Societal pressures and confidence dilemmas in women deputy headteachers' pursuit of headship in secondary schools

Submitted to the University of Hertfordshire in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctorate in Education

Jodie Ann Bolter

School of Education

University of Hertfordshire

January 2024

Abstract

The focus of this research is women in educational leadership roles. It explores the topic of women's career aspirations for headship in secondary schools in England. The study involves investigating the career aspirations of ten female deputy headteachers, and seeks input from five current headteachers, both male and female, to understand their perceptions of why women may or may not pursue headship.

The primary objective of this research is to unravel the intricacies surrounding women's aspirations for headship, the reasons influencing their decision-making processes, and any barriers hindering their progression from deputy headteacher to headteacher roles. The study explores the reasons the participating women give for choosing to aspire or not to aspire to headship.

The research uses semi-structured interviews and is influenced by narrative-informed approaches, providing a rich and in-depth exploration of participants' leadership journeys. Through participants' interviews, the study identifies individual experiences, revealing perceived barriers, constraints, motivations, and enablers shaping their career trajectories and ambitions. The research aims to understand how these experiences and perceptions influence participants' aspirations.

Examining three key groups within the study, those wanting to progress to headship, those who do not want to progress, and those who are undecided, the research analyses how these groups discuss key themes and how these impact their decision-making regarding headship. A key finding was that women in all three groups were influenced by the same factors including confidence in themselves, trust in educational systems including practices and policies, and pressures related to gender, particularly those connected to family life. All the participants called for more positive female role models and headteacher mentors to break down the current perceptions that headship is not seen as a compatible career for women. The group who wanted to progress to headship differed from the other groups as despite having the same perceptions of issues and identified barriers, their motivation to want to progress to headship was because they wanted the achievement of being able to reach the top of their career. They have often been supported in their decision-making to aim for this through a role model or someone who has encouraged them.

Exploring these key themes and concepts within this research sheds light on the intricate landscape of women's underrepresentation in secondary school headship. This thesis offers recommendations for future practices and policies based on these identified themes, aiming to address the persisting gender disparity in headship roles.

The findings presented in this research are crucial for stakeholders interested in reshaping future headteacher recruitment strategies and dismantling the barriers contributing to the unequal representation of women in secondary school headships in England. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender equity in educational leadership and calls for concerted efforts to create an inclusive and diverse leadership landscape within secondary schools.

Acknowledgments

My thesis would not have been possible without my participants who gave their free time to take part in my study; I would like to thank them for their patience and for giving their time so freely.

The completion of my doctorate would not have been possible without the support from my main supervisor Dr Joy Jarvis who supported and encouraged me throughout my studies. I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Dr Hilary Lee, for her helpful advice and guidance.

Finally, my thesis would not have been possible without the understanding and support of my family and friends whom I have neglected at times over the last few years to complete my research. I would especially like to thank my husband, David, for always believing that I could complete my research even when at times I did not.

Dedication

My research and work are dedicated in memory of my brother, Scott David Long, who passed away during my studies. I know that my completion of my doctorate will be something that he would be incredibly proud of and writing this in his memory has kept me motivated to complete it during difficult times. I would also like to dedicate my thesis to my loving mother, Marsha Ann Long who was a great believer in education and learning and always told me I could achieve anything.

Contents: **Page number:**

Figures:

173

Tables:

Chapter 1: Setting the scene: Why investigate women's aspirations for secondary school headship?

The first chapter of this doctoral submission begins with highlighting the recruitment issues for headteachers in England followed by an explanation of my interest in the focus of this study: women's aspirations for secondary school headship in England. The chapter then sets out the research questions that guide this study and concludes with an outline of the structure of this submission.

1.0 Introduction: Why are headteachers so difficult to recruit and where are the women?

There has been much discussion over the difficulties surrounding headteacher recruitment in the UK. Shaw (2006:6) states that *"one in three schools is failing to appoint a head teacher when they first advertise".* Alongside this pupil numbers are projected to rise by 5% between 2018 and 2024. This is driven by secondary school pupil numbers, which are expected to increase by 15% between 2018 and 2024 (Foster, 2019) which in turn will lead to more secondary school places needed and potentially more leaders within the system to run them. This situation is not unique to England as recruitment and retention of headteachers has become a concern in Australia (Cranston, 2007), the USA (Goldhaber et al, 2008), and Canada and New Zealand (MacBeath, 2006). Further research conducted through The School Leadership Challenge: 2022 suggested that by 2022 England could need up to 19,000 school leaders stating that there was underrepresentation in headship from women (2016:2). The report claims that unless addressed, England will face a school leadership shortage with 65% of school leaders being over 45, which will drive attrition over the next 10-15 years (ibid:7). Similarly, Rhodes and Brundett (2005,2006 and 2009:1) also comment about a '*looming recruitment and retention crisis in the United Kingdom*'. Research from the NAHT school recruitment survey and TES application data FY2015 illustrates that schools struggle to recruit headteachers in 72% of cases (The School Leadership Challenge 2022, 2016:18).

Alongside the recruitment crisis of headteachers, there has been an issue with diversity in headship positions in the UK education system. Historically, these positions have been disproportionately occupied by individuals from certain demographic groups, leading to concerns about representation and inclusivity. In the UK, minority ethnic groups and women have been, and still are, underrepresented in headship positions. For my research, I want to specifically look at women going into headship as this is something I can personally relate to

and can see the impact of this within my professional role. It is also an area that I believe needs to promote inclusivity for future generations to be able to achieve, *"(Gender imbalance) issues are a particular concern in education because it is an institution through which gendered divisions are reproduced" (Hutchings 2002: 125).* If students do not see women in place as headteachers, then they may assume it is not something to aspire to and thus the problem continues.

Research taken from the Department for Education Characteristics and Trends report (DfE, April 2022) looks at how women teachers are underrepresented in leadership roles compared to the wider teaching population. The Department for Education (DfE) in the United Kingdom plays a significant role in collecting, analysing, and utilising data related to education and children's services. However, this latest report shows an improved picture with 46% of headteachers new to post being female compared to 39% of existing headteachers. The same research also illustrated significant disparities between female and male teachers for promotion to senior and headship levels. In 2019/2020, female teachers were 14% less likely to be promoted to senior leadership – implying that around 17 female middle leaders would be promoted for every 20 male middle leaders. Female teachers were 20% less likely to be promoted to headship, implying that around 16 female senior leaders would be promoted for every 20 male senior leaders (ibid:59). The report also illustrated that retention rates of heads in secondary schools have declined from 2011 to 2016 but 1-year retention rates have since increased in 2018 and 2019 (ibid:59). Data released by the Department for Education in April 2022 tracks schools' leadership characteristics and trends from 2010 to 2020 stating that *"Women make up a high proportion of the teaching workforce but are under-represented at leadership positions - although this is improving, especially in secondary schools"* (Dfe, April 2022:72).

In their 2018 report (Dfe, 2018), it illustrated that in 2010, half of the headteachers were 51 or less, compared with half aged 48 or less in 2016. (DfE, 2018:23). The data shows that virtually all promotions into headteacher roles were after the age of 31. A comparison of the headteacher population from 2010 to 2016 illustrates a higher number of younger headteachers in 2016 than in 2010. There is a particular shift in the age, from a bulge of those aged 52 to 59 in 2010, to a longer bulge of those aged 41 to 52 in 2015. (Dfe, 2018:25). However, despite this age shift research from The School Leadership Challenge 2022 (2016:3)

would suggest that the supply of leaders is expected to fall by 8,000 due to retirement and leaders leaving the profession early. This research suggests that half of the existing leadership pool is expected to leave education in the next six years (ibid).

In trying to address this recruitment gap and the lack of future teachers coming into the profession, several agencies are working hard to recruit and retain teachers. In addition to this, government initiatives are working to try to solve the headteacher recruitment crisis.

Some of these agencies have undertaken educational research to try to solve the recruitment issues. One of these is Teach First which aims to transform education by providing schools with great teachers and ultimately future leaders and headteachers. Their work is focused on getting more teachers into schools where it is needed, supporting school leadership, and supporting schools with strong networks.

An additional agency working jointly with Teach First on research is Teaching Leaders and the Future Leaders Trust who work to raise the achievement of children served by schools in challenging circumstances. They provide expert leadership development for middle and senior leaders, aspiring headteachers, executive heads, and chief executive officers (CEOs).

More specifically aimed at women and women wanting to progress to leadership, the government has set up the DfE's Women Leading in Education (WLE) website and social media platforms. This is a woman-only network for education where women can access coaching support, be part of regional networking groups or women can pledge to support other women to coach them into leadership roles. Women Leading in Education is aimed at supporting women into leadership roles, through leadership development opportunities, sharing of good practice, and access to a range of resources. There is now a range of conferences aimed at women only to encourage them into leadership roles and a dedicated Twitter feed promoting their work. There has been a real shift in terms of trying to promote more women in education and I am interested in whether some of these initiatives have had an impact on women as deputy headteachers and whether they are encouraged by these to take on the route to headship.

A study undertaken by Nottingham University and Dr Kay Fuller (Fuller, April 2017) has claimed that female head teachers in England's secondary schools will remain an under-

represented group for a quarter of a century. Whilst the research acknowledges that the overall proportion of female head teachers is increasing, with an increase between 2001 and 2015, from 25% to 38% there is still an underrepresentation in the proportion of women headteachers to that of women classroom teachers. This is unlikely to change based on the current trajectory. The research assessed the number of female headteachers in posts in state secondary schools in England, during the academic year 2015-16. The study found that only seven local authorities had a proportion of female secondary headteachers that matched that of women secondary teachers nationally. (There are 317 Local Authorities within England). Women currently account for 64% of teachers in England's secondary schools (Fuller, April 2017). The study also found that in academies run by large chains, the majority of chief executive officers were men. (Academies are state-funded schools but they are independent from local authorities meaning they are not run by councils). Fuller in her report explains:

> *"In the 21st Century, women's under-representation in headship is a matter of social injustice, with women's lack of parity of participation resulting in lack of recognition for their capacity for leadership and from lack of resources with which to achieve it. Women are not a minority. A social justice argument suggests women should be represented in headship in the same proportion as their representation in society and/or in the same secondary school teaching force"* (Fuller, April 2017:57).

Fuller argues that schools have a responsibility to set a good example and to see women as key decision-makers and in positions of leadership and authority. Fuller also comments on the need for more flexible work regimes suggesting that women should be able to negotiate complex and interacting factors that create barriers to their career advancement and that women's careers are interrupted and disrupted disproportionately to men's (ibid). Fuller's report concludes that if we do not address the underrepresentation then we will not match women's representation in headship before 2040. Within my research, I would like to explore the perceptions of a group of women deputy headteachers to understand their experiences and to explore whether as Fuller suggests, women feel that their careers are affected by career breaks such as maternity leave and caring for children.

1.1 Aims and Research Questions

Having spent some time examining my interest in the research area and considering some of the areas that have been highlighted from this, I explore some of the reasons why there is a gender imbalance in leadership positions and whether more can be done to encourage women deputy headteachers to progress onto headships. Specifically, the study sets out to explore the following:

- To gain in-depth information about the leadership journey (start of career to current position) that women have been on and to start to gain an insight into what hurdles there are that women face in leadership positions in secondary schools in England
- Contribute to the development of theoretical understandings of the women deputy headteachers' experiences and perceptions in relation to leadership roles in secondary schools in England
- Identify implications for policy and practice that would directly address some of the issues in relation to women deputy headteachers progressing to headship in English secondary schools

Based on this, the questions which the study aims to address are:

RQ1: What are women deputy headteachers school and leadership perceptions and experiences?

RQ2: How do these experiences and perceptions relate to their ambitions in wanting to become headteachers?

RQ3: What barriers/hurdles to promotion can be identified?

RQ4: What enablers to promotion to headship can be identified?

1.2 Influenced by narrative

Having used my own reflective diaries to highlight my own journey (see 3.4.1), I feel that the most appropriate research method for my doctoral study is to use an approach that is influenced by a narrative inquiry approach. Narrative inquiry, or narrative research, is a qualitative research approach that focuses on the study and analysis of stories or narratives

as a means of understanding human experiences. In narrative inquiry, researchers seek to explore and make sense of the stories people tell about their lives, experiences, and events.

This research aims to explore the career aspirations of women who are deputy headteachers. Additionally, it looks to identify the reasons why women who are deputy headteachers choose not to go onto headship and to explore whether this is due to the demands of the job or stereotypes of what is expected from women in the job. The influence of a narrative approach will allow me to explore my participants' lives in the same way that I have explored my own. Using this approach will help to truly understand the individual experiences of each of my participants if we are to understand the issues contained within my research questions. MacIntyre (2007) believes that human actions are enacted in narratives as we all live out narratives in our lives. Therefore, we all understand and interpret our lives in terms of the narratives that we live and share therefore narrative is appropriate in trying to understand their own experiences much like it helped me to understand my own experiences in my reflection.

The subject of women in leadership and not progressing to headship is complex and a narrative approach offers a way that delves beneath the outward show of behaviour to explore thoughts, feelings, and intentions (Webster & Mertova, 2007:14). This helped me understand my thoughts and feelings when I reflected on my diaries and experiences. I want to replicate this with my participants' and know what the women deputy headteachers' experiences have been and how they reflect on these experiences both in terms of their thoughts and feelings.

Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that whilst other qualitative methods can be used for research, many of these neglect the complex areas of the phenomena under the study because they do not have the scope to deal with complex human-centered issues. I want to examine these complex issues such as the challenges, problems, or situations that are intricate, multifaceted, and closely tied to human experiences, perspectives, and interactions. I have already illustrated through analysing my narrative that it offers valuable insight into some of the complexities surrounding the subject of women in leadership.

1.3 Significance of the study

The findings of my study and research will be of value to the education sector in terms of equality and recruitment issues. There is a widespread concern over teacher recruitment at the moment in particular recruitment of headteachers and the imbalance of women as headteachers. Research points to the lack of women in senior positions and there needs to be an understanding as to why talented women are choosing not to pursue headship positions. Work has begun on this with the launch of women's networks and coaching but the first-hand experience of women within the education sector will allow me to unravel the reasons why some women are choosing not to take their careers further.

Therefore, my thesis will:

- Add to the existing knowledge and understanding of women in educational leadership and the patterns and trends
- Add to the knowledge of why women are choosing not to progress their careers and look at the barriers that women perceive they are facing
- Offer and inform suggestions to take forward for policy and change within education
- Offer guidance for the Department for Education (DfE) on how issues can be tackled within the secondary school phase and teacher recruitment campaign for encouraging women into senior positions

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into eleven sections. Chapter 1 forms the basis for the study, my interest, and the context of the research area, setting out the key research questions. Chapter two will discuss the existing literature on women and leadership in education. The third Chapter explains my methodology and Chapter four presents the findings from my pilot study. Chapter 5 looks at the main study. Chapters 6-9 examine the main themes that have emerged from the main study. Chapter 10 discusses the main findings from the study. The final chapter (11) discusses the research's findings and concludes how this study can be used to drive forward change, shape future policies and strategies to encourage women into leadership, and improve women's representation in the role of headteacher.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In the last chapter, Chapter 1, I reflected on some of the findings and context surrounding my research area. My literature chapter seeks to expand upon these reflections by exploring literature related to my research questions and aims. Additionally, within this Chapter, I explore some broader themes concerning leadership in the educational sector, encompassing aspects such as recruitment and the role of a deputy headteacher.

Leadership in schools remains a highly debated topic with the Government's drive to continually drive-up educational standards within UK Schools. One of the debates lies around the successful recruitment of headteachers to lead schools and the recruitment crisis surrounding this. Since 2005, there has been a constant struggle to fill headteacher posts and a decrease in the number of deputy headteachers applying for promotion (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006, Rhodes et al, 2009, Howson, 2011). Howson (2011) reported a national shortage of headteachers and a rise of 28% in headteacher posts being re-advertised nationally.

I analyse the role of the deputy as deputies play an important leadership role and are possible candidates for head teacher recruitment (Kwan, 2011; Sharp & Walter, 2012). Deputy headteachers traditionally go onto progress to headship and deputy headship is commonly perceived as an important rung on the ladder towards achieving headteacher status (Harris et al, 2003). Whilst there is a range of literature based on education and leadership there is not a wide-ranging amount of research on deputy headship and in particular a lack of research on women in deputy headships.

Southworth (1998:89) states "*Remarkably little is known about deputy heads*". Ribbins (1997:295) also comments "*headteachers are interesting: deputy headteachers, it seems are not. The former have routinely over the years, attracted the attention of biographers, dramatists, and novelists; the latter have virtually been ignored."* This is an issue that has been identified over time and whilst this literature is quite dated there is still a lack of literature directly relating to deputy headteachers.

Further researchers, Jansen & du Pleiss (2020) also noted that deputy headteachers is the least studied and underrepresented and that there is a need to fully explore their leadership journeys.

However, many deputy headteachers do not take up the post of head, hence the need to examine the reasons behind this. In particular, women in deputy head positions do not progress onto headship despite women dominating the teaching profession. Fuller argues that "*women's representation in headship will not match their representation in the teaching workforce before 2040"* (Fuller, 2017: 58). This has led to several initiatives that have been put in place to try to address this, which are discussed later.

Thus, whilst there is a host of literature on education and the leadership crisis there is limited material based on the role of the deputy headteacher and their career aspirations to headship and in particular a lack of literature on why women deputy headteachers decide whether or not to progress onto headship.

2.1 Literature search terms

For my initial research, I started to examine the literature based on 'school leadership' using these words as my key search criteria. Additional 'key words' used in the search were female deputy headteachers, women in educational leadership, barriers for women in educational leadership, perceptions of leadership, succession planning, and barriers to progression in leadership.

The findings varied within the literature with some articles examining the key concepts of what leadership is, to those looking critically at different styles and methodologies of the effectiveness of the leadership styles and in particular differences between masculine and feminine leadership styles. Previous studies on women within headships and some studies on women as deputy headteachers allowed me to start to look at some key themes that I could explore within my research. A number of categories or topics started to evolve from my literature search, and I chose to narrow these topics down to areas that would have a direct impact on my chosen area of interest and research questions – women as deputy headteachers and their career aspirations and reasons why or why they do not progress to headship. The areas within this search then left me with several areas to further explore.

Firstly, understanding the role of a deputy headteacher and literature around understanding their career aspirations. Secondly, understanding what women deputy headteachers' perceptions and experiences are including, gender stereotypes and leadership styles. The next section considers the barriers that women face and the challenges around this exploring the idea of family commitments, the glass ceiling, the imposter syndrome, and issues around identity and gender stereotypes. Finally, I examined the enablers to headship and the transition from deputy headteacher to head and the programmes and support in place to make this transition.

2.2 What is a deputy head role?

A 'deputy headteacher' (often referred to as a deputy principal or vice principal in some schools) is a significant leadership position within a school's administrative hierarchy. The role of a deputy headteacher is to assist and support the headteacher (principal) in the overall management and operation of the school. The deputy headteacher typically holds a leadership role that involves both administrative and instructional responsibilities. These responsibilities can vary depending on the school, context, and person in post.

Deputy headteachers have been cited as one of the most significant school factors affecting student achievement (Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis, and Ecob, 1988) and essential to ensure that schools are achieving their objectives (Kwan, 2011; Sharp & Walter 2012). Mortimore et al (1998) highlighted that deputy headteachers play a central role in shaping the quality of education within a school and, consequently, student achievement outcomes; yet research around this area is far from extensive. Jansen & du Plessis (2020) and Khumalo et al (2018) noted the need to fully explore the leadership journeys of deputy headteachers.

Much of the research around deputy headteachers is outdated and Kwan and Walker 2010 state that *"without exception, these studies called for more and better research"*. Guihen (2017, 2020) has explored the underrepresentation of women in secondary headship and within her research and calls for more studies that focus on the heterogeneous career experiences of this group.

Research by Tahir et al (2023) undertook a systematic literature review titled "*Published articles on Deputy Principals from 1980 to 2020"* offering a comprehensive analysis of

research trends and methodologies concerning deputy principals in educational leadership and management (EDLM). The study evaluated 61 articles published in 24 international EDLM and educational journals, employing quantitative and bibliometric content analysis methods. The key findings summarised that:

1. **Geographic Distribution**: Researchers from the United States, United Kingdom, and Hong Kong produced the highest number of publications on deputy principals.
2. **Research Focus**: Nearly half of the articles focused on the roles and responsibilities of deputy principals, their leadership, and their professional development programs.
3. **Methodologies Used**: Qualitative case studies, often involving interviews, document analysis, and observations, were the most common research methods. These were used to explore deputy principals' leadership roles, responsibilities, and career aspirations.
4. **Knowledge Production**: The review highlighted the need for further research to enhance the understanding and development of knowledge related to deputy principals.

The authors recommend continued efforts to expand research in this field to better support the professional and leadership development of deputy principals and to address gaps in current knowledge production.

The role of the deputy headteacher within schools is the natural point to look at in terms of there being a shortage of headteachers in the UK and an important rung on the ladder towards achieving headteacher status (Harris et al., 2003).

To understand the role and place of the deputy head in a school and the transition they would need to make to become a headteacher, it is important to understand their role fully and to understand any areas that they would cross over in terms of skills for future headship. In understanding the role, it may also help us to understand why some women as deputy headteachers do not want to progress onto headship either because the roles differ greatly or because they are happy and fulfilled within their current role. The role of a deputy headteacher in schools is to be one of the leading professionals in the school, working closely with the headteacher to drive the vision and ethos of the school forward. Their role will vary in terms of responsibilities depending on the school's need.

The National School and College for Leadership (NSCL) Report 2003, specifically looked at the duties and responsibilities of assistant headteachers and deputy headteachers and raised the

issue of role demarcation and by association the relationship with the headteacher. Whilst this research is twenty years old, it does look at how in particular in secondary schools the role of the deputy headteacher focused on pastoral or academic responsibilities whereas primary counterparts often covered both areas. There was disparity within roles and schools and some deputy headteachers were taking on the day-to-day running of the school in the headteacher's absence whereas others served a more subservient role whereby the headteacher delegated tasks to them without negotiation (ibid). These different experiences faced by deputy headteachers could lead to different views and perceptions on what it would mean to take on headship and to be a headteacher. This poses the question as to whether it depends on the experience the deputy headteacher has had within their school context and setting as to whether they aspire to become a headteacher in the future?

2.3 What are women deputy headteachers school and leadership perceptions and how do these relate to their ambitions in wanting to become headteachers?

Understanding women's perceptions and experiences of education leadership is a multifaceted and crucial area of study. Research has delved into this subject, highlighting the challenges, nuances, and opportunities inherent in women's leadership roles within educational contexts. Research by Eagly and Carli (2007) emphasises the significance of considering the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as race and ethnicity in comprehending women's experiences in leadership positions. Similarly, the work of Gunter and Fitzgerald (2018) explores the complex dynamics that shape women's perceptions of leadership in educational settings, shedding light on the impact of organisational cultures and societal expectations. Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory, for instance, posits that societal norms influence individuals' perceptions of leadership, potentially impacting women's confidence and ambition for roles traditionally associated with men, such as headship. Additionally, research by Gardiner and Enomoto (2018) highlights the significance of organisational climates and culture in influencing women's perceptions of their leadership efficacy and the feasibility of ascending to headship positions. The socio-cultural context and gendered expectations within the education sector may contribute to or inhibit women's confidence in pursuing headship roles.

Additionally, the research by Hewlett and Luce (2005) addresses the specific challenges women face in achieving leadership roles and provides insights into strategies for overcoming systemic barriers. Therefore, the relationship between women's perceptions and their ambitions for headship in education is a complex and nuanced area that warrants careful examination within my research.

Therefore, examining women's experiences in leadership positions provides valuable insights into how their perceptions and ambitions evolve. Smith and Smith (2010) argue that the lived experiences of women in leadership roles significantly shape their perceptions, impacting their confidence, leadership style, and willingness to pursue headship. Personal and professional experiences, mentorship, and exposure to diverse leadership models can also influence women's perceptions of their capabilities and aspirations for headship (Wolcott, 2017). It is the lived experiences of leadership that I want to explore within my interviews so that I can explore the impact of the above areas on my participants and how these shape their perceptions.

2.3.1 Deputies and ambitions for headship

Existing research around deputy headteachers has used various terms to describe the varying reasons for deputies to stay within their post or to seek career progression. Hayes (2005) uses the terms '*sitting tenants'*, '*rising stars'*, '*ambitious deputy',* and '*career deputy'*. Similarly, researchers James and Whiting (1998) use a set of terms referring to '*career anchorage*' regarding deputy headteacher and headship. Their terms are referred to as *'active aspirant'*, '*potential aspirants',* '*unpredictable'*, '*unveiled aspirants',* and '*settlers'*. (ibid). Whilst these terms are not gender specific, they are useful for my research to refer to when examining why women do or do not want to progress to headship and whether they too would fall within some of these terms used by Hayes, James, and Whiting.

'*Career deputies'* (Hayes, 2005; MacBeath, 2011) or '*settlers*' (James and Whitling, 1998) are those who remain in their positions until retirement. Goldhaber et al (2008) described 'career deputies' as those who do not want the responsibility of being a headteacher and leading a school. Those who do not want the added pressure and a change in workload are referred to as '*sitting tenants'* (Hayes, 2005) or '*settlers'* (James and Whiting, 1998). Those with a definitive career plan are 'rising stars' and '*ambitious deputies'* (Hayes 2005).

However, the role of the deputy headteacher has been identified as an important role and therefore a role that deputy headteachers may want to stay in. Research has shown that the satisfaction derived from deputy headship can prompt deputies to make the active decision not to pursue promotion (Cranston, 2007; MacBeath et al, 2009; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009). In Oplatka and Tamir's (2009) Israeli study, they focused specifically on the perspectives of women deputy headteachers regarding their current roles and the role of the headteacher. By interviewing women deputies who do not aspire to become headteachers, the researchers found that these participants held the view that the roles of the deputy headteacher and headteacher are distinct and separate. They perceived the headteacher's role as being centered around accountability, administrative procedures, and a 'masculine' form of managerialism. In contrast, they regarded the role of the deputy headteacher as engaging, challenging, and personally fulfilling (ibid:232). This research showed that deputy headteachers were quite happy with their job satisfaction within their role and therefore do not feel the need to progress further. This view is supported by Macbeath et al 2009 and Cranston, 2007.

Adding to this, studies have shown that for some deputy headteachers aspiring to headship is something they have rejected (National Association of Head Teachers, 2016). Draper and McMichael (2003:194) observe that a proportion of teachers of both sexes have '*always rejected headship as a career goal*'.

Taking this all into account, it will be important to look at the reasons why women deputy headteachers may or may not aspire to Headship. It may be that they feel fulfilled within their current role and feel that they play a significant role in the school's day-to-day management and operation of the school without progressing to headship.

At this point, it is also important to acknowledge the literature that surrounds some of these terms used to categorise deputy headteachers and to accept that some deputy headteachers are happy to stay in their positions and there is nothing wrong with that. As a researcher, I need to ensure that this view is clear within my interviews and not force any ideologies of what a deputy headteacher should do in terms of their position and promotion opportunities. These are both points that need to be explored with the women deputy headteachers during their interviews as it may be that they are actively choosing to remain in their roles. This links

back to Chapter 1 when I reflect on the motivations of my participants, and this is an important factor to consider within my research.

2.4 What barriers and hurdles to promotion are there?

Men continue to outnumber women at the secondary headteacher level (Guihen, 2017). The national school workforce statistics in England show that only 38% of headteachers at state secondary schools in England are women (Dfe, 2017). This statistic was taken from the time I conducted my research. Therefore, it is important within my research to establish how women deputy headteachers perceive the role of headteacher and to explore their aspirations around this, just as I did in my reflections.

Existing research has tried to examine some of the internal and external barriers that women face in educational careers and more so leadership (Brown and Ralph, 1996, Coleman 1996; 2001; Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Hall, 1996; Kruger, 1996, Young and McLeod, 2001).

Literature highlights that several external factors prevent women from applying for headships. There is a constantly changing picture within the education environment and external pressures are forever changing creating substantial challenges for school leadership (Ouston, et al, 1998; Glatter, 2012; Greany, 2016). These challenging Government expectations have been an ongoing concern over time (Gillborn, 1989; Cooley and Shen, 2003; Glatter, 2012). Alongside, the changing government agenda there may be other factors to consider when looking at why some women deputy headteachers do not aspire to headship, and one of these could be the role that women play within the family unit.

