiences</td>
<td>Personal district, state, and national award winners/recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School awards and recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmations</td>
<td>Achieving a ranking in the Top 10 highest scores in the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moving a failing or low performing school to successful rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustaining a successful rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achieving personal goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing a cohesive team to accomplish goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The overall emergent themes associated with achievements/experiences of exemplary female elementary principals derived from the responses were received on district, state, and national level in the form of awards and recognition. Affirmations were characterized as feelings associated with achieving a ranking in the Top 10 highest scores in the state, moving a failing/low performing school to successful ratings, sustaining a successful rating over time, making connections with parents and students, and establishing a cohesive team of accomplishments of goals.

Secondary Research Question 4B

What overall advice and guidance do exemplary female elementary principals have to offer to aspiring female principals regarding achieving an exemplary status?

During the interviews, participants were asked to share the overall advice/guidance they would give to aspiring female principals regarding achieving an exemplary status. Principal One shared,

Whatever job you’re at, whether it’s a teacher, a literacy specialist, or a Custodian, do the job to the best of your ability. Learn everything you can from it. Don’t always wait for the next job. Just find as much joy as you can in your current position and when you’re ready or if God wants you, He will create a position. There’s a position out there for you. We cannot rush it, just got to use our time to prepare for it.

As Principal Three recalled her experiences, she stated these encouraging words: “Be courageous enough to have courageous conversations with people, with your employees that you are working with, as well as with parents. Stay focused and focus to stay guided. Make sure that you work on time management.” Principal Five took a moment to remind female administrators that no matter how tough the job gets, remember your role is special. She shared the following
comment: “The work of a school principal is really special, especially for a female. You get to build relationships with your staff and to be a second momma to a bunch of kids all day.”

Table 38 summarizes the advice/guidance participants had to offer aspiring female principals as it related to achieving an exemplary status. The advice/guidance derived from the responses were based on both personal and professional aspects of the exemplary principals’ experiences.

Table 38

Advice/Guidance Offered to Aspiring Female Principals Regarding Achieving Exemplary Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Advice/Guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal One</td>
<td>Ensure you have the energy for the day-to-day requirements of the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be the person that leads and inspires others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bring your ‘A’ game, know your purpose, and use your God-given talents to make the world a better place, starting in your school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Two</td>
<td>Be confident in the curriculum, you can’t lead if you don’t know your content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be willing to learn because when you get the job, that’s when the learning begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust yourself and find someone that believes in you so when you vent you never have to hear it again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Three</td>
<td>Don’t count out culture and climate. Culture and climate are vitally important to your building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Handle challenges immediately and don’t put them off for later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talk to other principals before you go into the field of administration and really know it’s something you truly would like to do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 38 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Advice/Guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Four</td>
<td>Prioritize and stay focused on family – separate home from work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not allow the job to overshadow family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spend quality time with family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Five</td>
<td>Build relationships and invest in your people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall advice/guidance the exemplary female elementary principals shared with aspiring female administrators included the following: find time for self-care, nurture the culture and climate of the school to ensure success, and be a lifelong learner. The practices and strategies shared were aspects the participants in the study felt contributed to their successful moves they experienced in their organizations while striving to maintain a normal life for their personal families.

Table 39 presents the emergent themes from the advice and guidance the participants shared with aspiring female principals related to achieving an exemplary status. The principals were all exemplary in that they had received awards and recognition for their accomplishments.
Table 39

*Emergent Themes for Advice/Guidance Offered to Aspiring Female Principals Regarding Achieving Exemplary Status*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice/guidance</td>
<td>Be the person that leads and inspires others know your purpose, and use your God-given talents to make the world a better place,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be confident in the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be willing to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust yourself and find someone that believes in you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on culture and climate. Culture and climate are vitally important to your building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Handle challenges immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talk to other principals before you go into the field of administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not allow the job to overshadow family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spend quality time with family.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results for Secondary Research Question 4B indicated helpful advice/guidance for aspiring female principals. The emergent themes were derived from interview responses in reference to achievements/experiences, affirmations, and advice and guidance. The emergent themes ranged from being the best in your job to building the positive relationships with staff, students, and parents. The emergent themes derived for achievements/experiences were awards
and recognitions at the school/local, state, and national levels. Emergent themes for affirmations as shared by the participants were achieving a ranking in the Top 10 highest scores in the state, moving failing or low performing schools to successful rate accountability ratings, sustaining the successful ratings, making connections with parents and students, and establishing cohesive teams that work toward common goals.

