VOICES FROM THE PRINCIPALSHIP:

THE EXPERIENCES OF FIVE WOMEN WHO ARE PRINCIPALS IN JAMAICAN

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

There is much to be gained from the experiences of women who have advanced to the principalship in primary and secondary schools. This thesis is a feminist highlight of the experiences of five Jamaican women principals, who believe that despite the challenges they face, they have made great strides in their jobs. Through their adoption of collaborative leadership, care and 'mothering', and religious resilience strategies, they show how they have been able to thwart gender and leadership stereotypes. These women principals are motivated by experiences of reward and resilience.

The women principals related their experiences through single interviews. Their experiences were discussed under the following themes: women as leaders, mentoring and professional development, the need for male role models, rewards and support, challenges, gendered experiences, motivation to enter and remain in the principalship and how their views of effective leadership impact their jobs.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the members of my family: Paul Lindo, Jayson Lindo and Jermaine Lindo. You have sacrificed much to allow me to get to this stage. This is as much your achievement as it is mine.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Much of society has been built on patriarchy, which is a system of relations premised on the superiority of men as a class over women as a class. Patriarchy impacts systems, policies, practices and, not least of all, education. Despite strides that have been made by women in numerous spheres of life, including academia, there still exists inequity in how women and men are perceived and treated. This qualitative research explores the experiences of five women principals at select primary and secondary educational institutions in Jamaica. In conducting this qualitative research, I used a feminist framework to help shed some light on how women have fared as heads of schools in Jamaica. I was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of selected women who are principals of Jamaican primary and secondary schools?

2. How do the selected women principals at the primary/secondary level in Jamaica view their experiences?

3. What are the women principals' perceptions of the relationship between their experiences and their gender?

Purpose of Study

In my home country, Jamaica, there have been numerous instances where different communities have demanded that men and not women head their public schools. There were even occasions where it was reported in the media that there were community demonstrations against female principals. In these instances, the members of the community expressed their lack of confidence in female principals and calls were made for school boards to appoint male principals instead. I have listened to conversations of members of small communities, and it has become apparent that there is the perception that men make stronger, firmer leaders, who are better able to effectively implement and maintain discipline. Women are considered too weak to firmly deal with disciplinary problems in these schools. I see this as an example of how female educators are marginalized. As a consequence of this experience, I recognized the need to document the experiences of selected women in the principalship at the primary and secondary levels in Jamaica. My interest is also to find out how these women perceive their experiences are influenced by their gender.

This research is a means of giving a voice to those five Jamaican women principals whose work experiences have not been the subject of research. Their stories shed some light on some of

the challenges and rewards of women working as principals and may be useful to others who aspire to become principals.

Education in Jamaica

People of African descent, whose foreparents were sold into slavery from Africa, dominate Jamaica's population. Jamaica's education system is rooted in the country's history of British colonization and slavery. In the earlier days education "was intended to maintain and re-enforce a social structure characterized by a small white elite and largely black laboring class" (The Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture, 2004). Women have historically trailed in access to education hence "there is little documented about the education of girls in the colony before 1770" (Net Industries, 2011). In fact, girls enrolled in formal education were directed towards subject areas that had to with domestic activities such as needlework and cookery. This is very much in line with the country's British colonial background. It is understandable, therefore, that women were absent from positions of leadership then and under-represented now, not just in education but also in other sectors of the society. Men have traditionally been the heads of schools and it was only some time after Jamaica gained independence from Britain in 1962 that the term used to refer to the head of the school was changed from 'headmaster' to 'principal.'

Jamaica's present educational system is modeled off the British system where students, for example, sit external examinations at the end of secondary school. The education system is administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture through its main administrative office in the capital city and six regional offices spread across the island of approximately 2.8 million people. Each public school in Jamaica has its own board that oversees its operations. The Education Act stipulates the broad composition of these school boards to include the principal, community members, parent representative and teacher representative. The government appoints the chairman of each school board.

There are four levels of formal education: early childhood, which supports children under the age of six years; primary, which caters to children between the ages of six and twelve years; secondary, which encompasses the age group twelve to eighteen years; and tertiary, which delivers education to individuals who have satisfactorily completed secondary schooling. There are some schools that span primary grades (1–6) and early secondary grades (7–9). These schools are called all-age schools or primary and junior high schools. To deal with the problem

of overcrowding, some schools operate on a shift system where students are grouped to attend school in the morning session or the afternoon session. Some schools rotate the shifts every term while others do it annually.

At the primary level, where education is compulsory, students, over the course of six grades, have to complete national testing at grades one, three, four and six. The examination that is administered to all students at the end of their primary schooling is used to place them in secondary schools. The chance of students being placed at the high school of their choice is dependent on the quality of their grades in the examination. The students are placed at a variety of secondary schools at the end of primary school. These schools are traditional high, comprehensive high, technical high, upgraded high, and junior departments of primary and junior high schools or all-age schools. Traditional high schools are the most sought after high schools because they have a long tradition of supporting students of good academic backgrounds. These schools started out as schools for the wealthy and it was only through scholarships that poor students were afforded places there. When I attended school in the mid 1970s to late 1980s, students who passed the Common Entrance Examination at the end of primary school were placed at traditional high schools. Technical high schools provide students with predominantly skills-based education. Upgraded high schools are those schools that started out as 'New Secondary' schools and were fed by students who were unsuccessful in the Common Entrance Examination administered at the end of primary school. These upgraded schools have been stigmatized by parents and students as low performing schools and, consequently, students who are performing well academically shy away from these schools and opt to attend traditional high schools. As a result of this, students at these new upgraded high schools, for the most part, start off as low academic achievers. The junior high sections of all-age and primary and junior high schools tend to be dominated by students with academic challenges because students who did well at the end of the primary section are placed at other high schools. Also, students with low examination scores are placed at these junior high sections of primary and junior high schools.

According to the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) (2009) Jamaica has a challenge in providing equity in the "**quality of education for all** [original emphasis] children" (p. 14). The PIOJ pointed out that a resolution was made in 2003, through the country's parliament, to increase the allocation to the Ministry of Education incrementally but this was never achieved. The transformation project should have addressed, for example, improvements to schools'

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facilities and infrastructure; teaching resources; literacy and numeracy and; school leadership and management (PIOJ, 2009).

In order for readers to understand some of the financial challenges the women principals in this study said they faced, it is important for me to briefly highlight how Jamaican schools are funded. The government funds Jamaican public schools but with the country being heavily indebted, schools are under-funded. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2004) reported:

> The allocation of funds to the various types of schools requires revision, appears too low to attain the necessary quality improvements. Within secondary education, the High Schools continue to occupy a privileged place. Allocations for instructional materials, equipment and operating funds for all schools are dangerously low (p. 12).

This shows there are inequities in the funding distributed to different types of schools. As a matter of fact, my experience has been that schools, in tandem with parents, have to carry out varied fundraising activities to supplement government subventions. The UNESCO (2004) drew attention to the fact that although schools are allowed to, independently, raise funds, "this is generally easier for High Schools, because of the relatively high level of the socio-economic family background of their students" (p. 61).

Women dominate the teaching population at the primary and secondary levels in Jamaica. However, the representation of women in the principalship is disproportionate to the number of women in the profession. Of the 25,329 teachers working in the public sector in Jamaica, 19,988 or 78.9 % of them are women but only 65.4% of women are principals (Education Statistics, 2009–2010). Although women make up 88% of teachers in primary schools, 70.3% of the principalship at those schools is women. By Contrast, the high school teaching population is made up of 69% women and women head 51% of these schools.

Limitations of the Study

This study of the experiences of women who are principals in Jamaican primary and secondary schools has several limitations. First, because I conducted the interviews by distance, I was unable to capture the facial expressions of the participants, which would have allowed me to be more descriptive of their emotions. I, therefore, had to rely solely on the voices that I heard.

Although I do not think my research was greatly affected, I think that had I been able to interview the participants face-to-face, the participants and I would have been able to form a more trust-worthy bond. Telephone interviews do not foster the relational connection that a face-to-face interview would have provided.

Secondly, I was unable to fully involve the women principals at all the stages of the research process, in accordance with feminist methodology. This does not, however, adversely affect the substance of their stories.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although there has been concerted effort, through research, to bring the voices of women principals to audible levels, there is still a long way to go in bringing those voices to a crescendo. Feminism has played a pivotal role in raising the level of awareness and respect for the experiences of women so it is important that I review the feminist movement in Jamaica as a starting point for the discussion of literature related to the experiences of women who are principals in Jamaican primary and secondary schools. I also must discuss the study of women principals through their varied identities as well as from a feminist standpoint. I will also review the literature that addresses the 'feminization' of teaching and its implications. Subsequently, I will discuss the challenges faced by women principals. The literature being reviewed encompasses visible minority groups such as African-American women principals in the USA; Maori women principals in Australia and Chinese women principals in Canada. Included in the review of literature also women in general in Canada, Spain and the UK. There is also literature from Jamaica.

Feminism in Jamaica

Jamaica has no active advocacy feminist organization although the country shares a rich history with the early feminist movement in the Caribbean. Reddock (2007) named Jamaicans Amy Bailey and Una Mason as early feminists of the Anglophone Caribbean. She described these women as middle class and said that "their relationship to women of the working classes ranged from solidarity to charity" (p. 6). In her article, Reddock noted the following about the early Caribbean feminists:

> As the term was introduced in the late nineteenth century, many of the women activists of this period defined themselves as feminist. When they did not use the term to describe themselves, it was used by their detractors and supporters to identify them. Their lives and work reflected an awareness or consciousness of the subordination of women which they actively sought to change (p. 6).

There was the sense that the use of the term 'feminist' created reservation for some who were engaged in advocacy for women. One of the stimuli for the rise of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) was the opposition between class and gender (Reddock (2007). Reddock explained that this early movement struggled with its identity as feminist and a

collective body. In addition, she related that CAFRA's hierarchical structure, with few women leaders, was set in the mould of patriarchy. It is ironic that this feminist organization (CAFRA) was saddled with the very structures it was trying to topple in mainstream society. Reddock argued that there was, therefore, a challenge of representing heterogeneous groups with differences in race, class and location.

One of the issues that faced Black feminists in Jamaica was discrimination among women of various shades, not just Black and White (Reddock, 2007). Light skinned women occupied positions of privilege because they were closer to Whites. Jamaica has come a far way in reconciling with this type of discrimination but there is still that notion that to be 'brown' is better than being 'Black.' In modern Jamaican society women and even men, especially those living in inner-cities, glorify their chemically bleached skin because they believe it affords them some privilege.

The face of feminist activism has lost momentum in the Caribbean as it is now mainly through scholarship that the work is kept alive. This is supported through a gender and development studies department that is a part of the regional university. Reddock (2006) pointed out that there is more developed scholarship coming out of the Hispanic Caribbean. Young people today are not buying into feminism in the Caribbean because they see it as another "dead 'ism'" (Reddock, 2006, p. 5).

Jamaican women principals appear not to have organized feminist support. Also, it is unclear how much they have been studied through feminist lens. In the following section I explore how women principals have been studied across the world. The section include the underrepresentation of women in the principalship as well as the debate about whether women should be studied as members of a universal group or as individuals with varying identities based on race, class, location and so on.

How Women Principals have been Studied

There has been much that has been written about women and their experiences as they aspire to be principals and also as they perform their duties as principals. Gill (1995) conducted a study among women who were a part of the New Brunswick Centre for Educational Administration programme. In this programme, designed to help alleviate the underrepresentation of women in the principalship, school board supported participants took part in a principals' assessment programme (Gill, 1995). The participants for Gill's study were

chosen based on their involvement in the programme so the only distinction made was that they were either vice principals, principal aspirants, or practising principals from urban, suburban and rural areas. Gill found that a large percentage of the women principals studied in the province were working in small, rural school districts. This may be an indication that these are the jobs that men do not really opt for; hence women have a greater chance of getting these appointments.

Fitzgerald (2003) has leveled criticism at the theorizing of women as a group in educational leadership, because she feels that would suggest that women have a "collective identity" on account of their gender, shared experiences and struggles (p. 432). She raised the concern that distinctions are not made between women regarding their ethnicity, race, location, class, and beliefs. In Fitzgerald's view what has effectively been happening is a universalization of women's experiences in what she termed "discourses of identity" (p. 432). I, too, believe that who we are and where we are from as well as our placing in society make our experiences different form others so we all need to be studied with all of those identities in mind. If these layers of identity were to be stripped away what remains would be a shell.

There has not been much research highlighting the experiences of women who are minorities, including women of African descent (Wrushen & Sherman, 2008) and women in Jamaica. Despite there being an increasing number of African-American women in the principalship, even at gritty urban schools, there is limited research done on their experiences so, to a large extent, they remain under the proverbial bushel (Dillard, 1995; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Loder, 2005). Oram-Sterling (2009) studied a lone Jamaican woman principal, Joan Wint, who worked at an upgraded high school. She used a biography format to document Joan Wint's experiences. Oram-Sterling wrote, "Joan Wint worked to bring about the transformation of a school that everyone considered a hopeless environment" (p. 196). Joan Wint worked against all odds, including skepticism among her staff, and was able to effectively lead her school. Her story is one in which her identity as a young Black woman in a rural school has to be borne in mind. I will discuss the varied identities of women in the next section.

The Varied Identities of Women

I believe it is important to bear each woman's social location in mind because our experiences are not only shaped by our gender but also by other factors such as our race, class and age. Oram-Sterling (2009) reported that Joan Wint's staff rejected her because they felt she was too young and inexperienced to head the school. I think the significance of each woman's

experience is somewhat devalued if all the factors are not taken into consideration. Discounting a woman's race, ethnicity, location, class and beliefs, effectively universalizes women's experiences (Fitzgerald, 2003). It is with a view to avoid this type of universalization that Bloom and Erlandson (2003) presented the realities of a group of African-American principals working in urban schools. These principals were drawn from women who were parts of "tightly-knit communities" with a "collective consciousness of identity" (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). This is similar to many Jamaican communities that share a collective identity in terms of race and class. One stark difference between Bloom and Erlandson's participants' communities and Jamaican communities is the fact that Black women in Jamaica make up the majority and not the minority, but they still have experiences, such as those related to race that, historically, may bind them to women in other jurisdictions. The dynamics of the experiences of *majority* Black women in a former European colonized nation, as is the case in Jamaica, is worthy of inquiry.

Wrushen and Sherman (2008) saw things somewhat differently from Fitzgerald (2003). They believed that, "While it is clear that women leaders demonstrate difference in regard to class, sexuality, and ethnicity, they also hold similarities as a 'category'" (p. 459). Clearly, they subscribe to the idea of "collective identity". I believe that women are connected similarly to how contents of a Venn diagram are connected. The broad category of woman binds us because there are those experiences we have that are solely based on being women but there are a myriad of other shades of experiences that make us fit more snugly in smaller groups. These groups are formed through our experiences as Black woman, White woman, Asian woman, lesbian, Western woman or Eastern woman, Muslim woman or Christian woman, rich woman, poor woman, young or mature woman, and the list can go on and on. Researchers have to be careful of using the experiences of one group of women to theorize the experiences of women, in general.

Wrushen and Sherman (2008) interviewed women principals in the United States of America from a variety of ethnicities including African-American, Asian, Hispanic and Caucasian. They reported that the experiences of these women principals were more similar than different. This would help to support their argument of collective identity. Some of the things they found similar were their motivation for their career path, their struggles with balancing family and work and their perceptions of leadership as a place for compassion. The women principals in that study also showed an awareness of the perceptions that the communities have of them as leaders.

It is quite clear from studies done by scholars such as Loder (2005) that race, gender and generation has some influence on leadership. There is a difference in the experiences of women principals who "came of age" during the post Civil Rights era and those women who were born in that era (Loder, 2005). Those who grew up in the Civil Rights era saw the need to become "othermothers" (Collins, as cited in Loder, 2003, p. 301) to children from homes that suffer social and economic disadvantage. Race and class have, over the years, virtually become twin words because more often than not, especially among African-Americans, one's race would define one's class. In other words, if one is African-American, it is more likely that one would be in the lower class. That is the reality that schools that serve African-American communities have to deal with, hence, the reality of African-American women principals. These women, therefore, have to deal with issues of being a minority on multiple levels: their own circumstances as women and as African-Americans and that of their charges coming from disadvantaged communities, as well as fewer resources in their schools and, at least historically, lower pay for themselves.

Summary

Despite the fact that women share many experiences simply because of their gender, the group is not heterogeneous. There are factors such as age, ethnicity, religion, social and physical location as well as race that separate us. These factors contribute to our life experiences so they should be pivotal in how our experiences are interpreted and analysed. Despite the variation in women identities, women principals have found effective ways of leading. In the following section I address the topic of women as leaders. The discussion is centred around the leadership style of women principals that encompass care, inclusiveness, collaboration and, also the adoption of so-called 'masculinist' strategies.

Women as Leaders

Chin (2011) asserted, "There is strong evidence to support the tendency for women to adopt a more collaborative, cooperative, or democratic leadership style" (p. 2). Women seem to believe that when they are inclusive in how they manage their task, they have a better chance of motivating their staff to do well at their jobs. Kark (2004) described this type of leadership as transformational because the women leaders are flexible, team-oriented and participative. This is a good thing because I have been with former colleagues as we quarrelled among ourselves that our principal just presents decisions. Even if he 'threw things out' for us to discuss at staff

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meetings, there was the feeling that he had already decided which direction he planned to take. We felt that our ideas did not matter so we never felt motivated to give of our all.

Women principals have been found to be caring and compassionate (Dillard, 1995; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008; Sherman & Wrushen, 2009; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). Women have been socialized to take care of people. We have been socialized to care for our younger siblings and relatives. We have even been provided with dolls so we can practice our 'caring.' The tendency to care then becomes an extension of our humanity. Commenting on a woman teacher's image Oram (1989) stated, "Teaching has been sold as an undeniably feminine occupation, linked to women's role as mothers and nurturers of children. The younger the children the more apt is women's place as their teacher" (p. 31). It is yet to be shown if this image has actually harmed or helped the teacher.

I remember there was a single male teacher at my primary school in the 1970s and he was only the second most feared. The title of most feared belonged to our woman principal. She was feared, fierce and fearless. As students, we perceived her as having no soft side. When I reflect on my experience with that principal I am led to believe that she was only trying to carve out her niche in a traditionally male-dominated position. Bierema (2003) noted, "The few women who break through the glass ceiling do so by emulating men and reinforcing patriarchal systems that discriminate against women and people of colour, and, essentially, 'keep women in their place'" (p. 3). This underscores the point that women are believed to adopt 'masculine' traits to assist them in advancing their careers in leadership. Bierema asserted that, "the result of these dynamics is the acculturation of women into male work culture, devaluation of women's gender roles and deprivation of women's identity" (p. 4). This is a very interesting piece of information because it opens the eyes to how the teaching profession has morphed somewhat into masculinity as a result of patriarchal influence. The idea that there are women who feel compelled to 'masculinize' in order to be accepted in a patriarchal system of authority is quite telling. It could well be that women are intimidated by men and their dominance in positions of leadership. The glass ceiling has been so firm that some women may find it a useful strategy to break it by using the rules created by men. This goes to show how strong a reign men have on what is perceived to be good and effective leadership. It is the masculine brand of leadership that society readily accepts because that is what has been offered for such a long time and, historically, it was deliberately entrenched through higher material rewards to men.