2.4.1 Women and Family Responsibilities

Cultural and social attitudes towards women are complex and are likely to influence women's perceptions of themselves therefore reinforcing and perpetuating their disadvantaged position (McGivney, 1993:28). McGivney further explores the idea that women daily experience the paradox of living in a society in which promotes and extols the primacy of their family role (ibid). There is a pressure to undertake the family role and to see this as their '*social identity*' (Bem, 1993; Haar and O'Driscoll, 2005). Shakeshaft (1985) explains that a direct impediment for females in attaining administrative positions is the reality-based factor of family responsibility (Kamler and Shakeshaft, 1999). This particular study highlighted how

family responsibilities were one of the key reasons why women teachers did not progress to leadership positions (administration). Long and unsocial hours have been attributed to this argument. Hewitt (1989) explained that personal and family impact added to the complexities and tensions of the role. Despite this literature being dated, have things changed and is this still the view that family responsibilities prevent some women from progressing and aspiring to headship? The sizeable workload and a large number of meetings outside of school hours are also all factors that could reduce valuable time with families.

2.4.2 Female leadership and identity: Glass Ceiling and the leadership labyrinth

'Glass ceiling' was a metaphor used and introduced in 1986 by journalists of the Wall Street Journal to explain the number of women entering the workplace and their limited access to leadership positions (Oakley, 2000; Weyer, 2007). The term '*glass ceiling'* is a metaphor that is referred to frequently when examining women within the workplace and in particular in leadership positions and to highlight the struggle that women face. It refers to an invisible, unspoken barrier that prevents certain individuals, from underrepresented or marginalised groups (in this case women), from advancing to higher levels of leadership or career advancement within an organisation, despite their qualifications, skills, and abilities. This barrier is typically rooted in societal, cultural, or organisational biases and norms. The concept of the glass ceiling highlights the idea that while there may be formal opportunities and policies in place that suggest equal access to leadership roles, there are subtle or systematic barriers that hinder the progress of certain groups. The term 'glass' implies that this barrier is transparent, making it difficult to identify and address, yet it remains a significant obstacle to upward mobility. Individuals who encounter the glass ceiling may find themselves experiencing limitations in career growth, salary progression, and access to decision-making roles, despite their qualifications and achievements. Weyer 2007 suggests the glass ceiling prevents women from moving up the corporate ladder.

Within educational literature and research, Haslam and Ryan (2008: 530) explain that while historically research into gender and leadership has focused on the under-representation of women, they too believe that women traditionally encounter a '*glass ceiling'* preventing their rise into leadership.

Moreau et al (2007) also examine the idea of the glass ceiling and their research highlights that whilst *'feminization'* occurs in teaching (2007:237) this does not necessarily equate to more career opportunities for women. The study highlights that a low proportion of women appointed in management positions has also been identified in the annual survey of newly appointed senior staff (Howson, 2005 cited in Moreau et al 2007). The study uses a survey by Coleman (2005) who found that about half of the women secondary headteachers reported experiencing gender discrimination. It will be interesting to see if this comes up as an issue within my study. The feminist theory would suggest structural and cultural factors and behavioural causes, such as stereotyping and preferred leadership attributes to the glass ceiling (Noble and Moore, 2006).

A new term has been used to describe these barriers, *"the leadership labyrinth*" is used to illuminate the numerous barriers through which women must pass (Eagly, 2007; Eagly &Carli, 2007; Hoyt, 2010; Hoyt & Chemers, 2008). The leadership labyrinth refers to the unsanctioned barriers preventing women from securing top leadership roles such as headship. The labyrinth metaphor conveys the idea that unlike the 'glass ceiling' there is not just one invisible barrier but that the leadership journey is riddled with challenges throughout and that it ultimately has the potential to be navigated. I believe this term reflects the complexities that women face in their leadership experiences. What these challenges are within the labyrinth will be explored in my interviews.

Shakeshaft (1998:82) refers to internal or psychological barriers as "*those that can be overcome by individual change whereas external barriers require social and institutional change"*. There is also a body of literature that explores the constraints women face on the road to headship (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011). Not surprisingly, some of the factors include family and caring responsibilities, stereotyping and gender bias, as well as a negative view of the headteacher role. Research from Guihen (2017) explored the views of 12 women deputy headteachers and their views on headship. Among these views, her participants reflected on the disincentives and apprehensions of talking about the riskier reality of being a headteacher compared to the relative stability of deputy headship (Guihen, 2017). Personal and financial well-being, increased pressure, and the threat of Ofsted were all reasons given as disincentives within this study.

Draper and McMichael (1998:165) comment on the daunting elements of headship which may in themselves prevent even the well-prepared and widely experienced deputy from applying for promotion.

In Guihen's (2017) study, the fear of failure was a theme within her interviews with women deputy headteachers, with participants putting themselves down and perceiving their lack of skills as a concern.

For some women, a lack of confidence and self-belief is something that has prevented them from taking on a leadership role and in particular the jump from deputy to headship. This self-belief or self-efficacy is something that Bandura (1986,1997) has linked to how individuals have their ability to succeed and take on new challenges. Therefore, if someone has a high self-efficacy then they are likely to believe they can do something and take on new challenges. They see difficult tasks as challenges not impossible hurdles and recover quickly when faced with failure or setbacks. Failure is not seen in a negative frame but something that needs further work, skills, and knowledge all of which the individual can obtain. Those with low self-efficacy will doubt their capabilities and skills and will avoid difficult tasks for fear of failure. They may dwell on their deficiencies and not be able to address areas to help them upskill or perform successfully. Bandura (1994) suggests they will be slower to recover their sense of efficacy following setbacks or failure. In considering this, I would like to explore this further within my interviews with women who are deputy headteachers to see whether women who have high self-efficacy are those who strive to become headteachers and those with low are those who are shying away from the transition.

2.4.3 The imposter syndrome

Linked to this, my reading also pointed me towards Clance and Imes's (1978) imposter syndrome whereby they describe several characteristics that women display that fit in with the lack of confidence and belief in themselves.

This research originally came from Clance and Imes's work (1978) where they undertook research over 5 years with 150 highly successful women ranging from those with PhDs, respected professionals, and those recognised for academic excellence. Despite this array of both intellectual abilities and skills within their professional field, their research pointed to

the fact that these women did not experience an internal sense of success and that they considered themselves to be '*imposters*' (ibid).

Clance and Imes (1978) within their research pose the question of why so many bright women, despite consistent and impressive evidence to the contrary, continue to see themselves as imposters who pretend to be bright but who are not? Their research points to two main areas that the *'imposters'* fall into. The first group is those who have a sibling or close relative who it deemed the 'intelligent 'one of the family. Thus, therefore the women feel they cannot live up to their intelligent relatives and will never be good enough despite their achievements and accomplishments. In contrast to this, the second group is the women who have faced the opposite family dynamic whereby they have been told that they are superior in every way – intellect, personality, appearance, and talents (ibid), This then causes issues when the women or child at the time, has experiences whereby they cannot do everything they want to and do have difficulties. She then distrusts her parents' perceptions of her, and this leads to self-doubt. This self-doubt is then intensified as the child progresses through school. The study gives many examples of their participants and early lives and stories based on the family dynamic. This is not an area that I am going to explore within my research, but it is perhaps an area of research that future studies could be looked at in terms of the family dynamic and the way that the female child has grown to perceive their abilities whether that is that they are not as good as a sibling or feel an imposter as someone who has been told they are perfect and can achieve everything.

A study by Nicholls (1975) indicates that differential attribution of success and failure by girls and boys is already operative by the age of ten. This study is very dated but is this something still happening? Has anything changed?

Some of the behaviours associated with imposter syndrome revolve around diligence and hard work. One of the main behaviours is the fear that '*my stupidity will be discovered'* (ibid). A second behaviour identified centres on the '*phoniness*'. Clance and Imes (1978) discuss in their study how this involves women taking part in '*intellectual flattery*' or not giving their true viewpoint in a discussion for fear of being seen as unintelligent. The next behaviour discussed was to do with using charm and perceptiveness to win the approval of superiors (ibid). In this situation, the women seek out approval from someone she looks up to or

admires. The constant seeking of approval therefore leads to feelings of intellectually being a phony (ibid).

Deaux (1976) points to considerable evidence that women consistently have lower expectancies than men of their ability to perform successfully on a wide variety of tasks. Clance and Imes's (1976:2) original research report looks at how:

> *"The findings of the research cited by Deaux are consistent with the following principles: 1) An unexpected performance outcome will be attributed to a temporary cause. 2) An expected performance outcome will be attributed to a stable cause. In line with their lower expectancies, women tend to attribute their successes to temporary causes, such as luck or effort, in contrast to men who are much more likely to attribute their successes to the internal, stable factor of ability."*

The report goes on to explain how when women fail, they put this down to a lack of ability whereas men on the other hand explain the failure as bad luck or the difficulty of the task at hand. Clance and Imes (ibid) explain that *"given the lower expectancies women have for their own (and other women's) performances, they have internalized into a self-stereotype the societal sex-role stereotype that they are not considered competent* "(ibid).

Clance and Imes explain that self-declared imposters fear that eventually, some significant person will discover that they are indeed intellectual imposters (ibid).

Symptoms of the imposter phenomenon do not fall into a one-size-fits-all category but some of the clinical symptoms that Clance and Imes found within their research were reported as generalised anxiety, lack of self-confidence, depression, and frustration related to the inability to meet self-imposed standards of achievement (ibid).

Clance and Imes (1978) in their research discuss therapy as a way to try to overcome this syndrome explaining that a group therapy setting or an inter-actional group where there are some other high-achieving women experiencing the imposter phenomenon is highly recommended. They discuss how if one woman is willing to share her secret others can share theirs (ibid). Other tools are given such as how to prepare for exams or tests by changing the mind frame to *'I will do well in this exam'* rather than *'I will fail'*. Other techniques involve role play and stating to *themselves 'I am intelligent. I have learned and achieved a tremendous amount"*. (ibid).

In Huecker et al (2023), their research examines how imposter syndrome is a behavioural health phenomenon described as self-doubt of intellect, skills or accomplishments among high-achieving individuals. These individuals cannot internalise their success and subsequently experience pervasive feelings of self-doubt, anxiety, depression, and/or apprehension of being exposed as a fraud in their work, despite verifiable and objective evidence of their successfulness.

According to some researchers, 70 percent of high achievers (both men and women) have experienced it at some point during their life (Buckland, 2017; Goodhill,2016; Sakulku & Alexander, 2011). It is Sakulku and Alexander (2011) who have summarised six characteristics that Clance and Imes (1978) first identified that people suffering from Imposter Syndrome possessed.

The six characteristics are: (Sakulku & Alexander, 2011:73-92)

1. The Imposter Cycle – confronting an achievement-related task leads to anxiety, self-doubt, and worry, which leads to over-preparation and/or procrastination, followed by accomplishment, a feeling of relief, the discounting of positive feedback, followed by perceived fraudulence, increased self-doubt, depression and anxiety
2. The need to be special, to be the very best
3. Superwoman/Superman aspects – the urge to be perfect
4. Fear of failure
5. Denial of competence and discounting praise
6. Fear and guilt about success

It is important to point out that some of my participants were not born when this research was conducted but to also highlight that perhaps not much has changed as Huecker et al (2023:3) believe that: "*While imposter syndrome is a commonly researched, experienced, and pervasive phenomenon, there is an unknown true prevalence" (ibid).* They believe that although imposter syndrome is widely studied and many people report experiencing it, the exact number of individuals affected by it is not known. Researchers and psychologists frequently explore this condition, and many individuals identify with its symptoms, such as feeling like a fraud despite evidence of their success. However, due to variations in how imposter syndrome is defined and measured, as well as potential underreporting by those

who experience it, the precise rate at which it occurs in the general population remains unclear.

Imposter syndrome is also widely recognised in higher education and has been observed among various student groups, including non-traditional, ethnic minority, and first-generation students (Harvey & Katz, 1985; Parkman, 2016; Ramsey & Brown, 2018). Additionally, research indicates that imposter syndrome among college students is a predictor of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, psychological distress, and diminished confidence in their intellectual abilities (Parkman, 2016; Peteet et al., 2015). Linked to this, research on imposter syndrome among first- and continuing-generation college students highlights the roles of perfectionism and stress. The study, conducted by Holden et al. (2021), involved 388 students, with nearly half being first-generation students. It found that both first- and continuing-generation students experience similar levels of imposter syndrome and stress. However, the relationship between imposter syndrome and stress is stronger for first-generation students. Perfectionism, particularly socially prescribed perfectionism, significantly correlates with both imposter syndrome and stress across both student groups. This type of perfectionism involves the perception that others have high expectations of oneself, which can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and stress. The implications of these findings are critical for student mental health and retention strategies and could also apply to the women deputy headteachers within this study.

To summarise, the Imposter Syndrome is really in a simplistic form about self-doubt. Imposter Syndrome refers to the condition where a high-achieving individual does not recognise their accomplishments as earned, instead attributing their success to external factors like networking, luck, timing, lowered standards, and personal charm (Bravata et al., 2020; Parkman, 2016).

I could certainly relate to this within my professional work and my reflect on this in my diaries in Chapter 3. The views of the women deputy headteachers will be interesting to see whether we can apply this theory to their situations.

2.4.4 Current School Leadership Agenda

For the past ten years, concerns have been raised about the school workforce and the difficulty in recruiting staff and teachers and more importantly securing a strong leader to

ensure school standards are raised. Much literature debates what makes a good leader and how the structure can improve schools and the debate lies around whether there is a successful model of leadership that can transform underperforming schools and if this can be replicated. Over the years, the educational landscape has changed with the introduction of the government's white paper and the plan to move to more Multi Academy Trust (MATS). This structure is something that needs to be considered when looking at the educational landscape. In the Department for Education's white paper 2022: where are we now?, schools with two consecutive Ofsted ratings below 'good' are included in the expanded intervention powers under the statutory schools causing concern guidance. This means that if a school meets this criteria, it can be moved into an academy trust (or to a different trust if you are an academy). This could have implications for women deputy headteachers aspiring to headship as they may or may not want to work as part of a MAT. Another feature within the white paper is the commitment that all schools will be inspected by 2025 under the Ofsted inspection framework 2019 by the end of the summer term 2025. This includes outstanding schools. If you are a school expecting an Ofsted inspection, this potentially could be an area that prevents deputy headteachers from progressing to headship. Taking on a new role and school would be demanding, and they may feel that the pressure of an Ofsted inspection is too much in the infancy of their new role. Other areas within the white paper include a focus on improving attendance and the responsibilities of schools to improve this and a focus on improving academic standards in literacy and numeracy. For those that work within academy trusts, the Department for Education has published information about five 'trust quality descriptors' which will be used to define 'strong' academy trusts. The quality descriptors are:

- **High-quality and inclusive education**: deliver high-quality education across your academies, including for disadvantaged children and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- **School improvement**: particularly in transforming previously underperforming schools
- **Strategic governance**: operate effective and robust governance, and effectively hold school leaders to account
- **Financial management**: strong resource prioritisation to deliver the best educational experience
- **Workforce**: training, recruitment, and retention of leaders and teachers throughout their careers

Whilst these measures may not directly influence whether a woman deputy head decides to take on headship, we must consider whether the accountability and changing government agendas add additional pressures to leaders and heads and whether this is something that aspirant deputy headteachers would be concerned by.

2.4.5 Leadership and gender stereotypes

Elliott and Stead (2009:10) refer to Olsson (2002) and Wilson (1995) stating that there is a lack of empirical evidence detailing women's experiences and practice of leadership, particularly outside business and commercial environments (Elliott and Stead 2009: 160). This gives a biased view as to what women in leadership experience. They suggest several reasons for this and cite Calas and Smircich (1996) who claim that predominantly American and UK-based leadership literature adopts masculinity as the norm (Elliott and Stead 2009: 160). They argue that much of the literature is developed by men and they cite Lamsa and Sintonen (2011) who state that it is not surprising that this focus on male leaders' experiences promotes male values as the behavioural managerial norm (ibid). Whilst over twenty years old, Sherman (2000:133) cites Shakeshaft, (1989: 150) by adding that women have not been a *"part of the construction of the ideological apparatus which selects and studies key questions, problems, and issues*" concerned with educational leadership or managerial styles.

Additionally, the "*think manager-think male*" phenomenon (Schein, 1973) suggests that the default image of a leader is often male, reinforcing the stereotype that leadership is a masculine domain. Whilst this reference is rather dated, I want to see whether the participants view headship in this manner. Such biases have practical implications for career progression, limiting women's access to leadership roles and perpetuating gender-based occupational segregation. This could be a limiting factor for women if they perceive that leadership or headship is not something that women traditionally have the natural capabilities to do.

This links to the idea of there being different gender traits. Powell (1993) in his book "Women in Management", defines gender stereotyping as a belief that sees men be high in *'masculine'* traits such as dominance, aggressiveness and dominance, and women to be high in '*feminine'* traits such as gentleness, sensitivity to feelings of others, and tactfulness. A list of qualities

identified by Bem (1974) and by Gray (1989, 1993) are attempts to identify such a paradigm or ideal type.

Table 1 – Feminine and Masculine Paradigms, Gray 1993

Feminine Paradigm	**The Masculine Paradigm**
Aware of individual differences	*Evaluative*
Caring	*Disciplined*
Intuitive	*Competitive*
Tolerant	*Objective*
Creative	*Formal*
Informal	*Highly regarded*
Non-competitive	*Conformist*
Subjective	*Normative*

Whilst this research is again dated, existing research of women as headteachers have used these paradigms within their research to make assumptions about how women lead schools and to determine key characteristics. Coleman (2000:15) used the paradigms within research on leadership and management styles in female secondary headteachers, stating that *"it would appear that there is a strong identification with most of the feminine traits on the part of the headteachers and a weak identification with most of the masculine traits"*.

Chikwe, C, Eneh, N, and Akpuokwe, C (2024) examine the 'double bind' that women leaders frequently encounter. This dilemma requires them to display both traditionally feminine qualities (such as warmth and empathy) and traditionally masculine qualities (such as assertiveness and ambition) to be deemed effective. Their study investigates strategies for women to manage this dual expectation, aiming to dismantle stereotypes and biases for successful leadership. They recognise the deep-rooted nature of gender stereotypes and their detrimental effect on women's progress in leadership roles. The authors explain that women who overly conform to feminine stereotypes may be seen as deficient in leadership abilities, whereas those who adopt more masculine traits might be considered lacking in warmth and likability. This double bind creates a significant challenge for women leaders, compelling them to carefully balance these traits to achieve leadership success.

Several feminist texts on leadership and gender work with essentialized notions of femininity in which homogenizing conceptions of what it means to be *'female'* depict women as uniformly nurturant, affiliate and good at interpersonal relationships (Reay and Ball 2000: 145). Fitzgerald (2002) also notes that early studies tend to present women leaders as if they are a *"homogenized group and considerations of circumstances such as ethnicity/social class/location and beliefs have been discounted"* (ibid: 10).

They do not fully explore the role of the female leader and rarely explore the women's power over others. Fitzgerald (2002:15) explains that *"there has not been a conscious attempt to theorize how power is exercised and differentiated in gender*". This is an area that has not been covered widely in academic research and literature. Sherman (2000:133) adds to this point highlighting that little research has been carried out to investigate ways in which females attempt to incorporate preferred, alternative leadership styles into their school management.

Collard and Reynolds (2005: xiii) discuss in their work how the power of stereotypes is pervasive and limiting, and that confronting stereotypes is a leadership challenge. Collard and Reynolds (2005: xv) explain that there is now an awareness of the concept of multiple femininities and masculinities and that this is just beginning to appear in the discourse on educational leadership. Their work challenges the idea that men and women work and lead in different ways. Collard and Reynolds suggest that gender does not *'determine'* leadership style or performance even though there are powerful stereotypes that do affect leadership work (ibid: xvi).

The existence of gender stereotyping disadvantages women in power compared to their male counterparts as their gender stereotype conflicts with the leadership stereotypes (Galanaki, et al, 2009). Coleman (2005) also argues within her survey that about half of the women secondary headteachers reported experiencing gender discrimination. In a study by Moreau et al (2007), women interviewed highlighted several issues surrounding leadership and management. Having to juggle work, family, and domestic responsibilities was a major argument. Career breaks for childbirth and/or returning part-time to work were also key factors in the underrepresentation of women in management jobs (ibid). Hutchings (2002) would suggest that women who take statutory maternity leave or longer breaks may find

themselves disadvantaged in promotion. Coleman's research (2000:23) illustrates that it would appear that women who are married and who have children, may be identified more strongly with a domestic stereotype and implicitly considered less able to lead.

The gender discrimination that Coleman explored is something that I refer to in my reflections in Chapter 1. I want to see in the interviews with the women deputy heads, if they have had any similar experiences. Furthermore, the context of many schools is something that needs to be considered, and Reay and Ball (2000:146) argue that there are *"enormous difficulties in translating what are traditionally perceived to be 'women's ways of working' into senior management contexts, especially when, as research demonstrates, such qualities are highly context-specific".*

Whilst this has changed, there is still a tendency for people to associate certain skills with genders. Is this something that still occurs and do participants talk about this within their interviews?

Coleman's (2000) work discusses the collaborative approach that female headteachers take with her study identifying this as the most popular style of management, which was termed *'collaborative'* (Coleman, 2000: 16). It also links into existing research on women as leaders that points to this collaborative style being a likely way to work, working co-operatively, empowering colleagues and characteristically making use of teamwork (Adler 1993; Hall, 1996; Jirasinghe and Lyons, 1996). Linked into this 'collaborative' style other researchers have described women's leadership style as "*transformational leadership*" (Rosener, 1990) and "*democratic and participative"* (Trinidad and Normore 2005). Eagly and Karau (2002) suggest that women might prefer transformational leadership because this style entails behaviours that are considered to be more typical of women.

Different styles of female and male management and leadership have been highly debated across the years with women seeing themselves as using transformational leadership styles more than men (Bass et al., 1996; Druskat, 1994; Rosener, 1990). Rosener's (1990) study found that women managers put effort into building relationships and understanding the people they work with so that they can adapt their style to each individual. The study looked at women as leaders who believe that people perform best when they feel good about themselves and their work, and they try to create situations that contribute to that feeling

(ibid). Whilst this literature is quite dated, it is interesting to note when you consider Cubillo (1999) who found that women's lack of confidence was to do more with the unfamiliarity of tasks and the job than a lack of ability. If this is the case for women deputy headteachers then exploring possible scenarios around exposure to everyday tasks for a headteacher could be a possible solution. It will also be important to understand what the women deputy headteachers say about their leadership skills and ways of working.

Finally, in considering how female leaders may lead, Butler (1990) discusses "*performativity"* when examining gender and sexuality, the construction of sex and gender is shaped by discourse and societal norms (Bulter and Salih 2004:91). They refer to performativity evolving in "*linguistic and discursive terms*" (ibid). Therefore, suggesting that gender is something we do rather than what we are, caused by a social discourse (Butler 1990). Adding to this Fuller (2014) also explores within her work the idea of the performance of roles, functions, and behaviours and how they are combined into positions marked by titles. As mentioned in my reflections in Chapter 1, Fuller's research (2014) explores with female headteachers this idea further and refers to a headteacher that *"literally put on gendered educational leadership in a dramaturgical sense with costume, coiffure and makeup*" (Fuller 2010:2). Rather than this just being about her exploring her '*femininity',* Francis (2010) terms this a monoglossic disguise under which a complex enactment of gender has been constructed based on socio-cultural gender narratives (Paechter 2003, 2006; Fuller 2010). Fuller goes on to extend this idea in '*gender heteroglossia'* (2014) undercovering the nuances and conflicting constructions of gendered leadership. This term has come out from research from Francis (2010) when examining gender and the exploration of '*female masculinity'* (Fuller, 2014). Fullers' research points to the need for further work to be undertaken on breaking down stereotypes. Whilst this research would seem dated, it is something that needs to be considered in how the participants feel about gender and leadership.

2.5 What enablers to promotion to headship can be identified?

Within this section, I looked at how women could transition from deputy head and what support there was for capacity building. I started by researching existing programmes in place to support career progression to headship and then looked at any literature on flexible working and mentoring.

2.5.1 Programmes in place to support applications for headship from deputy headteachers

Research on school leadership indicates that the practices of school principals are crucial for school improvement (Lambrecht et al., 2022; Thien et al., 2022) and significantly influence students' learning outcomes (Fullan, 2015; Leithwood et al., 2020; Özgenel and Karsantik, 2020; Grissom et al., 2021; Kilinç and Gümüs, 2021). Leadership training for Principals that pays less attention to link learning activities with actions in school practices is seen to be less effective(Liljenberg and Wrethander, 2020). Consequently, the professional development programmes designed to prepare deputy heads for headteacher roles are crucial to improve school performance.

The current approach to CPD for those preparing for headship is through the government National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). This is a qualification run by the Department for Education designed to develop the skills, knowledge, and behaviours that you would need to be a high-performing headteacher. It is open to existing headteachers or those that aspire to be a headteacher. The qualification is centred around developing skills and knowledge which set out what an effective headteacher should know and be able to do alongside looking at leadership behaviours and how an effective headteacher should operate. Before the qualification was reformed in September 2021, the content covered the following areas:

- Strategy and improvement
- Teaching and curriculum excellence
- Leading with impact
- Working in partnership
- Managing resources and risks
- Increasing capability

Leadership behaviours look at commitment; collaboration; personal drive; resilience; awareness; integrity; and respect. A placement at a school with a different context to the applicants supplements the training.

However, in September 2021, the NPQH qualifications were reformed, and they became a blend of flexible online learning, online discussion, virtual workshops, and face-to-face workshops, for a few hours of study each week over 18 months. The assessment element changed to a 1500-word case study assessment in which participants need to demonstrate their understanding of real leadership and change. The NPQH modules cover the following topics for participants:

- Provide the strategic lead of effective teaching, curriculum, assessment, and culture within their school
- Lead effective professional development, change, and implementation
- Manage a school's systems and processes, working with parents and governors
- Build a stronger understanding of the participants' strengths and areas for development, helping to create a more sustainable and resilient approach to leadership

There is no placement school on this reformed qualification or need to attend any other school. The content of the course whilst it has some similarities to the previous content, there are some noticeable differences such as the exclusion of a second school placement. It will be interesting to see whether any of the participants discuss these qualifications or indeed any other progression routes and professional development they have come across.

In relation to this qualification, the NCTL (2013) conducted a series of studies with NPQH graduates to examine their motivations and to look at the impact the NPQH qualification had on them. Whilst this data is quite old, the revised NPQH qualification is too new to have any statistics at this point. The data provides a good insight into what the applicants felt was useful and not useful about the NPQH qualification. An element of this research was that within their interviews they asked all NPQH students the skills that they would like to develop these were: Managing budgets 77%; Working with Human Resources and Legal issues 69%; Understanding and implementing strategic change 69%; Leading and influencing others 63%;

Engaging with the wider community 63%; Developing own confidence 58% (NCTL 2013:14). After completing their training, the trainees were then asked to look at the skills they thought they had developed the most and likewise areas that they felt the NPQH had enabled them to develop the least and therefore still left some areas of training or concern. These areas were Legal and HR; working with parents and the community; finance and budget. In scoring systems given to the trainees after their NPQH, financial management and budgeting and HR legal issues consistently came out with low scores (NCTL, 2013:16,26). This suggests that perhaps these are key areas that deputy headteachers need support in and currently do not feel they are getting adequate training.

Research suggests that effective leadership paradigms and professional development programs are often more intricate than policymakers and educational leaders may realize (Hallinger, 2018; Mowat & McMahon, 2019). Consequently, leadership training programs need to be context-sensitive and specifically tailored to enhance school performance and academic outcomes. Some studies also indicate a gap in understanding the practical applicability of leadership training content for school leadership practices (Pannell et al., 2015; Grissom et al., 2019). Therefore, it is essential not only to evaluate previous CPD practices but also to continuously supervise and improve these programs for future effectiveness.

2.5.2 Programmes aimed specifically at women

In recognising that investment is needed in women's leadership development the DfE (2016:49) has devoted a section of the education white paper to *'increasing diversity in leadership'*. Women form a part of this diverse group and as a result, funding has allowed for the setting up of 'Women Leading in Education: regional networks', a 'Pledge to coach women teachers in schools', and further 'Leadership Equality and Diversity Fund: for school led programmes' (NCTL, 2016). Whilst this has now started the process of women in education to make links and networks, I wonder how far this has been disseminated into all schools and whether the participants that I interviewed are part of these initiatives or want to talk about them in their interviews?