**Overall Emergent Themes for Secondary Research Question 4**

How do exemplary female elementary principals describe their affirmations and guidance as an elementary school principal?

As stated earlier, participants in the study were well decorated with accolades of achievement. Participants shared their feelings of joy and satisfaction in knowing that they led their organizations to success, achieved notable milestones, and sustained these successes. They attributed these successes to the practices of establishing cohesive teams as well as building and nurturing relationships with students, staff, and parents.

Table 40 summarizes the responses to secondary research questions 4. The overall emergent themes were derived from the responses of the participants.
Table 40

*Overall Emergent Themes of Advice and Guidance Related to Affirmations Associated with the Achievements/Experiences of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals and Their Achieving Exemplary Status*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievements/experiences</td>
<td>Personal district, state, and national award winners/recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School awards and recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmations</td>
<td>Achieving a ranking in the Top 10 highest scores in the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moving a failing or low performing school to successful rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustaining a successful rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making connections with parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing a cohesive team to accomplish goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice/guidance</td>
<td>Bring your ‘A’ game, know your purpose, and use your God-given talents to make the world a better place, starting in your school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be confident in the curriculum, you can’t lead if you don’t know your content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be willing to learn because when you get the job, that’s when the learning begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust yourself and find someone that believes in you so when you vent you never have to hear it again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t count out culture and climate. Culture and climate are vitally important to your building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not allow the job to overshadow family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spend quality time with family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In reference to affirmations and school leadership achievement, the participants were recognized by state and national organizations for their excellence in leadership. Participants were recognized as distinguished leaders of successful schools. Titles were given for administrators of the year, distinguished principals, and community service. Affirmations related to accountability and relationships with teachers, students, and parents emerged as contributors to students’ academic achievement. Moving failing schools to success and sustaining successful ratings were noted in addition to building relationships with students/parents while establishing cohesive teams within the schools. The affirmations were described as feelings of accomplishment when leaders were able to help parents make connections with the school as a partnership for helping students succeed.

**Overall Description of the Exemplary Female Elementary Principals**

The overall descriptions of the participants include the following; married with children; working full time jobs as school administrators or district level administrators; maintaining households and caring for families. Each of the principals in the study were married and had children. While these women were highly educated and highly qualified for their positions, two had already made advance moves to higher levels of leadership. One of the five participants had retired from the field of education and two more were making great strides as they lead their “A” level schools into continued success. The stories from the exemplary female principals provided many examples and advice for aspiring administrators as they strive to achieve exemplary status as school leaders in the P-12 setting. The individuals vary in age and work experiences. Most have had the experience of working in schools with high poverty levels and faced the challenges of finding resources to help students with social emotional/ trauma concerns. All of the participants worked in schools with high poverty levels as indicated by the community needs and
free/reduced lunch percentages. While dealing with personal and professional challenges, these participants excelled in their craft to lead successful schools and sustain their ratings over time.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four provides a report of the findings after the collection and analysis of the data for this qualitative phenomenological study. The data were collected from telephone interviews with five female exemplary elementary principals who were recognized for state and/or national achievements or accomplishments within the United States. Additional data were collected from websites and printed documents that featured information about the each of the participants’ schools, their school districts, and state/national associations.

The primary and secondary research questions were used to guide the interviews and to organize the findings. Results were organized based on responses in reference to career paths, professional responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations. The overall emergent themes for career paths were married with children, highly educated, experts in specific curriculum fields, and various field experiences. The emergent themes derived from the professional responsibilities were principal positions, leadership practices that included sharing/distributing leadership to empower others, and building relationships through public service. Emergent themes for personal/professional/ public service barriers/challenges derived were prioritize, organize, manage time. Emergent themes for affirmations included awards and recognitions for exemplary leadership in academic excellence and community service.