It is so important to study women from a feminist perspective because of the masculine influence and domination on the definition of leadership and the firm entrenchment of male practices on leadership. The following section is a review of the study of women from a feminist perspective. In this section I give an account of the feminist perspective and what it means for the study of women.

The Study of Women from a Feminist Perspective

A feminist perspective is one that values women's experiences and recognizes that women are subjects of their own knowledge. Feminists reject the perception that women, by nature, are inferior to men (Westkott, 1990). Westkott (1990) stated that feminists believe that women are alienated in a male world. Therefore, "feminist scholarship has attended to both the material base of that control [by men] and to the cultural and psychological aspects of female devaluation" (Westkott, 1990, p. 60). Actually, women's work and their experiences have accrued more value through feminist scholarship. Furthermore, feminist inquiry deviates from mainstream types of inquiry in how the researcher and the subjects of research relate to each other. Also, feminist inquiry does not mandate that a researcher maintains emotional distance, hence objectivity, from the subject of her/his research (Harding, 2007; Westkott, 1990). In addition, feminists are critical of those methods of inquiry that serve "hierarchical power relations in the society" (Harding, 2007, p. 48). In feminist inquiry, therefore, the researcher and the research participants are on the same level and attempts are made to minimize power relations.

The most popular framework used to study female leadership in educational institutions has been a feminist framework. Researchers such as Coleman (2002; 2007), Wrushen and Sherman (2008), Sherman and Beaty (2010), Gill (1995), Reynolds (1995), Dillard (1995), Hall (1996), Elliot (1997), Acker (1994) and Coronel, Morena and Carrasco (2010) conducted their studies using a feminist framework. They argue that since women operate within a patriarchal society, it is a travesty to continually perpetuate the injustice of using the society's 'norms' to study them. Consequently, women are being studied from a feminist standpoint. In essence, a feminist standpoint affords the researcher the opportunity to bear in mind that:(1) a woman's experiences are valid and valued; (2) there is a connection to be made between our daily experiences as women and social structures (Calixte, Johnson and Motapanyane, 2010); (3) there needs to be "an analysis of systems of power in society and indicate how the unequal distribution

of this power shapes the lives of men and women" (Calixte, Johnson & Motapanyane, 2010, p. 1); and (4) the notion of gender dichotomy is false. However, although the notion of gender dichotomy is false, we still have to recognize that it has a huge impact on identity and on what we can materially achieve as women or as men. This impact has a significant bearing on how we are socialized to fit into roles of gender as defined by society.

Being an advocate and a practitioner of a feminist framework, Fitzgerald (2003) suggested that we structure our interrogation around five discourses: privilege, opportunity, identity, deficit and homogeneity. She believed that the theorizing of female leadership is silent on race as white, as a social construct and as privileged. Consequently, she encouraged the inclusion of discussions on "acknowledging and interrogating whiteness as a specific privilege and taken-for-granted construct" (p. 442).

While Fitzgerald (2003) recommended the five discourse strategy, Reynolds (1995), posited four categories of McIntosh's model of research that should be used in the study of educational leadership and administration—womanless administration and leadership; women administrators as focus; barriers and strategies for women administrators and; restructuring the discourse of educational administration and leadership. In the category of womanless administration and leadership, discussion is encouraged around the underrepresentation of women in administration. Making women administrators the focus of research may encompass the experiences of varied women in different situations and how their gender impacts these experiences. In addition, when looking into the barriers that women leaders encounter, Reynolds suggested research could direct attention to how barriers have changed and the strategies these women implement to survive. Finally, in restructuring the discourse of educational administration and management a connection should be made between "ideologies, everyday practices and official policies", "gendered relations" and the resistance to reform (Reynolds, 1995, p. 14). In a world where there is so much diversity among women, Reynolds' recommended research categories would have to be used in diverse ways to highlight the varying identities of women. The scholarship is almost invisible on these categories. Womanless administration, for example, has to be discussed around issues of race, class and location. In addition, how women principals, from diverse social backgrounds, devise and employ strategies to overcome challenges has to be brought to the inquiry.

Another area that needs to be brought into focus, through inquiry, is the overrepresentation of women in teaching. I will, therefore, extend my discussion in the following section to the feminization of teaching. In that section, I discuss the notion of teaching as a woman-dominated and woman-cultured profession; the possible causes of the feminization of teaching; and the debate about the effects of feminization on boys.

The Feminization of Teaching

With the increasing numbers of women in the teaching profession in the nineteenth century, researchers started using the term, 'feminization' to describe it. Prentice (1977) explained that 'feminization' of teaching has nothing to do with women venturing in an area they had no presence in since women taught in British North American schools in the mid nineteenth century. Griffiths (2006) posits that the 'feminization' of teaching not only refers to the numerical dominance of women in teaching but also the association of teaching with 'women culture.' The term, however, gives the impression of negativity being associated with the dominance of women. It is the latter part of Griffiths' assertion that I find interesting simply because it has been the concern of many communities served by schools dominated by women teachers that this 'women culture' is disadvantageous to boys. It is on that basis that there is the feeling that when there are too many women, then students are being taught, informally, the woman's way.

Feminization and Male Role Models

Acker (1994) surmised that as a consequence of the domination of women in teaching, some perceive that boys suffer a lack of suitable role models. There is the perception that when boys have few men around them, they are at a disadvantage because they need men to influence how they behave. This perception leads us back to the notion that women convey 'women culture' that is detrimental to boys. Griffiths (2006), however, argued that 'feminization' is to be embraced because it helps to subvert hegemonic masculinity that exists in schools. She argued further that boys are not affected negatively by the domination of women in the classroom.

The decreasing levels of men in the classroom may negatively affect boys in the sense that they lack male role models (Jamaica—Teaching Profession). The overrepresentation of women may also result in boys seeing the teaching profession as a one for women and in turn shy away from teaching. I think not enough research has been done to explain feminization of teaching so there could be some scholarship on the dominance of women teachers and the effects

of this dominance on the teaching profession, the women principals, and the students. Griffiths (2006) conceded that the perception does exist that teaching practices are affected by the "feminization" of teaching which is believed to affect boys who are presumed to need male role models. Wilkins and Gamble (2000) believed "female dominance in elementary education may be a factor contributing to the marginalization of Jamaican males and their failure in the education system" (p. 20). However, Griffiths (2006) argued that, "Research studies have repeatedly shown that boys are not disadvantaged by being taught by women" (p. 401). No doubt, this will continue to be the subject of debate. The presumption that boys need role models is important to my study because the women principals I studied raised the subject as a concern and some have implemented programmes to provide boys with male role models.

Factors Accounting for the Feminization of Teaching

Beginning in the nineteenth century, there have been several factors that have been posited as possible causes for the "feminization" of teaching. One reason advanced is that the Industrial Revolution created better paying jobs for men and as a result educational employers were forced to hire the women, who were left in the pool (Grumet, 1981; Griffiths, 2006). Another reason is that in a period where women working in public was unwelcomed, women found kindergarten and elementary teaching as gainful employment outside of the home which helped to give them "public standing and recognition" (Griffiths, 2006, p. 401). Prentice (1977) said that although women taught in schools in North America from as early as the nineteenth century, they had not extended themselves to teaching outside of the home in other jurisdictions. In effect, women were predominantly confined to teaching in the private sphere.

Speaking to the increasing percentage of women in teaching over the years, Grumet (1981) concluded, "Teaching had become the shelter of the educated woman. It was a refuge both familiar and alien, a boarding house where she didn't make the rules and didn't even have her own key" (p. 174). As a matter of fact, in a society where not many options are open to women, who have advanced themselves academically, teaching at varied levels has proven to be a means through which women academics can contribute meaningfully. As a result, women tend to be stable forces in the classroom.

Grumet (1981) postulated feminization as a benefit since it can be seen as a response to masculine hegemonic practices in schools. Grumet stated:

It has been widely argued that schooling supports the dominance of men in society first by exaggerating those characteristics that distinguish male from female gender and then by gradually establishing success norms that favor males, linking their achievements and world view to ideologies that dominate both the economy and the state (p. 175).

"Feminization" is, therefore, seen as a means of resistance. A changing teaching force is challenging the old order of male domination and male-centredness. Griffiths (2006) apparently supported Grumet's observation when she noted, "There are indications that the pressures of central government internationally are intensifying a culture of hegemonic masculinity in schools, whether or not they have a majority of women teachers" (p. 388). It matters not how many women teach, the men still make the rules In addition, Griffiths argued that "feminized practices" are "never hegemonic" (p. 388) since there is no universal category of woman.

In Jamaica, there is hardly any literature available to trace the beginning of the process of "feminization" of the teaching profession. Data obtained from the Ministry of Education confirms that there is a dominant number of women in the teaching profession at the primary and secondary levels. There are 25,329 teachers working in the public sector across Jamaica, 19,988 of whom are women and 5341 of whom are men (Education Statistics, 2009–2010). When broken down according to school type, the figures show that at the primary level there are 7,300 women and 961 men; at all-age and primary and junior high there are 4,166 women and 732 men and; at high schools there are 8,130 women and 3,626 men (Education Statistics, 2009–2010). This data reveals that women outnumber men in the teaching profession in Jamaica at a ratio of almost 4:1. The dominance of women is more pronounced at the primary level, which has; a ratio of almost 8:1 as opposed to the high school level where the ratio is 2:1. Wilkins and Gamble (2000) reported that, in one Jamaican woman principal's view, men have less preference to work with younger children because they preferred teaching specific subjects. The underrepresentation of male teachers, especially at the primary level may be attributable to fewer men using the profession as a stepping-stone and those who choose teaching as a career opt to focus on the upper secondary level (Jamaica—Teaching Profession). When I reflect on my teaching career at the secondary level, I realise that most of my male colleagues worked with the students above grade eight. The rationale then was that the students, especially grade nine boys, needed strong male presence to help them focus on schooling while they transition through adolescence.

Prentice (1977) pointed out that there were two movements in the late nineteeth century that accounted for the dominance of women teachers at the elementary level in North America. She said there was a movement to promote the placement of school children in grades "in the name of efficiency" (p. 51). Teachers with less training, likely women, were assigned to younger children and the more experienced teachers, most likely men, were assigned higher grades and higher salaries. The other movement Prentice mentioned was that to promote "the status of teaching as a profession" (p. 50). Prentice also explained that the movement believed that if salaries were higher and there was a school hierarchical structure in place—with men at the top, of course—teaching would be advanced to professional status. She argued that the movement, therefore, worked to secure better pay for school administrators, who were men, while women occupied lower paid classroom teaching. Women were attracted to teaching but they did not call the shots; the men did.

Summary

The 'feminization' of teaching is not only viewed in light of the high percentage of women who make up the profession, especially at the primary level but also the perceived dominant effect that women have on the transmission of culture in a school Griffiths, 2006). There is ongoing debate about the effects that this domination has on boys. While some scholars and practitioners drew attention to the perception held by some that boys are denied role models when women dominate the classroom (Acker, 1994; Wilkins & Gamble; Jamaica—Teaching Profession), others argue that studies show that boys are not disadvantaged as a result of having women teachers (Griffiths, 2006).

There are few accounts that have been given of the origin of feminization in teaching. Somewhere around the time of the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, men were afforded better paying jobs, hence education employers were forced to fill vacancies with women (Grumet, 1981; Griffiths, 2006). In addition, Grumet (1981) concluded that teaching was one of the few areas where educated women could retreat to when they sought employment. Also as women sought recognition they moved from employment in the confines of the private sphere and into teaching jobs at the elementary level in the public sphere. For women, it was a step up from domestic work. Prentice (1977) saw 'feminization' emanating from a movement to privilege men in higher paid teaching positions at the top.

The fight for recognition is one that was taken on by early feminists and there are still women today who are continuing that fight. The obstacles still remain countless moons later. In the next section the discussion focuses on some of the challenges women face in the principalship. These challenges range from an underrepresentation of women in the principalship—especially at the secondary level and, markedly, among minority women—to gender stereotyping and sexism.

Challenges Women Face in the Principalship

As I examine the literature, I realise that there are some challenges that women face that are the same whether they are in Australia or Europe or North America or the Caribbean. For example, women are generally underrepresented in the principalship, especially at grades that cater to older children (Coleman, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2003; Sherman and Beaty, 2010; Bing, 2010). The situation is more evident among minority women (Fitzgerald, 2003). Fitzgerald wrote about the Maori women in New Zealand and how these minority women tend to be placed as principals at schools that are dominated by students of colour. She also revealed that Maori men are more likely to become principals than Maori women. Sherman and Beaty (2010) and Bing (2010) also noted the underrepresentation of women in the principalship in the United States of America, despite their dominance of the teaching profession. Sherman and Beaty (2010) noted that men operate from privileged position where their leadership abilities are viewed in a positive light. Clearly the glass ceiling has not been obliterated.

Oram-Sterling (2009) reported that one of the first challenges that confronted Joan Wint, the subject of her biography, was the run-down nature of the school plant and the lack of respect for the school shown by the parents and other community members. Even more major than the school plant was the challenge of the resistance that Joan faced from the school community. Oram-Sterling wrote:

> So when Joan was appointed principal, senior members of the teaching staff protested, because they believed she was too young for the position and that she had not spent enough years at the institution to be elevated to the principalship. Other senior members of staff wanted the job (p. 207).

Women principals not only encounter institutional barriers but human barriers as well. The task of working with those who openly reject their leadership must be a difficult one to overcome.

Women principals have to constantly work to prove themselves. There is room for more inquiry into the types of challenges facing principals such as Joan Wint.

Wrushen and Sherman (2008) reported that the women principals in their study faced the challenge of their style of leadership being compared to their predecessor's. These women principals also reported not being heard and the fact that men are more able to get instant response to their commands than women are able to. My experience has been that my male principal usually shouted his commands to people to obtain immediate response and people have come to accept that technique. Women who are soft-spoken are frequently taken advantage of. The leadership of fear and aggression that some men use, is, therefore, viewed as more effective.

Coleman (2007) conducted research in England to survey the views of secondary school principals. One thing that was identified in that survey is the rootedness of gender stereotypes in educational leadership. Coleman noted:

> There is a stereotype of hegemonic masculinity that consciously and unconsciously influences our expectations of what a leader 'should be'. As a result, women, and others who do not correspond to the leader stereotype—male; heterosexual; white; middle class—may feel and be perceived by others as outsiders in a leadership role (p. 1).

In varying degrees, gender stereotyping is a significant barrier that women in myriad groups across the world may have to deal with. In order to perform their jobs well and be accepted, women principals have to scale this hurdle.   Joan Wint in Oram-Sterling's (2009) study revealed that people who came to the school expected to see a male principal. Both Cui (2010), who looked at visible minority women principals in Canada, and Hall (1996), who studied women principals in England, also reported that the community by and large expected that the head of the school would be a man. The women principals related how members of the community would enquire about the headmaster. In part, this also derives from the ideology of women as nurturers and that leaders cannot be nurturers. The head of the school is profiled to be a man so it is made to appear that women are out of their league in these positions. Patriarchy may be responsible for the expectation that the principal of a school should be a man as this expectation is fueled by leadership stereotypes along gender lines.

Coronel, Morena and Carrasco (2010) focused on those things women perceived as barriers that prevented them from ascending to the principalship in the Andalusian region of Spain. The most notable barrier is the conflict between work and family. Women have to

perform dual roles as homemaker and principal. While the men who lead, have women who support them at home, the women who lead, for the most part have to perform double duty as professionals and homemakers.

Coleman (2007) also highlighted that women were not confident in applying for leadership positions because they felt that men would get the job over them. This is exactly the feeling that some former colleagues and I discussed some years ago. We discussed that some of us as women pretend not be interested in positions of leadership because we fear we would not get those jobs anyway. Coleman (2002, 2007) also found that there is a perception that women are not as capable as men to lead, and that women had to be more outstanding than men. Coleman (2002 found that, "The main gender-related problem for the women heads was the resentment felt by men and some women about females in a leadership role, the underlying belief that leadership is inappropriate for women" (p. 87). Coleman (2002) also reported that female principals came up against gendered roles in schools so that men are more likely to be promoted to headship than women who perform "caring or servicing". Coleman (2002) also found that some women heads felt they were being tested to see if they could adequately deal with discipline, especially as it related to older boys. She reported further that women are more likely to become leaders of institutions which accommodate younger children, whereas the older the age group, the more difficult it is for these women to be promoted to the top. This, too, may have some relationship to the association of caring and nurturing with women. There is a perception that children in the earlier grades require more nurturing than those in the higher grades that men are attracted to. Also, some, like the participant in Wilkins and Gamble's (2000) study believed men prefer to specialize in specific subject areas. It is more than a preference, however, because men who teach younger children have to deal with the perception that it is 'unmanly' to teach young children and the fear they may be accused of pedophilia. Furthermore, men's limited presence in teaching younger children is related back to the deliberate stratification of the teaching profession highlighted by Prentice (1977).

Wrushen and Sherman (2008) revealed, "Many of the women talked about the frustration of not being heard as women leaders" (p. 463). These women principals expressed the view that men were able to get things done but there was a reluctance accepting a woman as leader. This speaks to the whole issue of male privilege. As a matter of fact, the women principals Wrushen and Sherman studied in the USA, voiced how they had attempted to "assert their leadership in

compassionate ways for school improvement knowing that it was an uphill battle and that the respect that they spent years working for had been a sure bet for many of their male counterparts" (p. 463). Generally, women have to work harder to earn respect and recognition in their field of work, including education.

One principal in Cui's (2010) study, expressed the concern that the school system seemed to have a visible minority and gender quota that they were mandated to cover. I can see how this perception could encourage female principals to feel gratefulness or resentment. There is the sentiment that as women we have made great strides in a patriarchal society so we should be thankful and be satisfied.

Summary

Women principals face myriad challenges in their quest to be effective. Before they even get to the principalship, women have to reconcile with the fact they are not well represented there. The odds are not in favour of them being promoted to the top job in schools, especially at the secondary level. This is even more unlikely for women from minority groups. As a result of this, some women are reluctant to apply to the principalship because they feel they will not be appointed over men.

Some women face challenges in getting their own colleagues to support them in advancing their vision for the school. This is a daunting challenge but as women principals, such as Joan Wint of Oram-Sterling's (2009) study have shown, it is a surmountable challenge.

Many women principals also encounter gender stereotyping and sexism. As a result of the patriarchal structures that exist in many societies, effective leadership is defined and judged according to male standards. Both genders have been socialized to respond to men as leaders so women have to work harder to get those they lead to respond to them. Further, men are identified with leadership, some people expect that the role of principal of a school is a man's and this is exemplified in studies that have been conducted.

Conclusion

There has been much that has been written about women and their experiences as they aspire to be principals and also as they perform their duties as principals. There have been studies conducted with a myriad of women in Canada, the USA, Spain, the UK, Australia and China but not much has come from the Caribbean, in general, and particularly Jamaica. The experiences of women principals in Jamaica are muted. Women may have come a long way in

their representation in the principalship but there should be provision for the airing of the voices of those principals who have broken the metaphorical glass ceiling. This is, therefore, a gap that research can seek to address.