2.5.3 Flexible working – Co-headship

Some of the barriers for women within existing research point to the lack of flexibility within workplaces especially for women with families. The introduction of co-headships is something that has been put forward as a possible solution to recruitment issues (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2007). This idea of a job share headship is something that could offer a solution to some of the criticism made that headteachers have far too many demands imposed on them (Gronn, 2003; Orchard, 2002). It would also utilise skills and ensure a spread of expertise allowing the two headteachers to feel more confident within their roles. Hertling (2001) suggests that it could also be a way of mentoring and utilising those headteachers ready to retire, coaching the next generation of leaders. Some other barriers within existing research such as external pressures of Ofsted and exams could also be shared rather than taken on by one individual.

2.5.4 Mentoring and Role Models

Literature suggests that mentoring can play a crucial role in shaping the leadership trajectories of women, offering a transformative avenue for professional development and career advancement. Mentoring has been identified as a catalyst for career advancement, skill development, and increased job satisfaction for women leaders (Ragins & Kram, 2007; Scandura, 1992). Studies by Turban and Dougherty (1994) emphasise the role of mentoring in shaping women's leadership identity, fostering a sense of empowerment and resilience in the face of gender-based challenges.

Additionally, mentoring serves as a means to mitigate gender-based barriers in leadership. Ibarra (1997) and Ely and Meyerson (2000) highlight the role of mentoring in facilitating women's access to influential networks, offering them exposure to opportunities that might otherwise be elusive. Empirical insights from studies such as those by Blake-Beard et al. (2011) emphasise the impact of mentoring on organisational culture, demonstrating how mentorship initiatives can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive work environment for women leaders. Adding to this, studies, such as that by Bannister and Parry (2017), focus on contemporary issues affecting women's leadership perceptions, including the role of mentorship and the changing landscape of educational leadership.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, Eagly & Carli (2007), discuss how the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles stems in part from negative stereotypes and discrimination against women in the leadership domain. One approach that has been discussed within literature is to counteract these negative stereotypes through exposure to counter-stereotypic role models, such as female leaders (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004; Rios, Stewart & Winter, 2010). Women who have strong mentors and mentorship opportunities indicate the support and encouragement these situations have given them have helped them to become successful (Fry, 2015). Developing a greater understanding of the need for goal setting is a crucial component in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). Nevertheless, investigations across a variety of domains have indicated that exposure to exceedingly successful role models has the potential to induce self-deflating effects, particularly when their level of success appears unattainable. (Buunk, Collins, Taylor, VanYperen, & Dakof, 1990; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; Major, Testa & Bylsma, 1991). I will examine whether any of my participants discuss or talk about mentoring and role models and whether this is something that could help with women's perceptions of both themselves and headship as a possible career.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the relationship between women's perceptions and ambitions for headship in education is multifaceted. My literature review has touched upon some of the factors that may influence this decision making such as societal expectations, organisational factors, and individual experiences. It has also examined some of the key barriers to progression and some of the enablers. However, a comprehensive understanding of all of the above is essential for developing strategies that promote gender equality in educational leadership and address the unique challenges women may encounter in aspiring to headship.

This research will involve talking to women deputy headteachers about their career aspirations in secondary schools in England, examining their perceptions of this career, their perceptions of themselves, and the key barriers and enablers to progression.

Within my literature chapter, I have highlighted some of the literature surrounding my chosen research topic and highlighted that some of this literature is quite old and dated especially the literature around confidence and self-esteem. Have things changed and moved on since this was written or are we still dealing with the same issues surrounding women in

leadership? The discussions with the participants will allow me to explore this further and look at whether any additional areas of interest emerge that have not been covered within the literature.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology and research methods used in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the methodological approach adopted for this study. The chapter begins by outlining my main aims and research questions followed by research design, epistemological viewpoint, methodology, and methods. The chapter proceeds to look at participants' recruitment and place of the researcher, including my own reflective journals, before discussing ethical considerations and data protection and consent. The final part of the chapter looks at undertaking thematic analysis.

3.1: Aims of the study

The main aim of my research was to understand the career aspirations of women deputy headteachers. Women headteachers are significantly underrepresented in the UK and the role before headship is always the role of deputy headteacher. However, despite this being the natural step from deputy headteacher to headteacher, and that more women are working within the teaching profession, there is limited research on this. A few previous studies (Chagger, 2012; Guihen, 2017; King, 2021) have analysed possible reasons why women may choose to not progress, and this study aimed to build on the existing research and offer insight into the reasons for their choices.

To understand the career aspirations of women deputy headteachers I investigated reasons why women choose or choose not to progress to headship. My research questions were focused on trying to understand their lived leadership experiences and how these may have influenced their aspirations for headship:

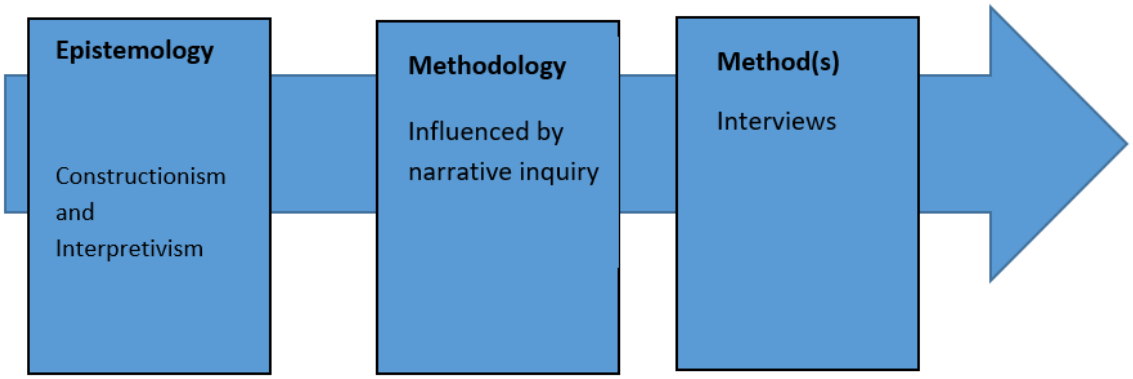
- Research question 1 (RQ1): What are women deputy headteachers' school and leadership perceptions and experiences?
- Research question 2 (RQ2): How do these perceptions and experiences relate to their ambitions in wanting to become headteachers?
- Research question 3 (RQ3): What barriers/hurdles to promotion can be identified?
- Research question 4 (RQ4): What enablers to promotion to headship can be identified?

In exploring the above questions and experiences, I aimed to contribute to the development of the existing work (Guihens 2017, Chagger, 2012, King 2021) and understanding of the under-represented female leadership roles. Moreover, within my research I aimed to consider how my findings could influence and shape future policies and strategies to encourage women into leadership and improve women's representation in the role of headteacher.

3.2 Research design

I used Crotty's (1998) foundations for research design; he focuses on the researcher establishing the epistemological viewpoint within their research. From here, I was able to determine the theoretical perspective and methodology used within my research; influenced by narrative inquiry, constructionism, and interpretivism. Crotty (ibid) lists various representational figures to illustrate sampling which I have adapted to structure my thinking:

Figure 1: Epistemological viewpoint and methodology



3.2.1 Constructionism and Interpretivism

Using the figure above and Crotty's (ibid) framework, my epistemological stance is constructionism and interpretivism. These two paradigms share a common ground in understanding the nature of knowledge and reality through subjective experiences and social constructs.

Constructionism, also known as social constructionism, suggests that knowledge and meaning are constructed through social interactions and shared understandings. It suggests that reality

is not objective and independent but rather shaped by human experiences, language, and social contexts.

Piaget's constructivism looks at how learners construct new understandings and knowledge, integrating the new with what they already know (Wadsworth, 1996). Constructionism is a theoretical perspective emphasising the role of active engagement, social interactions, and personal experiences in the process of learning and knowledge construction. It is closely related to constructivism, a broader educational philosophy that posits that learners actively build their understanding of the world through interactions with their environment, experiences, and prior knowledge.

Constructionism is more of an educational method based on the constructivist theory: *"The view that all knowledge, and therefore, all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of the interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty 2003:42)*

Therefore, meaning is not discovered but constructed. Meanings are constructed by human beings as they interpret the world. Understanding the participants' interviews and transcripts is therefore key to this process, enabling us to interpret their experiences and begin to construct meanings.

While Piaget's constructivism as an educational theory and constructivism as an epistemological stance share common ground in viewing knowledge as constructed, they differ in their focus, application, and foundational principles. Piaget's constructivism is more specific to cognitive development and educational practices, whereas constructivism as an epistemological stance offers a broader framework for understanding the nature of knowledge and its construction across various domains.

In interpreting my participants' transcripts, it became important to understand how my background may influence the interpretive approach to my study. Lambert et al (2010:34) highlight that *"One of the biggest issues a practitioner researcher faces is how their knowledge and identity affects the collection of data".* This is why I focused on my leadership story later on in this chapter (3.4.1) through the use of reflective journals that I have kept over the past ten years. These journal entries have assisted in recalling the different events that have

shaped my leadership journey, and exploring these first before undertaking interviews or data analysis allowed me to reflect on my existing knowledge and any socially constructed views I may have of the world. I discuss my own biases within this chapter (3.4.1). Crotty (1998:58) explains that everyone's experience is unique, and we all have our way of making sense of the world. His view is that social constructionism emphasises our cultural biases, therefore shaping the way we view things and our outlook on the world and perhaps our position within society. This view was key within my research regarding experiences of the women deputy headteachers.

In considering Interpretivism, this is an approach that focuses on understanding and interpreting the subjective meanings and social construction of human experiences, behaviour, and phenomena. Some key considerations I have taken in using this approach are my subjectivity and my aim to recognise my participants each construct meanings and interpretations based on their unique perspectives, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. The contextual understanding of my phenomena, women deputy headteachers in education, is important to consider within social, cultural, and historical contexts, providing insights into how individuals perceive and make sense of their experiences. I used qualitative methods within my research, discussed below, allowing me as a researcher to delve into the nuances of human experiences and to look at language and discourse to uncover underlying meanings and cultural constructs. I also looked at my reflexivity and personal perspectives that might influence the research process. My approaches can be seen in the following section where I discuss my methodology including the methods used, participants, place of the researcher, and ethical considerations.

By combining constructionism and interpretivism this creates a robust epistemological stance that appreciates the subjective construction of reality and seeks to understand the meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences within their social contexts. My combined stance involved the following:

- **Acknowledging the Social Construction of Reality**: Recognise that knowledge and meanings are constructed through social interactions and cultural contexts. This involves understanding how social norms, language, and shared experiences shape individuals' perceptions of reality.

- **Focusing on Subjective Meanings**: Emphasise understanding the subjective experiences and interpretations of individuals. This includes exploring how people make sense of their experiences and the meanings they attach to them within their social and cultural contexts.
- **Utilising Qualitative Methods**: Employ qualitative research methods such as interviews, participant observations, and content analysis to gather rich, in-depth data about individuals' experiences and social interactions.
- **Contextual Understanding**: Place a strong emphasis on the context in which individuals' experiences and interactions occur. This involves considering the historical, cultural, and social background that influences how people construct and interpret their realities.

By combining constructionism and interpretivism, I am hoping to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the women deputy headteachers construct their realities and the meanings they attach to their experiences within their social contexts.

3.2.2 Methodology

The main methodological approach for my study is influenced by narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is aimed at understanding and making meaning of experience (Clandinin &Connelly 2000:80). Clandinin and Connelly claim that experience happens narratively and therefore educational experience should be studied narratively (ibid:19). Therefore, if experience happens narratively this means that individuals make sense of their experiences, memories, and perceptions by constructing narratives. Instead of experiencing events as disconnected moments, people create coherent and meaningful narratives connecting different elements of their experiences. In essence, our understanding of the world is shaped by the stories we tell ourselves about our lives and interactions. Given that experience is inherently narrative, Clandinin and Connelly propose that educational researchers should employ a narrative approach to studying educational experiences. By doing so, researchers can gain deeper insights into the meaning-making processes, emotions, perspectives, and contexts that shape educational experiences.

As my research questions aimed to understand the career aspirations of deputy headteachers and their choices regarding headship, it seemed appropriate to understand how the

participants experience the world to describe their life experiences about their career. Narrative research is commonly used in educational studies as a way to offer a deeper understanding and insight into the subject matter. It is a way whereby *"collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus"* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:20). To understand the experiences of a group of women deputy headteachers, we must understand the phenomena from" *the perspective of those who have lived them"* (ibid:2). I aimed to listen to the participants' interviews and prompt when needed. Details of how I undertook this process with my participants will be discussed later on in this chapter under interviews.

Woodiwiss, Smith and Lockwood (2017:5) state that narrative researchers need to look not only at the stories being told but also at the contexts within which women make sense and narrate their lives; understanding cultural context and how this changes over time. Understanding that society and its patriarchal structures and androcentric bias and oppression of women persist (Stanley and Wise, 1993), in looking at their narratives, it is also important to consider the contexts within which women make sense of and narrate their lives and the resources available to them to do that (Woodiwiss, Smith & Lockwood, 2017:5).

In considering these views, I hope that as my work is influenced by this approach it will reflect this and offer alternative ways for women to view their career potential should they wish to progress to headship.

To summarise my approach, I have been influenced by a narrative framework that encompasses two factors: the theme of human-centredness and the complexity of human experience. (Webster and Mertova, 2020:112). To clarify this further, narratives tell the events of human lives, reflect human interest, and support our sense-making processes. Dyson & Genishi (1994) state that they can transform our lives and the contexts in which we live. Narrative records human experience through the construction and reconstruction of personal stories, which are constantly shaped by lifelong personal events and narratives. The interconnectedness of narrative and human experience means the study of narrative is the study of lived stories. Additionally, the study of lived stories is the study of the ways humans experience the world.

Polkinghorne (1998:176) argues that in narrative research, the focus of data is directed to the '*trustworthiness; of field notes and transcripts of interviews and to 'uncover the common themes or plots in the data*'. I have ensured that 'reflection' periods have been added into each step of my research to ensure that I am looking for underlying patterns across the examples of stories (Polkinghorne, 1998:177).

Johnson and Golombek (2002:3) discuss the benefits of narrative inquiry for the participants. When you uncover the lived experiences of teachers, narrative inquiry as a method allows you to not only facilitate "*personal and social growth"* but also helps to bring about *"new meaning and significance".*

As with all approaches and methodologies used, each has its strengths and weaknesses. In considering the potential weaknesses, I reflected upon Cadman and Brown (2011:447) who noted that narrative artifacts are open to *"coercive manipulations of process"*, which is because authors can decide what gets included within the narratives and what is omitted when retelling their experiences. Others have pointed out that there will be different perspectives to every narrative, and these will relate to time, context, and audience. Coulter and Smith (2009:578) state that *"eyewitnesses to the same event have differing accounts depending on their perspectives"*. However, I am only looking at the perspective of the women deputy headteachers therefore this is not a weakness. Other risks discussed with existing literature explore the bond between the researcher and narrator and the potential for the inquiry to become "*therapeutic*" or "*emotionally manipulative"* (Cadman and Brown, 2011:450). This had implications for how I conducted my interviews, so I clarified my position that I was a current deputy headteacher and wanted to understand their aspirations. I also ensured that at the start of the interview, we took time to make a hot drink and feel comfortable, ensuring that participants felt at ease talking to me.

3.2.3 Methods

The study is limited to secondary school teachers because, unlike their primary school colleagues, there are not as many females in positions of leadership in secondary schools. Primary schools tend to have a minority of male teachers. In secondary schools, the leadership teams are generally male-dominated, in particular the role of the headteacher.

The study uses a range of existing literature based on female leadership and education and it examines current statistics of females in leadership positions within schools.

My study is based on qualitative research (any quantitative data is used to set the context) because I wanted to draw on the power of women in education and focus on female deputy headteachers' experiences, opinions, and perceptions. Using this approach allows participants to talk about uncovering aspirations and reasons underlying these. Qualitative research focuses on understanding the intervention or phenomenon and exploring questions. Qualitative research intends to contribute to understanding through understanding the lives of the participants (Sargeant, 2012). This is also supported by Silverman (2009:10) *"If you are concerned with exploring people's life histories or everyday behaviour then qualitative methods may be favoured."*

3.2.3.1 Interviews

Interviews were used as a means of finding out the individual experiences about their careers through their interviews. They explore the career aspirations of the women deputy headteachers from when they started their careers to the present day. I refer to this as their 'leadership journey'. The interviews ask about any interactions the female deputy headteachers have had with stakeholders. For clarity, by stakeholders, I mean anyone involved in the school; governors; parents; staff. Within their interactions with stakeholders, I explore any positive and negative experiences along with any particular life events they feel have influenced their career, including people who may have inspired them or put them off along the way. Therefore, the interviews were conducted to understand and attain the views and perceptions of the women deputy headteachers in terms of their aspirations and to gather their experiences to form their leadership journeys.

The main purpose of the interviews is to explore the different experiences within each transcript.

Jonasssen, 1977, explains that the concept of narrative can be refined into a view that research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories. The idea is that just as a story explores the complexities of characters, then complex problems can be explored in this way too.

> *"Narratives are event-centred and historically particular, located in a particular time and place. Stories concern action, more specifically human action, and particularly social interaction. Stories have plots. They have a beginning, middle, and end, so that while they unfold in time, the order is more than more sequence but reveals a 'sense of whole'…Stories also reveal the way events and other actors act upon someone, shaping her/his possibilities, the way she/he views herself and her world" (Spreizer, 2009: 15)*

The interviews of women as deputy headteachers would therefore add to what is a complex area to understand in terms of trying to find possible solutions to the research area and add to the existing knowledge within it. To add to this, this approach allows us to give answers to unsolved questions (Aleandri & Russo, 2015:517) which fits in with my research topic as we are still not seeing a proportionate amount of women deputy headteachers transitioning to headteacher roles.

At each stage, I added in a reflection period as I believe this has helped me to refine my methodology and to ensure that I have kept a human-centric approach allowing me to reflect upon and gain insight into the human traits of understanding. Webster and Mertova (2007:86) argue this may be neglected in traditional and modernist approaches to research and they remind us that, narrative inquiry itself *"does not strive to produce any conclusions of certainty*" (ibid:4). Therefore, the reflection period allows me as a researcher to constantly re-engage with the interviews and to consider the complexities within in it.

Within my interviews, I used semi-structured questions and prompts. Focusing specifically on the use of semi-structured interviews, this is appropriate for my study as I have enough knowledge about female leadership to be able to develop questions in advance of the interviews. This structure allowed me to ask what I considered to be important questions based on the leadership experiences that the females have faced and their leadership journeys to becoming deputy headteachers. Richards and Morse (2007:14) state that the use of semi-structured interviews offers the researcher *"the organisation and comfort of pre-planned questions, but also the challenge of presenting them to participants in such a way as to invite detailed, complex answers" (ibid).*

The semi-structured questions allowed me to cover the topics key to my research questions and also allowed me to gather both specific information and open-ended data. Whilst this

offered a loose structure to my interviews it also allowed me to adapt and follow up questions based on the participants' responses, leading to more depth and exploration.

As I was influenced by the idea of narrative, I designed my questions to encourage participants to be able to talk about their leadership journey in their own words. The idea behind the questions was to try and find out some autobiographical information in terms of their leadership journey and how they had got to be a deputy head, looking at individual narratives around this and exploring their motivations and any barriers and enablers that they had come across on their leadership journeys. I designed my questions to start with their early career experiences and the journey they took through to deputy headship. I allowed them the space to tell their version and perception of events. The questions were based on my existing knowledge of the topic and existing research that examined potential barriers as explored in Chapter 2 in the literature review. The use of semi-structured interviews also facilitated the participants the space to explore narrative tangents and fully convey their internal narratives; to the extent that they were prepared to do in this context.

I had a set of questions that I used and adapted depending on the interviewees. An example of some of these questions are:

- *Can you tell me about your experience of education and schooling from Secondary school to Higher Education and what made you become a teacher?*
- *Can you talk to me about your career to date and any experiences of other women you know in teaching?*
- *Have you had any positive or negative workplace experiences as a woman that you want to talk about?*

As discussed earlier, the questions were based on trying to get the participants to tell their story in their own words, and the wording of the questions is aimed at allowing the memory to open up and tell in order to accept and not judge (Aleandri & Russo, 2015:19); I varied the questions, depending on the responses. These questions can be seen in Appendix 4**.** These include the additional and adapted questions that I included based on my pilot study.

The use of semi-structured questions also allowed me to deepen conversations where I felt the participant had more to say and likewise to shorten some questions or adapt them depending on the participant's emotional response to them. This is explored further in the

pilot study. If I felt a participant was confident in telling their leadership narrative without specific questions, I would allow them to, only prompting when necessary. Additionally, when I felt that the participant wanted to talk about a topic in more detail or had something important they wanted to tell, I would allow them to. In these instances, I would allow them to talk about the topic uninterrupted using open-ended prompts to encourage them to share their detailed experiences.

I structured the interviews around issues of women and leadership in schools and the role of deputy headteachers. Some of the interviews looked in detail at home circumstances and some focused on people that had influenced them within their careers; interviews were flexible and dependent on the main themes emerging from individual participants. The biographical questions gave me the chance to find out how interviewees had gained their positions, educational backgrounds, and influences. The autobiographical interview style facilitated mapping interviewee journeys and experiences, how they felt people perceived them, plus any barriers they experienced or things that assisted them to succeed in educational leadership. The autobiography style focuses on different aspects of a person's life and different moments during their life course (Aleandri & Russo, 2015:518) which in turn helped the participants to reflect on any experiences or context that may have influenced career decisions or affected how they were feeling.

My contribution to the interview process also needed consideration at this point as I am a woman and a deputy headteacher (at the time of interviewing), and this may have influenced the information the participants were prepared to tell, especially if we consider that stories are a construction told in a context to a particular audience. This is why I allowed participants to talk in more detail about any areas they were interested in rather than sticking rigidly to my set questions and answering with what they thought I wanted to hear. This was an important part of my reflection on my thought process and stages in the research and I referred to this process throughout. This reflection particularly helped me acknowledge that I needed to react to the participants' interviews and make changes and refinements.

3.2.3.2 Creating a coherent story for illustrative purposes

Once I had gathered my data and completed the final analysis, I wanted to be able to create an illustrative outline story for each participant. I wanted to do this after my data analysis so that I could use the stories to illustrate my findings and offer a summary of their experiences. This is important to note as the story creation is not explored until Chapter 9. This was a deliberate decision to ensure that the stories were used to summarise the participants'' experiences after the main findings. I wanted the stories to act as case study summaries not just for the participants but for other women who may identify with them. This is explained in more detail in chapter 9 and 11. As I was influenced by narrative, I wanted to be able to recreate how each participants' experiences were different and would allow other women to identify with these. Additionally, my research was influenced by constructionism, and I wanted to be able to illustrate how my participants understood their world and experiences, the use of stories would allow others to make sense of their information and experiences easily. I also reflected that stories, whether fictional or based on real experiences, have the power to connect with individuals on a personal level to encourage reflection, and are central to our means of communicating with ourselves and one another (Bruner, 2002; Siegal, 2015). I wanted my research to be accessible through stories to use with colleagues and other women to enable them to connect with the participants in my research on a personal level.

According to Nind (2011), engaging in narrative and life-story work enables the appreciation of participants as expert witnesses actively involved in recounting and revisiting their own experiences. In a related vein, Keats (2009) illustrates the advantages of employing multiple texts analysis in narrative research, noting that "*Including a variety of participant-constructed narratives... reflects the complexity of life experiences*" (p. 182). The use of stories therefore highlights the transformative potential of narrative and life-story work by positioning the participants as expert witnesses in their own lives and allowing others to see this too. By creating stories, I would also have case study summaries of my participants' stories so that I could use these in my professional work; permission for this use was sought from the participants who agreed to sharing their stories both within this research and for wider use. I discuss the process of the story creation below and the steps made to ensure that participants were not identifiable.

3.2.3.3 Creating the coherent stories process

Having decided on a story format, I then considered how I would apply the story creation. To do this, I considered how the analysis of narratives has been influenced by various scholars over the years and across a wide range of disciplines (Riessman, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1995; Embden, 1998; Priest, Roberts, and Woods, 2002; Beal, 2013). There is no standard framework to apply to creating a narrative account and therefore I drew on Petty's work (2019). I wanted to create a coherent story from the transcripts to summarise each interview. To do this, I created five stages within my story creation detailing my step-by-step approach to creating a coherent story. It is their individual perceptions of their stories that I wanted to capture so that I could use these to share my research findings. The below figure illustrates the different stages:

Figure 2: Creating a coherent story from the transcripts

Adapted from Petty (2019:93)

Stage 1 **Reflect** on interview transcripts, re-read, absorb, and understand

↓

Stage 2 **Extract** the core story- remove any interviewer contributions from the transcript and any unnecessary words from the participant's sentences and re-read to ensure the story is still coherent

↓

Stage 3 **Restorying –** reconfigure text by sequencing it in a logical order to form a series of events ('emplotment')

↓

Stage 4 **Events** refined -Events/plots are combined to create a single coherent story for each of the participants in chronological order and checked for accuracy with participants – amendments made if necessary

↓

Stage 5 **Final stories** given to participants for any final changes

To create my coherent stories, I organised their answers in a chronological order and cut out any parts of the interview that were not relevant to the research project (Stage 2 and 3). For

example, if a participant wanted to talk about something off topic. I then placed the topics discussed within the interview within the original six themes identified as a way to organise the data. I did not label this within the story as I wanted the story to be read in full as their own journey rather than be interrupted by theme headings. I then looked for any details that may identify the participant and took this out for example if they mentioned a place or personal issue to them, I removed this.

The content within each section was re worded from first person text to third person and if appropriate I made comments about any physical reactions the participants had for example laughing.

The coherent story creation acted as a summary of some of the main subject areas found within each participant's interview and offered a snapshot of their reasons for wanting or not wanting to progress to headship.

When I created the stories, the first story took me a lot longer than expected and I was worried that I was overcomplicating and overthinking the process. Stage 3 took the longest as I had to keep re-reading the events to check that I had them in the correct order. Once I reached this stage, the whole process seemed a lot easier.

After I had completed all the stages of the story creation for participants, I showed the participants their 'story' representation. As I had reordered the story chronologically, I asked the participants to check that this representation was correct. I also asked them to check for accuracy and that I had not misrepresented anything they had said or deleted anything that they wanted to keep within their story, this included checking that any details that they felt could identify them were removed. Only minor amendments were made to one story which was the order of events that needed to be swapped around. This gave me the confidence that this process worked, and it enabled me to see and understand their professional careers and perceptions easily and in chronological order.

3.3 Participants and Recruitment

For my main sample, ten participants were identified, two of whom participated in the pilot study. All ten were women who were currently deputy headteachers. They were chosen from a range of schools across the country with different contexts. Different contexts for my

research are different Ofsted gradings within the selected schools and different social contexts in terms of a range of schools with different socio-economic statuses. I purposely chose a small sample of ten participants because I wanted to allow for a rich description of their experiences and to explore the meanings that the participants derive from their experiences in detail. I felt that ten participants would offer a variety of women in different situations and a sample of what some of the potential barriers to headship may be and would be manageable in terms of the narrative and data analysis. Mason (2002) notes, that whilst there are no methodological reasons for small sample sizes in qualitative research the sample does have to be of a size that can be managed in practical terms.

I acknowledge that within this sample my research can only portray a fragment of experiences but "*each of these fragments is a rich elaboration of experiences collected in research*" (Emmel, 2013). Padgett (2013) suggests that sampling varies on the qualitative research design, but narrative inquiry sampling often uses small samples.

I then chose four headteachers or executive headteachers (two men, two women), as a result of my pilot study, as I felt I needed the view of existing headteachers/executive headteachers to comment on the barriers that either they faced or what they perceived as the barriers that were stopping woman deputy headteachers from progressing to headship.