Table 4.1 contains the overall emergent themes for career paths, professional responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations. The overall emergent themes from participants are listed in the chart below.
Table 41

*Overall Emergent Themes for Career Paths, Professional Responsibilities, Barriers/Challenges, and Affirmations of Exemplary Female Elementary Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career paths</td>
<td>Highly educated/highly qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experts in specific curriculum fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current job</td>
<td>Providing instructional leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibilities</td>
<td>Monitoring data and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervising safety of environment for staff and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Build positive relationships with students, parents, and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibilities</td>
<td>Distribute/share leadership to empower others to lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active in public/community service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers/challenges</td>
<td>Lacked resources in school for student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited time for building career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needed to take time for self-care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmations</td>
<td>Awards/recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In reference to career paths, the participants were married with children, highly educated/highly educated, and experts in the specific curriculum fields. Emergent themes for professional responsibilities were monitoring data, providing instructional leadership to improve
teaching practices and student achievement and supervising the safety of the environment for staff and students. Themes for barriers/challenges experienced by the participants included limited time for building career, lack of resources needed in schools for student needs, and the need to take time for self-care. The emergent themes for affirmations were awards/recognition received for accountability of student achievement.

**Overall Summary of Emergent Themes**

The five phenomenal participants in the study lead their schools with passion and persistence while working full time jobs, managing households, and caring for families. Their exemplary leadership practices and high levels of academic success resulted in special recognitions by their local school districts, state, and national levels for academic excellence and community service. While faced with barriers and challenges along their career paths, these women found ways to overcome and excel within their chosen fields.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of Chapter Five is to provide a final overview of the results of the study in connection to the reviews of literature and the analysis of the data collected from participants during the study. The summary includes a discussion of the methods and the major emergent themes evident from the collected data. The chapter is divided into the following sections: summary of study, discussion of findings, limitations of the study, general recommendations for educational leaders, and recommendations for future studies.

Summary

The study examined the career paths, current job responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and advice/guidance/affirmations from exemplary female principals to help provide guidance for aspiring as well as veteran female principals. The overarching research question addressed the purpose of the study: How do successful elementary principals describe their experiences related to their career paths, professional job responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations? The following secondary research questions were used to guide structured interview questions.

1. How do exemplary elementary female principals describe their professional career paths in relation to their personal, professional, and family services?

2. How do exemplary female principals describe their current responsibilities?
3. How do exemplary female elementary principals describe the major barriers/challenges they encountered along the way during their careers?

4. How do exemplary female elementary principals describe their affirmations and advice/guidance as an elementary school principal?

The qualitative phenomenological research design was selected to explore the lived experiences of the exemplary female elementary principals. Data for the qualitative phenomenological study were collected during phone interviews conducted by the researcher with the five exemplary female elementary principals that met specific criteria.

Chapter Two explored literature related to the study of career paths, current job responsibilities, barriers/challenges, and affirmations of principals in support of research and best practices. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2010) provided an overview of career path options and responsibilities of principals. MacNeil et al. (2009) emphasized the powerful effect of establishing a positive culture and climate within the organization. The research showed that when the learning environments are safe for staff and students, it impacts student achievement (Harris et al., 2007; Noddings 2013a, 2013b). While female leaders are faced with barriers/challenges, they are also making a difference in schools and communities (Bollinger & Grady, 2015; Shankland & Rosset, 2016).

The theoretical framework of the study established the foundation for the exploration of behaviors and personal attributes. The researcher examined the impact of the behaviors/attributes on the professional, family, and self-oriented activities of the participants in the study. Nodding’s (2010, 2013) ethics of care focused on the attributes/trait and impact of care in the educational setting. Female leaders have been found to create educational
environments that are supportive, aware of the power of positive relationships, exhibit trust, open to collaboration, and attentive to distinct details and abilities (Noddings, 2013a, 2013b). Based on Noddings’ (2013a, 2013b) research, these attributes/traits of care were determined as ideal characteristics for elementary settings. Research findings indicated that these attributes/traits could impact the development of children to become caring and loving adults. Schein’s (2004) organizational culture theory explained the behaviors exhibited by women and their career paths, responsibilities, challenges, and affirmations. Schein’s (2004) research placed emphasis on the lives of female principals in terms of personal behaviors/traits, family responsibilities, and professional accomplishments. The culture theory focused on the effects of relationships, beliefs, and responsibilities in terms of environmental demands and successes (Schein 2001, 2017).