I see Fitzgerald's (2003) point about the need to include discussion around discourses of identity. I would add that there could be a discussion around male privilege as well. In the literature that I have read, including those that described the experiences of minority women, there was no definitive discussion of privileges. I was a bit disappointed that Cui (2010) played down the issue of race in her study of minority South Asian female principals. It must be conceded, however, that Cui did not use a feminist framework but a post-positivist one. Post-positivists believe that the truth cannot be totally known. Furthermore, she explained that in Chinese culture, of which she is a part, they focus on positivity. There was one principal who alluded to a racial experience she had but because these minority principals were immigrants to Canada, they shied away from being negative in their comments about their adopted country. The principal was belittled because of an assumption that her English was not good. Although this incident of downplaying racial experience took place outside of her experience as a principal, I still think it should have been given more scope for discussion in the study since all the principals studied claimed that their earlier experiences influenced their decision to aspire to become principals.

Teaching is indeed feminized but the principalship sure is not. There is room for research on the dynamics of 'feminization' in teaching. It would also be useful to know how boys respond to female leadership and the effects, if any, that the feminization of teaching has on them.

I agree with Gill (1995) when she reasoned, "Women must be valued for the skills they bring to administration rather than being compared to the traditional concepts of administration" (p. 60). Coleman (2002) agreed when she asserted that "it cannot be that all women manage in a certain way and all men in another" (p. 117). Studies not only can seek to find out how teachers perceive their principals but the principals' perceptions of themselves should also be captured.

I have heard colleagues say their acting principal was not firm enough in the treatment of students who had broken the rules of the school. Their perception of her was that she was too weak. The woman was acting for our male principal who was on leave. His style of leadership was autocratic as he would take resolutions to staff meetings but would not entertain opposition to their passing. Furthermore, he was known to be aggressive in his tone as he addressed both

students and teachers. These are the qualities that are used to judge whether a principal is effective. As long as he is cold, aloof, fierce and feared; he is leading like a man so anything outside of this designated 'norm' is termed unacceptable. It is my belief that we have been so socialized by patriarchal norms that we do not even recognize we 'other' our women when we subscribe to the notion that the effective way to lead is a man's way or that women are out of their league when they aspire to be principals. Coleman (2002) asserted that, "The assumption is that there is only one correct way to manage—a 'male' way—and that showing emotions and being nice had no place when it came to leading a school" (p. 89). It is time we banish this assumption so the full benefits of what women and men have to offer are accrued to the society. My research highlights some of the strategies a few women principals devise to be effective leaders.

I am concerned that there is the perception that some female principals are appointed because of a diversity agenda. Ahmed (2009) spoke about the hypocrisy of implementing programmes of diversity while not doing enough to deal with the issue of racism. Ahmed's 'technology' of happiness, where Whites expect non-whites to feel happy and grateful when they are included in diversity programmes, is very applicable here. Not only should the non-white person be happy but also the happiness must be shown. My conclusion is that there is the belief that women should be grateful for the progress they have made in advancing to the principalship in a patriarchal society.

It is important that we study women principals through a feminist perspective. That standpoint provides the best place from which to study women without the baggage of 'masculinist' standards. There is much that can be learnt from the experiences of women principals. Women who are teachers have a lot to contribute to scholarship about teaching and women principals have much to contribute to the scholarship on school leadership. They are the practitioners so there is no better resource than them and there are no better mentors for aspiring women principals than practising women principals.

In the next chapter, I explain feminist framework as part of my methodology. I also expose the other methods I used to collect and analyse and present the data.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study was conceived out of my desire to explore the experiences of some Jamaican women who are principals of Jamaican primary and secondary schools. To guide my exploration I worked with the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of selected women who are principals of Jamaican primary and secondary schools?

2. How do the selected women principals at the primary/secondary level in Jamaica view their experiences?

3. What are the women principals' perceptions of the relationship between their experiences and their gender?

Considering that I wanted to hear what the experiences of these women principals were, I opted to do a qualitative study, which allowed me to hear the stories straight from the women themselves. I also used a feminist framework to situate my research and to help me to understand the women's experiences through a feminist lens, one that allows me to understand how patriarchal social structures help to shape those experiences.

Qualitative Study

A qualitative study presents the best means to allowing women principals to describe their experiences in their own way, in their own voice. I have opted to complete a study using qualitative methods because I feel that it is the most efficient and effective method capable of capturing the experiences of the research subjects. The women principals were allowed to frame their own responses to interview questions. I believe that when people are allowed to use their own words to describe their experiences there is a greater chance that their passion naturally emerges, and that is what I achieved through the use of a qualitative method. Furthermore, the use of a qualitative method provided me with the opportunity to ask follow-up questions based on given responses, thereby providing me with more meaningful data.

The Use of 'Prosaic' Discourse to Present the Women Principals

I have chosen to present the experiences of the five women principals using a 'prosaic' discourse. Polkinghorne (1995) explains, "Narrative as prosaic text has been extended to refer to any data that are in the form of natural discourse or speech (p. 6). In re-presenting what each woman principal told me, I merely grouped their experiences under headings and replaced some

of their direct speech with reported speech. In an effort not to veer too far away from what they actually said, I have allowed the reader to hear their voices directly through an extensive use of direct quotations. I used focused coding as explained by Charmaz (2007) as a guide to present the principals' profiles under headings. I found this type of presentation suited to my purpose of giving primacy to the voice of the principals.

I had a vision of how I wanted to present the experiences of the women principals who participated in the study but I could not find an authority on my vision. I explored Lawrence's (1994) portraiture model of narrative presentation and decided to simplify it by making my presentation less 'storied.' I wanted their stories to be heard but as close to how they told them as possible. I, therefore, chose a prose that would provide me with that kind of report. I feared making the experiences of my participants too fictional so I settled on just presenting their experiences in a simple report format that would make allowance for their direct quotations at multiple points of the report. In doing so, I was able to avoid the problem of discriminating what to include and what could be left out. I included all they told me, except for statements that would compromise their anonymity. Although I included the full content of the conversation I had with each woman principal, I focused on recurring themes in my analysis of data. I also relied on the literature reviewed to organize my discussion on themes. My data, to a great extent, informed my review of literature and my review of literature significantly helped me to make sense of my data.

Overarching Framework

In conducting this qualitative research study into the experiences of women who are principals of primary and/or secondary schools in Jamaica, I employed a feminist framework. I am a Jamaican woman who has taught in Jamaican schools and I have witnessed how women, who are principals, are judged according to how well they reflect what the society views as good leadership skills. The society's view is usually informed by its experience with leadership of a masculine nature so women principals are placed in positions of comparison with men. Grant (1989) cautioned, "In comparing the career patterns of women with those of men there is a danger of presenting men's experiences as the norm against which, correspondingly, women's experiences are defined as deviant" (p. 38). It is in this light that I utilized a feminist approach to my study because through this means the women principals were given an opportunity to

articulate their experiences without having those experiences placed under the masculine microscope, although they themselves might compare themselves to men.

"*Who* can know, *what* can be known, and *how* we can construct the most authentic view of the social world are at the centre of feminist concerns" (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 144). I want to show, through the use of the five women principals' experiences, that women have knowledge of school leadership. There is no better way of showcasing this knowledge than through the use of a feminist methodology. A feminist methodology allows me to shift the focus of my research from men as norm to women charting their own course.

Another reason I find a feminist framework suitable for my study is that I am able to maintain a personal connection to my research without being forced to adopt a neutral stance. Feminists make provision for the direct involvement of the researcher in the research process through the use of reflection and participation (Hesse-Biber, 2007). There is no need for the researcher to separate self from the research subjects in an effort to remain neutral (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Being a woman and having taught for over a decade, places me close to the subject of my research. My experiences are valuable to my research and a feminist methodology allows me not to discount that. Hesse-Biber (2007) emphasized this when she wrote:

> Through continuous reflection about how biography and historical social context shape the research process, the situatedness of both researcher and the participants are integrated into the process of knowledge building. This requires an active and collaborative, rather than passive, role on the part of the researcher (p. 144).

Like Acker (as cited in Grant, 1989), I seek to know more about myself through my interaction with the experiences of the women I have studied. According to Grant (1989), Acker's research took on a personal meaning because "in seeking to understand the career experiences of other women [she] was searching to know more about [her] own" (p. 38).

I embraced the feminist framework in my quest to examine the experiences of women who are administrators in secondary schools. I subscribe to the view that gender is an issue in our society because of the role that patriarchy plays in how people are socialized and assigned functions based on our gender. I agree with Johnson (1997) that, "feminism is the only critical perspective on patriarchy that we've got" (p. 101). I decided that since I am studying women, it is important that I use the clearest and most effective lens possible, one that takes into consideration the dictates of masculinity.

Participants

I solicited participation in this research study through the use of community nomination. According to Ladson-Billings (1994), community nomination takes place when researchers place reliance on members of the community to assess others in the community to determine their suitability for the study. I used the teaching community to recruit participants for this study. I asked former colleagues who are members of the school community to suggest female principals who they believe to be suitable for my study. I relied on their judgement to identify people in their setting who would aptly fit my study. The criteria for selecting the participants for the study were that the women principals must have been working as principals for at least two years in a primary, all-age, primary and junior high, or any type of public secondary school. I e-mailed former colleagues and former college mates about my study and asked them to forward my letter of invitation to eligible participants. Prospective participants were asked to contact me if they were willing to participate in the study or if they wanted more information. Five principals responded and their stories form the basis of this study.

Of the five women principals who participated in this study, two are heads of upgraded high schools, two are heads of primary and junior high schools and one is the head of a primary school. All the principals have several years of teaching experience and they have been principal for two years or more.

Data Collection

I collected data in this research study regarding the experiences of women who are principals through, primarily, the use of interviews. These interviews were conducted via the telephone, on the participants end and through the use of Skype on my end. This data was collected to provide answers to my research questions:

1. What are the experiences of selected women who are principals of Jamaican primary and secondary schools?

2. How do the selected women principals at the primary/secondary level in Jamaica view their experiences?

3. What are the women principals' perceptions of the relationship between their experiences and their gender?

Jones (2002) stated that, "how data is collected influences what can be known, experienced, and told by the researcher" (p. 467). That means I had to carefully choose the data collection

methods that would best help me to gather the information I sought. Since I was interested in the principals' own experiences, I believed semi-structured interviews were apt. Data for the study was, therefore, gathered using interviews with the female principals. I also kept reflective notes that documented my reflections on all stages of the research process. These reflections are incorporated throughout the research report.

Interviews with the Women Principals

The principals were interviewed for between 45 minutes and an hour, depending on the length of their responses and the inclusion of follow-up questions. They were provided with the interview questions beforehand so they could think about their responses. Because of the busy schedule of these women principals, all the interviews were conducted at nights between the hours of six and ten, the time most convenient to them. The interviews were all conducted via telephone and Skype and were voice recorded. After I transcribed the notes from the interviews, I planned to discuss the responses with each principal to confirm that what I have noted is actually what they said. To protect the anonymity of the principals, I assigned them pseudonyms and made them aware of this. The schools are also referred to using pseudonyms.

Reflective Notes

In keeping with the feminist methodology that I used for this research, I documented my thoughts throughout the research process by making notes. I noted my own gendered experiences from childhood to now. For instance, I thought about the fact that as girls we were placed in home economics classes while boys were encouraged to do industrial arts. I also reflected on conversations I had with colleagues as they reacted to women in administration. For example, I reflected on conversations I had with them about our female acting principal and the perception that she was not 'soft' and 'inclusive'. My reflection on my years at primary school and the experiences with a woman principal and the fear she drove in me assisted me in relating that experience to the literature that posits that there are some women who take on so-called masculine characteristics in order to give a sense that they can measure up to men. Through this reflection, I could understand how my principal in the 1970s may have been working to make her mark on a position that was previously reserved for men. She may have been acting in a manner expected by the community. In addition, I reflected on the different stages of the research process. My reflection on the research process helped me to identify the limitations of the study

as well as the implications for future research. I used my reflective notes as the basis of my comments throughout the study.

Data Analysis

Jones (2002) underscored that, "The appropriate system of analysis is the one that produces themes and findings that convey a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and that relate to the theoretical perspective anchoring the research" (p. 468). Bearing this in mind, I decided to use some aspects of grounded theory to guide the analysis of data in my research. I chose some steps in grounded theory because it fits in with my feminist methodology. Grounded theory is implicitly feminist in its treatment of data analysis (Clarke, 2007). It was not my intention to generate theory from my limited research so I only utilized coding to identify themes in my participants' experiences so I could organize my discussion. Corbin and Strauss (1990) advised, "A grounded theory should explain as well as describe" (p. 6). Although I did not form any theory from my data, I still used the data to describe and attempt to explain the experiences of the five women principals.

In analyzing the data, I first did initial line-by-line or in vivo coding to identify important elements of each woman principal's experience.   Saldana (2009) labeled in vivo coding as an initial step in grounded theory and a method "that prioritize[s] and honor[s] the participant's voice" (p. 74). I want my study to give validity to the voices of these female principals as they speak about their experiences leading up to their appointment as principals and their experiences in the posts of principals. As I went through the interview transcripts line by line, I made sure to "stick closely to the data" (Charmaz, 2007). I also made sure that I did not bring pre-existing labels to the coding but instead allowed the data to define the labels. I identified key verbs in each line of the transcript and used them to describe the lines.

I then used the next step in grounded theory, focused coding, to group elements of the women principal's experiences under different headings for further discussion. Some of the codes that were generated at this stage are "being an outsider"; "being a woman puts you on the caring side and gives you a motherly instinct"; "leading with a heavy hand not necessarily effective"; "working as a team". I used the information gathered through focused coding to describe each principal as an individual with her own experiences in chapter five.   I identified themes from the women principals' experiences and centred my discussion on those themes as well as themes guided by the review of literature.

I used the transcripts of the interviews done with the women principals to compose their profiles. These profiles make up the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FIVE WOMEN PRINCIPALS

I deem it important to my study to present the experiences of the five principals who participated. I have used the present tense to relate their stories because I feel that will help to highlight the living nature of their experiences. I have also tried as much as possible to incorporate their own words in the presentation of their experiences. This, too, should serve to give life and individuality to each woman principal's experience.

The five women principals interviewed for this study are from varied backgrounds. Their experiences in the following order: First, Marisssa Deans, who was recruited from another school to serve as principal of an upgraded high school in an urban community. Second, Jennifer Watt, who was also promoted from another school to serve as principal of her upgraded high school, located in an 'inner-rural'[1] community. Third, Cynthia Fields, who has had two stints as principal: once at a privately operated church preparatory school and now at a government funded primary and infant school in a sub-urban community. Fourth, is Renee Chord, who is the principal of a primary and junior high school located in a rural community. Finally, Joy Jones has been promoted through the ranks of her primary and junior high school from classroom teacher to senior teacher to vice principal and now to the post of principal.

Marissa Deans

Her Journey to the Principalship

When she graduated from university, armed with her bachelor's degree, Marissa Deans had no plans of joining her mother in Jamaica's low-paying teaching profession. Instead she had long harboured ambitions of becoming a lawyer, a profession she felt was more suited to her outspoken nature. Fast-forward 19 years and you find Marissa, a seasoned teacher, a principal of eleven years, who has no experience in any other profession but the one she has fallen in love with, she has excelled in and is passionate about, teaching. With pride in her voice, she asserted, "It's interesting though; once I got there, I kept saying no, but once I got there, I couldn't leave" (p. 3)[2]. When she speaks about her job, she claims it as her calling. She says, "I have told myself that I am going to keep the faith because for the time that I have on earth, I have received my calling and I'm going to be true to it" (p. 10). Marissa, a trained teacher of English and

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[1] 'Inner-rural', as described by Jennifer Watt, is an economically challenged residential district that is located in a rural area.

[2] These page numbers identify the page number of each interview transcript.

school librarianship, has also completed graduate studies in secondary schools administration. It is no surprise that Marissa eventually became a principal because as she confesses, "I've not been anywhere and not be[en] in leadership. Every stage of my life, I've been in leadership" (p. 7). She has been a head of department and head of several committees on which she voluntarily served. This seems like a natural path to the principalship but she shares the fact that there were some members of the school community (her home community) who felt that she was offered the job of principal of the newly upgraded high school because of the influence of her father. She is the daughter of a father who was a prominent, well-respected member of her community. Though there were some who held the view that her appointment at 34 years old was as a result of her father's influence, she brushed the notion aside declaring:

Now I went into the interview with a disadvantage, in the sense that I am from the community, my father was a serving mayor and was serving as councilor, a parish councilor at the time so as you can imagine, immediately people had begun to say that I had an advantage because I was the former mayor's daughter. I didn't believe I had any advantage [be]cause I was the former mayor's daughter. I didn't believe I had any advantage [be]cause I'd never known where I'd gotten anything easy. […] If I did get the job by connections, I don't know, but what I do know is, if I got it through connections, which I don't know, the connections never helped me to do the things that I needed to lead the school (p. 8).

As Marissa shares with me the story of her progression towards the principalship, her commitment to professional development shines through. She explains:

I have been involved in a number of short professional development courses, none of them at the certificate or diploma level. Most of what you hear from me is as a result of my curiosity and enquiring mind, I hope, so I spend a lot of time reading about education topics, especially as it relates to the primary and secondary levels of education (p. 1–2).

When she applied for the job at Mayton High, she drafted a proposal outlining her vision for the school. It is with a hint of regret that Marissa shares that it took "quite a while for [her] to get [her] permanent appointment [as principal] because the then chairman [of the school board] said that [she] had too many mishandled ideas about how to move the school and how to change the school and, so it took a little tussle at the time" (p. 8). Her appointment eventually came more than three years later (a process that normally takes a year), with the support of the other

members of the school board. As a result, she was eventually able to effect many of the changes she envisioned for the school.

Marissa also has experience in teacher advocacy and from that platform has called for teachers to be more committed to their jobs and for more training to be provided to teachers to make them more proficient at dealing with students' learning and behavioural problems. Marissa has also been recognized among her peers in the principalship nationwide.

Her Challenges

There are myriads of challenges at schools such as Mayton and Marissa talks about some of them. One of the major challenges she experiences is the school's lack of adequate financial support from the Ministry of Education, which reduces the school's ability to implement and maintain programmes they have planned. She explains, "Schools like ours [upgraded high schools] are really sometimes seen as the poor relations. For example, I don't understand how some traditional high schools are getting some things and we are not getting it" (p. 10). There is also the challenge of reaching the about 50% of students who are reading below their grade level. She laments the fact that many of the students who are underachieving are from challenged socio-economic backgrounds. She also sees the low levels of commitment of her staff as posing a serious challenge to how well the school is run. Another area of challenge for her is the experience she had working with both the very first school board and the current one which feels like "you have stumbling [a] block in your way" (p. 15). She, however, expresses reluctance to go into the details of the challenges she is having with the current school board.   Her experience working with parents has not been a rewarding one because she feels they are not proactive. She relates, "There are parents sitting down, waiting on you to tell them what to do so you can't feed off them" (p. 15).