A table of participants (using pseudonyms) is included below:

Table 2 Profile of deputy headteachers and headteachers:

School:	Name:	Age:	Area:	deputy/headteacher for how long?	Gender:
DHT1	Jean	40-49	Worcester	10 years	Female
DHT2	Sally	30-39	Birmingham	7 years	Female
DHT3	Emma	30-39	Leicester	3 years	Female
DHT4	Sarah	39-49	Essex	7 years	Female
DHT5	Natalie	30-39	Herts	4 years	Female
DHT6	Marie	40-49	Warwick	11 years	Female

DHT7	Andrea	40-49	Coventry	8 years	Female
DHT8	Samantha	40-49	Liverpool	6 years	Female
DHT9	Claire	30-39	Herts	5 years	Female
DHT10	Ellen	30-39	Bedfordshire	5 years	Female
HT1	Peter	50-59	Hertfordshire	15 years	Male
HT2	Alison	40-46	Bedfordshire	9 years	Female
HT2	Adrian	50-59	Worcestershire	7 years	Male
HT4	Samantha	50-59	Gloucestershire	5 years	Female

Participants were chosen using purposive sampling and I have sought participants because of their characteristics – women who are in positions of leadership in secondary schools as deputy headteachers. Spradley, 1979 cited in Richards and Morse (2007:195) describes these participants as those who know the information required, are willing to reflect on the phenomena of interest, have the time, and are willing to participate. Due to the nature of my study, this was essential as the research would not be successful if the participants did not meet these criteria. Therefore, to obtain this sample, I utilised my connections through the 'Leadership Schools Partners Network', facilitating easy access to women in senior positions in schools.

3.4 Place of the Researcher

It is important when undertaking qualitative research that the researcher ensures there is a continuous process of reflection on the research (Hsuing 2010). Part of this also involves the researcher examining their "*conceptual baggage*" and that I am aware of the effect on the process and outcomes of research that I may have based on the premise that *'knowledge cannot be separated from the knower'* (Steedman, 1991:53-62). This involved me acknowledging any pre-determined views that I might have as part of this, as this could ultimately affect my research, the research design, and the selection of data. With this in mind, I thought about the areas that could potentially collide with my research**.** I realised I

have multiple identities, which could potentially be implicated in the research process. These identities are as follows:

1. I am a woman 2. I am currently a deputy headteacher in a Secondary School (at the time of interviews) 3. Class background - how I have reached my position from a working-class background 4. Personal views on leadership 5. Experiences I have had had in leadership

To address this, I have included my own personal leadership story below. *"To understand oneself and others, we need to understand our histories and how we have come to be what we are"* (Chamberlayne et al 2000:7). I did this as I felt it was important to understand my own history so that I could make sense of my participants' and it allowed me to gain a greater understanding of both myself and others.

I will now examine my own experience of going from deputy head to head.

3.4.1: My journey

I examine my journey and experiences and discuss my learning from my reflections so that I can identify my own bias and positioning before undertaking my research. I have constructed a series of reflections based on different stages in my career.

I have analysed a series of personal reflective diary entries that I kept over several years to record different events within my leadership journey and different feelings I felt during these occasions. They were all written after the events had taken place in the past tense and I selected the entries based on different points in my career. The entries cover several different events that span a period within my career rather than focusing on one particular day or week. For this research, I have defined my leadership journey as the time I began teaching to my current position as headteacher and the years in between during my career.

The career points I selected within the entries started in my early career covering my move from PR to teaching (Jan 2007), enrolment onto the Fast Track scheme (2008), Advanced Skills Teacher status (2009), assistant head (2010), deputy head (2012) and principal (2014).

Some of these diaries have my reflections and assumptions within them.

This approach to analysing my own experiences enables me as a researcher to usefully reflect on these and to highlight how I construct my 'world' and interpret it and how this relates to

the wider research question; also offering an insight into how my leadership experience contributes to my research.

I start by outlining my background through a series of reflective entries to engage in critical reflection on my experiences before engaging with my participants in the main study.

3.4.2 Reflecting on and understanding my journey

By understanding my story and the analysis of the self (Hughes, Pennington & Markis, 2012) I believe that this will enable me to identify any pre-existing bias and will allow me to understand myself and that this is *"a pre-condition and concomitant condition to the understanding of others"* (Pinar, 1975: 173-188).

My journey is something that I feel is of importance in my study as I have been through the journey from deputy head to headteacher and I am a woman. This '*insider status*' (Styles, 1979) will help me to reflect on my previous knowledge and experience before discussing this with my participants. It will also highlight any preconceptions that I might have within my own experience that I will need to consider in relation to my research and data.

To understand individuals' experiences and how they make sense of their experiences, I first need to understand my history "*to understand oneself and others, we need to understand our own histories and how we have come to be what we are"* (Chamberlayne et al 2000:7).

As the researcher, I, therefore, needed to consider and reflect on how this might reflect the research that I am undertaking and analysing (ibid). I need to reflect upon the fact that my presuppositions could hinder and enhance the interpretation of another's lived experience therefore I must explain my own experiences and analyse this first.

I have tried to reflect upon the many different experiences that I have had and my motivations and deciding factors when I took the step from deputy to headteacher. I will look at any emerging areas of exploration from my own experiences and consider these in relation to my area of focus.

Reflective journals are one means of collecting data in qualitative research (Janesick, 1999) and are considered an effective way of capturing information about someone's feelings. (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). I have labelled the entries by the stage of my career.

3.4.3 Extracts from Key Reflections

Entry 1: Early Career Reflections written on 6th January 2013

My interest in women's educational leaders began when I started teaching, which for me was my second career. I previously had a career in Public Relations in 2002, where many of the senior partners were women, in fact, the whole of the PR industry was dominated by successful women, so I had come from an environment where a woman as leaders were the 'norm', and their leadership was celebrated. When I started a career in teaching, I always knew I wanted to climb the ladder quickly as I had spent five years in an industry where a competitive nature was normal and essential to be successful. However, teaching was not like Public Relations at all. One of the things that I did notice early on was the lack of women who wanted to reach the top. My mentor at the time, head of English, had reached her peak in terms of promotion and was happy with this, there was no way she wanted to go any further, and she made that quite clear. She didn't believe that she had the confidence to go any further and I am not sure it interested her. I on the other hand wanted to be promoted as my motivation was to eventually become a headteacher and I made this clear. In my first year as an NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher), I enrolled in the Government's Fast Track scheme and after a gruelling assessment was accepted. This meant that within three years I would graduate from the scheme with support if I were to gain a post as either an Advanced Skills Teacher or an assistant headteacher. I graduated within two years of joining as an Advanced Skills Teacher. My colleagues at the time would think I was mad for wanting promotions and more responsibility, but I wanted to make a success of what I did, and I enjoyed it. This wasn't the view of everyone of course but within the context of this school, it was. However, friends in other schools were equally as ambitious although at times we all faced situations that knocked our confidence.

Entry 2: Leadership progress reflections written on 8th June 2016

After securing my role as an Advanced Skills Teacher, an interim job role at my school came up as assistant headteacher. I knew I wanted to eventually become a headteacher, so I needed to sidestep into a senior leadership position at some point, so I decided to go for the job. I will always remember the interview as I had prepared well for it and I remember the Governor at the time seeming to be quite taken aback by the confident young woman before

him who knew what she was talking about and could show measurable impact of the work that I had undertaken within the school. But although the interview went well, I also knew that in this school things were very traditional, so traditional in fact that this school was where I was taught and many of the teachers were still here and having a young confident woman on the senior leadership team wasn't something that would fit into their traditions. This of course is my perception of the situation. After the interviews, I was told that I wasn't successful in securing the interim role. The assistant headteacher at the time bumped into me in the corridor and almost looked embarrassed to see me, apologising for what they thought was a mistake as I interviewed brilliantly. I knew then that this was not the school that would support my promotion and it made me feel a little sad that women as leaders would not be celebrated here as after all this school helped to shape me into the woman that I am after schooling me from aged 11 to 18. Again, this could have been related to my age and experience rather than gender but at the time it did make me rethink about the kind of school that I wanted to work in. The following week, I saw an assistant headteacher post advertised in a school not too far away. I went for the position and was successful and handed my notice in just two weeks after being unsuccessful in the interim position at my school. I had a great role model in my new school – a female headteacher who helped shape my career. I look back on my experiences now and I am not bitter about them at all as this next position led me to many more successes, but I often reflect on why some school structures and traditions do try to put a glass ceiling on success and whether this was just an experience that happened to me or whether more woman have faced it? Or indeed whether this was just my perception of the situation at the time which links to my self-doubt and confidence.

I took on a deputy headteacher role at this school and then relocated to the Midlands where I took an associate principal role and then eventually a principal role. However, I often think that if my journey hadn't taken this pathway would I still be stuck as an Advanced Skills teacher or happily comfortable as an assistant headteacher or deputy headteacher? People and places can have a big influence on your success, and I have been one of the determined women who have persevered, but I wonder how many other women have not been so lucky? Context therefore is an important element and I do think that the situation or school that you find yourself in can have a big influence on your decision-making process. More importantly for

me, the role of a good female role model was what influenced me the most to give me the confidence to progress.

Entry 3: My perceptions as female leader reflections written on 23rd April 2018

My pathway to headship hasn't been an easy one and along the way, I have felt at times that my gender has led to some discrimination, especially from other male headteachers but I have always managed to push these issues aside and concentrate on the overall picture which is committing myself to ensure that I am giving my students and my school the very best opportunities and that is not dependent on being male or female that is a passion for education and equality.

I have had comments made about my appearance, about the clothes I wear with one particular male peer colleague constantly commenting on "How he liked my suits", and another male peer colleague the first time of meeting me looking me up and down and stating, "Well you're not what I was expecting" and then swearing profusely in a conversation in a rather childlike situation as if trying to show off. I have received emails from peer male colleagues that I would consider completely inappropriate with kisses on the end and provocative comments that I doubt they would send to a male colleague. Even when I have replied professionally and ignored these comments, they have continued to send replies back with a flirtatious tone and kisses at the end. It is at this point if I reflect on this, I do think that I should have done more to prevent this from happening again. At the time, I think I was so shocked that I thought perhaps I had taken it too seriously and perhaps they were joking but the emails continued to 'cross the line' in my opinion, and rather than challenge that person I took the easy way out by diverting them to a colleague to answer any questions they had and therefore distancing myself from the situation but in doing this I have condoned this behaviour. At the time I think I didn't want to come across as a feminist or a hard-faced female headteacher but on reflection, I should have challenged this type of behaviour. These bizarre behaviours have not been isolated incidents and they have not just been male colleagues making them which makes me wonder whether the 'idea of what a headteacher should look like and be like' is something that society has engrained into us and therefore when faced with someone that doesn't fit this model it allows others to challenge it. The idea of what someone wears is also something I have thought about in great detail. Comments have been made about the suits I wear and how smart I look but again I think this is something that I have

assumed I should wear to show my authority and I find it quite difficult to dress any different to that even on staff inset days when staff come dressed in their casual attire. For me my suit allows me to feel I look the part and therefore I have constructed that image of what I think a headteacher should look like perhaps because I have faced incidents where I know people have treated me differently because I am not what they think a headteacher should look like.

Reflecting on clothing and my appearance I think I often use this as a leadership tool and certainly to define who I am as a leader. If I think back to a particularly difficult Ofsted inspection that I had I remember on day two thinking very carefully about what I would wear to go into battle. I remember specifically choosing a red top to show that I meant business. I also remember after day one of a difficult inspection thinking to myself 'time to put on my big boy pants' this in itself is an interesting phrase and terminology to use and something that I think says a lot about how I feel about myself and how I should be as a leader. Phrases like this assume that men are 'brave', and women are 'weak' and therefore I had to revert to masculine ways to confront the Ofsted inspector.

I think on reflection, the way that I dress has played an important part in creating the image of a successful headteacher. I can also think about times when I have dressed suitably for stressful meetings or meetings where I know conflict will occur. One of my triggers of stressful meetings or situations is that I develop a blotchy red rash on my chest, and I will always purposely choose to hide this in meetings by covering up my chest with a high neck top thus not allowing others to see that I feel stress and thus not letting them to see my vulnerabilities. Again, is this something I feel that leaders should not have, why is it that we don't want others to see our vulnerabilities and to come across as almost superwoman?

When I returned from work after a relatively short maternity break, again the comments started and people would say things like 'I just don't know how you cope, all that lack of sleep, how to do you it, you must be a superwoman'. Receiving constant comments like that does affect you in the sense that you then worry that perhaps you are neglecting your family role and that you're not doing a good enough job as a Mum. If people are constantly telling you that you are doing something they couldn't or something out of the ordinary, then it does make being a mother and a successful headteacher something that only a few people think they can do. It is only by reflecting on my experiences and having to listen to other women in

similar situations that I have realised that a lot of the reasons why women do not progress to headship is because they are made to feel that they can't and that certainly if you have a family too then something will suffer. There is a mixture of society's views, people's perceptions of what they think should happen, and the pressure that women put on themselves that make the prospect of progressing to headship an unrealistic goal, certainly for those juggling a family life balance. Perhaps if we were to celebrate the success of women who have succeeded in both areas more this may start to have a positive effect and start to break down some of the stereotypes that you must be a 'Superwoman' to do both. You can have your career and a family without superhuman powers.

3.4.4 Topics arising from my reflections

Within my entries, there is a wealth of personal reflections that illustrate my leadership experiences and the impact that my first career has had on my motivations for wanting to progress to headship. This is important to highlight as I was clear from entering teaching that my goal was to pursue headship. This will not be the same for all women and I must not assume that all women think the same way as myself or have the same motivations. Understanding their motivations to go into teaching is an important factor to consider in this study. The motivations underlying individuals' decisions to enter the teaching profession have been the subject of extensive research, reflecting the complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Bastick 2000; Boz and Boz 2008; Konig and Rothland 2012; Kyriacou and Coulthard 2000; Kyriacou et al. 2003; Moran et al. 2001; Papanastasiou and Papanastasiou 1998; Saban 2003; Sinclair 2008; Young 1995). Many prospective teachers exhibit a genuine passion for education, a desire to foster intellectual and socio-emotional growth in students, and a commitment to making a positive change in society (Chaplain, 2008). Additionally, the sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as articulated in self-determination theory, aligns with the fulfilment derived from shaping the learning experiences of students (Klasen et al., 2013). Studies have also shown that extrinsic motivations play a significant role in attracting individuals to the teaching profession (Chan, 1998). Job security, the societal value attributed to education, and the perceived stability of a career in teaching are factors often cited in literature (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Research by Veenman (1984) and Ingersoll (2003)

emphasises the importance of external factors such as the influence of family, role models, and the broader cultural context in shaping individuals' decisions to pursue a teaching career.

Building on this, if we reflect on why some women are motivated to progress onto headship and why some remain in their current roles this is again multifaceted. If we revisit the connection of this idea to self-determination theory (Deci &Ryan 2000) which emphasises intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, some women may be propelled by a genuine passion for leadership, a desire to effect institutional change, and a commitment to broader educational transformation (Leithwood et al, 1999). The intrinsic motivation to make a lasting impact on educational practices and policies may fuel their ambition for headship. Conversely, studies suggest that some women deputy headteachers may choose to remain in their roles due to a distinct set of considerations. The work of Guillaume et al (2017) emphasises the importance of organisational culture and the nature of deputy head roles in shaping career decisions. Some women may find fulfilment in the specific responsibilities and influence associated with deputy headship, opting for depth of impact over the broader scope of headship positions. Furthermore, the intricate interplay of work-life balance, family considerations, and an intentional decision to avoid the potential pressures associated with headship positions can play a significant role in shaping the career choices of women deputy headteachers (Harris et al., 2003). If we consider this within my study, it is important to acknowledge this and the reasons why my participants became teachers to understand their motivations and to consider a comprehensive approach to encourage more women into leadership by considering both intrinsic and extrinsic factors to create environments that attract and retain high-quality women leaders committed to the holistic development of students. I must not assume that all women come into teaching with the same motives and aspirations and understanding this is key to my research.

Within this next section, I look at some of the areas covered within my diaries and reflect on these critically before offering a summary of my reflections. I start chronologically by examining diary entry one followed by two and three.

The Fast-Track teaching scheme was set up by the government in 2001 to accelerate promising graduates, career changers, and existing teachers into senior leadership positions in teaching. At the time it was set up as part of the succession planning to address the need to recruit leaders for the future in schools. It was a programme that allowed me to attend

residential courses, workshops, and seminars on management and leadership skills. The idea behind the scheme was that the accelerated programme would provide a platform for future leaders to learn and be promoted quickly. I think it is important to acknowledge here that as teaching was my second career, I wanted to progress quickly in teaching, so I had already identified this as a route to help me succeed. I had not entered teaching as my first career and probably had different ambitions than a teacher who had entered the profession straight from university. My previous career was also very competitive, and it was expected to progress. I refer to leadership as being 'celebrated' within my entry. The Fast Track scheme was provided and supported by the then NCSL, National College for School Leadership (which no longer exists as this) and it had a bespoke conference centre in Nottingham where future leaders could attend seminars and training programmes. The work of NCSL became part of the remit for the Department for Education and whilst there are similar recruitment drives such as 'Teach First' (Teach First is a fast-track route to teacher qualification in England and Wales), there does not seem to be a programme that is designed to mirror the aims and ambitions of the Fast-track programme. However, in recognising that investment is needed in women's leadership development Dfe (2016:49) has devoted a section of the education white paper to '*increasing diversity in leadership'*. Women form a part of this diverse group and as a result, funding has allowed for the setting up of 'Women Leading in Education: regional networks', a 'Pledge to coach women teachers in schools' and further 'Leadership Equality and Diversity Fund: for school led programmes' (NCTL, 2016).

The term 'rising star' or 'ambitious deputy' from Hayes (2005) would seem to be appropriate to describe the characteristics displayed within my career, having a definitive career plan and wanting to progress to headship. Of course, not everyone within my research will see themselves as this and therefore it is important to examine the differing motivations behind each leadership journey to try to find solutions to the lack of women's representation with headship.

Morley explores some of the feelings I experienced when I felt that I was not successful in a post because of my age and gender. Of course, these were my perceptions. Whilst some literature refers to leadership and the inequalities in terms of gender and the role of women within the education sector, Morley (2012) explores the term *'leaderism'*. Morley (2012:117) refers to "*the focus on leadership as the organisational panacea*". Within her work, she draws

on O'Reilly and Reed (2010, 2011, cited in Morley, 2012:117) who state that they see "L*eaderism as a development or evolution of managerialism that has been utilised and applied within the policy discourse of public service reform in the UK".* In essence, this is proposing that 'leaderism' has emerged as a newer or advanced approach compared to 'managerialism' in the context of reforming public services in the UK. It suggests that there is a shift towards emphasising leadership qualities and principles alongside traditional managerial practices as part of the ongoing efforts to improve and transform public services. Teaching thus, is one of these. This could involve a focus on visionary leadership, empowerment, and more adaptable decision-making in addition to efficiency-driven managerial techniques; all of which could have an impact on women in leadership. Morley (2012) within her work focuses on the role of women within the education system, namely Higher Education, and engages with Diana Leonard's writing reviewing feminist views on how power and gender interact with leadership. Whilst the study looks specifically at higher education, it raises some very valid questions about education leadership. Morley looks to pose questions about the misrecognition of women's leadership capacities. Morley suggests that women should be supported to achieve their aspirations and that there are tensions within organisational hierarchies that highlight the gender inequalities in positions of seniority. Morley examines the wider context in terms of global literature and the views that men and women are treated differently within leadership positions. This reminds me of my position when I was not successful in the first leadership post I went for. I refer in my entry to the word 'stuck' suggesting that I felt if I had not moved schools and progressed then I would have been 'stuck' in the same position at my school. Morley refers to Marshall who states (Marshall 2007 cited in Morley 2012:125) *"women and men are largely placed differently with differential access to leadership and hence to influence meanings, discourses and practices"*. Morley reflects on the fact that while in some countries female leaders are increasing, they are predominantly underrepresented in senior leadership internationally. Morley believes that the rules of the game in terms of leadership need to be re-addressed and we should seek leadership practices that combine health, well-being, and competitiveness. Again, this relates to how I felt when I was unsuccessful in my first post. Of course, I recognise above that the feelings I felt at the time and the reasons why I was not successful in the role are subjective and it is important to understand in my research that people will interpret different situations differently and the implications for my research are that I need to understand this. I also reflect on the impact

on my confidence and how the negative leadership experiences worked as a motivator for me to want to progress in another school. It will be interesting to see whether any other women within the study have experienced similar situations.

The reference to a female headteacher and learning from her and being mentored is another area that I think needs exploring further within the research as I felt that this had a big part to play in my progress as I felt inspired and motivated by her. Reay and Ball (2000:146) argue that there *are "enormous difficulties in translating what are traditionally perceived to be "women's ways of working" into senior management contexts, especially when, as research demonstrates, such qualities are highly context-specific*". This would support my experience where in one school, I felt that my leadership style and qualities such as being able to work at a fast pace were not recognised whereas within a different school setting and context, I had a very successful career and series of promotions. This is clearly shown in my diary entries when I went from one school interview and was unsuccessful for an assistant head post to another school the following week where I was successful and went on to be promoted to deputy headteacher.

Clothing and appearance are something that I have often reflected upon and wondered whether it was just me that felt the need to put on 'armour' to defend my leadership. Fuller's research discusses the headteacher who "*literally put on gendered educational leadership in a dramaturgical sense with costume, coiffure and makeup*" (Fuller 2010:2). Coleman (2005) also argues that within this gender stereotype, in her survey, about half of the women secondary headteachers reported experiencing gender discrimination. This is interesting as it covers several themes. First of all, gender discrimination is a direct example of the interaction where the participant (myself) felt discriminated against and also how appearance and clothes were used to help with confidence.

Cultural and social attitudes towards women is a complex argument but something that inevitably influences women's perceptions of themselves and therefore reinforcing and perpetuating their disadvantaged position (MGivney, 1993:28). McGivney further explores the idea that women daily experience the paradox of living in a society which simultaneously promotes and extols the primacy of their family role (ibid). Adding to this, potential barriers for women is the pressure on themselves to undertake the family role and to see this as their

'social identity' (Bem, 1993; Haar and O'Driscoll, 2005). This links to the term I referred to in reflective journals of 'Superwoman' and that society has created this view that women cannot have both family and career or certainly that some women feel that they cannot. Adding to this, Hutchings (2002) would suggest that women who take statutory maternity leave or longer breaks may find themselves disadvantaged in promotion.

Coleman's research (2000:23) illustrates that it would appear that women who are married and who have children, may be identified more strongly with a domestic stereotype and implicitly considered less able to lead. The role of the woman within the family home and the pressure that society puts on women to act and be a certain way will be an area that I would like to explore further, especially concerning women and their perceptions as to whether they can manage the role of the headteacher within other family commitments and responsibilities. This role women and society assign to themselves can be seen as both a barrier and an enabler in my case I felt that this motivated me to want to show that you could have both career and family life. Whilst some of this literature is very dated now it will be interesting to examine whether this position has changed?

3.4.5 What have I learned from my reflections that will help me in the next stage?

Having analysed and reflected upon my own experiences, this has allowed me to look at my area of interest in more detail from a personal perspective. This has also enabled me to understand my own bias and some of the perceptions that I have. I am aware that I have constructed my reflections through the lens of being a woman and that my experiences are affected by this. I reflected on John Wild's quote *"Imprisonment in a world of our construction"* (1995: 191) to help me understand my own viewpoints. The quote suggests that people can inadvertently limit themselves by adhering too rigidly to their preconceived notions, biases, and constructed mental models and that they may fail to recognise alternative viewpoints, possibilities, or ways of thinking that exist beyond the boundaries they have set for themselves. This quote has helped me to remind myself that as a researcher, I must remain open-minded, question assumptions, and actively seek to expand my understanding. I am mindful that I must not assume that everyone wants to be a headteacher and would not necessarily have the same motivations and aspirations for their career as I have had. This resonated with me as when I reflected on some of the language used within

my reflective diaries, I noticed that the language I use is very focused on my personal ambitions such as *"I wanted to make a success of what I did", "I had wanted to get promoted", "I knew I wanted to climb the ladder quickly",* I also referred to myself as a *"rising star".*

This stands in contrast to the earlier motivations I discussed regarding women entering the teaching profession, including a fervent passion for education, a drive to nurture intellectual and socio-emotional growth in students, and a dedication to effecting positive societal change. Personally, I perceived that I could fulfil these aspirations and make a meaningful impact by taking the helm in a headship role. Consequently, my ambition for promotion was rooted in the desire for school-wide transformation. This inclination may stem from my recognition of how leadership roles in my initial career facilitated rapid change, and I yearned to replicate such transformative capabilities. I recognise that my perception of progress and success may differ from others who gauge their achievements and advancements based on their motivations and values for entering the teaching profession.

When I set out to analyse my reflective diaries, I wanted to look at my experiences and how my perceptions and experiences affected my views on routes into headship; any positive and negative experiences I had within my career including perceived gender issues; support that I have had in my career; areas affecting my confidence; cultural and social attitudes towards women including family commitments and career. This has helped me to understand what my perceptions of women in headship are and how my own set of beliefs has shaped my career aspirations. I have also reflected on how I feel other people perceive me and I think this is an important aspect to acknowledge and for me to explore with other women in my research.

I aim to investigate these areas by conducting interviews with female deputy headteachers, aiming to understand whether their experiences align with or diverge from my own, and to explore the decisions they make. I recognise that there may be additional challenges encountered by women, and I would like to delve deeper into these issues through their interviews.

All the above areas meant that I had to approach my data very carefully and not have any preconceived ideas of where the interviews would take me.

With this in mind, I was very aware of the semi-structured interviews and ensured my views were not reflected in the questions or by the way I asked the questions. I endeavoured to engage with participants' interviews and responses with genuine interest, refraining from expressing agreement, disagreement, or offering comments on their statements. I facilitated a space for participants to guide the direction of their interviews, adjusting my questions to align with the trajectory they naturally followed.

I also needed also to consider my analysis of the data and responses to the questions and answers given. Taking this into consideration, I decided as part of my research design to keep a reflexive journal which enabled me to log the details of any areas that I felt may influence the results of the interview. This can then be put forward as a contribution to the final analysis but also enrich the study design and provide a first-hand account of interview bias and the preconceptions that may have influenced findings (Roller, 2012).

3.5 Ethical considerations

In considering the following quote, *"To comprehend some meanings in life, one must get close to that life"* (Jegatheesan, 2008:1-13), this helps to explain the complexities of dealing with rich data and some of the challenges researchers face. However, in doing this researchers have to consider ethical guidelines, codes and conduct, confidentiality, and trust.

Before asking my participants to take part in my study, I thought carefully about the information that would be required from them and how this would be used. I understood that the rights of the participant needed to be carefully considered and these included the right to be protected from harm and the right to be informed about the research aims (Richards and Morse, 2007: 238). My information sheet (Appendix 1) gave details about my project and my consent form (Appendix 1) outlined a description of the project, requirements from the participants, and approximate timings for their involvement in the project. I also explained to my participants how much time I would need from them and ensured they were clear that they did not have to talk about anything they were not comfortable with. At the end of the research, I also provided an opportunity to debrief my participants on my findings, which they all agreed they would like to happen.

Before undertaking my project, my research proposal was passed by the University's ethical committee (Appendix 1). My research project abides by the BERA code of ethics (2011), and I

have ensured that all participants in the research understand the process in which they are engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used, and how and to whom it will be reported.

3.6 Data protection and consent

As per the Data Protection Act (1998), I complied with the legal requirements about the storage and use of personal data, locking all data away in a secure cupboard, and password-protected any work being analysed and used. I also considered the sensitive nature of the data that I was handling, ensuring I provided all participants with the following:

- Written and verbal communication that all data would be kept in a safe storage (as above) and would not be available to anyone other than myself
- Ensured all names throughout the study remained anonymous through the use of pseudonyms and abbreviations
- Hard copy retention of data, including the files on the computer which were all encrypted, and password-protected
- The coding system used throughout the research project provided consistent anonymity of the participants

As with all research projects, my main necessity was to gain the consent and cooperation of my participants and the institutions they were working in. To do this I gave all participants consent forms and worked around basing my project around '*informed consent*' which is defined by Diener and Crandall as cited in Ries and Morse (2007: 238) as *'the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions'* Diener and Crandell, (1978, ibid). To do this, I explained to all of my participants the study and any potential risks and benefits of the study. For example, one participant referred to the institution they were currently working in and it was important to make this participant feel at ease and to reassure them that any information and data generated would remain confidential. Confidentiality means that we are obliged as researchers to protect each participant's identity and place and location of the research (Silverman, 2016:33). For my research and confidentiality, I refer to all my participants in my research through the use of codes. I have changed all names to a pseudonym and refer to the broad area they work in along with an age bracket. For example,

I refer to the participants in my research by using the following code, Marie, WDH, Warwick, 40-49 to identify the participants. This refers to:

Marie – first name (pseudonym given)

WDH – Woman deputy head

Warwick – area they work in

40-49 – indication of their age range

I informed all participants that they were free to withdraw consent from the project at any time without prejudice.