Historically, the role of a female principal was described as being diverse and fragmented (Wesson, 1998). Over the years, shifts in female leadership and in organizational culture required leaders to develop relationships with subordinates (Beer et al., 2012). Today, women’s leadership traits are valued (Obeogbulem, 2013). The attributes/traits of being caring, nurturing, inclusive, and attentive are now considered assets for leaders in today’s society (Growe & Montgomery, 2000).

Based upon the data collected and analyzed in Chapter Four, five exemplary elementary principals participated in the study. The five phenomenal women in the study lead their schools with passion and persistence while working full time jobs, managing households, and caring for families. Their exemplary leadership practices and high levels of academic success resulted in special recognitions by their local school districts, state, and national levels for academic excellence and community service. While faced with barriers and challenges along their career paths, these women found ways to overcome and excel within their chosen fields.
Participants served as principals of elementary schools in Mississippi and South Carolina. During the collection of data from interview responses, participants provided details about their experiences from the aspects of family, personal and professional encounters. The following descriptions and emergent themes are based on the compiled responses from the participants in reference to the secondary research questions.

**Secondary Research Question 1: How do exemplary elementary female principals describe their professional career paths in relation to their personal, professional, and family experience?**

Based on the findings in the study, exemplary female principals described their professional career paths in relation to their personal, professional, and family experiences. All of the participants held Master’s degrees plus additional credits. Two of the participants held Doctoral degrees. Based on the data the female principals were highly educated/highly qualified experts in specific fields of the curriculum. Participants obtained their credentials to become school leaders through either traditional or alternate route programs in Educational Leadership. The participants’ years of experience as a teacher ranged from 3-10 years and as an administrator ranged from 8-23 years. At the time the participants began their careers, they were either single with no children or married and some children. Early work experiences included but were not limited to teaching, academic coaching, and interventionist and prepared participants for their roles as elementary principals. The responsibilities based on interview responses were included but were not limited to providing instructional leadership, working with parents, students, and teachers, creating a safe learning and working environment for staff and students, monitoring data, and revitalizing school culture by establishing a clear vision and communicating the mission and goals to stakeholders. Participants in the study offered the following career path
advice and guidance to aspiring school administrators: know content area curriculum, build positive relationships with parents, students, and teachers, and complete graduate degrees before starting a family when possible.

Secondary Research Question 2: How do exemplary female principals describe their current job, personal/public service leadership roles, and family responsibilities?

The findings from the study exemplary female principals described their current job, personal/public service roles, and family responsibilities. Exemplary female elementary principals described their current job responsibilities as being the instructional leader, creating and sharing the vision, mission, and goals, supervising safety of environment for staff and students, and focusing on accountability and data. Their leadership practices included distributing leadership to empower others, holding everyone accountable, building positive relationships with staff, students, and parents, and managing time and tasks within the schools. Participants were active members of their respective churches, communities, and educational organizations. In some cases, the participants held leadership positions within the organizations. All participants were married with children and were responsible for providing care for their families as well as tending to household tasks while working in their current job positions. Advice/guidance offered to aspiring leaders included the following: be passionate about your job, be willing to learn, be proactive when addressing problems, manage time, prioritize tasks, and know when to say “No”.

Secondary Research Question 3: How do exemplary female elementary principals describe the major challenges/barriers they encountered along the way during their careers?

Exemplary female elementary principals described major challenges/barriers that they encountered along the way during their career paths. Participants in the study emphasized the
importance of knowing how to find a balance between home and work by prioritizing tasks as well as finding comfort after the loss of a loved one or friend and recovering from a life-altering event such as a house fire. Participants expressed that they were limited with their time for building their careers and lacked resources to meet some needs of their students. When female principals do not work toward establishing balance in their lives, it creates a lack of structure and organization that leads to frustrations. Participants advised aspiring female principals to advocate for the resources needed, take time for self-care, trust in God, and focus on building positive relationships.