Her Rewards

Marissa says there are a number of things that translate into rewards for her as she completes her job. First of all, she glowingly speaks about the camaraderie that exists among the staff, "even those whom you may not get along so well with" (p. 11). She maintains, "The textbooks don't tell you that the reality is that there must be conflict and you will never win over everybody" (p. 11). She is very pleased that the staff stood by her on her return from secondment as well as having to deal with her father's death.   She enjoys watching the students progress, especially those who had reading challenges. In addition, she finds it rewarding when

the students excelling in sports, cultural activities and other extra-curricular activities. With pride in her voice she relates how she was just as animated as the children when the school won a regional athletics competition. That, to her, made up for the embarrassment she felt when the school would finish towards the bottom of the pack as it did in earlier years.

She acknowledges, "You must give back to your country" (p. 10) and that commitment works to keep Marissa going in the profession. She beams remembering the number of exciting moments she has had at Mayton. From the involvement in extra-curricular activities to the improvement in the reading levels of her students, she says she gets excited over the smallest achievement. Her voice lowers as she talks about the students who come to Mayton not being able to read and write but the pitch of her voice begins to elevate when she relates, "A student who comes in, who can't read and write [well] and then you see the student pass, if it's even one subject [in external examinations]; that's major!" (p. 12).

Her Supporters

Marissa is grateful for the supportive students and staff, though "not every single one of them," (p. 13). She says, "You just have a few people who are always going to be saying the opposite of anything good that is happening" (p. 13). Marissa also mentions the support she gets from past students, locally and internationally, as well as the support she receives from her family. She views the support she receives from different groups of people as very important to her leadership because each group brings "a different skill set and a different set of influence on the school population" (p. 14).

Her Gendered Experiences

Marissa describes several experiences she has had as a consequence of being a woman. She claims, "How people respond to you; it's pretty stereotypical and we have to work twice as hard to get past them" (p. 16). She also relates how she overheard someone saying, in response to the problem some children were giving, "Is a man dem [they] want out here" (p. 16). She finds this annoying because according to her:

> It seems as if people forget that the place was a drug den and I cleaned it up […] I came and took over from a man and this place was run down. So here it was, somebody was saying it needed a man but they haven't seen that I took over from a man and before that man was another man. And, tremendous changes have been made (p. 16).

From among the staff, she feels the women are more supportive of her than the men because, in her view, "men have a challenge responding to female leadership" (p. 13). As a result of this she confesses:

> I try to find ways to mitigate and to minimize the impact it might have, so over the years, as I've matured in the job, for example, I kind [of] change the way I approach them so I don't approach the men in as formal a way as I used to approach them. You know you kind of cut down the real formal way of speaking. You pass by and you say, "Hey boss, waa gwaan?" [Jamaican greeting] rather than, "Good morning, how are you, Mr. So and So?" I mean, females respond to that kind of thing better. I mean, I will pass a male teacher and say, "Yes my yute" [Jamaican greeting] and they respond (p. 14).

It is Marissa's view that male students respond more favourably to her because "you come across as a mother figure or somebody who look[s] like the girl that they would like" (p. 17). As a consequence, she sees this as an effective approach to be used advantageously. She does not subscribe to the view that men are more effective in dealing with discipline because men's use of the 'big stick' approach is not always useful. She contends that women are running some of the best schools in the country.

Her Perceptions of the Characteristics of a Good Principal

Marissa believes 'caring' is the most important characteristic of a good principal. According to her if "you care about every single thing in your school, then you are more than halfway to getting the job done" (p. 18). She singled out caring for the following:[3]

1. Teaching and learning;
2. Students and what is happening with them as individuals;
3. Members of staff: empowering them, helping them improve their instructional delivery, understanding and supporting them as individuals with needs, and encouraging them to develop their own leadership qualities;
4. Deciding on where to direct the school; and
5. Accountability.

A final important ingredient is "the vision that you bring to the job, the principalship and how you use that vision to shape the vision of others so that, in essence, you can end up with a collective vision" (p. 19).

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[3] List compiled from transcript.

Jennifer Watt

Her Journey to the Principalship

Jennifer Watt, a 36-year veteran of the teaching profession, has been the principal of Radon High for eight years. She describes herself as highly self motivated. She started her teaching career in England, where she completed her teacher certification. She originally wanted to study law but the magnetism of teaching was too much to ignore since "[she] loved it and was good at it" (p. 1). In fact, her motivation to enter the teaching profession stemmed from the public's concern that "West Indians were not doing well" (p. 1). After teaching in England for two years, she felt that "if [she] was going to be working so hard, [she] might as well come work for [her] own people" (p. 1) so she made a life-changing decision to return home to Jamaica to contribute to the development of her people.

As she focused her sights on becoming a principal, Jennifer moved up the ranks from being a classroom teacher to becoming department head and then vice principal. She did not want her career ambitions to adversely affect her family; consequently, she sought an appointment that was fairly close to home. She shares:

> I think about in the middle '80s I've been applying to have my own school, to run my own school but I wasn't successful until this very late stage, in 2004, so it took me a long time. Really, I kept applying only for schools that were in and around [my parish] you know because I'm a family person. I didn't want a school that was so far, you know, that I would have to spend many hours travelling there and back or that I'd have to relocate, you understand, because my children were in school (p. 3).

After seeing the advertisement for the post of principal at the nearby Radon High School, Jennifer applied. She was then shortlisted and interviewed. In the next stage the top three applicants were referred to the Ministry of Education's regional headquarters for further assessment. The applicants who were interviewed were then ranked in order of preference. Jennifer confided that she was not the number one person: that person was a man, who was offered the position. When that appointment did not materialize, for whatever reason, the number two person, another man (the vice principal), was offered the job. That, too, did not bear fruit so it was then that she was appointed principal. Within a year of her provisional appointment, she was favourably appraised and her appointment promptly made permanent.

Her Qualifications & Achievements

In addition to the teaching certificate she obtained in London, England, Jennifer completed a B.Ed. in educational administration, in Jamaica. She has also engaged in short professional development courses. Added to that is the personnel management course that she started. She has also recently been named a principal of excellence.

Her Challenges

Jennifer describes her biggest challenge as the lack of support coming from the male vice principal, who acted as principal before her appointment. It has been four years since she has been principal and he has still not warmed to her. She details how, earlier in her appointment, he would orchestrate ridiculing her at staff meetings and how he would undermine her efforts by neglecting tasks she assigned him. Speaking of him and the staff he directly supervises, Jennifer relates, "I had *great* [emphasis hers] challenges trying to motivate them and bringing them on board" (p. 5). Although she tells me she has no negative experiences that she could tie down to gender, she confesses that the level of support she gets from her male and female vice principals is very different. She does not see a similar disparity in support playing out at any other level. Of the male vice principal she says, "I don't know what to make of him. I've said to him though that I cannot feel his support" (p. 11). Another group that has proven challenging to work with is the middle managers or senior teachers. These are the teachers who would be at the school the longest.

Jennifer also laments that there is a disciplinary problem at her school. She attributes this disciplinary problem to the community in which the school is located and in which the children predominantly live. She says the community is a subsistent one, which is characterized by inner-city violence, illicit drugs and high unemployment. Furthermore, about 50 percent of the students are on welfare. Despite this challenge, Jennifer feels that it motivates her to work with others to find solutions.

Her Rewards

One of the things, Jennifer finds rewarding is when she sees students improving in their literacy and numeracy skills. Her school has both a reading and a math laboratory and there are reading specialists employed to the school. Through the use of individualized instruction, some students have improved from a pre-primer level reader to a grade four level reader in just a year. Another thing she says she has had reason to beam about is the fact that there was one student

who passed nine subjects in the external examinations, a rarity at her school. She tells me, "I know it sounds like very little to you, but we used to have students who passed three or four subjects but now we're going to sevens" (p. 9). She also describes it as a rewarding experience when some of those who were reluctant to support her at the outset, began to come around. The improvement to the physical plant of the school is also something she feels good about.

Her Supporters

In naming those who have been most supportive of her job as principal, Jennifer tells me that her female vice principal and dean of discipline top the list. She also recognized the Ministry of Education for supporting the school financially as well as some of the parents whose support encourages her. In addition, she speaks of useful support coming from the administrative and ancillary staff and sections of the teaching staff, especially the juniors. She describes to me how, at the outset, some people felt that her personality would be good for the school. She says people perceive her as personable, diplomatic and having a personal touch and that can account for some of the support she has received. She says her strong interpersonal skills also help to endear her to those with whom she works. Added to that is her tendency to be patient and respectful.

Jennifer is adamant that it is important to have the support of all the stakeholders of the school because "you really cannot lead alone." In her view:

> We all should be on the same team. We are all on the same team. Each team member or each category, each section of the team has a function to play because leadership is just so many different things: leadership of the school; you're leading instructional leadership, financial/fiscal, disciplinary. There's [sic] a whole lot of categories to the leadership in a school. And, I believe you have to have the support of the Ministry of Education because that's where your funding comes from. Support is important because, as I said to you, because I'm used to, the confidence level when I went there first was such that you're thinking that what you're seeing, you can appraise, you can do it and make the decision by yourself. But after a while you learn that of course, other people are capable too and they have better ideas, in some cases […]. It is very important to have the support of your colleagues equally as your super-ordinates; those who supervise you. The best job will come from the cooperation of everybody and the support of all of us (p. 11).

Her Gendered Experiences

Jennifer says she is unsure as to whether her leadership experiences have anything to do with her gender or if it is because "[She's] an outsider coming in" (p. 12). She goes on to tell me:

> All the previous principals, except the first one, came up through the school and I was an outsider coming in, and that in our context will cause a certain amount of resentment because they're thinking their person should have gotten the job. (p. 12–13)

She says the men are more protective of her than anything else. In explaining, she says if there were a fight, the men would beat her to the scene so they could resolve the situation. Furthermore, she relates that if there are tasks that require manual labour, the men "feel they ought to give [her] assistance" (p. 13). She believes they do this "because of their ego, their male chauvinist tendencies" (p. 13).

Jennifer is adamant that despite the perception that women cannot effectively deal with discipline, leadership does not depend on gender but "on the person's skills; the person's attitude; the person's know-how" (p. 15). She believes "the bullying thing doesn't always work" (p. 15). Besides, in her view, an autocratic and intolerant principal doesn't necessarily get results. She also alludes to men incorporating shouting and corporal punishment in the repertoire of disciplinary solutions, which she believes accomplishes nothing. She believes corporal punishment "reduces the self esteem and that a person without self esteem is going to behave worse than the one with [self esteem]" (p. 15). She also tells me, "If you're using fear leadership you [are] not going [to] get anywhere, whether you're a man or a woman" (p. 16). In her view, "The strong-arm [tactics] will only work with a few" (p. 16).

Her Perception of the Characteristics of a Good Principal

Jennifer shares the following tips about how a principal can be effective in her job (see footnote 3):

1. Delegate tasks to minimize stress;
2. Train staff to be managers by assigning them supervisory duties;
3. Rotate the middle managers "to find where their strength is" (p. 14);
4. Respect students and staff;
5. Be able to conquer through love;
6. Be able to "bring all your team on board" (p. 15);
7. Be organized;

8. Be able to plan well;

9. Know to sometimes follow;

10. Be flexible;

11. Have purpose and vision;

12. Have a good knowledge of people;

13. Mix with the community;

14. Be committed.

Jennifer confesses that her shortcoming is that she has not been able to bring all the members of her team on board.

Cynthia Fields

Her Personal Background

Cynthia Fields is mother to an adult daughter, who is a college student. She grew up in a small family consisting of her parents and two brothers. She is separated from her husband and is now living with her elderly father, who she takes care of. The Christian church played a pivotal part in her upbringing as both her parents were active members of their church and all the children had to attend church regularly and participate in other church activities. Today she is a very involved member of her church and she credits her fellow church members with supporting her over the years. She reveals that it was her pastor who first told her about the job opening and encouraged her to apply. It was the admiration for her teachers throughout her schooling that motivated her from an early age to want to be a teacher.

Her Journey to the Principalship

Cynthia tells me that it was the admiration of her childhood teachers that strongly sparked her interest in the teaching profession. She has been a principal at Limford Primary and Infant School for three years. This is her second stint as a principal, however, since she was the principal of a privately run church-operated preparatory school for four years. When she and the school board could not see the decline in revenues to the school through similar lens, their relationship was severed and she returned to teaching in the public system. She discloses that when her pastor told her about the opening, she was apprehensive about applying because it was another church-related school and it reminded her of her previous experience working with a church school. Nevertheless, after being assured by a friend, who was acting as principal in a similar school, that the school was government funded; and being encouraged by other friends

and her pastor; she decided to apply. The period between her applying and being appointed took an unusually long time (two years), according to her, partly because there was a changeover of partnership from one church denomination to another, resulting in a change in the board. When she was offered the job, she was unwilling to leave her current job—teaching at a high school— in the middle of the school year so she requested that the teacher who was acting be asked to continue to act until she was able to assume the role of principal at the beginning of the new school year. Cynthia explains that partnership between the church and the government translates into the government paying salaries while the church maintains ownership of the land. Also, the board appointments are jointly made by church and state.

Although she had conflicts with the board of the school of her first principal appointment, Cynthia concedes that her earlier experience helped to prepare her for her current job as principal of Limford Primary and Junior High. She attributes her ability to relate well to her colleagues to her earlier job as principal. She also credits her sharpened administrative skills to her first job as principal. She shares:

> Somehow it has allowed me, too, not to let down my guard and maybe to be more focused and stronger. It has made me strong as a leader. I think that is one of the greatest things: it has made me stronger because […] being in a leadership position, it's not a friend thing and, you are there to do a job and you have to just do it and you realize that leadership is a lonely place at times because sometimes you make decisions and it might not necessarily go down well with staff but the decision has to be made and you just have to stand by it and do what you have to do and somewhere down the line persons realize that, you know, that this was what was really needed to be done (p. 6).

In preparing herself for her current job as principal, Cynthia says she also "went back into some books [and] did some reading" (p. 5). In addition, she reveals that she spoke with a friend, who was already a principal, about the policies that were in effect in the school.

Her Qualifications and Achievements

In addition to her teaching diploma, Cynthia is the holder of a bachelor's degree, which she earned prior to her transition into secondary teaching. She has had experiences teaching at both the primary and the secondary level as well as in the public and private education system. At different points in her teaching career, Cynthia has served as a senior teacher.

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Her Challenges

Cynthia confides that at a point during her first job as principal, when she was at loggerheads with the church-school board, she had reached a point where she felt like leaving the teaching profession. She says she was blamed for the declining registration numbers at the school and, consequently, she felt very uncomfortable. She believes that the increase in school fees, coupled with a lack of commitment to curriculum, on the board's part, led to the school's troubles.

Cynthia also describes the challenges she has faced over the years in her current appointment. She lists her first challenge as the lack of sufficient financial support to implement programmes at the school. She says that the grants the school receives from the Ministry of Education "is just a drop in the bucket" (p. 6) which cannot fund all the activities that the school wants to participate in. In order to mitigate this challenge she and her staff have had to engage in fundraising activities. She also bemoans the lack of parental support for the students as well as the activities of the school. She attributes this lack of parental support to the age of the parents. She relates:

> There are a lot of young parents, and when I say young parents I mean maybe in their twenties; but the sort of support that you would have wanted from them, it's not there. It's like they just don't care and you find that many of the children are on their own. And, that cause[s] a whole lot [of] things, you know (p. 7).

She feels one consequence of the lack of parental support is that, some of "the children are not responding" (p. 14) well to their schooling. Some of them also have reading challenges. She also suggests some of the parents do not make sure that their children are prepared for school.

Another challenge that Cynthia shares is that she feels the members of the community do not take enough care of the school, which is a part of their community. She laments the resistance she gets from parents when she tries to implement changes she believes are in the best interest of the school. She painfully relates how the school's perimeter fence was partially destroyed, presumably by the community's footballers and their supporters, to provide quicker access to the football field. She also relates the following about her frustration with the community:

> I mean when the scrap metal [trade] was at its heights in those months gone by, they literally took out posts and cut the wire to sell to the scrap metal people, and I mean it

pains my heart because I say, this is your school. Many of them came to the school, you know, and instead of protecting, you destroying (p. 7).

Her Rewards

When Cynthia speaks about the rewarding things about her job, there is pride emanating from her voice. She chuckles as she speaks about the school's dance troupe winning a national award for their dance routine. She says she found that special because at the outset they could not afford to hire a tutor to train the students. The students were, subsequently, asked to contribute financially to the cost of hiring the tutor. Cynthia tells me she also contributed, from her personal funds, to the dance troupe. Later in the competition, they almost dropped out because the transportation cost to the competition's venue was unaffordable. It was only after they came to an arrangement with the bus owner to pay at a later date that they were able to participate.

Cynthia also mentions how rewarding she finds it when the students excel at their work. She is especially proud of those students who make marked improvement in their reading skills and those who do well in their examinations. She says, " I really feel good amidst the challenges that we have" (p. 9).

Her Supporters

Cynthia names a select group of parents among the people who have supported her most. Additionally, she finds useful support among her staff even as they work to raise funds to finance the school's projects. She also singles out her church, family and friends as people she can always count on for support.

Cynthia recalls how difficult it was to work with the lone man on her staff when she first joined the staff. She explains:

> When I went there, there was just one male person and he was the person who was acting before I came but somehow I think things went awry and he was not really pleased with me in the position, which he actually came and told me. He said he should have gotten the job (p. 10).

She confides that she feels he sabotaged the computer lab because he was the administrator and, only after a year of operation, things started to go wrong and when he was asked to diagnose what was wrong, he requested payment. There were also some members of the community who,

at the time, shared the former acting principal's view that he should have been appointed principal. Cynthia, however, feels that they have now gone past that.

Cynthia asserts that the support of all the different interest groups of the school is important. She states, "You don't want to know it's only you dragging along but that persons share the vision, understand where you want to go, where you want to take the school, and really work with you to achieve that degree of excellence" (p. 13–14).

Her Gendered Experiences

Cynthia expresses uncertainty about the relationship between any of her experiences and her gender. She puts the challenge she had with her former male colleague down to the fact that he felt shafted because he acted as principal. She also sympathizes with the community members who supported him. She says:

> I think as I mentioned earlier the only thing that I see coming up is the fact that some members of the community wanted the person who was acting before me to have gotten the position, but, I don't think it has anything to do with the gender, just that he was there and in the system so they just felt he should be the one who should have gotten the position instead of me, ahm, coming in as a new person and I, don't think it has to do with gender (p. 140).

Cynthia rejects the notion that women cannot effectively deal with discipline. She is adamant that "women are capable of disciplining just as the men are" (p. 15). She makes the point that corporal punishment is not equivalent to disciplining. She further adds that she has been effectively dealing with discipline, through initiatives of a disciplinary committee and a dean of discipline.

Although Cynthia says she has not heard the cry of communities for male leadership in their schools; she admits that her staff and parents have said they need a male figure because the boys need role models. She explains:

> The only thing I know I've heard from parents and even us as staff members is that we really need a male figure, in the sense that our boys need role models. These are times when we would really say, "You know, we wish we really had a male person." At the beginning of the school year we had a male teacher who was working for a teacher who was on leave for two months and he really made his mark, you know, with the boys. Yeah, there are times when we really think it would be good to have a male, you know,

person there to mentor the boys somewhat but outside of that we still try. We bring in persons sometimes to talk to the boys and really to encourage them (p. 16).