As a researcher, I am responsible for producing rigorous research and this qualitative research informed by constructionist epistemologies is a complex, multi-dimensional, and contextual phenomenon. (Silverman, 2016:36). Hence, an ongoing ethical obligation exists to meticulously delve into the data and refrain from seeking immediate predetermined solutions.

The final question within Silverman's work in relation to qualitative research is trust (2016:32). Boydell et al (2012) and Lafrenière et al (2012) highlighted this issue in relation to data interpretation in ensuring that data is honestly and accurately represented. If researchers do not achieve this, then data can be deemed untruthful and therefore unethical.

3.7 Undertaking Data Analysis

Once I gathered my data, it was necessary to analyse the data from the interviews. I decided to use thematic analysis as this was an appropriate flexible approach for my analysis that allowed me to identify, analyse and report on patterns and themes within the data. I decided to manually code the data to identify recurring themes and sub-themes. Whilst I could have used software such as NVivo to assist in managing and organising my data I decided that I wanted to do this myself. The main reason being, I felt the dataset size was manageable and I wanted to build a deeper familiarity with the data. Manually coding involved close and repeated engagement with the raw data which I believed could lead to a more profound understanding of the material. It also allowed me to have complete control over the coding process and I could adapt and refine the coding schema as I progressed through the analysis.

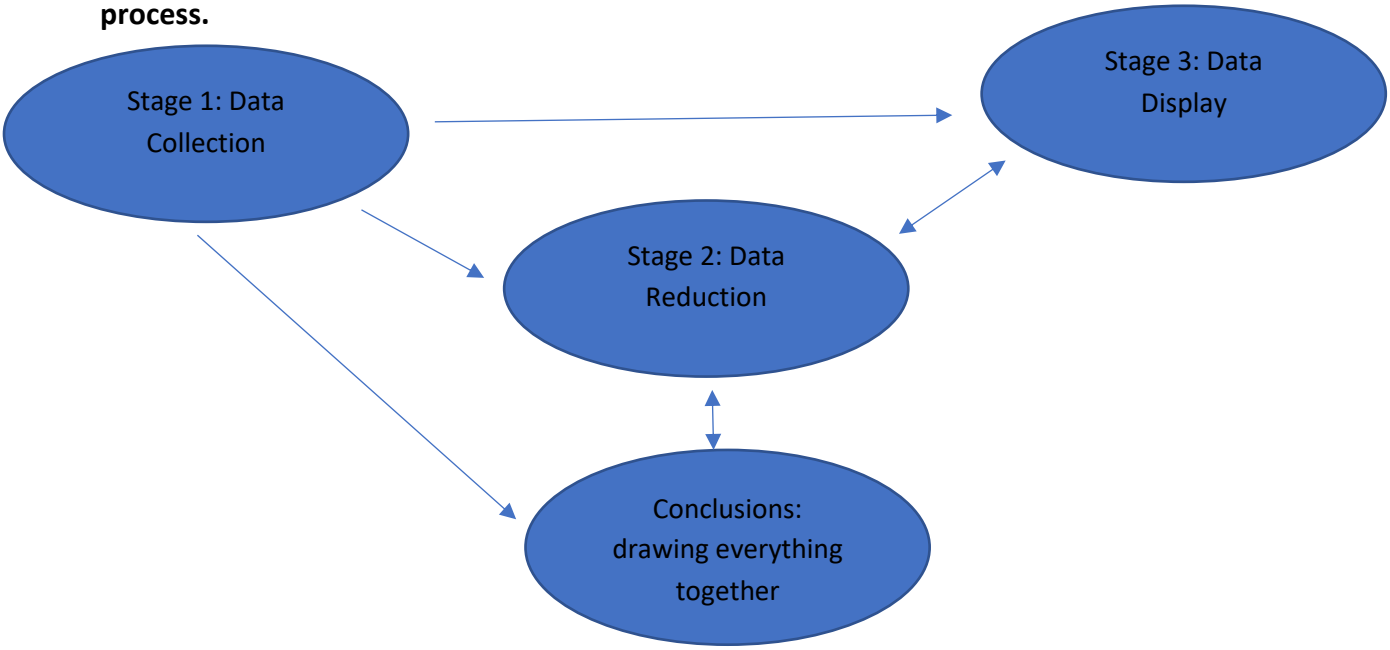
Manual coding also allowed me to spend time reflecting on the meaning and implications of each code and theme and it allowed me to continuously revisit and refine codes as I gained a deeper understanding of the information. However, whilst manual coding had its advantages, it is important to acknowledge this was very time-consuming and labour intensive. I was also aware that manual coding can be subject to bias and errors in interpretations, which is why I built in frequent reflection points and revisited the data numerous times. This can be seen in my later data analysis chapters and the stages taken within this.

In my thematic analysis, I chose to combine elements of both Braun and Clarke's approach (2006, 2014) to thematic analysis and that of Miles and Huberman (1984). I chose Braun and Clarke's approach to identify and analyse the themes, as I wanted to explore the subjective experiences, perspectives, and narratives of participants. I also chose Mile's and Huberman's approach to organise and present these themes visually. Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2014) model is a clear and staged approach that allows themes and sub-themes to emerge from the data. This framework worked for my set of data and seemed to be the most plausible method for helping identify several key themes within my data.

I adapted Miles and Huberman's approach, with the main reason for selecting this approach to be able to transcend surface-level descriptions and identify deeper patterns, themes, and relationships within the data. Using Miles and Huberman's approach allowed me to explore and uncover the richness and depth of my qualitative data whilst telling the story from my participants' perspectives. The use of visual representation, as advocated by Miles and Huberman also facilitated visualising the data and thematic patterns. This visual representation aided in clarifying complex relationships and allowed me to present findings in a clear and accessible manner.

Having been influenced by Miles and Huberman's (1984) approach to data analysis I wanted to take a three-staged approach to my data analysis before drawing any conclusions. This is illustrated in the diagram below. These stages were 1. Data collection, 2. Data reduction and 3. Data Display.

Figure 3: Diagram influenced by the key stages in Miles and Huberman's data analysis process.



I used Miles and Huberman's data analysis process which helped to provide a structured approach to analysing and making sense of my data, allowing me to fully explore all of my research questions.

Stage 1: Data Collection

This was the initial gathering of my qualitative data through my interviews and organising and storing data systematically.

Stage 2: Data reduction

This was where I began to summarise and condense the raw data. I created a coding system and started to identify key themes within the data.

Stage 3: Data Display

At this stage, I developed visual representations of the data through tables and by dividing the data into three distinct groups. This stage helped me to convert the qualitative data into a more manageable and structured format for further analysis.

Data analysis in the Miles and Huberman approach is often iterative, the subsequent chapters after the main study in Chapter 5 illustrate how I cycle back through the stages multiple times to refine my analysis as new insights emerge. The data analysis process helped me to make

sense of complex qualitative data by reducing it into manageable parts, displaying it visually, and helping me to draw meaningful conclusions.

Crucially, these phases prioritise the visualisation of data through utilising various presentation methods. These include but are not limited to, incorporating quotes, narrative passages, graphical representations, tabulating distinctions and resemblances, and elucidating the interrelationships, along with the intricacies tied to the data set (Miles and Huberman 1994; Gibbs 2002; Yin 2010). By using these different data display techniques within my data analysis this allowed me to make the description of the comparison and similarities in the data clearer. The use of quotations within my data analysis aimed to provide evidence, support, and validate interpretations (Miles and Huberman 1994; Gibbs 2002; Patton 1990). In the concluding phases of my data analysis process, I organised my ideas and concepts. This was accomplished by constructing cohesive findings and crafting frameworks for presenting the outcomes derived from the exhibited data. In this phase, it becomes imperative to elucidate the significance of conflicting and congruent data (Creswell, 2007; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

This combined approach can be seen in more detail in Chapter 5 where I discuss the steps taken within my analysis and how this then fits into the identified stages within Miles and Huberman in Table 4 (5.5).

The next chapter (4) provides a detailed summary of my pilot research project.

Chapter 4: Small-scale pilot study

4.0 Introduction

Bryman (2008) discusses that it is advantageous to conduct a pilot study before the main study for several reasons. It allows the researcher to test out the research instrument and that it functions well and allows the researcher to try out the research questions and refine them based on the experiences of the pilot study. Kezar (2000) also argues that piloting research instruments allows the researcher to gain *"firsthand, real world"* experience with the issue allowing the researcher to enhance the design, conceptualisation, interpretation of findings, and ultimately the results (ibid:385).

Therefore, considering the above, before conducting the main body of research, I undertook a pilot study in June/July 2017. I selected two of my participants to trial my questions with, two female deputy headteachers in secondary schools. I selected teachers whom I knew on a professional basis so that it made it easy to interview them and collect data. The pilot study helped me to gain an understanding of some of the issues that I would explore in my research, and this enabled me to refine my questions and methodology to allow for more in-depth conversations with the participants in my research project.

This chapter provides an overview of my initial small-scale pilot study that helped to inform the design of my main study. The main purpose of the study for my work was to help test out how likely the research process was to work to help me refine my processes before the final study. It therefore allowed me to look at whether any of the methods needed to be adapted or modified accordingly (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 1996: 121).

4.1 Aims of the pilot study

The main aims of the pilot were:

- To practise using semi-structured questions in interviews to allow the participants to explore their leadership experiences
- To trial using taped diaries to see if they give me appropriate data to answer my research questions
- To practise data analysis in different ways to identify appropriate approaches for my final study
- To identify changes needed in the methods and data analysis for my final study

The pilot study had wider benefits which have been acknowledged by Prescott and Soeken (1989) and Teijlingen and Hundley (2001), who discuss the benefits as being the ability to identify potential obstacles that might occur in the data collection or within the recruitment. As a researcher fairly new to data collection, the pilot study offered me the chance to test my "*road map"* (Thabane et al, 2010) and to test the feasibility, reliability, and validity of my proposed research design. As a novice researcher, it also allowed me to conduct the process of data and data analysis and to become confident in interviewing my participants. Holloway (1997:121) explains that piloting qualitative approaches has benefits especially if the researcher "*lacks confidence or is a novice, particularly when using the interview technique"* (ibid). The pilot study offered a useful tool that would provide information that would contribute to the overall success of my main study.

4.2 Undertaking my Pilot Study

For my pilot study, I interviewed two deputy headteachers who were women to understand their career aspirations and attain the views of women as deputy headteachers. I wanted to experiment with the use of questioning and to see whether the use of taped diaries proved to be an effective data-gathering tool or not.

The methods used within my pilot study were interviews and taped diaries. I experimented with data analysis and emerging themes.

The sample was purposefully small as I wanted to use it as a way to test out my methods and interview techniques to inform my main study and identify any adjustments that may need to be made.

Participants were selected by convenience sampling, a form of sampling whereby I selected the participants based on their accessibility; in this case the two closest participants from my main study in terms of proximity to allow easy access for interviews. In this case, both participants were within a two-hour drive of my location.

Participants for this study were two female deputy headteachers whom I interviewed in June and July 2017.

4.3 Ethical approach

Before asking my participants to take part in my pilot study, I thought carefully about the information that would be required from them and how this would be used. I understood that the rights of the participant needed to be carefully considered and these included the right to be protected from harm and the right to be informed about the research aims (Richards and Morse, 2007: 238). My information sheet (Appendix 1) gave details about my project and my consent form (Appendix 1) outlined a description of the project, requirements from the participant, and approximate timings for their involvement in the project. At the end of the research, I also wanted to provide an opportunity to debrief my participants on my findings, which they both agreed they would like to do. Participants were also assured about the confidentiality of the interviews and how participants' anonymity would be undertaken.

4.4 Interviews

I interviewed both participants, each interview taking approx. 45 minutes to an hour. Although at this point it is useful to acknowledge that whilst the interviews in themselves only took an hour, I did not account for the additional time that participants wanted to spend with me just talking and so the overall interviews took approximately one and a half hours to two hours in total. This is something that I needed to account for in my main study to allow additional time.

Both participants interviewed were existing deputy headteachers and for my pilot study, I travelled to their schools or chosen locations to interview them in a private room. Both interviews took between 45 minutes to an hour (an hour and a half/two hours including initial before and after conversations). One participant chose to be interviewed at work after school hours and the other in a neutral place away from work. I interviewed both participants to collect their version of their leadership journeys. The use of semi-structured interview questions helped with the interview structure as it gave several targeted questions to allow the participant to answer the topic areas relating to my research questions. However, I also wanted the participants to be able to talk about their experiences in their own words. I allowed participants to answer more on certain questions if they felt they needed to expand and less on others if needed. I used this in the pilot study when one participant wanted to explore her leadership experience during pregnancy in more detail and had a wider story she wanted to tell around this. In this instance, I used prompts rather than set questions to keep

the conversation going. This method allowed me to give her the voice to do so. It gave me a real insight into what the project could produce on a larger scale with some fascinating findings.

Both interviews were recorded. I started both interviews by asking the participants about their leadership journey so that they could talk about the moment they decided to become teachers to the present day. The question was framed as: *Can you tell me about your experience of education and schooling from Secondary school to Higher Education and what made you become a teacher?* This question allowed the participants to talk about their own education experiences before describing how and why they became a teacher and then a deputy headteacher. If I felt that more information was needed from a question, I would add additional questions and likewise delete questions from my prepared list if I felt the participant had already answered them. Other questions asked within the interview tried to get the participant to think about their journey of becoming a deputy headteacher and to consider any hurdles they may have faced on the way: *Have you had any positive or negative workplace experiences as a woman that you want to talk about? How long has it taken you to become a deputy headteacher?* The questions were designed to try to allow the participants to tell their leadership journeys and not for me to interrupt them with my thoughts or ideas. This was something I wanted to explore and practice during the pilot study as I acknowledged that I had preconceived ideas and views on what I thought could be the barriers. It was also important for the participants that I let them know that I would not be expecting any particular answers from them and that the interview was about their journey. Therefore, much of the pilot study became about how to establish relationships and this became a focal point in terms of looking at ways that would relax the participant and myself to get the most out of the interview. I explained to them my role as a deputy head and gave them time to talk about themselves and built-in additional time to ensure they had a hot drink and felt comfortable and relaxed. (See Appendix 2 for interview schedules and questions.)

4.5 Taped diaries

Both participants were asked to keep a taped diary for a week during the pilot study. (See Appendix 3). During this week, they were asked to record any reflections about meetings with stakeholders in terms of how they performed leadership. This method is an important

part of my pilot study as I wanted to see whether this was something that the participants felt they were able to do or whether it was too time-consuming.

The taped diaries serve several purposes (Burgess, 1984:203 as cited in Punch 2006:91). They provide first-hand accounts of leadership situations to which the researcher may not have direct access. They also provided me with additional material and information and an insight into their feelings and emotions.

4.6 Transcription

I transcribed the interview recordings by listening repeatedly to the tape including my own and the participant's contributions. I added notes on facial expressions or any body language as I felt was important to show these. These notes were added next to the question asked and I made a note of the keywords used so that I could easily annotate the transcripts afterwards. Some of the notes refer to participants showing signs of anxiety or enthusiastic responses. The notes were not used as part of the data analysis but as a way to monitor and comment upon any areas that I felt participants felt uncomfortable or were particularly passionate about. I then wanted to tidy up the transcripts by taking out my contributions and the questions.

I then transcribed the recordings from the diaries and transferred these into separate transcripts to sit alongside their interview transcripts. They were therefore not part of the main interview transcript. I did this as I wanted to keep the two separate, as the diaries were very focused on feelings and emotions whereas the main interviews looked at their leadership journey.

4.7 Emerging themes: Examination of research questions and how the pilot study addressed these

I decided at this stage not to conduct a full thematic analysis as I intended to use the two interviews within the main study. However, I did experiment with colour coding and allocating initial themes to each transcript. This allowed me to think about and practice data analysis which in itself illustrated the complexities of data, especially narrative data. It also allowed me to check that my research questions were enabling me to collect suitable data to answer my questions. I used this process to enable me to feel comfortable with coding and

for the main study I recoded all transcripts including the two within the pilot study to ensure that I was consistent with this process.

4.7.1 Interviews and coding

I initially started coding the interview transcripts to identify some emerging themes within the data linked to the key research questions because I wanted to see whether any data was emerging about my research questions. To do this, I colour-coded the themes based on which research question they related to. So, there were 4 key areas to code:

RQ1. The first area related to any leadership experiences the participants talked about (*What are women deputy headteachers school and leadership perceptions and experiences?)*

RQ2. The second area looked for any mentions of ambition and headship *(How do these perceptions and experiences relate to their ambitions in wanting to become headteachers?)*

RQ3. Thirdly, I look for any perceived barriers or hurdles the participant discussed *(What barriers/hurdles to promotion to headship can be identified?)*

RQ4. Lastly, I looked for any mention of enablers to headship in their *career (What enablers to promotion to headship be identified?)*

Analysing both transcripts there were several emerging themes that initially came out of the study that relate to the research questions and areas for me to explore within the main study. Some of these initial themes proved problematic as the participant's answers often fitted into more than one research question and there was often overlap. For example, one participant talked a lot about work-life balance and family but the context in which they discussed it fell within my first research question on leadership experiences and also within the perceived barriers and hurdles. This was something that I would need to consider for the main study in terms of how I reflect this in my analysis and any decisions I make in terms of how I analyse the data.

As I did not undertake an in-depth thematic analysis at this stage, I looked for any relevant quotes and areas that might need to be considered and adjusted for the main study. The

following section looks at my learnings from the pilot study and any adjustments I felt needed to be made in the main study.

4.8 Learnings from the pilot study

The main practical consideration that needed further consideration in my main study is the time allowed for each interview. I underestimated how much time the participants wanted to talk before and after the interview and to form relationships. This was an important part of my research and study as I wanted the participants to feel as comfortable as possible and to feel like they could tell their own stories in their own time. I therefore adapted my schedule for my main study and ensured that I only interviewed one participant on one day rather than trying to schedule two per day. This allowed additional time if participants wished to spend longer beforehand talking. This was more evident in the participants who chose a neutral place rather than their workplace and this is something I needed to consider in my main study; I offered participants a range of times to be interviewed including weekends.

4.8.1 Expanding the sample of participants

My pilot study brought up some issues that I perhaps had not anticipated. As a result of this, I decided to widen my research out to not just women who were secondary deputy headteachers but to existing headteachers male and female and executive headteachers. The reason why I added these to my sample is that I wanted to gain their views on how they support women who are deputy headteachers and whether they had any views on leadership issues that could potentially cause barriers for women. This would also enhance my research and sample.

4.8.2 Adjustments to the interviews

One of the most useful parts of the pilot study was the interviews and the time to practise using the questions and adapting them where I felt necessary. This exercise allowed me to see where I needed to give more prompts for questions and areas that would be of interest to explore further in the main study. This also allowed me to gain confidence with my style of interviewing whereby I would allow the participants to talk about a topic in more detail. I was initially worried about this because I felt that perhaps my interviews would go off on a tangent and not focus on the research questions. However, once I became confident with my interview style, I felt that I enabled the participants to talk more freely about their

experiences. For example, Participant 1 wanted to talk in detail about her pregnancy and how this affected her leadership journey.

Some of the adjustments made to questions were simply minor amendments. For example I asked one participant about their workplace and leadership experiences, and they focused on negative events that had occurred and how they had motivated her. I had not necessarily anticipated this but decided that I needed to make this clear in my main study that participants could give examples of positive or negative experiences as this would allow them to reflect on their own experiences. I also wanted to expand on the barriers questions by asking specifically whether women felt more pressure wanting a career and family as this seemed like a sensible topic to further explore in my research.

I have summarised in Table 3 the main adaptations and adjustments made to the original questions or additional questions. I did not always use these set questions; they were used when I felt the participant needed additional prompts to help them discuss their leadership experiences or they wanted to discuss these topics further. Some of the questions were designed to probe further into their feelings rather than try to influence the study.

Table 3: Adaptions of pilot study questions

Original question:	Adapted or additional questions:
Have you had any workplace experiences as a woman that you want to talk about?	***Have you had any positive or negative workplace experiences as a woman that you want to talk about? (Adapted question)***
What barriers do you think there are for women wanting to progress to headship?	***Do you feel like there is additional pressure put on women wanting a career and family? (Additional question if needed)***
	Have you ever had any mentoring within your role? (Additional question if needed)

4.8.3. Taped diaries

The use of the taped diaries whilst useful, proved too unwieldy for the participants and the initial key themes emerging from their data matched those within their transcripts. There were themes around '*performing as a woman to a certain standard*' and having to '*prove*

yourself' and it was useful to consolidate the themes through the taped diaries and the transcripts. A lot of the taped diary extracts reflect on the emotions of the women relating to their job role rather than the reasons why they perhaps do not progress, although it could be said that some of these emotions could provide further insight into the key barriers. Whilst the interviews within the main study will provide enough data, the taped diaries will be a loss to the study. However, it was an unrealistic additional pressure that I could not expect the participants to endure. I recognised that I needed to be flexible and accommodating in acknowledging that the time they were giving me already for interviews was significant so the additional pressure of asking them to tape themselves was not something I was going to expect them to do. This is an area that could be looked at in a further study focusing just on the thoughts and feelings of women via this method as this would be useful to understand how their day-to-day experiences affect them.

My pilot study has offered the chance for me to initially explore the aspirations thoughts and feelings of two participants regarding women deputy headteachers' aspirations. The two participants interviewed in my pilot study will form part of my main study so that I can build on their views and compare them to the remaining eight participants.

The changes I made to my main study were:

- Not to include the taped diaries as the time it took to complete them was unsustainable
- Widening my interviews to include more participants – existing headteachers
- Ensured extra time was given to interviews
- Adapted interview questions based on the pilot study

To conclude, my pilot study has allowed me to reflect on my research design and experiment with my questioning and data collection methods. Based on my pilot, I feel that my methodology is an appropriate form of research that will enable me to answer my research questions. The next chapter discusses the main study.

Chapter 5: Main study – research design and thematic analysis

5.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at how I conducted my main study in light of the revisions made from the pilot study. The main study follows the same processes as discussed in the pilot study and within the methodology in Chapter 3. The latter part of the chapter looks at the analysis process and the themes emerging from this.

5.1 Participants and Recruitment

For my main sample, ten participants were identified, two of whom participated in the pilot study. All ten were women who were currently deputy headteachers. I discuss the participants and recruitment process in Table 2 (3.3).

5.2 Interview process

Once I had received consent from all the participants, I contacted them to find suitable dates and locations for the interviews to take place. Participants could decide where they wanted the interviews to take place, at their home schools or in a neutral venue. Weekdays and weekends were given as options so that the interview could fit around the participant. I also learned from the pilot study that I needed to ensure that I scheduled enough time to be able to spend time with participants before and after the interviews. This was an important part of the learning process from the pilot and something that I was keen to do in the main study to ensure that all participants felt comfortable.

Before starting the interviews, all participants received information about the research project and could ask any questions that they had. I reiterated that the research project was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage of the research project.

Participants were invited to a scheduled interview (final interview questions can be seen in Appendix 4 and the schedule in Appendix 2).

A challenging aspect of the interviews was arranging a time for the interviews to take place around the deputy headteachers' busy schedules. It needed to be at a time when they were relaxed and felt they could give the time to the interview so that I got the full breadth of

answers rather than them seeing it as another school-based task to do. This was a challenge in itself, but important to get right. This was something that worked well in my pilot study, and I wanted to replicate this in the main study as it was important that my participants felt completely at ease and that they had the time to spare to talk to me.

Probing questions were used when necessary and, in some cases, questions or prompts were expanded upon or changed to allow the participant to talk about their own experiences and context. The interview questions in Appendix 4 show the different examples of these questions. When a participant freely spoke, I allowed them to and I only used questions when they started to go off-topic. Each interview lasted in-between 45 minutes to an hour and a half, and I recorded all interviews with a digital voice recorder. The time spent with each participant varied from 2 hours to 3.5 hours in total (this includes conversation before and after the interview as well as the interview).

The interviews were recorded and transcribed by hand.

I followed the same process for the four headteacher interviews, but the interviews were focused on the support that they had given to deputy headteachers to progress to headship and general questions about how a deputy head would progress and what might be stopping them. These interviews took place in their place of work, as requested by the participants, and lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. (See Appendix 4 for the headteacher interview questions).

5.3 Transcribing participants' interviews

I transcribed all my interviews from beginning to end verbatim and followed the same process as I did in my pilot study. This process took me a year, and this was something I wanted to do myself so that I could gain a greater understanding of the interviews. I transcribed by hand and whilst I acknowledge that I could have used other ways to gain this data I felt that this was an important part of understanding the data. It gave me time to reflect on each transcript carefully.

As with the pilot study, after the above transcription stages had taken place all the participants viewed their transcripts to check for accuracy and that I had not misrepresented anything they had said or deleted anything that they wanted to keep.

5.4 Thematic Analysis

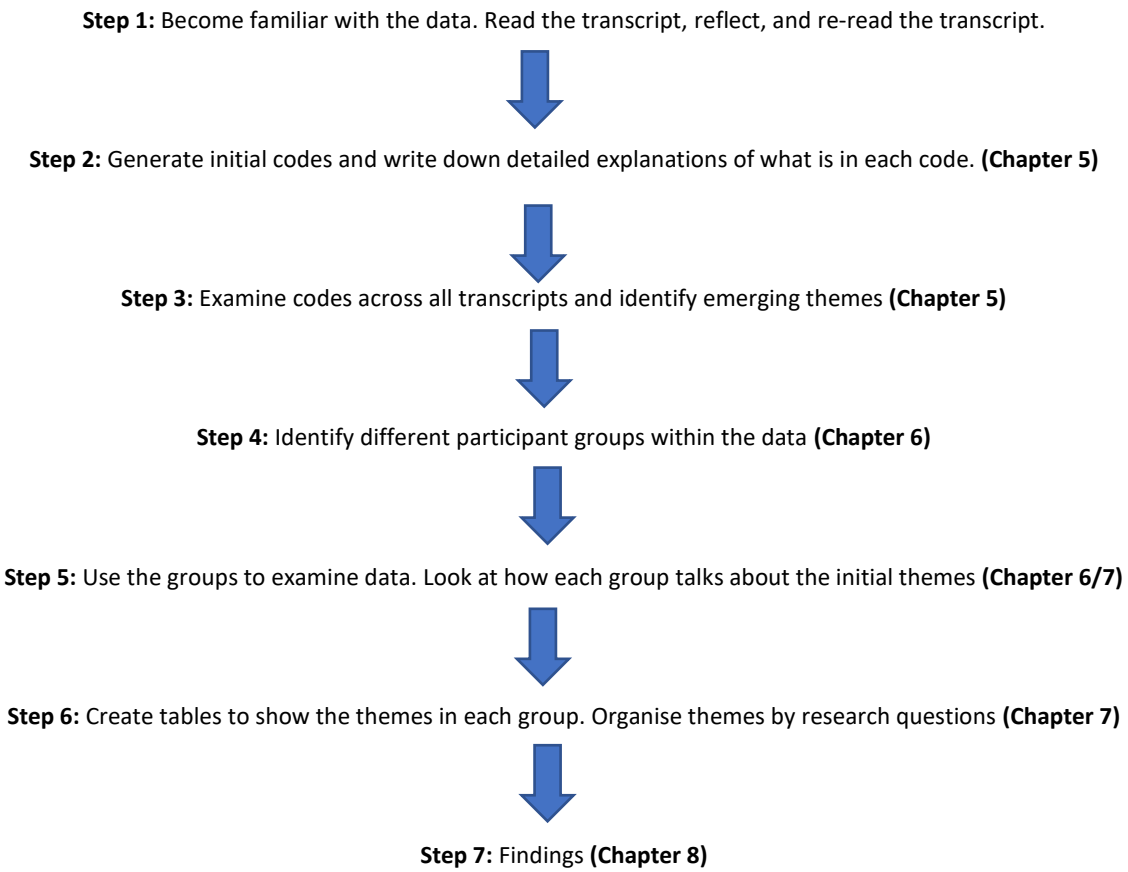
Once I had my raw transcript it was then necessary to extract meanings and to generate the main themes from the data collected.