**Secondary Research Question 4: How do exemplary female elementary principals describe their affirmations and guidance as an elementary school principal?**

Exemplary female described their affirmations and guidance of being an elementary principal. Participants in the study were well decorated with accolades of achievement. While these women were highly educated and highly qualified for their positions, two had already made advance moves to higher levels of leadership. One of the five participants had retired from the field of education and two more were making great strides as they lead their “A” level schools into continued success. The stories from the exemplary female principals provided many examples and advice for aspiring administrators as they strive to achieve exemplary status as school leaders in the P-12 setting. The individuals varied in age and work experiences. Most have had the experience of working in schools with high poverty levels and faced the challenges of finding resources to help students with social emotional/trauma concerns. All of the participants worked in schools with high poverty levels as indicated by the community needs and free/reduced lunch percentages. While dealing with personal and professional challenges, these participants excelled in their craft to lead successful schools and sustain their ratings over time.
Participants shared their feelings of joy and satisfaction in knowing that they led their organizations to success, achieved notable milestones, and sustained these successes. They attributed these successes to the practices of establishing cohesive teams as well as building and nurturing relationships with students, staff, and parents.

**Discussion Related to Secondary Research Question 1 – Career Paths**

The emergent themes regarding career paths were married with children, highly educated/highly qualified, and experts in their curriculum fields. All participants commonly held at least a Master’s degree. The findings from the study were consistent with existing research by Reeves and Berry (2009) that a Master’s degree was highest common degree among school leaders. For the current study, the doctoral degree was the highest degree held by the participants. Previous academic and work experiences of the participants fostered the development of their expertise and knowledge in their curriculum field. Preparation played a part in the success of the leaders because it enhanced and developed instructional practices as suggested by research from Helterbran and Rieg (2004). Two participants made advanced moves in their careers from elementary principals to district level leadership roles which supported career path research of Glass (2000) and Polinchock (2014). Glass (2000) and Polinchock (2014) found in their study that most aspiring individuals seeking upper level leadership roles follow either a traditional path of moving through the ranks as a teacher/principal/central office employee or teacher/principal to becoming a superintendent.

**Discussion Related to Secondary Research Question 2 - Current Job Responsibilities**

The emergent themes regarding current job responsibilities of the participants included providing instructional leadership, monitoring data and accountability systems, supervising staff
and students, providing safety, building positive relationships with staff, students, and parents as well as distribute leadership to empower others to lead. As the school leader, the principals were responsible for being the instructional leader. Hoerr’s (2015) research suggested that as the instructional leader, principals are responsible for monitoring and providing feedback/support to improve instructional practices. The shift in the role of the principal from manager to instructional leader as referenced by Grobler (2013) was evident in the job responsibilities presented by the participants. However, many of the principals’ roles emphasized instructional leadership as well as managerial, human resource, and the supervision of students and faculty, and the safety of the school’s environment (Lunenburg, 2000). While transforming failing/low performing schools into successful “A” rated schools, these exemplary principals empowered others by practicing distributed/shared leadership within their organizations. Growe and Montgomery’s (2000) research suggested that positive relationships with students, staff, and parents by being inclusive, demonstrating care, and being attentive to the needs and concerns can change the culture and climate in the school. Noddings’ (2013a, 2013b) research on relationships between the school and the community targeted teaching and learning. The impact of the relationships led to school interactions that help teach and develop a sense of empathy in the lives of young children (Noddings 2013a, 2013b). Such relationships were emphasized as a powerful contributing factor to the success of the schools lead by participants in the study.

Discussion Related to Secondary Research Question 3- Barriers /Challenges

Emergent themes related to barriers/challenges were lack of resources in the schools for student needs, limited time for building careers, and the need to take time for self-care. In previous research, barriers were believed to contribute to the underrepresentation of females in leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Northouse, 2016). In the present study, participants
were faced with challenges that impacted their opportunities for career advancements and the desire to find balance among personal needs as well as family and work responsibilities. Similar research related to balancing work and family needs and accountability support the findings of previous studies by Havice & Williams (2005), Morgan (2006), and Wise (2015). Especially for participants in high poverty schools that lacked funding and resources needed to support the social/emotional needs of the students and families they served.