Renee Chord

Her Personal Background

Renee, in her mid-forties, married teacher with no children, is a very religious woman. She is so religious that she proclaims that one of the things that keeps her going, despite the challenges of her job, is a prayer team that surrounds her. She professes, "I have a prayer team behind me…a church prayer team behind me. Yeah, that is so important. These people, they continue to pray for me...they pray for the school and it's a continuous thing" (p. 10). It has been 16 years since she walked into her first classroom and was shocked to discover that there were children attending high school who were non-readers. As she reflects on her sojourn in the teaching profession, she tells me that for as long as she could remember, she had always wanted to be a teacher. It is while reflecting that she pinpoints the factors that attracted her to a career in teaching. She relates that she never really had any teachers around her when she was a young child but she remembers watching her cousins going off to a particular high school, and silently wanting to teach there. With the sound of admiration in her voice, she also reflects on her mother, who she credits with teaching her and her siblings songs and poems at home. She says her mother was not afforded an education but she had inborn teaching skills. For this reason, she says, "I got it [interest in teaching] from my mother who didn't get the chance" (p. 1).

Her Journey to the Principalship

Renee succeeded another woman as principal of Ridgeland Primary and Junior High. After being promoted to teacher, based on her job performance, she continued to impress others by her superior ability to be a good leader. She relates that her principal was seconded for a year to the Ministry of Education. As a consequence of her impending transfer, Renee's principal recommended that Renee act as principal for the year of her absence. When the seconded principal's contract was extended for another year, Renee was asked to continue acting, based on her positive evaluation. Her principal resigned from the substantive post at the end of the second year to permanently work as an education officer with the Ministry of Education. Arising from this development, the post of principal was advertised and Renee applied. She was shortlisted, interviewed and, subsequently, offered the job.

After working for four years as principal (two years acting), Renee is able to reflect on her journey. According to her, as a classroom teacher, there were things she saw that she felt needed improvement, such as a high level of indiscipline and underachieving students. She notes:

> There were students who were hiding from classes, students who came in and it's like they did not achieve anything; they just left the way they came. And, I was like, my God if I were in a position to fix this, I would, you know, and I also looked at staff; the relationship. It was so terrible. The staff, the community and the parents, and I was like, no, for the school to progress we can't continue. If I find myself in a principal's position, all of these things would have to change. To be honest, I wanted to fix things but as a classroom teacher you could just make suggestions but you really couldn't get things done because you really have no control (p. 5).

She tells me that is what guided her decision to apply of the post of principal.

In preparing herself for the job of principal, Renee emphasizes that she made herself aware of what was going on in the education system. She further explains that she also made sure she knew what the Ministry of Education required of a principal. She also says she made certain of her vision for the school and how to articulate it. She evaluated the school in terms of what was working and what was not.

Her Qualification and Achievements

Renee has a teaching diploma, a bachelor's degree as well as a master's degree. She has gained experience teaching at varied levels of the education system: primary, secondary and tertiary. Four years ago she was nominated for the award of teacher of the year in her school's region. Over the course of her teaching career, she has moved up the ranks of her current school, from being a regular classroom teacher to being the principal.

Her Challenges

From the very outset, Renee says she identified two of her biggest challenges as the unacceptable low level of discipline and the low achievement of the students, especially those students in the 7–9 programme. She places the responsibility for the underachievement of the students squarely at the feet of the parents, who she deems not supportive enough of their children and the school. She says because the parents are very young, they do not seem prepared to be parents. She asserts:

The parents are too young. They themselves are children so they don't have a clue. They themselves have the children so early they…some of them didn't get the chance to finish high school so they don't really know the value of education and I don't think they have explained to the children that, "Listen, man, this is something you must have. This is something you need for life." I don't think the children really see the value of education based upon what is happening in the home. I honestly think that…because the children who excel, the children who do well; they have great parental support. Parents are behind them. They come to the PTA [Parents-Teachers Association] meetings. They call the teachers. They know what is happening and they support by helping with the homework (p. 2).

Renee explains that there have been occasions where the Child Development Agency or the police have had to be called in before parents turn up at the school. She concludes, "They [the parents] don't provide what the children need for school" (p. 7). She, however, observes that the parents tend to "put out more effort for the girls than for the boys" (p. 9). She laments, "They will get the textbooks for the girls. They will get everything for the girls but when it comes to the boys, nothing" (p. 10). Being cognizant of this, she declares:

I have a soft spot for the boys and, you know, I really have to go all out for them. We try to involve them as much as possible. We do really get through to a lot of them but it's a lot of work. It's hard work because what is happening is that they are on their own at home so when they come to school it's kind of hard for them to be students because they are practically on their own in their community (p. 10).

Although many parents are not involved with the school, Renee has set out to find ways of getting them on board. She and her team have been conducting parenting seminars, which she says have borne some fruit. They have also organized workshops on literacy and numeracy to assist parents in guiding their children with homework. In addition, parents are mandated to pick up the student's reports and on that occasion their children's progress is discussed with them.

Renee also names financial challenges as another major obstacle for her. She laments the fact that the school does not get enough funds form the Ministry of Education so "things that [they would] love to do [they] are not able to" (p. 8). In an effort to minimize the effect of financial challenges on the school, Renee says they have to continually have fundraisers. She shares that, "I have become a professional beggar since I've been in this position, honestly, I

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didn't know I could beg so well. I really go all out to beg for the school" (p. 8). She says that despite the fact that individuals and organizations have contributed funds to the school, the harsh economic conditions now in existence makes it difficult for them to continue. There is more that large companies can do to help the school but she thinks some of them are reluctant to contribute unless there is provision for them to get publicity. She praises her staff and the few parents for volunteering their time to organize and implement fundraising activities to benefit the school and its programmes.

Her Rewards

Of all the positive experiences she has had at Ridgeland, Renee finds the most pleasure in the improvement that students, especially non-readers, make over the course of time at the school. She proudly relates to me an experience she had with a boy. The seventh grader was not able to read but he was "street smart" (p. 2). She says she encouraged him and provided him with books. He subsequently reported to her that he was able to read. She continues, "He started to read for me…believe me, man, if I had won a million dollars I couldn't have been happier" (p. 3). She also relates another case of a girl she was "like a mother to" (p. 3). This girl was unable to read at grade seven but eventually did well in external examinations. Renee tells me there are numerous cases like those that make her beam with pride and motivate her. She says she is deeply concerned with the education and wellbeing of students. In her words, "a child with problems can't learn; a child who is uncomfortable can't learn. School is about children, not us, so we have to make sure that they are happy at school" (p. 5).

Working as a Team

Renee emphasizes how important teamwork is to the successful completion of her job. She believes that people will be more comfortable working with a leader who includes them in the decision-making process. She muses:

> If you have your staff and make all the decisions and just hand it to them, do you think they are going to work with you like that and be willing? They're going to feel that you are an autocratic leader, so, you include them in everything. I can leave school and I don't have to worry because I know the school is left in capable hands (p. 6).

She says teamwork is one of the hallmarks of her leadership. After working as a team, she makes sure that they celebrate and socialize as a team as well. She points out to me that the team

includes all categories of staff. It is because of teamwork, she claims, that she has no problems getting staff members to complete tasks.

Her Supporters

Without hesitation, Renee names the chairman of the school board and the president of the P.T.A. as "the two key persons on the school board [who] have the school at heart" (p. 10). She says, "They will go all out to get things done for the school" (p. 10). She also names the Soroptomist Club, whose members help to "empower young girls" (p. 11). Her list of supporters include the guidance counsellor and the very few hardworking parents, who are a part of the P.T.A. In addition, she says she is grateful to the past students who donate gifts to the students and as well to the school to help improve the infrastructure of the school.

Renee reiterates that, for the most part, her staff is very supportive since her detractors are in the very small minority. She, however, explains that there are some women who she feels display a bit of jealousy. This is how she laughingly puts it:

> You are all in the staffroom together and somebody moves ahead, you know, and they expect you to still be in the staffroom and you can't be in the staffroom anymore, so you know the little jealousy here and there (p. 12).

The community, as far as Renee is concerned, is also supportive of her. The school annually honours the outstanding members of the community and parents.

Renee reveals that she highly values the support she has received from the different stakeholders of the school. She admits, "If I didn't have these people around me I couldn't do it" (p. 13). It is for this reason that she says she is so appreciative of her supporters.

Her Gendered Experiences

Renee believes that being a woman makes her more caring and aware of the needs of the people she comes in contact with. She asserts:

> Being female you are more on the caring side, not that I'm saying that males are not caring but it makes a difference so when you see a child coming to school and the child is dirty, the first thing that comes to your mind is, "What is happening at home?" and, you are going to find out what is happening at home and you're going to do something about it. You have a child who is fighting at all times. You say to yourself, "No man, something must be wrong." You can't have a child, [and] as somebody looks at him or her, a fight starts, you know, something is wrong. So, being female you have this…I don't

know what to call it…maybe motherly instinct, although I'm not a mother, you know, and it causes you to feel more than the surface. So, you are really able to touch lives so you don't just see the children as students. You see them as human beings; you see them as your children (p. 16).

Renee talks about another experience with a male parent who was having personal problems. She describes how he came to her office and before she knew it, he was crying. He started to tell her about how his son's mother abandoned the family and how stressful it had become at home. Renee responded to him by listening to him and encouraging him for two hours. She wondered if her being a woman contributed to this parent opening up to her about his domestic problems.

Renee expresses doubt about any existing link between her gender and any negative experiences she has had. To her, any resistance she has encountered has more to do with her firmness than with her being a woman. She says, "I think, being in leadership, putting your foot down, you're going to have negative experiences" (p. 17).

The view that women cannot effectively deal with discipline is totally rejected by Renee. She explains that there was a problem with discipline at her school and, as a team, they devised strategies to minimize the problem and they have had great success. She says everyone has to know what is expected and those in charge must set a good example. She also talks about the need for the little things like 'late-coming' to be tackled before they escalate into bigger things. She emphasizes that when everyone works as a team, there are better results. That is why she believes in the work of the disciplinary committee.

Renee thinks that, "You have good, real good female leaders who are firm, real firm and they run the school tight" (p. 20). She says she does not talk down to students but "reasons" with them instead. She asks them probing questions to get them to talk about their behaviour and to lead them to evaluate that behaviour. She concludes, "People believe that shouting and making a lot of noise is leading. That's not leading" (p. 20). Renee is adamant that "It's [leadership] not about being female or male. It's about your vision for the school and where you want to take it and the team you're working with" (p. 21).

Her Perception of the Characteristics of a Good Principal

Renee believes that to be a good principal these ingredients must be present (see footnote 3):

1. God must be first in your life;

2. Be humble;

3. Remember your roots;

4. Be a team player;

5. Be able to "take advice even from students" (p. 21);

6. Be a good listener;

7. Have vision.

Joy Jones

Her Personal Background

Joy is a married mother of an adult son. She highly values family as is evident in her decision to forego certain career goals in order to stay close to her elderly parents while she takes care of them. She is soft-spoken and she feels that some people try to take advantage of that personality trait. Although she has no history of teaching in her family, Joy has done nothing but teach all her life.

Her Journey to the Principalship

Joy confesses that she wanted to be an education officer for Home Economics since that is where her training and her passion lie. She, however, decided to sacrifice that career ambition in order be near to her parents and to care for them. She hoped that a position as education officer, near to home, would come up someday. Her plan for career advancement took a different turn when the post of vice principal at her school became vacant. She says she "wasn't all that interested" (p. 3) but was encouraged to do so by the retiring vice principal and a colleague and friend. She was convinced that taking the job would help keep her close to her father, who was now a widower. She was interviewed along with five other applicants and was subsequently she was offered the job.

Eight months after being appointed vice principal, Joy's principal retired and she was asked to act as principal. She laughs as she tells me how fearful she was because she felt she was not "mentally prepared for it" (p. 4). After only a few months' experience as vice principal, she had not yet developed the confidence to lead. Speaking about how she overcame this challenge, she states, "I prayed about it and I took on the mantle and one of the good thing[s] about my position there, I had the persons in administration all working with me so far and that has strengthened me and made me the person I am today" (p. 4). When the post of principal was

advertised shortly afterwards, Joy was the only member of her staff who applied. After acting as principal for four months, Joy was confirmed as principal.

Joy describes her job as vice principal as a learning experience because she worked with a very experienced colleague. She believes she did not get the same kind of mentorship as principal because she did not "have persons around [her] who had that kind of experience" (p. 6). She has been working with a new team of administrators so she and her two new vice principals have formed a bond. She enhanced her experience in the principalship by participating in training workshops.

Her Qualification and Experience

Joy is now able to reflect on 31 years of continuous experience in the teaching profession. When she left high school, she had to participate in the Youth Service[4] programme and she did so in a school. This was where her love of teaching began.

When Joy initially entered the teaching profession the minimum qualification was only a certificate. She subsequently completed a teaching diploma when the necessary qualifications were upgraded to a diploma. She did not stop there, however, as she had administration in her sights. She moved on to do a bachelor's degree in the teaching of Home Economics and then completed her master's degree.

Her Challenges

Joy names dealing with human resource as her biggest challenge. She feels that staff has a difficulty adjusting to a different type of leader so it is a challenge to get people to cooperate. She asserts:

> Because it's a new management so you go with your own style and you try as best to make people feel comfortable. Sometimes persons feel that, you know, who are you to make that decision because we usually do things this way or that way or whatever, so at times it poses a challenge in getting workers to conform to certain changes which may be imposed on them, not necessarily by myself, but through the Ministry of Education. Some persons do not readily adapt to change, hence, when change comes and you bring it to them, they see you as that person with a stick over their back, so in that case I do find challenge (p. 7).

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[4] The Youth Service is a government programme that places students, fresh out of secondary school, in public entities to gain work experience.

Joy mentions that she has experienced disrespect from teachers. She attributes this disrespect to the fact that she is mild mannered and not as aggressive as her predecessor. She feels they "play on that […] softer side" (p. 7). She says she puts the welfare of students at the forefront and that sometimes this puts her on a collision course with a few teachers who "would want to leave their classes during teaching time and may be somewhere having a conversation" (p. 7). Conversely, there have been times when she has to mediate between teachers and parents and she has been perceived to be on the teacher's side. This, too, poses a challenge as she has to discharge her duties without any hint of bias.

Her Rewards

Joy, enthusiastically, exclaims that the students provide her with her most rewarding experiences. She is especially proud when children with behavioural problems are reformed. She confesses that she has "a passion for boys" (p. 9) maybe because her only child is a boy. She says, "When you have these disruptive students and when you get to the bottom of it, it is coming from home" (p. 10). She is able to relate cases of students who were troubled but have mended through intervention and have returned to the school later in life to express gratitude. She emphasizes, "It is not really financial but the satisfaction you get from seeing your students being assets to society. That has really helped me to continue in the teaching profession" (p. 1).

Her Supporters

Joy is proud of the relationship she has with her vice principals and is relieved that they collaborate as they lead the school. She declares:

> We build that relationship among ourselves as administration, the VPs, we make decisions, yeah, but I am more democratic at times where we come together, sit, look at the whole picture before we make decisions so it's like we are holding each other's hand so that makes my work far easier, you know, when you hear of other persons in other situations where VPs [are] against the principal and so on (p. 6).

She also believes she has the support of about 90 percent of the staff. In addition, she is heartened by the vendors, at the school gate, who are members of the community who gave a complimentary report of the school to the Ministry of Education's school appraisal team. She says these vendors act as informal security for the school and this adds a lot of support. There are also community members who mentor students and Joy sees this as supporting her job as principal. Joy finds the support she has received as motivational. According to her:

If I did not have that support, I don't think I'd be performing how I am now. I, maybe, would be feeling on the weaker side. When you have your ideas you'd be thinking that, wondering if this idea will come off or whatever, but, I am happy that the support is there, and so when you come up with new ideas, there is always a group to help you to get things off the ground (p. 11).

Her Gendered Experiences

Joy tells me, "I have never had a problem in terms of my gender and what I do" (p. 12). She says she does not buy into the "male role model" argument either because there are women who relate better to boys than men do. Furthermore, she is adamant that as a principal she effectively deals with both boys and girls. She declares, "There are men who don't know how to control the boys" (p. 14).

Joy reveals that in her 30-year history at Shillings she has worked with only one male principal. She adds that the school has had a woman as principal since 1986. This, according to her, has set a lot of precedence to prove that women can be effective leaders.

Her Perception of the Characteristics of a Good Principal

The following is a list of the characteristics Joy feels a good principal must have (see footnote 3):

1. The ability to build a respectful relationship among all the stakeholders since "you cannot be above those people you have to relate with" (p. 15);

2. The skills to know when to strike compromises and when to "put your foot down" (p. 15);

3. The ability to admit when you are wrong;

4. Continuous training;

5. Care for the well-being of students;

6. An attitude that promotes non-confrontation;

7. The ability to work as team.

Summary of Principals' Profiles

	Marissa	Jennifer	Cynthia	Renee	Joy
Journey	- Dreamt of studying law. - Started teaching as convenience but now embraces it as calling. - Always in positions of leadership. - Had vision for school. - Became principal at 34.	- Initial interest in study of law. - Started teaching career in England. - West Indians not doing well motivated teaching interest. - Returned home to help develop her people. - Concern for family affected principal aspiration. - Progressed through teaching ranks. - Was ranked 3rd	- Relies on spirituality for support. - Motivated to teach by her teachers. - Had 2 stints as principal, 1st at a private school & then at a public school. - Views previous principal job as learning experience.	- Leans heavily on religion. - Inspired to teach by her mother. - Advanced through ranks of current school to principal. - Acted as principal. - Desired to create positive changes.	- Youth Service participant. - Has been teaching all her working life. - Wanted to be education officer but altered plans because of aging parents. - Moved up through ranks of current school to vice principal and shortly after, principal.

		in line, behind 2 men, for post of principal.			
Qualification & Achievement	• Diploma: teaching of English & Social Studies. • 2 masters' degrees: school administration & school librarianship. • Professional development courses. • Department head. • Volunteer. • Teacher advocate.	• Teaching certificate. • BEd in educational administration. • Principal of excellence. • 36 years teaching; 8 as principal.	• Teaching diploma. • BA degree. • Taught at primary & secondary levels. • Senior teacher.	• 4 years as principal. • Bachelor's & master's degrees.	• Teaching for 31 years (almost 3 as principal). • Teaching certificate & diploma. • BEd., Masters.
Challenges	• Some felt promotion gained via father's	• Lack of support from male vice principal. • Disciplinary	• Conflicts with school board at previous job. • Lack of	• Low level of discipline. • Insufficient parental	• Dealing with human resource. • Mediating

	influence. • Permanently appointed after 3 years (norm of 1 year). • Lack of adequate. • Low literacy rate. • Low level of support by some staff. • Conflicts with school board. • Parents not proactive	problems. • Motivating middle managers. • Depressed nature of school community.	sufficient state funding. • Lack of parental support, which causes lowered levels of student interest. • Community not caring enough for school. • Lack of support from previous acting principal.	support. • Insufficient financial support of students.	between teachers & parents.
Rewards	• Staff camaraderie. • Improving literacy. • Extracurricular excellence.	• Improved literacy & numeracy levels & external exam passes. • Gaining support of skeptical staff.	• Extracurricular achievements. • Students' improved literacy & performance in exams.	• Students' improvement. • Harmony among staff.	• Improvement in students who had behavioural problems. • Seeing students become

		Improvements to school plant.			valuable assets to society.
Supporters	• Most students (past & present) & staff. • Family.	• Female vice principal. • Some staff, students & parents. • Ministry of Education.	• Staff, select group of parents. • Church, family & friends.	• Chairman of school board, PTA, past students. • All categories of staff.	• Fellow admin. • Most of the staff. • The community.
Gendered Experiences	• Community wanting male principal. • Women more supportive than men. • Feels men have difficulty responding to female leadership. • Good response from male students because	• Men are protective of her as woman. • Believes leadership more dependent on skills, attitude & competence than gender. • Believes autocracy & intolerance are misplaced in school	• Believes outsider status responsible for conflict with male colleague, not gender. • Believes women as capable of leading as men. • Discussed, with staff, male students' need for male role models.	• Believes being woman makes her more caring. • Feels people may be more comfortable sharing their personal problems because she is a woman. • Doubts link between her	• Does not buy into the role model argument because she believes there are women who relate better to boys than men. • Effectively deals with both genders.