Attride-Stirling (2001) discusses the importance of a need to take a rigorous and methodical approach to the analysis to yield meaningful and useful results. Using a systematic approach allows me to be transparent (Malterud, 2001; Sandelowski, 1995).

As discussed in Chapter 3, using Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2014) thematic analysis framework, I identified the main themes within the data. I did this by looking at each transcript individually looking for themes within before comparing them to other transcripts. For this research, themes are defined as patterns or similarities in experiences from the participants and areas of interest about the phenomena.

The figure below, Figure 3 outlines the thematic analysis steps that I applied to analysing the individual transcript of the participants. Each step within my thematic analysis is explained in detail in the subsequent chapters.

Figure 4: Thematic analysis applied to each individual's transcript



5.4.1 Step 1

I read every individual transcript a number of times to enable me to become familiar with the data. I built in reflection time and then re-read the transcript. After reading the individual transcripts several times I started to see patterns within the data. I made notes next to the transcripts to help me with the next stage of coding.

5.4.2 Step 2

I was concerned with addressing specific research questions around why some women do not progress to headship and analysed the data with this in mind – so this was a theoretical thematic analysis rather than an inductive one. I coded each segment of the data that I felt was relevant to or captured something specific about my research questions much like I did initially in the pilot study. I did not therefore need to code every piece of text. However, if I had been doing a more inductive analysis then line-by-line analysis may have been appropriate.

Despite, having some initial areas to explore from the pilot study, I did not have pre-set codes, so used open coding. This meant that I developed and modified codes as I worked through the coding process. This first stage allowed me to have some initial ideas about codes. For example, struggling to return to work after maternity leave was an issue that came up in the interviews this was very relevant to my research question. I worked through each transcript and followed this process generating new codes as I went through. I did this by hand initially, working through the hard copies of the transcripts with pens and highlighters.

I analysed all the transcripts and started off identifying the different codes and detail within each code from the individual scripts.

5.4.3 Step 3

After transcribing the data and identifying the different codes, I began to look across all of the transcripts and this enabled me to start to see some initial themes from within the codes. I used the codes to help me group the data into emerging themes and made decisions over problematic codes that could be categorised into more than one theme. Table 5 later on in the chapter illustrates the codes and initial themes identified.

5.4.4 Step 4

Once I had my initial themes, I identified three groups within the data in relation to career ambition. Group A, those wanting to progress to headship, group B, those not wanting to progress and group C those who were undecided.

5.4.5 Step 5

I used these groups (above) to examine the data and to look at how each group talked about the initial themes. I looked at each theme from each group and compared where there were similarities and differences to see whether this gave any further insight into the data.

5.4.6 Step 6

Once I had examined the data by group, I wanted to look at the research questions and organised the group data according to these and the initial themes. I wanted to look at visual representations and comparison tables to show the themes within each group within each research question. These allowed me to view the data in a visual form and to reflect on my findings. This enabled me to look at the data in a different format and to examine any similarities and difference and to answer the main research questions.

5.4.7 Step 7

After my visual table creation and comparison, I was able to see the findings emerging from the thematic analysis process.

All of the above steps are discussed in more detail with examples in the next section of this chapter.

5.5 Early steps within data analysis

As discussed in Chapter 3, I was influenced by Braun and Clarke and Miles and Huberman's three-stage approach of data collection, data reduction and data display before the conclusion making. Earlier in the chapter, in Figure 3, I illustrated the steps that I took within this, and this part of the chapter and subsequent chapters go through each of these steps and show how I combined these approaches.

The following table (Table 4) illustrates how I incorporated the three stages of Miles and Huberman (data collection, data reduction, and data display – see Figure 3 in 3.7) within my thematic analysis steps identified earlier on in Figure 3. It illustrates the key questions of reflection that I asked within each stage and where I explore the different stages within the analysis chapters. This illustrates my thinking, and the different reflection points I took during the data analysis process.

Table 4: Combined thematic analysis approach

Stages:	Steps:	Process:	Questions asked
Data Collection	Step 1: Become familiar with the data. Read the transcript, reflect and re read transcript.	Became familiar with the transcripts. Read the transcripts. Reflected. Re read transcripts.	Are the initial codes on the transcripts linking to each other or is something more complex emerging?
Data Reduction	Step 2: Generate initial codes and write down detailed explanations of what was in each code.	Generated initial basic codes. Organised data from transcripts into different codes.	Are the codes too broad. What do they tell me about the research question? Do I need to refine these further and group them? **Chapter 5**
Data Reduction	Step 3: Examine codes across all transcripts and identify emerging themes.	Searched for emerging themes. Identified participant groups within the data. ***(See Appendix 5 for initial themes within transcripts)***	What participant groups can I see merging from the data? Can I organise by data by participant groups? **Chapter 5**
Data Display	Step 4: Identify different participant groups within the data.	Organised data into three groups- A (wanting to progress to Headship), B (Not wanting to progress) and C (undecided on progression to headship).	What did the data look like when I divided it into participant groups? **Chapter 6**
	Step 5: Use the groups to examine data and look at how each group talks about the initial themes.	Analysed themes within each identified participant group and analysed how each participant group talked about the themes. Used quotations and tables to display the data.	Does each theme have adequate supporting data? Is the data included coherent in supporting the theme? Can I see any patterns within each group? **Chapter 6/7**
Data Display	Step 6: Create tables to show the themes in each participant group and organise themes by research questions.	Examined data in relation to the research questions through creating tables and looked at key findings emerging from this stage.	What patterns can I see across the groups? Any new patterns emerging? **Chapter 8**
Conclusion drawing/verifying	Step 7: Findings emerging from the process.	Key concepts emerging from data and exploration.	Are there any links to existing theories? **Chapter 9**

These stages were used to ensure that there was a continuous focus on interpreting my data throughout. According to Lodico et al. (2010:165), in all qualitative research, data analysis and interpretation are continuous throughout the study, so that insights gained in initial data analysis can guide future data collection. Part of what distinguishes qualitative analysis is a loop-like pattern of multiple rounds of revisiting the data as additional questions emerge (Frectling, Sharp, 1997); my approach reflected this and would allow me to develop a deep understanding of the material.

5.6 Initial coding process – Steps 1 and 2

My initial coding of my data was quite straightforward as I read and reread the transcripts coding them based on the qualitative data itself, using inductive/open coding shown in steps 1 and 2 in my thematic analysis table. This formed stage two of Miles and Huberman's (1984) approach as this was the stage I was looking at data reduction. According to Miles (1994:10), data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data in written field notes or transcripts. Coding is a fundamental step in data reduction in which I systematically assigned codes to segments of the qualitative data (interview responses) to categorise and organise them based on common themes, concepts, or patterns. These codes served to condense and summarise the data, making it more manageable for further analysis.

Before I started the process of coding, I chose inductive coding as I was aware of my 'insider knowledge' on the subject area and I didn't want to start with a set of predefined codes as with deductive coding.

The first step after reading the transcripts was to code what was in the data. I created a set of codes as I read through each transcript based on areas relating to my research question and topics covered within my sample. I then collated these codes across the whole sample. I had a number of codes at this stage in the thematic analysis as can be seen below.

Table 5: Initial codes

• Pressure to be a Mum and have a career • Guilt of balancing family and career • People's perceptions of being a Mum and on SLT • View you can't have a young family and be a Head • Mums pigeonholed as being a Mum • Having children and headship not compatible • Career breaks and confidence • Need to be more resilient and prove yourself after having children • Ambition/prove everyone wrong • Inspired by self/head • Wants to make an influence on school as Head • Make positive changes as head • Wanting to make decisions as head • Shape vision of school as head • Shape future lives • Achieve ambition of being a head • Finally have confidence to be a head • Love their role as deputy head • Making an influence on a school in current DH position • Needs to be more flexibility in headship role • Lack of job shares • Work-life balance important • Flexibility of DH roles versus headship • Not confident enough in all areas/not ready • Lack of appropriate training • The unknown of headship • Need female mentors to encourage women into headship • Female role models needed • Conversations about career progression needed	• Positive experience of education • Struggled with education • Always liked school so wanted to be a teacher • Traditional route to teaching versus non-traditional route • Positive experience of education • Struggled with education • Always liked school so wanted to be a teacher • Traditional route to teaching versus non-traditional route • Gendered SLT roles • Men appearing more confident • Gender discrimination/bullying • Lack of skills and confidence • Men appearing more confident • Frustrated at times as deputy head • Men and women do things differently • Skill set of men and women • Headship appeals more to men • Encouraged by head • More female heads with children as role models needed • Head hasn't encouraged me • Happy in current DH role • Husband's career takes priority • Staffing and retention worries • Government agendas/pressure • Ofsted • HR/finance worries • Accountability • Headship is all-consuming

5.7 Examined codes across all transcripts and identified emerging themes - Step 3

After identifying all my codes, I was then able to identify initial themes. On my first read through I identified my initial themes, they were: Having children/Being a Mum/Pregnancy/balancing home and work; Education; Influence; Leadership; Headteacher's

style; Flexible working. I colour coded my transcripts with these themes making notes as I went through.

At this stage I added two additional initial themes which was lack of training/preparation for headship and external barriers. Having added these additional initial themes, I reread all the transcripts again and recoded them accordingly. Whilst this process was very time consuming, it allowed me to have a more complete, unbiased look at the themes throughout my data. This process can be seen in the table below where I illustrate how I assigned each code to an initial theme.

Table 6: Initial themes and explanations

Initial themes:	**Codes:**
Having children/being a Mum/Pregnancy	Pressure to be a Mum and have a career Guilt of balancing family and career People's perceptions of being a Mum and on SLT View you can't have a young family and be a Head Mums pigeonholed as Mum Having children and headship not compatible Career breaks and confidence Need to be more resilient and prove yourself after having children
Education	Positive experience of education Struggled with education Always liked school so wanted to be a teacher Traditional route to teaching versus non-traditional route
Influence	Ambition/prove everyone wrong Inspired by self/Head Wants to make an influence on school as Head Make positive changes as head Wanting to make decisions as head Shape vision of school as head Shape future lives Achieve ambition of being a head Finally have the confidence to be a head Love their role as deputy head Making an influence on a school in the current DH position
Leadership	Gendered SLT roles Men appear more confident Gender discrimination/bullying Lack of skills and confidence Men appear more confident Frustrated at times as deputy head Men and women do things differently

	Skill set of men and women headship appeals more to men
Headteacher influence	Encouraged by head More female heads with children as role models needed Head hasn't encouraged me
Flexible working	Needs to be more flexibility in headship role Lack of job shares Work-life balance important Flexibility of DH roles versus headship
Lack of training/preparation for headship	Not confident enough in all areas/not ready Lack of appropriate training The unknown of headship Need female mentors to encourage women into headship Female role models needed Conversations about career progression needed
External barriers	Happy in current DH role Husband's career takes priority Staffing and retention worries Government agendas/pressure Ofsted HR/finance worries Accountability Headship is all-consuming

I then used the initial themes to code each transcript so that I could clearly see the parts of each transcript that related to each initial theme.

An example extract from this process is shown below:

Having children/Being a Mum/Pregnancy

Education

Influence

Leadership

Headteacher influence

Flexible working

Lack of training/preparation for headship

External barriers

Transcript of interview with a woman who is a deputy headteacher

R: What was your experience of education and schooling? Can you talk me through your education journey from Secondary School to Higher Education?

I: Didn't do very well at school. At secondary school, I was very PE based. Went to lots of clubs and activities. Did Ok on my GCSES but not very well really. Got my Maths and English and an A in PE but everything else was D's and F's. Then I got pregnant at the age of 17 and was told by my teachers that I wouldn't go to university and that I'd ruined my life completely. I sat my A levels 7 months pregnant and did OK got two ds. I spent two years bringing up my daughter having part time jobs and then I applied to university and got an unconditional offer for Greenwich. My Mum supported me fully in going to university. Didn't really enjoy University at all it was a means to an end. I absolutely knew I wanted to go into teaching. I found the whole process really hard because of having my daughter but I did what I needed to do to be able to teach. So, I guess for me school and education wasn't really an overly positive experience yet I still went back. I've now been a Deputy Head for 7 years.

Further examples of coding can be seen in Appendix 5. After repeating this for all my transcripts, I reflected that this was quite a basic initial analysis and there were many complexities within the data and that within some of the broader themes such as 'Having Children/Being a Mum/Pregnancy' there were a lot more complex issues and I wanted to be able to see the complexities to give me a better understanding.

5.7.1 Problematic codes and initial themes

During this exercise, several codes proved problematic where they could be categorised into more than one theme. For example, career breaks could also fall into theme of having children/being a Mum and also external barriers. I made the decision to code anything that was directly related to being a woman (such as being a Mum, maternity related) to fall under having children/being a Mum and then other personal barriers that could apply to both men and women (such as Ofsted, government pressures) categorised within the theme of eternal barriers.

5.8 Clarifying the initial themes

At this stage, I had eight initial themes, which I felt could be condensed further as some of the initial themes were more relevant to my study than others. For example, 'Having Children/Pregnancy/Being a Mum' and some of the 'External barriers' contained a wealth of topics that were worth exploring in more detail whereas the theme of education was not adding anything of interest to my study and could be added to an existing theme: inspiration and motivation. At this stage, I used the initial themes to help me group the data into final themes. For example, gendered roles and skills became a final theme as there was evidence from the detail within this that this covered a range of areas from gendered SLT roles and skill

sets to lack of encouragement from headteachers. Other themes were renamed to reflect the merging of themes or to represent the theme that was starting to emerge. The table below illustrates how the initial themes merged into final themes with some of the examples of the data used to illustrate the final themes.

Table 7: Original codes used to identify final themes

Initial theme:	***Final Theme:***	***Data example:***
Leadership *Headteacher influence*	**1. Gendered roles and skills**	*"It's really obvious on my SLT there are gendered roles"* *"The men on my SLT have bags of confidence"* *"I lacked self-belief in my skills"* *"I've felt frustrated at times with my career"* *"My female Head encouraged me to take on headship"*
Education *Influence*	**2. Inspiration and ambition**	*"I want to prove everyone wrong"* *"I'm looking forward to having my school and to see the impact that I can have on it"* *"It's exciting to think you can make such positive changes"* *"I want to shape the next generation"* *"I know I have the expertise to move a school forward now"* *"Ultimately my aim was always to become a headteacher for not only myself to get to the top of my profession to make a difference to young people"* *"I'm so ready for headship…I finally have the confidence"* *"I'm very happy in my role as DH"* *"I still get to make important decisions and have influence"*
Flexible working	**3. Work-Life balance challenges**	*"I have often thought why not take the next step to headship, but it would be impossible at the moment with two children"* *"I can completely see why some women are put off headship. It is not the most flexible job you could have"* *"A job share for headship would be a great idea"* *"There needs to be more encouragement or even job shares"* *"It's whether I can balance it all with home life and a child"* *"We need to celebrate successful female headteachers more"*

		"I enjoy the balance and workload of DH. You can't have a family and manage your work-life balance as a Head" *"I love the flexibility of my current role!"*
Having children/being a Mum/Pregnancy	**4. Impact of Motherhood**	*"Confidence definitely has an impact on a woman's career"* *"The amount of guilt I feel if I don't quite make it home"* *"The second I got pregnant, everything changed….my confidence hit rock bottom"* *"The amount of people that have said to me are you going to be alright? Will you be able to cope?"* *"I mean it's the assumption that it's too much if you have two children….it makes you more determined in the end"* *"Children equals no career, especially having a child"* *"Headship is all-consuming. Women that take on headship with children must be superwoman!".*
Lack of training/preparation for headship	**5. Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations**	*"I would love to progress to headship, but you know I just don't possess that confidence that men do"* *"I would never put myself in a situation or job where I didn't feel 100% confident that I could do a good job"* *"There's no amount of training that can prepare you for headship"* *"The unknown of headship"* *"If I saw more female headteachers in my position with young children I'd be encouraged to do it"* *"If I had a female mentor or role model to discuss headship with, I think this would help"*
External barriers	**6. Personal and systematic pressures**	*"I'm very happy in my role and if I'm honest I couldn't nor would I want to go any further"* *"My husband's job takes priority"* *"The biggest thing that worries me is staff retention and recruitment"* *"I think the government needs to relook at the education system, the pressure on schools financially is daunting and Ofsted is too much pressure"* *"You hear so many stories about Ofsted"* *"The pressures of the ever-changing Government demands and lack of support worries me"* *"I can't even begin to imagine it when it's just you and you are accountable for everything!"*

After this stage, it allowed me to move on to data display, transformation, and deeper analysis, ultimately leading to the interpretation of findings and the development of meaningful conclusions which are all explored in subsequent chapters.

The next chapter (6) will look at step 4 where I sorted the participants into three groups consisting of those who had ambitions for headship, those who did not, and those who were undecided. This was important for my research as I was seeking to identify what might encourage or inhibit ambitions for promotion. This part of the study will explore whether some of these initial themes are more relevant to the different groups and whether any new themes arise. During this process, I returned to the data numerous times ensuring that this was an iterative process.

At the end of chapter 6, I also examine the group of headteachers and explain their interviews and findings.

CHAPTER 6: Dividing participants into groups in relation to ambition for headship and exploring themes within these – Step 4

6.0 Introduction

The next step in my analysis, was to examine the transcripts in detail and to start to group these relating to their ambition for headship. Within these groups, I began to also examine the themes within each of these groups. This formed step 4 of my thematic analysis.

The interviews with the female deputy headteacher participants allowed them to talk about their career aspirations. I asked them specifically whether they wanted to progress to headship or not. Many of them talked about future aspirations with some expressing the desire to become headteachers one day whilst others said they were happy to stay in their deputy headteacher roles and did not want to progress onto headship. One final group emerged from the study, and this was those who were undecided about their future career and whether they wanted to progress to headship. I made the decision to split the participants into three groups; those wanting to progress to headship; those not wanting to progress to headship; and those undecided on whether to progress to headship. This would enable me to identify whether the different groups had different themes which might explain why they were making different career choices.

6.1 Identifying groups and analysing key themes

I put the participants into three groups based on the participants' views of their aspirations for headship. They are labelled: A) those wanting to progress to headship; B) those who didn't want to progress to headship; C) those undecided on whether to progress to headship. Within each of these three groups I have examined whether the themes from Chapter 5 can be identified within the data and whether there are any additional themes. A reminder that these themes were:

1. **Gendered roles and skills**
2. **Inspiration and ambition**
3. **Work-life balance challenges**
4. **Impact of Motherhood**
5. **Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations**
6. **Personal and systematic pressures**

Group A: Group A consisted of five female deputy headteachers who talked about wanting to progress to headship at some point in their career (Deputies 1, 3, 4, 6, 9). This group all expressed an interest in wanting to become a headteacher within the future. Their ages ranged from 30-49.

Group B: Group B consisted of three female deputy headteachers who explained that they did not want to become headteachers and that it was never part of their career plan (Deputies 2, 7 and 10). Their ages ranged from 30 – 49.

Group C: Group C consisted of two female deputy headteachers who explained that they were undecided about their future career progression (Deputies 5 and 8). The two within this group expressed views on skills set and whether they would ever be ready for headship. Their ages ranged between 30 and 49.

I will now discuss and explore the six themes in relation to each group.

6.2: Group A – wanting to progress to headship

Within this section, I will illustrate some examples of how the participants talked about the six different themes in relation to their careers.

The topics summarised at the start of each section were identified by the common patterns within the participants answers. Where a topic was discussed that was relevant to the theme, I wrote this down and then summarised these into a table in case anything further emerged from these topics that I felt needed to be investigated further. It also helped me to visually see the topics within each theme and where there were commonalities occurring across themes.

Each section will follow the same format; summary of topics within themes followed by illustrative examples.

6.2.1 Theme 1: Gendered roles and skills

Group A, discussed six topics within leadership, a summary of these is below:

Summary of topics with the theme of Gendered roles and skills:

Lack of confidence and skill	Gendered SLT roles	Wearing power suits	Men appearing confidence

Career Breaks affecting confidence in leadership	Men dominating conversations

These topics are demonstrated in what participants say and discuss about the theme of gendered roles and skills. These are expressed in several ways throughout the interviews. Jean, WDH, Worcester, 40-49 explains the experiences she has had on SLT:

> *"It's really obvious on my SLT that there are gendered roles – the men are in charge of data and timetabling and the women lead on learning and teaching and pastoral. I'm considered the 'Listener' of SLT, the one staff come to. Sometimes I have to take a deep breath in meetings because the men try to dominate the conversations. It is definitely male-dominated on my team and that's hard sometimes. I find myself wearing power suits just to make myself credible and to give myself a voice!"*

Jean's experience has affected her confidence and skill set so much that she feels that she needs to put on 'power suits' to be heard. This is an interesting outlook, and the gender mix is something that Claire, WDH, Herts, 30-39 also discusses when she talks about her leadership experiences describing how her male colleagues are very confident:

> *"I would love to progress to headship…. I just don't possess that confidence that men do. The men on my SLT have bags of confidence and half the time I know that they don't know what they are talking about, but they appear confident, so everyone goes with it! I think my career break for maternity has played a big part in my confidence. It's hard coming back and everyone expecting you to just come back as confident as before and others don't help as they assume you can't manage both family and leadership".*

However, not all the participants feel the same about their experiences on SLT, and Emma, WDH, Leicester, 30-39 talks about how she feels her gender has not held her back:

> *"I have a female headteacher who is very mindful about family pressures, and I don't feel like my gender has held me back, however, what I have observed is how other*

people view you especially after coming back from maternity. That's when I doubted myself and my confidence. Men don't have career breaks, well it's not as common."

Marie, WDH, Warwick, 40-49 also discusses gender in her interview explaining that:
"I've never come across any gender issues in my career, the main blocker to headship has been me. I felt a pressure to prove myself after maternity leave and I lacked self-belief in my skills".

All the participants talk about career breaks and confidence and their position as a woman as a senior leader and for many of them their own perceptions of their confidence and skills.

6.2.2 Theme 2: Inspiration and ambition

Summary of topics within the theme of Inspiration and ambition:

Ready for headship and finally have the confidence	**Proud of achievement and wants to go to the top- headship**	**Prove you can achieve your ambition**	**Frustrated with career and felt held back by family commitments**
Only one to go to university – wants to be a head to show you can achieve	**Wants to be a role model for other**	**Positive role models influenced them to want to be head**	**Make a positive change/have a positive influence**

All five deputy headteachers who wanted to be headteachers talked about their journeys and the feeling of wanting to succeed in their careers. All five used the word 'ambition' or 'ambitious' when they described themselves and that they were proud of their achievements to date. This reminded me of the language that I used in Chapter 3 in my reflective journals. Sarah, WDH, Essex, 30-39 described her journey:

"I am proud of what I've achieved and for me the icing on the cake is to make it all the way to the top- to be Head. I've proved everyone wrong. I had a child at 17 and put myself through university whilst looking after a young child. I've proved that you can have ambition if you have the drive to succeed no matter what your circumstances".

Whilst all the participants talked about ambition, one participant discussed how she had to curb her ambitions whilst she had a young family. Jean WDH, Worcester, 40-49 described her journey as:

> *"I felt frustrated at times with my career and aspirations because I've always been ambitious, and I didn't feel at the time that I could do both – be ambitious and have a family. I've sat back for so many years waiting for my time to come but I should have done it sooner, I didn't need to leave it until the children had grown up."*

Another participant talked about their educational background and family context and how becoming a headteacher would be a personal goal and achievement. Emma, WDH, Leicester, 30-39 explained that:

> *"I am the only one in my family to have ever gone to university so for me becoming a headteacher is something that I want to do for a number of reasons. Yes of course because I love teaching and am passionate about shaping lives but actually it's more personal for me too. I want to be a role model to my family, to prove that you can achieve whatever you want with a bit of hard work."*

When questioned about their reasons for wanting to become a headteacher all the deputy headteachers talked about a previous teacher or colleague that inspired them in some way. For all, it was a female role model although not necessarily a headteacher.

Sarah, WDH, Essex, 30-39 explained:

> *"I have always been inspired by my previous teacher from when I was at school. I had a difficult time at school having a child at 17 and during my A levels but actually my teacher, who was head of year at the time, made me believe in myself and she knew my dream was to always become a teacher and I was inspired by her to do my best. When I finally went to university and did my teacher training, I made the decision then that I wanted to make it to the top, to become a headteacher so that I could have the same positive influence on children that she had on me."*

Some of the participants also referred to having a positive role model as their headteacher:

> *"My headteacher has been fantastic, I don't know if it's because she is female or whether it is because she just gets it! She makes a point of ensuring that we all get a work-life balance and leads by example herself too. She's managed to combine her headship with having a young family and she still succeeds. Her view is that it should never stop someone from achieving what they want to and that there's always a way*

> *to make it work. I just wish all my previous headteachers had been the same. I really do think perhaps I would have looked at headship at lot earlier if they were" (Marie, WDH, Warwick, 40-49).*

Other participants discussed having a role model who they felt was fair and was able to communicate well. Claire, WDH, Herts, 30-39 explained:

> *"For me, be able to talk to your head in a non-judgemental way has been great. It's a really important skill for headteachers to have I think, to be approachable and to be seen as fair. It's definitely something I have come away thinking I'd like to be like that as a head".*

All the deputy headteachers had someone that they could recall in terms of inspiring them to become headteachers. For all, it was the personal qualities that they admired in each individual and qualities that they wanted to model themselves in headship.

Another real factor for this group in terms of progressing to headship was the desire to make a positive change. Everyone talked about this as a real driver to succeed. For some, they talked about the fact that they felt confident in their roles as deputy headteachers and had spent time observing their headteachers and felt that now they could make a difference within a school as a headteacher. This was broken down into two topics, firstly those that almost felt frustrated by their current roles and not being able to make key decisions in driving things forward, and the second that they were looking forward to making positive change based on the experiences they had gathered from their current school and putting these learnings into practice in another environment. The below quotes illustrate these two differing viewpoints:

Sarah, WDH, Essex, 30-*39 "To be honest, I'm so ready for headship now and I find it a little frustrating that I'm not… I can now see things that need to happen in my school, and I make suggestions but if the head doesn't agree with them then ultimately, it's their school and their decision is final. I know that I have the expertise now to move a school forward and I now finally have the confidence to do this".*

Another deputy head explained that they would use their current learning and model this in their new school. Jean, WDH, Worcester, 40-49:

"I've learnt so much from my headteacher and I'm not saying I'd take everything they do as the way I would lead my school but there's certainly a lot I would. I'm looking forward to my own school and to see the impact that I can have on it. It's exciting to think you can make such a positive change."

All the participants within this group spoke about headship in a positive manner and something that they felt they could all make a positive change and have an impact on a new school environment. They did all acknowledge that there were also some barriers that they would need to face in taking on a headship, but they all seemed prepared for these and had discussion points around how these could be solved nationwide to help promote more women going into headship.

6.2.3 Theme 3: Work-life balance challenges

Summary of topics within the theme of Work-life balance challenges:

Impossible to be head with children	**Guilt associated with work and having children**	**Like flexibility of DH role-family time and manage workload**	**Wouldn't have confidence to put themselves forward for headship and manage workload**
Not sure whether you can balance home and having a child with headship	**Need to see more female heads with children to show it's possible**		

All five deputy headteachers who were interviewed who wanted to become headteachers said they all had reservations about family commitments and work-life balance. It was a common theme amongst all of them and many had stories that they recalled where they had faced difficulties with either juggling their family commitments or other people's perceptions of being able to juggle family and a headship. All five women had their own families, and all admitted that their family commitments were the biggest factor that had stopped them from progressing to headship so far. One participant (Jean, WDH, Worcester, 40-49) expressed that:

"I have been a deputy head in two different schools now for over 11 years. I have often thought why not take the next step to headship...it would be impossible at the moment with two children… perhaps when they are older I will go for it but the pressure on me to be a Mum and have a career is overwhelming at times. The amount of guilt I feel if

I don't quite make it home to bedtime is awful. I can only imagine this being ten times worse if I was the headteacher".