**Discussion Related to Secondary Research Question 4 - Affirmation /Advice/ Guidance**

Emergent themes of affirmations were identified as feelings and behavior associated with awards/recognition and accountability. Participants were all recognized for their exemplary leadership for academic excellence and/or community service at the district, state, and/or national levels. However, the affirmations valued highly by the participants dealt with accountability and overcoming personal challenges associated with building relationships and improving student achievement within their organizations. Other researchers (Bollinger & Grady, 2015; Marzano et al., 2005) found affirmations in the rewarding experiences associated with making a difference in the communities, building positive relationships, and effectively communicating vision and goals.

Overall emergent themes were generated from the participants’ responses. General findings from the study included the following.

1. All female elementary principals in the study practiced shared and distributed leadership to empower others and to build capacity within the organization.

2. The exemplary female elementary principals were firm and fair in their leadership style.
3. Current job responsibilities commonly associated with leadership in the elementary setting included using data to monitor accountability, being the instructional leader (evaluate instruction, monitor PLCs, and provide instructional support), creating a safe learning environment for students and staff; and managing the day to day operations of the campus.

**Limitations**

The qualitative phenomenological research design was used to explore and describe the lived career experiences of the participants based on their individual encounters. The study was limited to female elementary principals with 3 to 5 years of experience who received state or national recognition for exemplary leadership as defined by the organization and/or department of education in their respective state or national organization. The number of participants used in the study; represented a very small sampling of views and experiences. The participants were representative from the states of Mississippi and South Carolina. Nonetheless, the results are useful and enlightening for aspiring administrators.

**General Recommendations**

Aspiring females seeking or practicing in roles of school leadership can benefit from the emergent themes presented in the data shared in the study. They provided advice and guidance that would be helpful to aspiring females seeking advancement in the field of educational leadership. According to the findings, the following general recommendations are suggested.

1. Superintendents of school districts, state school leaders, and policymakers should consider encouraging and supporting aspiring female administrators as they prepare academically for careers as principals.
2. Superintendents of school districts, state school leaders, and policymakers should consider encouraging and supporting current female administrators as they fulfill the roles of principals and or other school leadership positions.

3. Superintendents of school districts, state school leaders, and policymakers should consider encouraging and supporting aspiring female administrators as they begin their careers as principals.

4. Superintendents of school districts, state school leaders, and policymakers should ensure that successful school principals are recognized for their exemplary work within schools.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Recommendations for future research regarding exemplary female elementary principals in pursuing upper level roles in administration:

1. Additional research studies should be done to explore the career paths, challenges/barriers, affirmation and advice of a larger sample of participants as well as specifically African-American male and female administrators who have advanced to central and superintendent roles.

2. Additional research studies should be conducted to compare the success of male and female elementary administrators.

3. Additional research should be conducted to investigate the components and practices associated with successful school leaders and successful schools.
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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER
NOTICE OF DETERMINATION FROM THE HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM

DATE: May 23, 2019

TO: Frankie Williams, PhD, Educational Leadership, Christopher Armstrong-Leaf
    McMullan, Stephanie King
    Christopher Armstrong, PhD, The Learning Center, Leigh McMullan, PhD, Educational Leadership
    Stephanie King, Educational Leadership, Stacie Collins, Educational Leadership

PROTOCOL TITLE: A Phenomenological Case Study of Career Paths, Responsibilities, Barriers, Guidance, and Affirmations of Exemplary Female Elementary School Principals

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-19-219

Approval Date: May 23, 2019 Expiration Date: May 22, 2024

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

The review of your research study referenced above has been completed. The HRPP had made an Exemption Determination as defined by 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). Based on this determination, and in accordance with Federal Regulations, your research does not require further oversight by the HRPP.

Employing best practices for Exempt studies are strongly encouraged such as adherence to the ethical principles articulated in the Belmont Report, found at www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report# as well as the MSU HRPP Operations Manual, found at www.orc.msstate.edu/humansubjects. Additionally, to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so.

Based on this determination, this study has been inactivated in our system. This means that recruitment, enrollment, data collection, and/or data analysis CAN continue, yet personnel and procedural amendments to this study are no longer required. If at any point, however, the risk to participants increases, you must contact the HRPP immediately. If you are unsure if your proposed change would increase the risk, please call the HRPP office and they can guide you.

If this research is for a thesis or dissertation, this notification is your official documentation that the HRPP has made this determination.

If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact the HRPP Office at irb@research.msstate.edu. We wish you success in carrying out your research project.