	'mother figure' symbol. • Believes men's 'big stick' approach ineffective in discipline.	leadership. • Believes outsider status responsible for conflict with male vice principal, not gender.		experiences & gender. • Firmly believes she leads well & effectively deals with disciplinary problems.	
Characteristics of a Good Principal	• Care for everything in school. • Have shared vision for school.	• Provide staff leadership training. • Motivate team. • Be respectful, organized, flexible, committed, loving, sociable. • Have purpose & vision. • Sometimes follow.		• Be a team player. • Have vision, humility. • Take advice. • Place God first. • Be good listener.	• Be able to build respect among all the school's stakeholders & work as a team. • Caring for students. • Be able to compromise • Be able to admit fault.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

Women as Leaders

Despite Marissa Deans, Jennifer Watt, Cynthia Fields, Renee Chord and Joy Jones coming from varied backgrounds, I have found very little difference in how they lead. They all emphasize the importance of working as a team with the stakeholders of the school. The women principals also indicted their care as integral to how they lead.

Collaborative Leadership

I found that among the women principals that I interviewed for this study, there is a clear stance that they value teamwork. One principal, Renee Chord expressed how proud she feels that she has a good team working with her and how working with her team has contributed positively to the improvements evident in her school. She asserted:

> So you work with your team and I have a very good team, an excellent team, I should say and we work together. So everything is done with consultation; it's not a one person doing, you know, consult and really work together (p. 5).

Renee also believes that working as a team with her staff has a bearing on how effectively she conducts her job. According to her no staff is comfortable working in an environment where they have no say in the decisions that are made. Added to this, in her view, are the trust, motivation and confidence that can be built among the staff and administration. She declared:

> So, you give them the opportunity to make decisions as well, you work together, you include them in everything. I can leave school and I don't have to worry because I know the school is left in capable hands (p. 6).

She also said she has no difficulty motivating her staff to complete tasks because they are treated as team members. Joy Jones expressed gratitude for the collaboration between herself and her fellow administrators. She said they democratically make decisions to benefit the school. Jennifer Watt agreed that collaboration is necessary in the successful management of the school. She stated:

> I think it's very important because you really cannot lead alone. Who would you be leading? We are all on the same team. Each team member or each category, each section of the team has a function to play because leadership is so many different things […] The

best job will come from the co-operation of everybody and the support of all of us (p. 12).

Jennifer also mentioned taking her senior teachers on a retreat to "do some analysis of what's going on at school and what we could do for the next year to improve student performance and staff motivation" (p. 6). She sees this as a way of not only building camaraderie but also giving staff a say in how activities at the school are conducted.

Cynthia Fields conceded that although teamwork is great, there are times when unpopular decisions have to be made. She said:

> Leadership is a lonely place at times because sometimes you make some decisions and it might not necessarily go down well with staff but the decision has to be made and you just have to stand by it and do what you have to do and somewhere down the line persons realize that, you know, that this was what was really needed to be done (p. 5–6).

Leadership of Care and "Mothering"

Another notable point coming out of the interviews with the women principals is the fact that the women see caring as something they have to do as they lead. Marissa Deans expressed her view that in order to be a good principal, a caring school must be operated. She stated, "you care about every single thing in your school, then you are more than half way to getting the job done. You care and then you can talk" (p. 18). She emphasized that this care should be extended to the students and staff, as individuals.

Renee Chord, also, highlighted the significance of exercising care in performing the job of a principal. She feels that "being female, you are more on the caring side" (p. 16). She said she and her staff care so much about the welfare of the students that they seek to provide them not only with knowledge, but also with other necessary tools such as books, uniform and sometimes bus fare. She declared:

> That is how far we will go because they have to be in school and if we are building a wonderful nation, we have to start with the young people. And, if they are not getting what they are supposed to at school, what will happen later on? To be honest, the students' welfare, that's priority, so for learning to take place, school must be conducive (p. 6).

Renee also said that she has made every effort to be accommodating to students because sometimes they approach her and they just want to talk or have a hug. This is how she described it:

> From time to time I have rap sessions with the students, move from class to class, and sometimes I go to their devotions. I just rap with them. Sometimes they come in and they want to talk […] and I just let them come and talk. The little ones, they have to get their hug. In the mornings, when you drive in, lunch time or break time; they have to get their hug (p. 15).

In other words, these principals act like mothers to their students. There is that motherly instinct, even with those who are not biological mothers. They treat the students as if they [the principals] are their [the children's] mothers.

Joy Jones confessed that the disruptive students in her school are usually boys and she has a passion for them because she has one of her own. She shared that she always tried to find time to sit and have talks with them about their behaviour. This caring approach has resulted in many boys reforming and returning, after they have left the school, to say thanks.

Christianity and Leadership

Both Cynthia and Renee credit their Christian belief with their ability to progress in their jobs. Cynthia credits her fellow church members with giving her intangible support throughout her sojourn in the principalship. Renee advised, "God must be first place in your life. That makes you a good principal" (p. 21). Renee also spoke glowingly of the prayer team that she has supporting her constantly. She said it is one of the things that has sustained her in her job as principal. She stated, "These people they continue to pray for me…they pray for the school and it's a continuous thing" (p. 10). When Joy felt uncertainty about her readiness for the job of principal, she said she prayed about it and she felt encouraged.

Training Staff for Leadership

It is interesting to note the value that the women principals place on the training of staff to make them prepared for leadership positions. The staff development activities would include spreading out areas of special responsibility in order for adequate exposure. Cynthia organizes her staff on committees such as a disciplinary committee to help to chart the path of school. Jennifer described assigning her staff members tasks that would show some "recognition of their capacity" (p. 6). Marissa also has staff training prominently placed on her agenda and she has

told her senior staff that she "expects many principals coming out of the group" (p. 9). She said the training of senior staff is a high point in her career.

The Need for Male Role Models

Three of the five women principals interviewed spoke about the need for boys to have role models in a classroom dominated by women. Cynthia, whose school has no male member on the teaching staff, revealed that parents and staff expressed concern about the lack of male presence at the school. She revealed, "I've heard from parents and even us as staff members that we really need a male figure, in the sense that our boys need role models. These are times when we would really say, you know, we wish we really had a male person" (p. 16). As a matter of fact, she and her staff are actively engaged in bringing in men to help to encourage the male student population of the school.

Joy said she has heard teachers saying that the boys need role models to help them to conform to acceptable codes of discipline. She, however, feels that all the boys need is to be reached with love. It is her view that, "There are men who don't know how to control the boys" (p. 14).

Rewards and Support

Chief among the rewards that the women principals described are those to do with student achievement. All the women principals interviewed took great pride in the accomplishments of the students of the school. These accomplishments are as simple as an improvement in reading level or the winning of a cultural award. Another experience that was articulated by the women principals as being rewarding is when those who were reluctant to support them initially come on board and make their job more manageable.

Jennifer, Cynthia, Renee, Joy and Marissa are all in agreement that the support of all the stakeholders of the school is vital to their effectively carrying out their jobs as principals. Most of them lament the fact that they lack the full support of the parents, who they see as not being intimately involved in the education of their children. It is also clear from the experiences of the women principals that when they do not have the support of the school board things can take a long time to happen. This was the case with Marissa when she was first appointed. Because the chairman of the school board felt that she came "with too many mishandled ideas about how to move the school and how to change the school" (p. 8), she was not confirmed as principal until more than two years above normal.

Jennifer has discovered how challenging it can be when the vice principal is not on her side with his support. She admitted that that is one challenge she has not been able to overcome despite her efforts.

Mentoring and Professional Development

Although there is no formal system of mentorship for the women principals, there is one who has high praises for the mentoring she received from the vice principal she replaced as well as the one she briefly worked with. Joy described the mentoring she got from her very experienced predecessor as a learning experience.

Constant professional development is pivotal to the women principals effectively functioning in their roles. Marissa said she reads habitually to keep abreast of the latest information on school principalship. She also subscribes to the Association for Supervision Curriculum and Development (ASCD) where she procures a lot of resources. All the women principals attend professional development training workshops structured by the Ministry of Education. Joy said, "I go to the training to make sure I am aware of all the things that I have to do. And that made my task a little bit easier than I expected" (p. 6).

Challenges

One challenge that all the women opine is that of insufficient financial resources to efficiently run the school and implement necessary programmes. Marissa raised the concern about the inequities involved in the distribution of resources to schools.

Another challenge is the perceived scant regard that some parents have for education, the school's property and the efforts of the school. This was blamed on the young age of the parents. Cynthia lamented, "It's like they just don't care" (p. 7).

In addition, the women principals experience challenges with their staff. In the case of Joy the challenge manifests itself in getting her staff to be receptive of her type of leadership, which she describes as caring. She viewed this as different from her predecessor's type of leadership, which she said was stringent. She opines, "You go with your own style and you try as best to make people feel comfortable. Sometimes persons feel that, you know, who are you to make that decision because we usually do things this way or that way or whatever" (p. 6). Jennifer and Cynthia, at some point or the other, have been forced to feel like outsiders because they were recruited from outside of the school. They gained their experience at other school(s) but were appointed principal at a school where they have never taught. Jennifer related, "When I

went there first I was like an outsider coming in' (p. 5). They both had challenges working with the man who acted as principal before their appointment. Jennifer said, "I found that some people were really unco-operative and some people took steps to kind a, what would you say now, like sabotage the things you were doing (p. 5). In Jamaica, teachers who act as principals, especially if it is for at least a year, feel that they should be confirmed as principals.

Overcoming Challenges

Despite the presence of challenges the five women principals all work assiduously to rise above them. They realize that unless they devise strategies to overcome the challenges, their job will never be fulfilling. To get the staff moving with them on their vision they try to include them in discussion and decision-making. Jennifer reported:

> I try to strengthen relationships and to form professional, wholesome bonds with staff. Even persons who were unco-operative, I just didn't focus on the lack of co-operation. I just tried to find a way to motivate them and to get them involved (p. 6).

Jennifer has admitted that she has still not captured the full support of her male vice principal despite repeated efforts to do so. Similarly, Cynthia has reported that before she was able to broker any collaboration with her former acting principal, he walked away from the school.

The women principals spoke of the measures they enacted to increase the participation of the parents in school activities. There have been parenting workshops, Parents' Days as well as honours bestowed on parents who give their support. While the measures do not always work, the women principals continue to make attempts to bring the parents on board.

To minimize the challenge of inadequate financial resources, the women principals described the many ways that they and their staff have tried to raise funds for their schools. Despite not always having the parents involved, the women principals commended their staff for their voluntary work in the fundraising ventures. There have also been occasions when private companies sponsor events at the schools or just directly donate funds to the schools.

To overcome the reading challenges that faced the students and the school, programmes have been implemented with the aim of improving the reading levels of students. In one school, the woman principal has established a reading lab and in others specialist teachers have been employed. The women principals reported that these initiatives have borne fruit.

Gendered Experiences in the Principalship

The women who experienced adverse reactions to their appointments do not feel those experiences are related to their gender but to their status as outsiders. These are the women who came from other schools to become principals in schools where they had not taught.

Men respond differently to the leadership of a woman than women do. Marissa related how she had to devise specific strategies to deal with the men on her staff. She said this is necessary and explained it this way: "Because sometimes men have a challenge responding to female leadership, so I'm just taking a reality check" (p. 13). She said women are generally more supportive. Jennifer stated that the men are protective of her and jump ahead of her in situations they feel are too much for her to deal with physically.

All the women reject the notion that women are less effective in dealing with discipline. They all put the notion down to the misguided belief that driving fear into people is good leadership.

Marissa said there was a cry, in response to problems some boys were creating, for a man to head the school. She had to respond strongly to remind the community that that men led before her and the school was in shambles. Furthermore, she has effectively dealt with problems of drugs, violence and lack of discipline since she had been appointed principal.

I found that the principals believe there are some women who display jealousy in response to the appointment of a fellow woman to the principalship. Renee described it like this: "Sometimes it's always females with little jealousy. You are all in the staffroom together and somebody moves ahead, you know, and they expect you to still be in the staffroom and you can't be in the staffroom anymore" (p. 12).

Motivation to Enter and Remain in the Principalship

The women principals were told about the vacancy for principal and/or encouraged by (friends, colleagues, church brethren and principal or vice principal) to apply for the post. This encouragement helped to propel them to seriously think about the prospect and subsequently to apply.

Apart from self-actualization, the women principals remained attracted to the principalship because of a desire to serve and create positive changes. Marissa professed:

It's just a pity that we don't have the wherewithal to do it more than we are now doing but it's a tremendous feeling to see the positive changes that you are able to bring to young

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people's lives and the lasting changes that you can bring; because one of the things that I always say as an educator: forget about today and the immediacy of education. It's not about today; it's about the long term, if you can produce people who are better persons a few years down the road when it really matters. So, it's not always about the here and now; it's about lifelong opportunities that you have been able to enable. That's basically it, you're making a difference and that's it because, you know, my personal motto is: just leave it a little better than you found it (p. 3).

Renee said, as a classroom teacher, she saw what was happening at the school and felt helpless in her position to effect any meaningful change. She thought, "My God if I were in a position to fix this, I would" (p. 5). She also feels that, "If you don't love it [the job], you can't do it…you have to love it" (p. 10).

Referring to the impoverished nature of the community that her school serves, Jennifer said, "Maybe something with my personality needed to have those kinds of people to work with" (p. 7). Similar to Marissa, she saw her job as her calling. Joy thinks it is the "togetherness of administration" (p. 6) that keeps her motivated.

Summary

In leading their schools, the women principals adopt a collaborative approach that values the contribution of team members. They find this approach useful because it empowers and motivates staff, as well as builds trust and confidence among them. I also found the women principals to be practitioners of caring and "mothering" leadership. As Marissa put it, if a principal cares about every aspect of her/his school, the job is almost done. The women also shared that they assume the role of mothers to the children in their schools. In addition, I found that some principals credit their religious beliefs for their resilience. As an indication of the value they place on their human resource, the women principals highlighted their efforts in training their staff for leadership.

There is the presumption among the women principals that boys need male role models because of the absence of men from the classroom, especially at the primary level. As a consequence of this presumption, boys-centered activities are carried out.

Despite their challenges with resources, under-involved parents, under-achieving students and, in some cases, unsupportive colleagues, the women principals related how rewarding it is for them when they overcome these challenges. Those principals, who taught at other schools

immediately before being appointed principals, have faced special challenges as because of their status as outsiders.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Because of the small sample size of five Jamaican women principals, I make no attempt in this study to use these women's experiences to theorize the experiences of women principals generally. The purpose of this study is to highlight the experiences of the five women principals. I will, therefore, discuss the findings and seek to use existing literature to draw similarities and differences between the Jamaican women principals' experiences and those of others that have been documented.

In this chapter I will discuss how the Jamaican women in the principalship lead. As I do so I will first take a close look at their use of care and "mothering", their grounding in spirituality as well as the importance they place on the training of staff. Second, I will examine the mentorship of women principals and the place of professional development in their careers. Third, I will look at the women principals' perceptions of boys and their need for role models. Fourth, I will discuss the rewards and support that the women principals receive as they undertake their duties. Fifth, I centre the discussion on challenges faced by the women principals. I will also expose how they work to overcome the challenges they face. My sixth area of focus in this chapter will be a discussion of the relationship between the women principals' experiences and their gender. Finally, I will explore their motivation to enter and remain in the principalship.

Women as Leaders

The women principals who participated in this study emphasized caring, nurturing and collaboration as characteristics of their leadership. Kark (2004) described this type of leadership as transformational because women leaders are flexible, team-oriented and participative. According to Sherman and Wrushen (2009), "Female attributes include empathy, intuition, sensitivity, nurturing, compromising, caring, co-operation, and accommodation, which are increasingly thought to be positively associated with effective administration" (p. 174). The Jamaican women principals who participated in this study have chosen to love and care for the people with whom they work and, in the process, forged meaningful bonds. In collaborating with stakeholders of their schools, the women principals believe they are improving their effectiveness. What cannot be determined is whether these women are leading in accordance with leadership stereotypes. According to Sherman and Beaty (2010):

Men are more easily credited with leadership abilities and accepted as leaders because women are expected to be kind and gentle. Men are expected to be aggressive and confident, creating a double bind for many women who are in turn expected to be communal and assertive in leadership roles (p. 160)

Women and men are stereotyped in how they lead and so it is not unimaginable that we may act according to these stereotypes. Following is a discussion of these women's most striking leadership characteristics.

Collaborative Leadership

The Jamaican women principals described their leadership style as consultative and collaborative, among other things. Kark (2004) cited several studies on transformational leadership that identified that "women are perceived, and perceive themselves, as using transformational leadership styles more than men" (p. 163). Renee emphasized how much value she placed on teamwork while Jennifer firmly believes leading cannot be done alone. Jennifer stated:

You really cannot lead alone. Who would you be leading? We are all on the same team. Each team member or each category, each section of the team has a function to play because leadership is so many different things […]. The best job will come from the co-operation of everybody and the support of all of us (p. 12).

Chin (2011) explained that women tend to be collaborative, cooperative and democratic in their style of leadership. Despite the embrace of collaborative leadership, there are times when the woman principal has to stand alone in making some decisions. It is to those times that Cynthia refers when she said, "Leadership is a lonely place." Included in the women principals' assessment of their own leadership is their effort to build meaningful relationships with the people they work with. In describing the family type nature of the relationship she has with her staff, Renee gushed:

When I say staff, I mean ancillary staff, academic staff…everybody. Summer we go on a trip. We have our social every month, for instance, in the month of November, about seven of us celebrate birthday so we just come together, buy a nice, big cake, buy some stuff and have a nice social. Everybody would just play games and enjoy ourselves. After school we have aerobics classes, you know, it's more like family. To be honest,

[Ridgeland] is more like family. That's how we live here. So the staff is highly

motivated so I really don't have a problem getting them to do anything (p. 7).