Jean, WDH, Worcester, 40-49, also explains that she loves the flexibility of her current role and worries that she will not be able to continue this as a headteacher:

"I love the flexibility of my current role; it means I can spend time with my family and still feel confident in managing my work, but I want a career and I'm just not sure whether I have the confidence to put myself forward and if I could do it."

She clearly felt that the step up to headteacher was a step too far with more responsibilities and longer working hours. These views are not uncommon among women who have children, and it is not only just the pressure that others put on them but also the pressure of having to do a good job and still be a good parent. Pressures that men as deputy headteachers do not always have to face.

Within the five that state they wish to become headteachers one day, there are mixed views on whether they can be successful and still have a work-life balance. Claire, WDH, Herts, 39-49 explained:

"Ultimately my aim was always to become a head teacher for not only myself but to get to the top of my profession to make a difference to young people. I fundamentally believe that. This new job has made me realise that I can do it, I've got my confidence back. It's just whether I can balance it all with home life and a child."

The call for more flexible work practices is something that all the participants I interviewed mentioned and Claire, WDH, Herts, 39-49 also called for there to be more female role models as headteachers:

"I think if I saw more female headteachers in my position with young children I'd be more encouraged to do it but for me it's the unknown of not knowing whether I would cope with it and as everyone assumes you can't then I guess it starts to rub off on you."

All five deputy heads cited work-life balance or family commitments as a problem and a reason for them not taking on headship. Many of them came up with ideas to overcome this such as more female headteachers as role models and co-headships but all of them agreed

that these were ideas they felt had not really come to anything yet, and it would take time for people's views of what a headteacher should be like to change, including flexible working hours and a commitment to work-life balance.

6.2.4 Theme 4: Impact of Motherhood

Summary of topics within the themes of Impact of Motherhood:

Pressure to be a Mum and on SLT	**Pigeonholed as a Mum**	**Lack of confidence after maternity leave**	**Others' view that you can't be on SLT and have a young family**
Proving you are good enough to be a head with or without a child	**Having to be more resilient if you have children**	**Changing perceptions of your ability if you have children**	

When I asked the participants about their relationships with their headteachers and whether they had been encouraged to progress their careers since having children, most of them had negative experiences of this. In the most severe cases of discrimination, women headteachers were the ones discouraging the deputy heads from career progression. One of the participants talked about how her headteacher made her feel incompetent at her job whilst pregnant and constantly told her that you could not balance a family and a job on SLT. Sarah, WDH, Essex, 39-49: "*The second I got pregnant everything changed and I was then very much challenged on everything I did. I wasn't given any opportunities; I was spoken down to in meetings and told that I wasn't doing a very good job yet two months before I was told I was doing an amazing job and all that changed when I told my head I was pregnant."*

This view is echoed across other participants with children, Emma, WDH, Leicester, 30-39, stated that she felt a lot of pressure on her being a Mum and on the senior leadership team with people commenting:

> *"The amount of people that have said to me are you going to be alright will you be able to cope? Yeah of course why wouldn't it be? Do you know what I mean, it's the assumption that it's too much if you have two children? No, it's my family and my choice. I've chosen this so I will make it work. It makes you more determined in the end."*

These views are not uncommon among women who have children, and it is not only just the pressure that others put on them but also the pressure of having to do a good job and still be a good parent. Pressures that men as deputy headteachers do not necessarily have to face.

Emma, WDH, Leicester, 30-39 when questioned on whether she'd like to take on headship in the next couple of years, very cautiously answered:

> *"I don't know, erm, in the current state not at the moment that's personally as well because I have a young family. It would have to be quite a special place you know what I mean. I think I need to see more Mums as heads, so I know its achievable."*

She went on to elaborate that she simply could not think of how she could manage with the pressure of family life and a career and that it was something she would look to do in the future.

Others felt that there was also an image created of them being a mother and therefore they felt it went against them. Claire, WDH, Herts, 30-39, explained that:

> *"I think when people know you are a Mum and have a family, they somehow then pigeonhole you into that role and then subconsciously think well that's her main role now, so she won't be able to cope with leading and managing a school too. How do we get over this? I'm not sure there is an answer. Men aren't categorised in the same way."*

All the participants wanting to progress to headship had strong views on this and their roles as 'Mum' and their confidence to do the job. Sarah, WDH, Essex, 39-49, explained:

> *"Before having a child there was no stopping me in terms of my confidence and career. I would have no doubts about moving forward but my previous headteacher made me feel like it was impossible to have a child and still be on SLT. She made that quite clear…that has affected my confidence. I now feel like I have to work harder to prove to people that I am capable…I didn't have to do this before. It's unfair and I know a lot of the pressure I put on myself is from my own perception of what I think people think. I want to prove to them all that I am good enough to be a head with or without a child."*

Marie, WDH, Warwick, 40-49, added to this view explaining that she too felt like she had to be seen to be more resilient and was conscious of her role post having children adapting her style to prove herself:

> *"Yes definitely. You have to play people the right way. I think sometimes you have to play the whole I am going to get it done and be resilient I think you have to prove you are more resilient definitely and also show you can do it especially after coming back after having two children. It does have a knock-on effect to your confidence."*

Sarah goes on to explain that she only took three months of maternity leave and that there were many reasons behind this; financial; love of her job; and pressure to get back to work as a deputy headteacher. Sarah also said there was an element of wanting to prove her headteacher wrong:

> *"My headteacher made it clear that she didn't feel like you could juggle being a new Mum and a deputy headteacher and I wanted to prove her wrong. Don't get me wrong, it's hard staying late at school knowing you are missing seeing your child go to bed but then I don't want to be the one member of the team who leaves early because I have a child."* (Sarah, WDH, Essex, 39-49)

Other participants have mentioned that they were asked whether they wanted to '*step down from SLT*' or to reduce hours due to the high demands of the job. More worryingly, Sarah's experience illustrates that in her particular case there seems to be more than just discrimination going on, which of course goes against the promotion of gender equality in the workplace and within education. Sarah, WDH, Essex, 39-49 continues to explain that she was threatened with a formal process if she did not adhere to her usual working hours. She explained:

> *"Throughout my pregnancy, I wasn't allowed any reasonable adjustments to my every day work. I was still expected to stay here at work three times a week sometime until 7/8/9 o'clock. I was basically told that even though I was pregnant, it didn't make any difference, I just had to carry on and if I didn't, I was threatened with formal process."*

Whilst Sarah's experience seems extreme, it is an experience that has happened and whilst other participants discussed discrimination they felt they had received, they did not have an

example like Sarah's where they felt threatened, but they did express concerns about how people's perceptions and treatment of them changed once they became pregnant. On questioning Sarah further, I was interested to find out why she had not challenged this behaviour with her headteacher. Sarah very honestly responded by saying that she did not want to make the situation worse *"I know it was just a coward's way out by not saying anything, but I didn't want to make the situation worse. I know things will never change if everyone keeps quiet"* (Sarah, WDH, Essex, 39-49).

This reminds me of the gender discrimination that I discussed in Chapter 3 in my reflective diary entries. Whilst this was not pregnancy related, it does relate to gender and the idea of the 'Glass Ceiling' again, especially for those that have had children.

All five deputy heads cited work-life balance or family commitments as a problem and a reason for them not taking on headship. Likewise, within my own reflective journals, work-life balance and family came up as key areas that were discussed.

All the participants talk about career breaks and confidence and their position as a woman as a senior leader and for many of them their own perceptions of their confidence and skills.

6.2.5 Theme 5: Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations

Summary of topics within the theme of gender and confidence in leadership aspirations

Needs to be more female headteachers with children as role models	**More encouragement is needed for women to go into headships**	**More job shares in headship**	**Celebrate female heads**

The participants talked frequently about the view that headship was all-consuming and inflexible. This was something that participants discussed within the work-life balance section too. A call for more flexible work practices is something that all the participants I interviewed mentioned and Claire, WDH, Herts, 39-49, also called for there to be more female role models and flexibility as headteachers:

> *"I think if I saw more female headteachers in my position with young children I'd be more encouraged to do it but for me it's the unknown of not knowing whether I would cope with it and as everyone assumes you can't then I guess it starts to rub off on you."*

This is something that other participants mentioned as Marie, WDH, Warwick, 40-49, explained:

> *"My female Head encouraged me to take on headship and has given me the confidence to apply but there needs to be more female heads as role models to show that it's possible to juggle a young family."*

Claire, WDH, Herts, 39-49, adds to this by stating:

> *"We need to celebrate successful female headteachers more!"*

Sarah, WDH, Essex, 39-49, explained *"We need to see more Mum's being a headteacher and it being the norm!".*

All the participants felt that more needed to be done in terms of raising awareness of women in headteacher positions and illustrating that it can be done successfully. The perception of headship from this group is that it is viewed as incompatible with family life and therefore they have either put their ambition on hold or been put off due to the demands of juggling home life with work.

6.2.6 Theme 6: Personal and systematic pressures

Summary of topics within the theme of Personal and systematic pressures

Worries around staff recruitment and retention	**Ofsted fears**	**Budget and financial pressures in schools**	**Changing government agendas**	**Pressure and worries associated with headship**

All five deputy heads interviewed mentioned the current political agenda and education in some way within their interviews and as a concern and barrier for not taking on a headship.

Claire, WDH, Herts, 30-39, explained that she had real concerns about the current educational environment:

> *"To be honest, now is not a good time to become a headteacher. There's been so many cuts that I think there's a lot of pressure on headteachers to manage budgets and I've heard of so many schools with huge deficit budgets – it's really worrying. When you think about the benefits of being a Head- I get it I really do. I want to shape the next generation, but headteachers and teachers do get a hard time. It's not an easy job! I*

> *guess at the moment I'm playing the waiting game to see what happens next with the government and with Ofsted."*

Ofsted was a common theme amongst this group with worries and concerns from all around being ultimately responsible for the Ofsted judgement as a headteacher. Sarah, WDH, Essex, 30-39 explained:

> *"I've heard some awful stories about heads who have gone through an Ofsted inspection, and it's literally broken them. For some it's been their first headship and now they've decided that headship isn't right for them. Don't get me wrong I know we need accountability, but something has gone drastically wrong with Ofsted, you hear all sorts of stories at the moment with unfair inspections. It does worry me that I would be responsible for a school and ultimately their Ofsted judgement".*

Jean, WDH, Worcester, 40-49, added to this stating, *"You hear so many stories about Ofsted and it being dependant on the team that you get that I'd be so worried about Ofsted inspectors and whether I got a good team or not".* Linking into this Emma, WDH, Leicester, 30-39, raised concerns about the government: *"The pressures of the ever-changing Government demands, and lack of support really worries me."*

Other concerns the deputy heads discussed were around recruitment and retention and worries over not being able to staff their schools with specialist teachers. Marie, WDH, Warwick, 40-49, talked about this in some detail in her interview:

> *"I have been thinking of some of the things I'd need to face as a headteacher and the biggest thing that worries me is staff retention and recruitment. Your school can only be as good as your staff and I'm seeing so many teachers leave the profession that it worries me especially in certain subjects. What would you do as a headteacher if you didn't have any specialist staff?"*

All those interviewed within this group were aware of the external pressures headteachers faced with some stating that they were waiting to see what the political agenda had next before making the leap into headship.

6.2.7. Summary

It is clear from the research above that this group all aspire to progress to headship at some point in their career. Their reasons for this progression did vary but there were common sub-themes around wanting to make a difference to a school and to be a role model either within their family unit or wider community; they all talked about ambition. This reminded me of the motivations I discussed in Chapter 3 and the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 2000; Leithwood et al, 1999). However, they also all expressed concerns and discussed barriers that were stopping them from making the transition from deputy head to headteacher. All the participants talked in great detail about their family commitments and their worries over being able to juggle the two. However, the greatest barrier that seemed to stop them from progressing alongside family commitments was 'confidence' and this was either as a result of returning to work after maternity leave, or a general feeling that they did not have the required skill set for headship. Other barriers included the fear of a bad Ofsted inspection, lack of HR/staffing experience and the general feeling that education was not an easy career to be in currently.

6.3 Group B – women not wanting to progress to headship

These three participants were certain that they did not want to progress their careers any further. When I questioned them on whether they would potentially change their minds later on or in a few years, all three were very assertive in their responses which was "no" and that they did not ever want to become a headteacher. I follow the same process as I did with group A.

6.3.1 Theme 1: Gendered roles and skills

Summary of topics within the theme of Gendered roles and skills

Happy in current DH role	**Husband's job takes priority**	**Enjoy current responsibility levels, headship is too pressured**	**Headship and family not compatible**	**Men and women approach jobs differently. Men are more confident**
Men more suited to headship				

As mentioned above, this group had a very different view on gendered roles and skills to group A with participants discussing that headship is something that is suited more to men. Sally, WDH, Birmingham, 30-39, explains that although she has dismissed headship, she believes that her experiences as a leader have led her to believe that the role of a head is something that appeals more to men:

> *"Men and women approach jobs very differently, the men on my team are very confident and know all the answers whereas I constantly doubt myself- I don't pretend I can do things if I can't. If my head felt I was good enough to progress to headship they would have encouraged me. Men are more suited to headship."*

Similarly, Ellen, WDH, Bedfordshire, 30-39, also talks about confidence and skills and feels she does not have them, although she also states that she is more than happy in her current deputy head role and is not seeking progression:

> *"I'm happy in my deputy head role and well respected, I enjoy the balance of responsibility and workload. I don't feel like I have the skills to be a headteacher and I wouldn't want to be, there is too much unmanageable pressure. You can't have a family and manage your work-life balance as a head."*

Andrea, WDH, Coventry, 40-49, also feels that her lack of confidence would stop her from applying for headships, but she also acknowledges that her circumstances play a huge role in her decision-making:

> *"I'm very happy in my role and if I'm honest I couldn't nor would I want to go any further. My husband's job takes priority, and he earns more and is more successful than me, so I really don't need to progress any further."*

All three participants discuss how they are happy and comfortable in the roles and that this has had an influence on their decision-making. In describing their workplace experiences, they all talk about their skills and their experiences of being a woman on SLT. Of course, we must acknowledge within this group that not wanting to progress to headship is absolutely fine and not something that should be seen as a negative. However, if we look at some of the reasons why they do not want to progress they may be similar to the other groups and in which case this could help form part of the solution.

Despite not wanting to progress to headship, it is interesting to see that the theme of confidence and skills is an area that has again been discussed alongside work-life balance and managing to juggle home and work commitments. I discuss this further in the below themes.

6.3.2 Theme 2: Inspiration and ambition

Summary of topics within the theme of Inspiration and ambition

Husband's job takes priority	**Need more encouragement to become Heads**	**Use of female mentors and role models in headship to inspire/motivate more female Heads**

Despite the participants not wanting to progress to headship all talked about how more female role models or mentors might influence and inspire other women into headship. So, whilst they did not have the inspiration or ambition to take on headship, they recognised more needed to be done:

Sally, WDH, Birmingham, 30-39, stated:

> *"We really need more female heads as role models as I think people assume it's a job for men!"*

Adding to this, Andrea, WDH, Coventry, 40-49, discussed the importance of female mentors:

> *"If we had more positive female mentors, I think that would help encourage more women into headship as they would understand the responsibilities that women have outside of work."*

Ellen, WDH, Bedfordshire, 30-39, had similar views and stated that:

> *"Women need to be encouraged to progress by other female headteachers".*

So, whilst all the participants did not want to progress, they were all clear on how others could be encouraged. All the suggestions given involved more female role models and access to mentors. This is again an area that participants have mentioned on several occasions and an interesting area to explore further within my study.

For one participant it did not come down to personal ambition or barriers but more her home life and husband's role. She explained that for her, her career would always come second to her husband's and therefore she did not want to progress too much for fear of letting the school down. Andrea, WDH, Coventry, 40-49, *"My husband earns more than me and has a more successful career. I need to be flexible with his work and if he needs to move then we move. I could not take on a headship short term and then move on it just would not be right."*

Understandably for this group, their motivations for headship are different to those that want to progress as they have identified themselves as not wanting to progress. Therefore, they explain their reasons behind their motivations for staying within their current role as deputy head and explain some ways in which more women could be encouraged.

6.3.3 Theme 3: Work-life balance challenges

Summary of topics within the theme of Work-life balance challenges

Teaching is stressful – couldn't take any more on for their well-being	**Want children in the future and headship and children isn't manageable**	**Like the current DH role and the well-being, the role gives- the balance is right**	**Not prepared to sacrifice family life**

Like group A, work-life balance plays an important role in their decision-making. Often the reason simply came down to their orientation towards family life. One participant, whilst they had not had children yet, was very conscious of wanting to have a family and felt that the two just did not go together and therefore, she did not want to pursue a career as a headteacher. Sally, WDH, Birmingham, 30-39, explained:

> *"Whilst I don't have any children at the moment it is my aim to have children. I like my role as deputy headteacher and feel that I have the work-life balance right. There is no way I would want to compromise on that at all. Even now without a child, I just wouldn't. Teaching is hard enough. I just can't see me ever wanting to progress to headship because of that. It would be impossible, and for that reason it doesn't interest me."*

All participants mentioned family life and work-life balance as a big factor in their decision to not progress to headship. For some, it came down to children and their family life, but others also mentioned their general well-being and state of mind. Ellen, WDH, Bedfordshire, 30-39,

explained, *"Teaching is stressful, I can just about juggle everything and keep it all together. For my own well-being I simply wouldn't want to take any more on."* Andrea, WDH, Coventry, 40-49, stated, *"My job is busy enough and I have days and weeks where I struggle to balance everything. I'm not prepared to make any more sacrifice to my family life. Headship would change that."*

For this group, work-life balance is important to them, and they cannot see how they can balance their current home life with taking on any additional responsibilities. This perception then may have factored into their decision to dismiss headship.

6.3.4. Theme 4: Impact of Motherhood

Summary of topics within the theme of Impact of Motherhood

Men are more confident than women	**Men and women possess different skills**	**Different expectations for men and women – men wear suits, women wear pretty dresses**	**Don't want to apply for a job unless I can 100% do all of it**	**Don't have the confidence for headship**

The idea of confidence once again was prevalent within this group and the emerging themes within female leadership and identity. All the participants talked about 'confidence' and not feeling that could undertake the role of a headteacher successfully. Andrea, WDH, Coventry, 40-49, discussed the difference between a deputy head role and to headship:

> *"When I've looked at job descriptions for headships if there one or two elements on there that I think I can't do then I'd never dream of applying. I would never want to put myself in a situation or job where I didn't feel 100% confident that I could do a good job. Can I say 100% I could do a headship? No, I couldn't. Therefore, I'll happily stay in a role that pays well and gives me the confidence to do it well."*

Ellen, WDH, Bedfordshire, 30-39, also talked about the different skill set that men and women have and the expectations for men to appear 'smart' and women to appear 'feminine'.

> *"Men and women do possess different skill sets there are some things that I just don't feel confident in. It's also about appearance. Men wear a suit and look smart and professional but there isn't the same expectation for women. We can wear 'pretty' dresses and still be viewed as looking smart. It's wrong really".*

Sally gave an interesting viewpoint that built on Andrea's ,*"I've spoken with my husband about this, it's funny really because I look at a job description and think of all the things I can't do, and he will look at one and his view is the opposite. He will look at how many things he can do and therefore he thinks the rest will come! Is it a male, female view? I don't know but I know that he's a lot more confident than me"* Sally, WDH, Birmingham, 30-39.

All three participants mentioned lack of skills or confidence in some manner and the fact that they did not feel capable of completing all the tasks within a headship. The reference to men being more confident is an interesting perception along with how one participant feels men view job descriptions compared to women. Clothes also plays an important role in this section with the idea of men dressing smartly versus female 'pretty'. Clothes is an interesting idea of gendered roles in society and the impact that this might have on men and women.

6.3.5 Theme 5: Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations

Summary of topics within the theme of Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations

Budget cuts putting pressure on heads	**Friends' experience of headship is stressful**	**Crisis in headteacher recruitment**	**Pressure of current climate**	**Strain of Ofsted, budgets, government pressure**

All three participants could not come up with a single reason as to why they would want to become a headteacher.

Ellen, WDH, Bedfordshire, 35-39, explained:

> *"Who on earth would want the pressure of being a headteacher in today's climate? You have to deal with so many government agendas and cutbacks that is it any surprise that we are facing a crisis in recruiting heads and teachers in general. I'm quite happy being a deputy headteacher as I still get to make important decisions but ultimately, I'm kept out of the overall running of the school and final decision making when it comes to cutbacks".*

Sally, WDH, Birmingham, 30-39, agreed with this statement claiming, *"There's no reason I can think of at the present time that would entice anyone to become a headteacher, the pressure is just too much!"*. Andrea, WDH, Coventry, 40-49, added to this, *"There's a real crisis in*

headteacher recruitment in my opinion, I honestly can't imagine why anyone would want to be one in this climate. It's not a good place to work at the moment especially if you are a headteacher facing the challenge of budget cuts."

All three participants discussed the pressure of teaching and how the thought of a headship would just be too much pressure. They all talked about Ofsted, accountability, financial pressures, and changing government policies. Ellen, WDH, Bedfordshire, 30-39, summed up all these areas within her interview:

> *"Oh my, the pressure would be phenomenal. It's hard enough as a deputy. I can't even begin to imagine it when it's just you and you are accountable for everything! Ofsted, budgets, staffing! The pressure of changing government policy every year. You couldn't pay me enough to take all of that on."*

Andrea, WDH, Coventry, 40-49, discussed her views on headship from her friend's experience *"My friend became a headteacher, she was so stressed out all the time, I could physically see the affect it had on her. I'm not willing to let that happen to me".* She then went on to explain, *"I also know that budget cuts are putting a huge pressure on headteachers which in turn in resulting in redundancies and that can't be nice. I'd never sleep if that was me in charge."*

This group is really interesting in their response to barriers as predominantly the discussions were based around the pressures and strains of the job and it seeming like an impossible job to do. They have all highlighted the negative aspects of the job and the recruitment crisis.

6.3.6 Theme 6: Personal and systematic pressures

Summary of topics within the theme of Personal and systematic pressures

Not confident enough to apply for headship	**Not ready for headship – do not have all the skills**	**Will not apply for headship unless 100% confident that they can do the job role**
Haven't got an understanding of finance – no confidence	**HR worries and staffing- not confident**	

There were a number of concerns and barriers raised by this group, many revolved around the fact that they just did not want to become a headteacher, but when questioned further they also revealed some other areas that were stopping them from progressing.

Some of the participants said it came down to a lack of skills and confidence. Ellen, WDH, Bedfordshire, 30-39, discussed how she felt she needed more experience with other areas such as timetabling:

> *"I know of a colleague who is a deputy headteacher who has gone out of her way to learn skills that she doesn't naturally possess such as timetabling and data. I admire her for this but I'm not sure I have the confidence to do the same and surely until I know all of the skills then I will not be ready for headship."*

All the participants talked about 'confidence' and not feeling that could undertake the role of a headteacher successfully.

Andrea, WDH, Coventry, 40-49, explained that *"I haven't got a clue when it comes to finance in a school and I don't think any amount of training would help, I have no confidence in this area. It would really put me off."*

Sally, WDH, Birmingham, 30-39 added to this stating *"HR issues would worry me – what if you had no staff or no budget? I don't think training can prepare you for this. I'm not confident with this but even if you were could you still manage it?".*

All three participants mentioned a lack of skills or confidence in some manner and the fact that they did not feel capable of completing all the tasks within headship.

6.3.7 Summary

This group of participants were adamant that they did not want to become headteachers. They were very forthright in their views and held strong opinions about their choice. Neither participant could think of any reasons why they would want to go into headship. This fits in with Draper and Mc Michael's (2003:194) view in my literature review whereby a proportion of deputy headteachers '*always rejects headship as a career'*. They did however have several arguments as to why they did not want to progress their career further. Their main reasons focused on the compatibility of having a family alongside a headship and the pressures that headteachers currently face in the education environment. The pressure of being a headteacher and the accountability of Ofsted was a common theme again, with some participants talking about personal experiences their friends had faced as headteachers, which had in turn put them off from becoming headteachers. The lack of work-life balance

and being able to juggle family and work came out as the strongest theme and reasons why the women did not want to become a headteacher. However, when questioned further on other reasons preventing them from progressing, all three participants cited their 'lack of skills' and 'confidence' to do the job, suggesting that perhaps if these areas were addressed they may have adopted a different view? The theme of confidence is something that group A talked about too, perhaps suggesting that this is an area that needs to be addressed in terms of possible solutions and recommendations. It will be interesting to see whether the final group also highlight this as an area that is stopping them from progressing.

6.4 Group C – undecided on whether to progress to headship

Of the women interviewed that did not want to progress to headship when questioned whether they would ever want to be a head, two of the participants said that they might consider it at a later stage in life and that they were at present undecided. This is an interesting group as they are potentially open to the idea of headship, so it will be interesting to compare their answers to group A, which will occur later on in this chapter. The same process has been followed as with group A and B.

6.4.1 Theme 1: Gendered roles and skills

Summary of topics within the theme of Gendered roles and skills:

Frustrated at times as deputy head	**Happy in current role as work-life balance important – headship not compatible with family**
View that headship is all-consuming – women as heads must be superwoman!	

Both participants are happy in their current roles as deputy headteachers and have enjoyed the flexibility of their roles and manageable workloads. Whilst undecided on whether they want to progress, their leadership experiences have made them cautious about taking on headship and the additional workload. Samantha, WDH, Liverpool, 40-49, explained:

> *"I do get frustrated at times in my role and think I would like to make the decisions as a head but when I think about it for not much more in salary there is an incredible jump in terms of accountability. Don't get me wrong my motivations are not finance related at all but my work-life balance is important."*

Natalie, WDH, 30-39, Hertfordshire, has similar views in terms of her leadership experiences:

> *"I love my job and I couldn't imagine doing anything else. I have thought about headship, and I would love to do it, but at the stage in life I am at I just couldn't. I have two young children, it's just not compatible whereas my role allows me to make a difference and still make time for my family. Headship is all consuming. Women that take on headship with children must be superwoman!"*

Whilst it is acknowledged that they both enjoy their current jobs, they have both thought about headship as an option, but have the view that there is a lot of additional accountabilities for very little financial reward and a detrimental impact on their work-life balance.

6.4.2 Theme 2: Inspiration and ambition

Summary of topics within the theme of Inspiration and ambition.

Making an influence on a school as a head	Shape vision of school as head

The two participants both talked about the benefits of being a headteacher and in particular how they would like to be able to influence education and shape their vision within a school. Samantha, WDH, Liverpool, 40-49:

> *"I love being a deputy because I can see how my work impacts the whole school but there are times when I can see other ways to move the school forward, but the head doesn't always agree with my thinking. At times like that I do think it would be great to be able to have full responsibility of my own school, but do I want all of that responsibility?"*

The other participants Natalie, WDH, Herts 30-39, had similar views:

> *"One day, I'd like to think I'd be in a position where I'd go for a headship but not right now. Life is far too busy to take on anything else. You have to be able to put 100% into it to make a real change and influence over a school."*

Whilst both participants could see the benefit of becoming a headteacher in terms of change and making an influence they both highlighted that they both felt they were not ready to commit to this role just yet.

Natalie, WDH, Hertfordshire, 30-39 said:

> *"I haven't thought that far ahead I guess because for me at the moment it's a no, but perhaps when my children are old enough, I may reconsider the option. It would depend on my personal and family circumstances. They come first."*

In stating this, the participants also expressed that workplace barriers they currently face would need to be addressed.

6.4.3 Theme 3: Work-life balance challenges

Summary of topics within the theme of work-life balance challenges

Family and personal circumstances come first	**Inflexible hours and late meetings stop women going into headship**
Easier for husband's job to take priority – his long hours do not impact childcare	

Work-life balance was an issue for both participants with both feeling that having children and being able to maintain a work-life balance was not possible. Samantha, WDH, Liverpool, 40-49, talked about the main barrier stopping women from going into headship being the inflexible hours and late meetings and citing the difficult and expensive childcare costs associated with this:

> *"It's not like you can just leave as a head and go and pick your children up. Well certainly that's the perception of the job! There's late nights and long meetings and even if you put your children into breakfast and after school clubs it would cost a lot of money in childcare."*

Natalie, WDH, Hertfordshire, 30-39, said:

> *"Perhaps when my children are old enough, I may reconsider the option. It would depend on my personal and family circumstances. They come first."*

When questioned further about her ambitions, Samantha was quite happy to take a step back and let her husband's career take priority over hers. Samantha, WDH, Liverpool, 40-49:

> *"I guess it's just easier for my husband's job to take priority. He can do the long hours without it really impacting anyone as I am the main carer when it comes to the children."*

Work-life balance for the two participants is a big barrier to progression to headship at present and headship is viewed by them as inflexible.