Not only do the women principals deem it important to strengthen bonds with staff, they also believe the students are equally important because as Renee put it, "School is about children, not us" (p. 5). Women leaders tend to make efforts at building relationships (Grogan, 1999). Grogan (1999) reviewed several pieces of literature on the leadership styles of women and concluded:

Many women are relational leaders, that is, leaders who strive to get to know students,

teachers, and other members of the school community. Based on having good knowledge

of others, relational leaders see themselves in relationships that are facilitative of others'

efforts rather than in control (p. 524)

This contrasts, however, with the leadership style of one participant in another study. That African-American principal, in an effort to get her teachers to focus on teaching the students, "maintains an underlying tone of social distance with most of [them]" (Dillard, 1995, p. 556). She said:

Some people grumble because I really don't have an open door policy. I don't want folks

to visit me like they'd visit their hairdresser or their psychiatrist.   I don't have time for

that. I have better things to do with my time. They should know how to teach (p. 556).

This contrast highlights the varied experiences of women, depending on who they are and where they are.

Leadership of Care and "Mothering"

The fact that women have a tendency to be caring in their performance of their duties as leader is well supported in the literature. The women principals in the study conducted by Wrushen and Sherman (2008) spoke about the important role that compassion play in their effectiveness as principals. One of those principals said, "I think I am a caring leader. I think I'm a compassionate leader. I think I'm a very strong leader. I think I'm the kind of leader that people have faith in" (p. 462). The women principals who participated in my study all conveyed a high level of care for the children with whom they work. This proclivity to care can be equated with the history of people of African origin who, as a community, helped to care for all the children in the community (Dillard, 1995). Jamaican women have that same communal root so it is no surprise that the women principals have the commitment to care for their students. When I

was growing up and attending school, my parents would reminisce about the good old days when every adult in the community was parent to all the children in the community. My mother would relate tales of how she would be sternly reprimanded by neighbours for unacceptable behaviour and she dared not go home and complain because she would be punished again, not just for her initial infraction but also for showing dissent by complaining about being reprimanded. These stories were shared with us as children because our parents wanted us to see what we were missing—the communal effort at raising children. I have noticed that, over time, the community has become more individual-centred so each family has to deal with its own issues. Added to that is the change in today's family's structure which has evolved into many single-parent homes and grandparent-headed homes. During the course of my teaching career, I have interacted with many students who live with just one parent (most often the mother), or have been left with grandparents so that parents can seek a better life. The onus falls, therefore, on schools to help fill the void that is created in these children's lives and it seems to be the women who assume the role of caregiver.

The Jamaican women principals also feel that they are like mothers to the children in their schools. Some of these women describe themselves as having "motherly instincts" because they instinctively treat the children as their own. Renee related how she would hug her students and they looked forward to it. In a pleasing tone she said, "They have to get their hug, in the morning, lunch time or break time; they have to get their hug" (p. 15). This is similar to the participant in Bloom and Erlandson's (2003) study who said, "I hug students. I try to give them encouragement when I pass them. I think you have to speak to kids and show them respect" (p. 359). This type of community "othermothering" has its genesis in African-American culture in the Civil Rights era when the community was actively involved in the rearing of children (Loder, 2005). For some women principals, like Renee, it is natural for them to mother the children in their schools, even if they are not themselves biological mothers.

The women principals were quite critical of their students' parents because they (principals) perceived them (parents) as not being involved enough in their children's education. Marissa cited her students' parents as not proactive enough for her to depend on them for ideas and Cynthia and Renee deemed them too young for parenting. My experience has taught me that the parents who are most visible in school activities and PTA are women. This raises some questions: Are parents really uninterested in their children's education? If they were

uninterested, what would account for this? What part does the fact that women are now taking on careers have to do with their dwindling visibility in school activities? Is the school expecting too much from parents? These are questions that future research can shed some light on. Somehow, I believe it is too simplistic to believe parents, on a large scale, are not interested in their children's education.

Christianity and Leadership

With Jamaica being a predominantly Christian country that places no restrictions on Christian worship in schools, it is interesting to note the place that religion plays in the lives of the women principals as they perform their duties in the principalship. Renee demonstrates how important her spirituality is to all areas of her life. She described the support she gets from her prayer team, with members constantly praying for her and her success as a principal. She also spoke about having devotion with students as a means of strengthening her bond with them. Cynthia also highlighted the importance of the support she receives from her church.   Jamaican women principals are by no means unique in their religiosity. This is exemplified by an African-American principal in another study who declared, "Without my church I would have crumbled" (Bloom and Erlandson, 2003, p. 361). The similarity between the Jamaican women principals' reliance on their religion and Bloom and Erlandson's participant is evident.   The women principals in both studies credited their Christianity for their determination and resilience in the principalship. What sets the Jamaican women principals apart from their African-American counterparts is that the former are able to openly minister to their students and staff while the latter are restricted in their use of religion in their places of work.

Training Staff for Leadership

As they perform their duties as principals, the Jamaican women exert some effort in providing leadership-training opportunities for their staff. These opportunities may be in the form of co-ordinating committees or acting in supervisory roles created by the principal. Marissa provides training sessions for her senior staff and she said she told them she expected many of them to become principals later on. According to The Transformational Leadership Report (2007) leadership is transformational when the leader is a role model, inspires those s/he works with, helps them to develop their creativity and shows concern for their needs. The women principals who provide their staff with leadership training opportunities are transformational leaders because they are stimulating their professional development and inspiring them to work.

Jason (2000) noted that transformational leadership might be effective in its promotion of the development and maintenance of leadership competence in schools. Courtney (1992) expressed the view that a principal who feeds the growth needs of staff will avoid stress and help to foster good working relationships.

Mentoring and Professional Development

One woman principal, Joy, emphasized the value she placed on the mentorship she received from the senior vice principal she worked with, when she was a vice principal herself. Although she had no such direct mentorship experience when she was appointed principal, she said she learned from working with senior people at the level of vice principal. Her school has a bit of history of women principals and she has served the school throughout that period so she has experiences to relate to. It is the women with whom she has crossed paths with throughout her life that have served as models for her. Whether we realize it or not, we have mentoring experiences, though they may not be formal. We tend to want to emulate people who influence us positively and more often than not, it includes our mother.

Despite the absence of a structured mentorship programme, however, the women principals all participate in workshops, organized by the Ministry of Education, which provides them with a forum to meet with principals of other schools. The women principals view these workshops as beneficial to their professional development so they make every effort to attend them. Here, also, lies the need for further research to explore the value of peer support to women in the principalship in Jamaica.

The Need for Male Role Models

There is concern about the fate of boys in the absence (in some cases) or minimal presence (in other cases) of men in schools. Cynthia said there is currently no male member on her teaching staff. She confessed that this has spurred discussion among her staff and herself about the need for the boys to have role models. She related:

> I've heard from parents and even us as staff members that we really need a male figure, in the sense that our boys need role models. These are times when we would really say, you know, we wish we really had a male person" (p. 16).

In fact, Cynthia outlined programmes that have been designed to provide boys with male figures in the school setting. Renee also expressed concern for the boys at her school, who she feels are at a disadvantage because, according to her, the parents take less interest in their education. I am

still trying to figure out why this is so. I am unsure if this phenomenon has anything to do with single mother homes because it is difficult for me to understand why a mother would place her son in a position of disadvantage. Clearly, this is deserving of closer examination in future study. Renee revealed that as a result of this disadvantaged position that the boys are placed in, she has developed a "soft spot" (p. 10) for them. As part of an initiative to get the boys involved, the school has a structured Boys' Day when motivational speakers address the boys.

It is interesting that the women principals do not speak about the dominance of women in the classroom but the absence of men. The absence of men is seen as negative in the sense that boys are lacking in role models at school but no mention is made of girls and their need for male role models, especially since some of them have absentee or abusive fathers. Research has, however, not confirmed the need for boys to have male role models. Griffiths (2006) asserts that research studies have not revealed any disadvantage that boys suffer as a result of being taught by women. While research studies dispute that having women teachers disadvantages boys, the perception still exists that boys need role models (Griffiths, 2006). It is not just in Jamaica that there is the belief that boys need role models. Webber (2010) wrote about what she described as "almost a moral panic about the state of boys in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom" (p. 252). Webber also noted that arguments about the fear that boys are at risk because teaching is feminized may just be an attempt to advance "masculinist education discourses" (p. 252). We must find out what our boys think and we must also hear from the girls how they are affected by the absence of male teachers in their schools. What must be said here is that both boys and girls receive a very strong message about the gendered nature of teaching, that is, teaching, especially at the primary level, is women's work. Are we saying boys exclusively need male role models and girls exclusively need female role models? If that is indeed the thinking then we are nowhere near unlocking ourselves, and our society from gender stereotypes. Is male marginalization a serious concern? To what extent, if any, are boys' performances in school really affected by lack of male role models? These are questions that further research can help to answer.

Rewards and Support

All the Jamaican women principals view the achievement of their students in academics and in extra-curricular activities as their most rewarding experiences. The pride they feel for the improvements their students make can be related to their culture of care. They care so much for

their students that they are personally satisfied when they do well. Marissa shared, "There are students who come to us who can barely read and write. A student who comes in, who can't read and write and then you see that student pass, if it's even one subject, that's major!" (p. 12). Marissa also said when her students won the zonal athletics championship she was right among them celebrating as if she were one of them. Jennifer basked in the fact that she had a student who passed nine subjects in the external examinations, a feat that is uncommon at her school. Similarly, Joy detailed her pride when she had a student who was unable to read, learnt to read and reported it to her. Cynthia, too, revels in the accomplishments of her students. She related the difficulties her school's dance group had as they participated in the parish cultural competition. Her financial contribution along with that of her staff helped the team overcome their challenges and they won medals in the competition. It is this kind of personal involvement that makes the rewards so pleasing for these women principals.

Of course there are other things that the women principals find rewarding. Marissa said she finds reward in "the kind of camaraderie that can exist among staff, even those you may not be getting along so well [with]" (p. 11). This ties into the cooperative kind of leadership that these women practise. They set their goals based on their vision of leadership and so when they achieve these goals it is a great source of reward for them. In this case, Marissa embraces a leadership of cooperation and inclusiveness and the staff has developed that togetherness that she finds useful in building cooperation and fostering a pleasant working environment.

The women principals all believe that in order for the school to progress and in order for them to be effective in their jobs, they need to have the support of the stakeholders. Generally, they do garner the support of their staff and students "although not every single one of them" (Marissa, p. 13). The core of the community has also shown support for the women principals as they seek to realize their vision for the school. In admitting that not everybody will support her, Marissa pointed out, "You have just a few people who are always going to be saying the opposite of anything good that is happening but they don't faze me" (p. 13). Although, ideally, having the support of all stakeholders of the school is good, it is sometimes not likely that the women principals will have full support. The women principals have, therefore, had to manage with whatever support they have, knowing it may not be the perfect situation.

Schools in Jamaica are under-funded so there is encouragement in the idea that a set of vendors at a school gate can act as informal security for the school, as in the case of Joy's school.

These vendors have assigned themselves protectors of the school because they appreciate the relationship between the success of their businesses and the success of the school. This contrasts with Cynthia's complaint about the footballers who vandalize the school's fence to get easier access to the football field. Too often, members of society blind themselves to the relationship between themselves and the success of public institutions. How many people who feed off the school see the need to actually work to preserve or improve the school?

Challenges

The support that the Jamaican women principals have garnered did not come easily but out of concerted effort to build relationships and to prove themselves worthy of support. It has been a major challenge for some, especially those considered outsiders, to get people on their side. Jennifer has been a principal for four years and she confessed that she still does not get the full support of her male vice principal, despite repeated attempts to get him on board. Furthermore, he was ranked ahead of her after being interviewed for the job of principal. She said he felt sidelined because he acted as principal and she landed the job instead of him. Jennifer regrets that she has not been able to fully resolve this issue because she feels it is important to have the support of all segments of the school family, especially among the administration. Not having the support of a member of her administrative team has proven to be a bit stressful for Jennifer although in the earlier days she smothered it with her positivity. This is how she described that experience:

> But, you know, it seems small now and back then, in fact, I think because sometimes you are so motivated and you are positive, things don't impact you in the immediate sense. It's like, on reflection, you say to yourself, "My goodness," you know (p. 5).

Marissa, however, believed that, "You will never win over everybody" (p. 11).

Cynthia, another woman principal with outsider status, had a similar experience to Jennifer's. She, too, had to work with the man who acted as principal before she was appointed principal. He told her that he felt that he should have gotten the job, not her. Cynthia felt that his resentment for her resulted in what she deemed sabotage of the school's computer lab. In Cynthia's case, however, the former acting principal severed ties with the school, leaving her with a wholly female staff, which she works well with.

The fact that these two women principals were treated as outsiders is of itself a challenge. It was the expectation of teachers of a school that they would be promoted within their school and

so if one of their members acted as principal, they expected that person to be confirmed as principal. The appointments of Marissa, Jennifer and Cynthia ran counter to that expectation since they did not progress through the ranks of the school. They were outsiders coming in. Being outsiders, they faced the task of getting the staff to coalesce around them and to get the community to support them. There were people in Marissa's school community who felt that she was appointed through her father's influential connections in the community and the parish. She felt that people sought to find ways to explain why, at age 34, she was appointed principal of a high school. Cynthia found that not only did the former acting principal resent her for being appointed; the community also felt that he should have been appointed principal instead of her. On account of this, she had a challenging time getting them to subscribe to her vision for the school. The women principals who are appointed from outside the school seem to have a harder time rallying the support of staff than those who were promoted through the ranks of the school. This is especially true if the newly appointed principal has the former acting principal to work with, as is the case with Jennifer and Cynthia. The woman principal in Oram-Sterling's (2009) study was promoted from within the school but, like Marissa, she was deemed too young and inexperienced by the senior members of her staff. This tells me that there may be a connection between a woman principal's age and the perception of her being an effective principal. The woman principal in Wrushen and Sherman's (2008) study declared, "I think just because you are a woman, and, for me, a younger woman, I think the way people respond to you and engage with you is very different" (p. 462). Young women principals seem to be perceived by their staff as not being able to do an effective job because of their youth and lack of experience. In reference to younger teachers with little experience being assigned to classes of challenged students, Kalogrides, Loeb and Betielle (2011) suggested that this age discrimination may have some bearing on power relations among staff.   Kalogrides, Loeb and Betielle also argued that this age/experience discrimination is disadvantageous to the less experienced teacher and the teacher who is a minority or is female. I think this explanation could be applied to the experiences of challenge that the women principals have. For some reason, people tend not to respond favourably to somebody who is junior in age and experience leading them. A more extensive study would, however, have to be done to explore the relationship between age, experience and leading successfully in the principalship.

Both Marissa and Jennifer have indicated that they experience challenges working with their middle management staff. These middle managers would be the seasoned members of staff and so they are the ones who would feel most threatened by the appointment of an outsider. They would be the most resistant to change and that is what sometimes created conflicts between them and their principal. This challenge is also related to the women principals being outsiders. The two principals who were promoted within their respective schools reported little significant opposition, from among their staff, to their leadership. Joy related that her greatest challenge among the staff was with newer teachers. She, however, mentioned that a few teachers would seek to take advantage of her "soft-spoken" nature. This is interesting because it heightens the discussion about the effectiveness of being relational and caring in leadership.

Another challenge common among the women principals is the inadequate support that parents give their children and consequently the school. They lament the poor support of the parents at school events and the limited guidance parents provide their children in areas such as homework. When asked to explain why they think that is so, they responded that the parents are very young, may not have completed school and need guidance themselves. Bloom & Erlandson (2003) believed, "Many students and parents in urban public schools are singularly dependent on the school to provide the educational and emotional sustenance that should come from the home" (p. 359). This is the same kind of scenario that plays out in the Jamaican schools of the women principals in my study and it may not be limited to urban schools. Marissa complained that at her school she cannot depend on the parents for ideas because they are not proactive. She lamented, "These are parents sitting down, waiting on you to tell them what to do so you can't feed off them" (p. 15). The parents are not proactive because they are looking to the school for guidance. The Jamaican women principals believe the school has to fulfill the needs of the students and sometimes as principals they have had to give audience to the problems of parents. Again, this raises some questions about parenting today. What are the challenges that parents face as they try to raise their children? How are families affected by the absence of one parent? How critical is parent involvement to the school carrying out its mandate? Are schools doing enough to reach out to parents to get a sense of what the school can do to facilitate their involvement?

All of the women principals, who participated in this study, find it a challenge to work with the limited financial resources they have been allotted by the Ministry of Education. Marissa expressed the view that there are inequities in school funding. She said, "Schools like

ours are really seen as the poor relations" (p. 10). This concern about the inequities in public school funding is in line with that raised by the UNESCO (1983) and discussed in chapter one. The students who attend upgraded high schools like those headed by Marissa and Jennifer are usually from low socio-economic homes. As a consequence, these schools are challenged to raise additional funds to support their programmes. As a result of their limited resources, the women principals have had to prioritize the programmes that their school will engage in and this has affected the effectiveness with which they perform their jobs. Their energies and that of their staff have also been channeled into fund-raising efforts to help to supplement the shortfall in their finances and to preserve programmes, such as welfare, at their schools.

The women principals also found the students' reading difficulties a challenge. There are cases where students are either non-readers or are reading below their grade level. This problem is not uncommon in the type of schools that these women principals lead. Students who are not able to secure a place at a traditional high school because of their lower examination scores are usually placed at upgraded high schools and junior high sections of primary and junior high schools. It would be interesting to find out if women are more likely to be appointed to under-performing schools. That, of course, could be a component of future research.

Two principals related vandalism by members of the community of the schools' property. This, they feel, is as a result of an inability of these people to connect the schools' value to the improvement of the community. Cynthia painfully described how a perimeter fence erected by a company, at no cost to the school, was cut to provide community footballers with quicker access to the school's play field. Marissa also expressed amazement at how little respect some community members show the school's property.

Overcoming Challenges

To overcome the challenges that they face, the Jamaican women principals have had to seek consensus with the stakeholders of the school. Jennifer explained:

I try to strengthen relationships and to form professional, wholesome bonds with staff. Even persons who were uncooperative, I just didn't focus on the lack of cooperation; I just tried to find a way to motivate them to get involved. I try to give them things to do, which would show some kind of, what you'd call it, you know, recognition of their capacity (p. 6).

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In order to build the relationship with colleagues, the women principals have scheduled staff retreats outside of the confines of the school where they make and discuss plans for the school. In describing the success of the school under her leadership, Jennifer said, "I have found that the school has grown a great deal: the physical plant, the students, the results" (p. 7).

With a view to assist parents in actively participating in their children's education, some principals have crafted programmes to provide them (the parents) with training. Renee spoke about parenting workshops where parents are taught how to guide their children in reading and literacy and to sensitize them about the part they can play in assisting the children with homework. These principals accept that one important way to help the children improve their literacy and numeracy skills is to bring the parents on board to help the students. They agree the progress is slow but they know their efforts must be constant. Oram-Sterling (2009), in her biography of a Jamaican woman principal, wrote this about the principal:

> She noted that she often reflects on her early life in Success and she now realizes that, if children have caring influences in their lives, poverty and single-parent households will never be a deterrent to success. So in her role as principal, Joan made sure that parents were involved in their children's lives (p. 202).

It is absolutely necessary that the parents be brought on board to be active participants in their children's school life and the principals are cognizant of this.

In addition to bringing the parents on board, the women principals have implemented programmes to help the students improve their reading and mathematical skills. Jennifer said her school has established both a reading laboratory and a mathematics laboratory where students are taught using individualized instruction. She and other principals have also seen to the employment of reading specialists.

All in all the women principals have declared that they have created positive changes in their schools. They have overcome numerous challenges and their schools are the better for this. Marissa reflected:

> Today we were saying, after senior staff meeting, that if we were to really look back seriously on some of the cases we've had at [Mayton] High School, I had forgotten, you know, we've got to the point where we have almost forgot that. We used to have a lot of violence, a lot of wounding, a lot of even near-deaths; and there have been several times where I've been driving like a mad person, taking children to the hospital. Those were

very low points, too, and, thankfully, we have gone past that. As a female, I face down the drug dealers; I face down the knives; I face down the guns; I face down everything. And, we don't have a violence or incident-free campus but we have come a long way (p. 16–17).

This is a testament to the resilience of these women principals. Not only have they found ways of overcoming the challenges but they have also found motivation in overcoming them.

Gendered Experiences

While Jennifer places particular experiences she had at the feet of her outsider position, she, at the same time, related how the men on her staff assumed a protective stance towards her in what she termed "their male chauvinist[ic] tendencies" (p. 13). "African-American male teachers tended to be chauvinistic when accepting direction from a woman, especially a Black woman" (Bloom & Erlandson, p. 355). Jennifer plays down this chauvinism and labels it as men just protecting her. She explained:

I'm not sure if I'd put them down to my gender or because I'm an outsider coming in because really and truly all the VPs, all the previous principals, except the first one, came up through the school and I was an outsider coming in and, that in our context, will cause a certain amount of resentment because they're thinking their person should have gotten the job (p. 13).

The question to be asked here is how different the experience would be for a man who is recruited from outside of the school. It seems to me that women principals find themselves in a double bind: first as women and then as outsiders. Duncan and Seguin (2002) posited that the community considers principals outsiders when they fall outside the culture of the school. Gender may also contribute to the outsider effect because of stereotypes and if the woman principal appears to thwart those norms, she is seen as deficient (Duncan & Seguin, 2002). The women principals in this study may have been treated as outsiders because they were perceived as threats to the hierarchical conventions and culture of the school.

The men rush to shield Jennifer from performing tasks they deem too physical for her, including dealing with fights. She also revealed that the level of support she gets from the men is less than what she gets from the women. In explaining why she feels this so she responded, "I think some of the males, they feel that here's a female—you know, I'm not your principal profile: big and strapping, you know some people think that's it—and I think that that makes them

protective" (p. 11). Women, for whatever reason, tend to be reluctant to identify sexism as a contributor to their experiences (Grogan, 1999). As I reflect on my own experiences, I feel compelled to say that women may divert blame from sexism because we reject the 'feminist' label. This is especially true if we have men as spouses. We tend to equate feminism with a dislike for men and we do not want to be thought of as women who dislike men. I remember an experience I had at the beginning of my course when a feminist who was asked to present to my class asked for all the feminists to raise their hands. My hand remained in my lap because I, too, feared the 'feminist label' and I did not want to be singled out. I have since grown to appreciate the work of feminists and I have also reconciled with my 'feminist insecurities.' I fully appreciate the advocacy for women to be viewed on their own terms.

Elliot (1997) theorized that, as a part of selective reality, women conflictingly disclose and deny, simultaneously, experiences of sexism. Selective reality involves the re-presentation of what we want to be seen as reality (Elliot, 1997). Their denial that their experiences had nothing to do with their gender but at the same time relating experiences that display a link to gender may be a re-presentation of these principals' reality. When asked about the relationship between her experiences and her gender, Cynthia responded:

> No, you know, I don't know…I really don't think I see any relationship. Ahm, just that, ahm, I think as I mentioned earlier the only thingy that I see coming up is the fact that some members of the community wanted the person who was acting before me to have gotten the position, but, I don't think it has anything to do with the gender, just that he was there and in the system so they just felt he should be the one who should have gotten the position instead of me, ahm, coming in as a new person and I, I don't think it has to do with gender (p. 14)

At the same time that she is denying sexism, Cynthia is relating a case that seems to involve sexism. If she felt that experience had nothing to do with her gender, I am left to wonder if she would have mentioned it in the context of gender. Having said all of that, though, I must concede that it is difficult to compartmentalize our experiences. Not all the women principals denied the connection between their experiences and their gender. Marissa said she recognizes that men respond differently to her leadership than women do. She explained:

> Because sometimes I think men have a challenge responding to female leadership, so I'm just taking a reality check. And I try to find ways to mitigate and to minimize the impact

it might have so over the years, as I've matured in the job, for example, I kind of change the way I approach them so I don't approach the men in a formal way as I used to approach them (p. 14).

The type of casual approach that Marissa described adds up to being 'nice' to the guys and trying to fit in with them. However, this approach to have a different means of relating to men as opposed to women co-workers may need some further exploration. The women principals studied in Spain by Coronel, Moreno and Carrasco (2010) lamented that they got limited support from female teachers, who they saw as generally more critical than other groups. Coleman (2002) argued that men may be uncomfortable working with women. One hypothesis she used to explain this is that "women leaders tend to lean towards participatory management— which men may see as a threat to their autonomy as teachers" (p. 88). This is how a principal in Wrushen and Sherman's (2008) study commented on this perception, "I don't know if I perceive school leadership differently because of my gender, but I think I'm definitely perceived differently because of it" (p. 462). Women are aware of the general perceptions of their leadership abilities based on their gender and their age. I think that men have been so used to being in the role of leader that they have difficulty reconciling with the fact that someone from the opposite sex is in charge. Again, this goes back to socialization and sex-role stereotyping.

There are communities that have displayed elements of sexism and this is borne out in the experiences of some of the women principals who participated in this study. When her school was having problems with some students, Marissa said there was a call for the leadership of a man. She responded, "But I came and I took over from a man and before that man was another man. And, tremendous changes have been made (p. 16). She has had to defend her tenure as principal to a community that harboured the belief that women are not as effective in the principalship as men. It is this very sentiment that provided me with the rationale for this study. I believe this perception that women are less effective as principals is as a consequence of patriarchy.

Motivation to Enter and Remain in the Principalship

It is clear that although the women principals were encouraged by their colleagues, friends and even by retiring principals or vice principals, these women had leadership aspirations. Jennifer said she harboured thoughts and even had been applying for years prior to her appointment. One of the major factors that affected her aspiration was her concern for her family

and how such a position would affect them. She, therefore, focused on finding an opening that was close to where her family lived. It is clear that this would have limited her chances, over the years, of realizing her dream of becoming a principal.

The women principals indicated that it is their desire to serve and create changes that motivated them towards the principalship. Marissa stated:

It's just a pity that we don't have the wherewithal to do it more than we are now doing but it's a tremendous feeling to see the positive changes that you are able to bring to young people's lives and the lasting changes that you can bring; because one of the things that I always say as an educator: forget about today and the immediacy of education. It's not about today; it's about the long term, if you can produce people who are better persons a few years down the road when it really matters. So, it's not always about the here and now; it's about lifelong opportunities that you have been able to enable. That's basically it, you're making a difference and that's it because, you know, my personal motto is: just leave it a little better than you found it (p. 3).

None of the women principals indicated personal benefits as their source of motivation in the principalship. Instead, they indicated that their motivation come from a desire to make life better for others. There is a relationship between a woman's motivation to become a school administrator and how she leads (Young & McLeod, 2001). According to Young and McLeod (2001), "individuals who enter administration to serve teachers and students and who see their role as supportive or facilitative are more likely to adopt a cooperative, participatory style of leadership" (p. 475). It is evident that Marissa, Renee, Cynthia, Joy and Jennifer view themselves as servant leaders and they are cooperative in their style of leadership.

How the Principals' View of Effective Leadership Impact their Job

The women principals' view of leadership has impacted how they lead and how they evaluate their leadership. They, therefore, strive to be the best principals they can. What resounds from the women principals is their belief that in order to be effective, a principal must exercise care for all areas of the school. According to them, from 'care' will flow all the other ingredients necessary to build the school. Marissa, for example, is convinced that caring about everything in the school ensures that your job is more than halfway done. Cynthia believed her weakness is that she has been unable to get all the members of her team to coalesce around her. She deemed this a weakness because she thinks a good principal should be able to "bring all [her]

team on board" (p. 15). The principals also believe in the sharing of power with others. This is in line with their commitment to include their colleagues in decision-making and charting the vision of the school. Duncan and Seguin (2002) stated:

> It is interesting to note that experienced practicing administrators who were aware of the importance of developing good working relationships with teachers and of the benefits of involving teachers in decision making chose not to recognize their knowledge by using actions that were collaborative, that shared authority, and that sought to preserve positive staff morale (p. 630).

Conclusion

From the outset I set out to find answers to three research questions:

1. What are the experiences of selected women who are principals of Jamaican primary and secondary schools?
2. How do the selected women principals at the primary/secondary level in Jamaica view their experiences?
3. What are the women principals' perceptions of the relationship between their experiences and their gender?

I have gained much insight into the experiences of the five women principals who participated in the study, thus my research did provide me with valuable answers.

What are the experiences of selected women who are principals of Jamaican primary and secondary schools? In answering this question, I must highlight the conclusion that the five women principals who participated in this study are similar in their styles of leadership. They all display love and care in how they run their schools. Some women principals singled out the boys for special care because they surmise they lack male role models, in an environment where women's presence is dominant and men are absent. This, however, raises other questions about the exclusion of girls in this scheme. How are girls affected by being taught by predominantly women, especially at the lower grade levels? What benefits are there to be had from male role models?

In addition, the women principals sought to build relationships with the people with whom they work. As a means of building trust and camaraderie, they work as a team with their staff. This team effort has worked well for the most part but these principals, in some cases, have difficulty getting everybody to move to a similar beat. This challenge is especially manifested in

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those circumstances where the women principals are considered outsiders. These women principals have been assigned outsider status by their staff as well as the school community because they did not gain promotion through their current school. Instead, they have been promoted to a new environment where resentment may be rife. As a consequence, they have to work to prove their detractors wrong by making sure they are effective in their positions as principals. I am motivated to reflect on what the experiences of these women principals would have been had they been men. Further research has to be done to highlight the experiences of women who are principals of schools at which they are considered outsiders.

How do the selected women principals at the primary/secondary level in Jamaica view their experiences? It was interesting to hear the women principals talk about how they found reward in overcoming their challenges. The five women principals in this study believe they are proficient in their leadership because they adopt a caring and collaborative stance in their approach to their jobs. They also do not believe they are any less able to lead than men. To them, the 'big-stick' approach is limited and is not a true display of effective leadership of a school. The women principals have shown a growing connection to their assigned tasks and have reaped great rewards.

What are the women principals' perceptions of the relationship between their experiences and their gender? As I tried to answer this research question, I had to concede that it is sometimes difficult to separate our experiences from different sides of ourselves since we do not compartmentalize these experiences. In other words, we are unsure of what we experience on account of our age, our class, our race, or even our gender. It is, therefore, difficult to definitively relate some of these principals' experiences to their gender. For example, when those women principals who were promoted from other schools outside their current one, told me they believed their challenging experiences were precipitated by their status as outsiders and not necessarily their gender, it is understandable. It may very well be that they would have that same outsider status and treatment if they were men.

I was motivated to do this study because of the negative response to women principals in some communities. I wanted to find out about the experiences of women principals and to what extent, if any, these experiences were related to their gender. Because there were media reports of community members clamouring for men to head their schools, I assumed that there was a connection between the experiences of women principals and their gender. I have actually learnt

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that there is a relationship but I was surprised that some principals downplayed or denied the connection. The fact that being an outsider played such a significant role in the resistance some principals experienced is an eye opener for me. Apparently, school ties are just as important as experience and qualification in being accepted as principal.

The revelation made by Renee that parents are more supportive of girls than boys caused me to think long and hard about the possible motivation. I had never heard nor experienced anything like this so it has really piqued my interest. Some of the questions that are raised in my mind are: why would parents be more supportive of boys' education than girls'? Does the differing treatment have anything to do with the children's perceived ability levels? Already I can see how this can fuel future research.

Implications for Further Research

My research has provided the basis for more comprehensive research about Jamaican women who are principals of Jamaican primary and secondary schools. More research could also be done to expose the experiences of women principals who are considered outsiders by their staff and school community. It would be interesting to find the extent of the outsider label placed on some women principals and how much of this is extended to men who are recruited from outside the school.

I can also envision future research looking at the dynamics of the need for male role models. There is debate surrounding the perception that boys are disadvantaged by feminization of teaching in the sense that they are denied male role models. But, another question lingers: How are girls affected by feminization and do they have similar needs for male role models? Future research can uncover answers to that question.

Future research can also explore the role of parents in the education of their children and whether the blame that is leveled at them is merited. The women principals in this study highlighted the challenges they faced because they felt their students' parents were not supportive enough of the students and the school's activities. It would be interesting to find out what factors account for the under-involvement of parents in the education of their children.

As I reflected on the research process, I identified some things that I would improve if I were to do further research as a doctoral student. In this research I conducted single interviews with each principal but that was limited in how much depth could be had of the women principals' experiences. As I sifted through the data, I saw room for more related questions to be

asked. For example, when the principals told me about their status as outsiders, I could have concentrated some more on what they perceived as the reasons they were treated the way they were and if and how they adjusted their leadership style to cope. It could also be investigated to see what disadvantages and advantages there are to being an outsider and if men are also treated as outsiders. I would structure follow-up conversations with the women principals to get more details about their experiences. I would also include observations of the women principals as they work in their schools. I would, therefore, be with them in their environment to learn more about them as women who are leaders. Another area that I would concentrate more closely on is the revelation that the women principals in this study found themselves in schools that are troubled, under-funded and underperforming. A more extensive study may unearth any pattern of the types of schools women principals are concentrated in. I would also include information gathered from the community, the students and the colleagues of the women principals to help present a more balanced picture them.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How long have you been teaching?

2. What motivated you to become a teacher?

3. What has your experience been like throughout your teaching career? Tell me about the high points and the low points and any memorable events you feel comfortable sharing.

4. Tell me about your journey to becoming a principal at this school.

-How long you have you been in the position?

-Describe the process you went through to be appointed

-How have you prepared yourself for the position?

-What guided your decision to apply for the post?

5. Now talk to me about your experiences of being a principal.

-What keeps you going?

-What are some of the things that make your job most challenging? What do you do to overcome these challenges?

-What are some of the things you find rewarding?

6. Tell me about the people or groups of people who have been most supportive of your position as principal.

-How have you been supported by your colleagues (men, women)?

-How have you been supported by the community?

-How important is this support to your leadership?

7. What sector/group have you found it most challenging to work with? Why do you think so?

8. Do you perceive any relationship between your experiences and your gender? Tell me about the specific experiences.

9. How does your personal/family life affect your life as a principal?

10. There is the view of some that women cannot effectively deal with discipline, what are your views on this?

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Oct 20, 2011

Dear _____:

I am a current masters student in the Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. I am conducting a research on **The Experiences of Women who are Principals in Primary/Secondary Schools in Jamaica**. I will be collecting data for the study between October and December, 2011. The study will provide you with the opportunity to give voice to your experiences and in so doing may motivate positive changes in how women are voiced and how they are treated in school administrations. Adding your voice to this study is one way in which you can impact the lives of many other teachers who aspire to become principals.

I am interested in interviewing you to get some insights on what are the things that account for how you have effected your job, for example, your support base, your leadership style, your experience, and so on. I know that you have a busy schedule but I ask that you allow a maximum of one hour and a half for the telephone or Skype interview that will take place at a place, date and time most convenient to you, preferably outside of school hours and off the school site.

You can be assured that your anonymity will be secured, as you, your school and school district will only be identified through the use of pseudonyms in all data collection and analysis documents. Any information that you supply will be treated with the strictest of confidence.

I have enclosed a copy of the interview questions for your perusal. If you consent to participate in this study, please complete the consent form that I have also included in this communication. You may send me an email, a text message or telephone me to confirm your

participation. Please be aware that your signing of the consent form does not mean that you are bound to participate in the study. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time preceding the pooling of the data for the study and this will in no way be held against you.

If you need further clarification or additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please feel free to also contact my supervisor, Dr. Verna St. Denis at the university by e-mail at verna.stdenis@usask.ca or telephone at 306-966-2734 or by fax at 306-966-7549.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Curline Lindo

RESEARCHER: Curline Lindo, Masters candidate

Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education

University of Saskatchewan

28 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, SK

Tel: (306) 966-7549

You are being invited to participate in a research project entitled **The experiences of women who are principals of primary/secondary schools in Jamaica**. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

Researcher: Curline Lindo, M.Ed Student, Department of Edicational Foundations, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N0X1.

Ph. (306) 966-7549.

Purpose and Procedure: The purpose of the study is to document the experiences of women who are women in primary/ secondary schools in Jamaica as well a to explore if and how these women perceive the relationship between their experiences and their gender. The data for the study will be gathered through the use of personal telephone/Skype interviews that will last for approximately 90 minutes. The research will take place at a date (between October 1 and December 31), time and place convenient to you. The data will be reported in a summarized format with references to some direct quotations. The findings will form the basis for my master's thesis, a requirement for the completion of my degree. In addition, the information may be used as the source for conference papers and journal articles. Because of the small sample size (five to seven participants) the scope of the study will be limited, therefore, the information collected will not be used to advance any theory. Instead, the data collected for this study will help to inform a limited discussion around the following questions:

- What are the factors that motivate a group of women to seek to become principals?
- How do some women principals view themselves?
- How do some women principals view the perceptions others have of them?
- What are the support systems that some women in school principalship rely on?
- How do some women in the principalship manage/balance their personal and professional lives?

- What are the challenges facing some women as they carry out their jobs as principals?
- What do some women who are principals find rewarding about their jobs?
- What is the relationship, in any, between some women's gender and their experiences working as principals?

Potential Benefits: Participation in this study may result in the participants finding support in the experiences of others. The study may also work to give a voice to those who have participated.

Potential Risks: There are no known risks, beyond those associated with everyday life, which could be associated with this study.

Storage of Data: In accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines, all data (notes, tapes, records) will be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the office of Dr. Verna St. Denis (College of Education, Room 3088) for a minimum of five years, and after that they will be appropriately destroyed beyond recovery. There will be no marks of personal identification on interview transcripts. All identifying information such as master list and consent forms will be stored separately from the data collected.

Confidentiality: A pseudonym will be used to refer to each participant, school and school region.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from your involvement. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with my university supervisor and committee members. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason without penalty of any sort. Your right to withdraw data from this study, however, will expire once the data has been pooled. At this point it is possible that some form of research dissemination would have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data. If you withdraw from the research project, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed, at your request.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided if you have other questions. The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Ethics Board on November 21, 2011 has approved this research project, on ethical grounds. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (306-966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

Follow-Up Debriefing: You will be offered an electronic copy of the final research project.

Consent to Participate:

I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____   _____

Name of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Signature of Researcher

APPENDIX D: TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in the study titled "The experiences of women who are principals of primary/secondary schools in Jamaica", and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Curline Lindo. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Curline Lindo to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

_____   _____

Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Signature of Researcher