6.4.4 Theme 4: Impact of Motherhood

Summary of topics within the theme of Impact of Motherhood

No confident enough in all areas to be a head	**Haven't been asked about career progression – incompatibility of headship and family**
Men are more confident than women – they don't have the same home constraints	**More discussion/mentors needed**

Both participants have discussed the incompatibility of headship with having a family and headship being all-consuming. Natalie, WDH, Hertfordshire, 30-39 also discusses her lack of confidence in being able to do the role stating *"Besides, I'm not confident enough in all areas at present. There's no way I could be a head yet."* In discussing their current leadership experiences, Samantha discusses how the lack of a female mentor and role model has impacted her decision-making:

Samantha, WDH, Liverpool, 40-49, said:

> *"If I had a female mentor or role model to discuss headship with, I think this would help. I do find my job easy, but no one has ever had a conversation with me about progressing to headship. I think that's partly because in my current school no one ever leaves so there's no chance of promotion or headship!"*

Samantha adds to this talking about her own confidence and ability to do the job as headteacher *"I think because I haven't discussed it with anyone, I just think I'm not ready and I don't have the confidence to do it. Men are more confident than women naturally and they just don't have the same constraints as us, we are expected to do everything at home and still somehow manage a career."*

This suggests that Samantha is needing validation from others and wants to discuss career routes. Is this something that is gender-related or just based on confidence? Natalie, WDH, Hertfordshire, 30-39, also discusses mentoring although her views are different from Samantha's:

> *"I have a female headteacher, but she's never asked me about career progression, and I don't really think if I had a mentor, it would make much difference to me."*

Whilst Natalie does not think that a mentor would make any difference to her career plans it is interesting to see that both participants have mentioned the lack of discussion with their headteachers over career progression, which suggests that maybe this is an area that needs exploring further with deputy headteachers. Perhaps if more frequent conversations occurred then this may prompt more female deputy headteachers to consider this as a career option.

6.4.5 Theme 5: Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations

Summary of topics within the theme of Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations

So much negativity around education – not confident	**Accountability that heads face**
DH position can make a change	**Strain of headship – not compatible with family**

This theme has been somewhat discussed previously as both participants stated that their perceptions of headship was that it was not compatible with having children or a work-life balance.

Both participants expressed that they were happy with their deputy head roles and whilst they may consider headship in the future it was not something that they would be considering in the next few years. Samantha, WDH, Liverpool, 40-49, *"There's so much negativity at the moment around education and the accountability that heads face, that I just don't want to consider it at the moment. I don't have the confidence. My deputy position is perfect, I can make change and get paid well. I'll move on if and when the time is right."*

The view that headship is not only incompatible with family life but also that it is not the right time to pursue a career as a head due to the current educational landscape is an intriguing

concept. Natalie, WDH, Hertfordshire, 30-39, also discussed the pressures associated with headship:

> *"The strain headship would have on you, my gosh! You could not do it with a family! All that budgeting, staffing worries, everything lands at your feet!"*

Both participants highlight the issues regarding the current perception of headship and that these factors are putting them off progressing.

6.4.6 Theme 6: Personal and systematic pressures

Summary of topics within the theme of personal and systematic pressures

Lack of training that gives you the confidence to take on headship	**Unknown of headship**
Not having the confidence to take headship on	**HR/finance issues**

When questioned about preparation for headship, both participants felt that this was something that needed to be addressed. They both knew about the NPQH qualification but felt that this was more about the theory of headship, and they would like opportunities to be involved with the everyday running of a school. Natalie, WDH, 30-39, Hertfordshire explained:

> *"I think one of the reasons that puts people off going for headship is the unknown. It's very different being a deputy to head and it's all the HR and finance that puts me off. I know that I could ask for experience here, but I guess as at the moment I just feel I've got enough on my plate and perhaps that would change if I considered going for headship. I wouldn't have the confidence to take that jump right now."*

Natalie, WDH, Hertfordshire, 30-39:

> *"I wouldn't even know where to begin with some of the HR/finance issues and I just don't think there's any amount of training that prepares you for when it's you on your own making decisions. Some colleagues have done the NPQH, and I know some Heads that haven't too. Nowadays I don't think it is as highly regarded as it used to be."*

Samantha, WDH, Liverpool, 40-49, echoes these views and states:

> *"I think a big barrier to progression is training and knowing that the training will give you the confidence to take on headship. I'm not sure any course has this right – even the NPQH. You need to apply your skills not just learn about them."*

Both participants talked about the NPQH qualification and the need for something more practical. One of the participants talked about having a mentor when you first become a head explaining this would make them feel more comfortable.

6.4.7 Summary

In summary, group C (undecided about headship) spoke about considering headship when they felt it suited their circumstances. They both expressed that they were happy with their deputy headteacher positions, and the fact that they felt they could already make a difference within their schools. Both felt that the present education climate and negativity around education was putting them off from becoming headteachers, and they felt the safer option was to stay in their current positions. They both cited family commitments as a barrier to progression and did not think they could manage the work of a headteacher alongside a family. In fact, one participant did not currently have children but had said that it was a huge factor in considering headship and that their family commitments came before work. The lack of appropriate training was a factor for both participants with both wanting more practical experience rather than theory or accreditations and something that would give them the confidence to do the job. HR and finance came out as issues putting the participants off. This reminded me of the statistics from the NCTL survey from Chapter 2 (2.5.1.) where NPQH trainees cited HR and financial management as key areas they needed support in.

6.5 Headteacher interviews

In addition to the deputy headteachers, I also interviewed four current headteachers on their perspective on why women were choosing or not choosing to go into headship. I questioned them all on why women may or may not want to go into headship and why they may be undecided. These interviews took place after the deputy headteacher interviews were completed. This was so that I could discuss with the headteachers the three distinct groups

that the deputy headteachers fell into and to explore possible reasons why or why not women chose to progress to headship. We explored a number of themes within this such as staff development and training, support for deputy headteachers, and the role of a headteacher. Their findings are reported below but have not influenced the overall thematic analysis. I will return to this data to help inform the recommendations in the final chapter.

6.5.1 Headteacher's views on support for women who want to progress to headship

In looking at those participants who wanted to progress to headship, I interviewed four headteachers to discuss how easy it would be to transition from deputy's head to headship, and asked them to talk about some of the perceived barriers that they felt prospective headteachers may face. All the current headteachers interviewed spoke about the difficulties that they all faced when transitioning from deputy headteachers to their first headships. They talked about how the best experiences a deputy headteacher could get was a varied job description and to be *"thrown in at the deep end"* (Peter, 56, headteacher, Hertfordshire). One headteacher talked about reasons why she thinks women deputy headteachers perhaps do not progress to headship. Alison, headteacher, Bedfordshire, 46 explained:

> *"From my experience of being a headteacher and a woman, I can completely see why some women are put off going for headship. It is not the most flexible job you could have and there are lots of late-night meetings and a lot of pressure. I have many friends who have been deputy headteachers who have simply put off going for headship until their children are older. I think there's a lot of pressure that women put on themselves to be good Mum's and to juggle their career and it's a lot to do both."*

When asked about support that deputy headteachers had to prepare them for headship, all headteachers agreed this was something that perhaps needed rethinking. Adrian, headteacher, Worcester, 58 said:

> *"There is the NPQH qualification but to be honest, I'd much rather my deputy headteachers had real life experience of being a headteacher. The NPQH doesn't prepare you for that. I think the whole process needs rethinking. There needs to be more opportunities for secondments, for deputy headteachers stepping up into the headship role perhaps once a week, something that allows them to build their confidence with decision making because ultimately that's the hardest transition*

knowing that every decision lies with you. I think women in particular would benefit from this because often I find that they don't have the confidence, or they doubt themselves when actually they are more than skilled and experienced enough to take on a headship."

Another headteacher, Samantha, Gloucestershire, 50, explained that there had been some positive forward steps in encouraging women into leadership in education:

"I have seen over the last couple of years a deliberate push from the government to encourage more women into leadership positions. There is now a women in education coaching programme, which is great as it allows other women to see successful female leaders and be mentored by them. There is also more of a social media presence with women in education and more CPD. It's a promising start."

All the headteachers agreed that it was positive that these women all wanted to progress to headship, and they all acknowledged the difficulties that they could face with this transition, all stating that there needed to be more support and flexibility within the role if we wanted to encourage more women to become headteachers.

Summary of headteachers views for prospective headteachers:

- **Best experience is doing the job**
- **Need more flexibility in the role**
- **Secondments**
- **Real-life experience rather than NPQH qualification**

6.5.2. Headteacher's views on why some women do not want to progress to headship

All four headteachers talked in detail about why they think that deputy headteachers do not progress to headship and when we discussed women and their motivations, they all agreed that it was several reasons, the lack of flexibility within the profession for those deputy headteachers with children and the pressure that women put on themselves to manage both their work and family lives. Adrian, headteacher, Worcester, 58 discussed his experiences:

> *"I had an amazing deputy headteacher who worked for me, but she just felt that headship wasn't compatible with keeping her family life ticking over. Her priority was her children and she said she was quite happy in her current role."*

The other headteachers expressed similar views where women they had worked with had said the same about family commitments. Samantha, headteacher, Gloucestershire, 50 talked about her own personal experience *"If I hadn't of had a great female role model who was a headteacher with young children, I probably wouldn't have gone for headship. I had so many people at the time tell me that it just wouldn't work."*

Summary of headteacher's views:

- **Lack of female role models**
- **Compatibility with family life**

6.5.3 – Headteacher's views on why some women may be hesitant to take on headship

All the headteachers interviewed completely empathised with why women may be unsure about going into headship. Alison, headteacher, 46, Bedfordshire, explained that she had known women who had gone into headship too early or were not mentally prepared for the task, and it had a negative impact for not only the school but also the woman involved. She explained "*You've got to be mentally prepared for headship, if you're in two minds it's not the sort of job where you can change your mind. In my experience you know when you're ready and when you want the challenge, and if you're not sure don't go for it.*" Peter, headteacher, 56, Hertfordshire, talked about the training for headteachers and linked this to why they thought some women did not progress.

> *"I think the best training a deputy headteacher can have, is experience of working in a school under scrutiny. It's the best learning curve. I think where deputy heads come unstuck is where they've work in a school were there hasn't been much scrutiny. If they then go on to take on an RI school for example, it's a very different situation to being in a good or outstanding school"* (ibid).

Samantha, headteacher, 50, Gloucestershire explained that she completely understood why some women might be undecided about whether to go into headship. Samantha described her own experience as 'daunting':

> *"Headship for me was daunting but I'd actually had a great experience as a deputy where my head let me manage the school in her absence. I was exposed to finance and HR issues so none of these came as a shock when I was a head and it meant that I transitioned into the role a lot more quickly than some other heads I know".*

All the headteachers talked about the loneliness of the role and how this can really put people off headship. Adrian, headteacher, 58, Worcester said: "*It can be a lonely job, and no one really prepares you for that. If you don't have a support network, it can be very isolating".* The headteachers talked in detail about how if women deputy headteachers did not have an existing network, that this could be a contributing factor to making the leap, as it can be a very difficult job if you do not have anyone to run things past or have a support network.

They all discussed how you had to be mentally prepared for headship and how if you were not ready it could cause problems. Isolation within the role was a theme that was discussed that potentially could put women off from headship especially if they did not have any existing networks of headteachers to talk to. All agreed that appropriate training that looked at HR and finance needed to be in place to ease some of the fears that women may have as deputy headteachers when deciding on whether to progress to headship.

Summary of headteacher's views:

- **Network of support for female deputy headteachers and headteachers**
- **Experience of accountability in schools and leading a school in the head's absence**

The above practical suggestions above will be used to consider and inform any recommendations practices that arise from my research in Chapter 11.

The next chapter (7) looks at whether there are similarities or differences between the three groups in relation to each theme.

Chapter 7: How do each group talk about the six themes and how do they relate to the research questions? (Step 5/6).

7.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I look at each theme from each group and compare where there are similarities and differences to see whether this gives any further insight into the data. This forms step 5 of my thematic analysis, whereby I am looking across the groups for any similarities and differences. I will take each theme in turn and provide an analysis of the topics from each group to illustrate the findings and discuss what each group talks about. In the second part of the chapter, I organise the themes in relation to my research questions. I do this to enable me to look at the data in a different format, to examine any similarities and differences, and to begin to answer the main research questions. This also formed step 6 of my thematic analysis.

7.1. Gendered roles and skills across groups A, B and C

The table below shows the topic table from the theme of gendered roles and skills within each group. To be able to compare the group's findings I added all the topics from each theme and group into one table (see below). I then highlighted by colour some commonalities within the groups. To do this, I selected a colour and then looked across the groups for any similar topics and colour-coded them the same if I felt they were of the same topic. The colours are not related across the six themes. I repeated this process until I had several colours all with similar topics. An example of this is shown below and Appendix 6 illustrates the tables for all the remaining themes across the groups.

Table 8: Comparing the theme of Leadership roles and skills across groups A, B, and C

Theme: Leadership roles and skills	
Group A Wanting to progress to headship:	• **Lack of confidence and skills** • **Gendered SLT roles** • **Wearing power suits** • **Men appearing confident** • **Career breaks affecting confidence** • **Men dominating conversations**

Group B: Not wanting to progress to headship	• Happy in current DH role • Husband's job takes priority • Enjoy current responsibility levels; Headship too pressurised • Headship and family not compatible • Men and women approach jobs differently; Men are more confident • Men more suited to headship
Group C: Undecided on headship	• Frustrated at times as DH • Happy in current role as work-life balance important • View that headship is all-consuming

There are some similarities between the groups particularly around the issue of gender and leadership. Both group A and B talk about men appearing more confident and approaching jobs differently, reminding me of Bem (1974) and Gray (1989, 1983). Group B even go as far as saying that headship is more suited to men. Whilst group A are the ones who want to progress to headship within their findings they talk a lot about their lack of confidence and skills and some of the gender issues that they have come across as a leader. Again, this can relate back to Chapter 2 and the work of both Collard and Reynolds (2005) and Clance and Imes (1978). Group B those not wanting to progress to headship seem to have the perception that headship and family life is not compatible and therefore is not reachable (as with Kamler and Shakeshaft's (1999) research). Whilst this group have said they are not interested in headship perhaps some of their answers reveal their own barriers in terms of their perceptions of headship. Group C, unsurprisingly show a mix of being frustrated in their current role and wanting more but also highlight the lack of work-life balance and the view that headship is all consuming. We might expect this from this group as they have not decided whether headship is for them.

7.2 Inspiration and ambition across groups A, B and C

I followed the same format as above and the table comparing the theme of inspiration and ambition across groups A, B and C can be seen in Appendix 6, table 6.1.

Within this theme, group A and C are similar in their views in that they are looking at the positives that headship could bring such as being able to shape and influence a school and make positive changes. Group A also focus on their personal motivations to succeed as head. Whilst some of the barriers to headship come up within this theme such as feeling held back in their career due to family commitments there are a lot of solutions offered too. This is

particularly prominent in group B who despite not wanting to proceed to headship they offer several solutions that could encourage more women into headship. More encouragement for women to become heads and the use of role models is suggested. This is interesting to see and note that this group are open to ideas of how more women could be encouraged and motivated to apply for headship. This also reflects the literature in Chapter 2 from Ibarra (1997) and Ely and Meyerson (2000). Within group B, one of the participants explained that their husband's job took priority over theirs and we must acknowledge that this too is a reason behind some decision making and that even if further interventions were put in place to encourage more female heads for this participant their decision may still be the same. For some women, they do not want to progress and that too is fine.

7.3 Work-life balance challenges across groups A, B,C – see Appendix 6, table 6.2

The theme of work-life balance challenges is probably the area where all the groups are the most similar. Whether they wanted to progress to headship or not, similar comments were made about the role of headship being inflexible and the perception that if you had a family or children that it would put additional pressure on this. Research from McGivney (1993) in Chapter 2 supports this. In fact, for some it was seen as an impossible task to balance children with headship and the participants talked about the detrimental impact this would have on their well-being. As with the previous theme, suggestions were put forward to help with these perceptions such as promotion of female heads with children, demonstrating you could manage both the job and family and the promotion of job shares. Within group B, the work-life balance of their current role as deputy headteacher was pointed out as having the right balance and perhaps the fear of this changing if they progressed to headship added to their decision not to progress.

7**.4 Impact of Motherhood across groups A, B and C – see Appendix 6, table 6.3**

Within this set of answers group A are focusing on some of the challenges they have faced as a female leader such as the pressures of being a Mum and feeling pigeonholed into this role and having to be more reliant to prove themselves. However, group B, who do not want to progress to headship seem to have the perception that men are more confident than women and have a different set of skills and therefore perhaps more suited to headship. This suggests the 'think manager-think male' (Schein, 1973) phenomenon discussed in Chapter 2 is still

relevant. Group C, who are undecided have a mixed view, but their answers offer an insight because they seem to rely on wanting to have further conversations about progression and if someone has not asked them about their progression to headship the perception is that they are not ready or good enough. All three groups discuss confidence and that they are either not confident enough to be a head or have lacked in confidence due to maternity leave or will not apply for headship unless they are one hundred percent certain they can do all of the job. This is again an interesting area and something that is emerging as a key factor for decision-making with career progression.

7.5 Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations across groups A, B, and C – Appendix 6, table 6.4

Within group A, the perceptions of headship are very much focused on how we can change the perception such as celebrating more female heads with children and there generally being more celebration and encouragement of female heads. Group B's perceptions focus on solely the negatives of headship such as the stress, pressure, budget and Ofsted worries. They use very emotive language such as 'crisis' and 'strain'. Group C is similar to group B in that they point out the strain of headship and the accountability and current negativity in education. They also highlight that their current role gives them scope to make change so perhaps this could be a way to convince themselves not to progress as they feel they already make a difference in their role. It is interesting to see such different perspectives and perhaps if the changing perception of what headship is like could be tackled and promoted as more female friendly this may help persuade others to consider it as an option?

7.6 Personal and systematic pressures across groups A, B, and C – Appendix 6, table 6.5

In the final theme, all groups highlight the areas that they feel are barriers to their progression and this involves training around HR/finance issues. The pressures and worries associated with headship such as Ofsted and government agendas are highlighted. Group B and C both focus on the lack of confidence and skills and the unknown of headship again highlighting that there is further work to be done on the women's perceived view of their own skills and their confidence levels. However, it is clear from all groups that the training around some of their concerns to do with finance and HR will need to be considered in the recommendations.

I then looked at each group's data and summarised the main reasons for progression or not progressing as I thought this would be an exercise that allowed me to show the differences and similarities between the groups.

Table 9: Reasons for progressing/not progressing per group

Group A: Wanted to progress to headship	Group B: Did not want to progress to headship	Group C: Undecided on whether to progress
• Motivations – make a difference; being a role model; ambition • Barriers to progression: Worries around family commitments/juggling the two; lack of confidence; fear of Ofsted; lack of hr/staffing experience; transition to headship hard; Lack of flexibility in headship; lack of female role models.	• Main barriers to progression: Incompatibility of having a family and pressures Heads face in current educational climate; Pressures and accountability; Lack of work-life balance; Lack of skills and confidence; Lack of flexibility in headship.	• Main barriers to progress- Happy in current role and feel they are making a difference; education climate putting them off progressing; family commitments are a barrier; lack of appropriate training for headship.

This summary highlights how the different groups all talk about the themes and how this interacts with their decision making on whether to progress to headship. This illustrates the complexities within the data because there is no real difference in how the themes are interpreted across the groups and therefore this does not give us a clear indicator of what can be done to encourage more women into headship. The main difference between the groups is that group A have a motivation to progress to headship despite the known barriers. Group B and C identify similar barriers to progression as group A but do not have the same ambition and motivation as group A. This is important because we need to consider what influences group A to want to be ambitious and progress to see whether this could be influential in changing the career progression of other women that do not necessarily fall into group A.

7.7 Next steps and summary

As can be seen from the above analysis there was no real reason why one group wanted to progress over another other than ambition. The barriers were very similar. I therefore needed to look more deeply. I decided the next logical stage in my analysis would be to discuss and explore the themes and topics in relation to each research question and to organise my data by research question and by group. By organising my data in an additional way this will add to my thematic analysis and deepen my understanding of the data. The next part of the chapter follows this process.

7.8 Looking at themes in relation to the research questions – Step 6

I followed the same process as above and organised my data into three groups. I then grouped the existing data under each research question (as in Table 4, 5.5):

- RQ1: What are deputy headteachers school and leadership perceptions and experiences?
- RQ2: How do these perceptions and experiences relate to their ambitions in wanting to become headteachers?
- RQ3: What barriers/hurdles to promotion can be identified?
- RQ4: What enablers to promotion to headship can be identified?

I decided to combine RQ1 and RQ2 as these questions directly related to each other. The following section looks at each research question and illustrates which of the themes and topics relate to each question and whether some of the deputy headteachers were adversely affected by some themes. A reminder that the themes were:

1. **Gendered roles and skills**
2. **Inspiration and ambition**
3. **Work-life balance challenges**
4. **Impact of Motherhood**
5. **Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations**
6. **Personal and systematic pressures**

This process helped me to start to formulate answers to my research questions. I start by summarising the key themes within each research question followed by a series of tables to help me visually see the differences between the three groups and to see any overlap of

themes. For example, based on my research question 1 some of the topics emerging were headings such as 'Lack of Skills and Confidence', 'Gendered SLT roles' and 'Budget cuts'. I then allocated them to one of the existing themes so lack confidence and skills, theme 4, Impact of Motherhood; Gendered SLT role, theme 1, Gendered roles and skills; Budget cuts, theme 5 and 6, Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations and personal and systematic pressures. At this point in the analysis, if I felt that a topic fitted within two themes, I simply labelled them as both for example, the topic of flexibility of the deputy headteacher role versus headship fitted into theme 3 (Work-life balance challenges) and theme 5 (Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations). I made this decision at this point as I wanted to be able to see any areas that crossed over.
This can be seen in an example table below under each research question analysis and within Appendix 7 for further examples.

This analysis would allow me to have a detailed analysis of the group findings and look more deeply across the whole group to look at how each of the themes is shown in each group to see whether there are patterns or similarities and differences so that I did not miss anything within the whole data set. I then used this analysis to look back at each of the groups to see if I could identify any patterns as I did previously in this chapter. This was still part of my 'reducing data stage' which started to overlap with 'data display' as I wanted to be able to view the emerging themes. As part of this 'data display' stage, I then started creating a series of comparison tables based on the questions asked and responses within each group. (see Table 4 in 5.5).

7.8.1 Examining the themes in RQ1 and 2

RQ1: What are deputy headteachers school and leadership perceptions and experiences? RQ2: How do these perceptions and experiences relate to their ambitions in wanting to become headteachers?

If we look at the group's overall summary, we can see that there are a number of key themes that help us to understand the answers to research questions 1 and 2. These themes are predominately centred around 'Impact of Motherhood', 'Work-life balance challenges' and 'Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations'. The topics within these themes allow us to understand the experiences that the participants have had on their existing senior

leadership teams and how these have shaped their views on how they perceive themselves. Within these topics participants talk about how headship is 'stressful', and government and Ofsted pressures are a barrier. Many of the participants talk about a 'lack of skills', 'gendered SLT roles and 'confidence' which also contributes to their perceptions of their ability to progress to headship. For some, they are motivated to progress despite these barriers. The below table illustrates how I looked at each group and discusses the similarities and differences between them. The remaining tables can be seen in Appendix 7.

Table 10 – themes relating to RQ1 & 2 – a comparison by groups

Key: Bold text indicates the topics; and red text indicates the themes.

Group A	Group B	Group C
• Lack of confidence and skills – Impact of Motherhood • Gendered SLT roles – Impact of Motherhood • Flexibility of DH role versus Headship – Work-life balance challenges & Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations • Men appearing confident – Gendered roles and skills • Career breaks – Impact of Motherhood • Ambition – Inspiration & ambition • Proving everyone wrong – Inspiration & ambition • Inspired by head or self – Inspiration & ambition	• Lack of skills – Impact of Motherhood • Confidence – Impact of Motherhood • Too stressful- Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations • Budget cuts – Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations/Personal and systematic aspirations • Government pressure - • Ofsted - Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations/Personal and systematic aspirations • Flexibility of DH role – Work-life balance challenges/Impact of Motherhood • Having children and headship not compatible – Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations	• Frustrated at times as deputy- Gendered roles & skills and impact of Motherhood • Work-life balance important- Work-life balance challenges • More conversations about career progression needed as they didn't always happen- Impact of Motherhood and inspiration and ambition • Lack of female mentor- affecting confidence – Impact of Motherhood and inspiration and ambition • Love their current role as deputy head- Impact of Motherhood and personal and systematic pressures • View that headship is all consuming- Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations and personal and systematic pressures

From this table, I could see that there were many similarities between each of the groups, but group A illustrated more positive motivations to become a head such as being 'ambitious' and 'wanting to proving everyone wrong'. Whereas group B just focused on the negatives and the fact that headship was not compatible with children. Group C offered some solutions to encouraging more women to progress such as having more conversations around headship and progression but also commented that they quite liked their current role. Confidence was something that appeared across all groups. The visual representation of being able to compare how each group answered the research questions allowed me to start to form initial ideas of how the research questions were being answered in response to my research.

7.8.2 Examining the themes in RQ3

RQ3: What barriers/hurdles to promotion can be identified?

I followed the same process as above and created a summary table across the groups (see Appendix 7, Table 7.1). If we look at the group's overall summary for this research question, we can see that there are three themes that directly feed into answering the question. These themes are 'Impact of Motherhood', 'Personal and systematic pressures' and 'Work-life balance challenges'. The topics within these themes help us to understand that for many of the participants, the pressure of being a Mum and having a career is a barrier for them having to 'balance family and career' and also the 'guilt' surrounding this. Within this theme of 'Impact of Motherhood' and 'Work-life balance challenges' the topics also explore the idea that other people's perceptions of working Mum's affects the participants and that they feel stereotyped as a 'Mum' with the view that you cannot have a young family and be on the senior leadership team having to prove yourself to be more resilient. For some the main barrier to promotion is that they are happy in their current position as deputy headteacher and therefore do not want to progress.

From my analysis (Appendix 7, table 7.1), it is clear to see how the themes relate to the research question. Again, many of the themes across the groups were similar with all the groups talking about external pressures such as Ofsted, budgets and accountability. In group A, they focused more on their gender and the perception of them being 'pigeonholed' as a Mum and this creating an additional barrier to headship along with feelings of guilt. Group C were content in their current deputy head position and the unknown of headship was

something currently putting them off progressing. Again, confidence was mentioned across all three groups along with cultural and education factors putting them off progressing.

7.8.3 Examining the themes in RQ4

RQ4: What enablers to promotion to headship can be identified?

If we look at the group's overall summary for this research question, (Appendix 7, table 7.2), we can see that there are two themes that directly feed into answering the question. These themes are 'Impact of Motherhood', 'Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations and Inspirations and ambitions'. For some participants they can see the positives within the theme of 'Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations' and 'Inspiration and ambitions' describing within the topics that they can 'make positive changes' and that they want to 'make decisions as a head' and 'shape future lives'. For some within the theme of 'Impact of Motherhood' they want to explore their 'ambition' of becoming a head but call for more female mentors and role models to enable them to fulfil this ambition or to enable others to want to progress.

Within this comparison activity you can visibly see a clear distinction of the enablers for each group and within group A there are many enablers compared to group B and C. Group A identifies positive aspects to being a headteacher such as making change and shaping future lives which group C also identifies. For group B the only enabler they can identify is a suggestion of more female role models and mentors to encourage women into headship. This suggestion is perhaps key to thinking about how women perceive themselves and that the role of headteacher is something that they view as incompatible and unachievable. Perhaps if they saw more women in the role, they would be encouraged to change this view? This is something that I pick up later in my research in my recommendations (Chapter 11).

7.9 Initial summary of findings from the research questions

As can be seen from above, this exercise allowed me to see the similarities and differences between each group and to see how the themes related to each research question. This allowed me to begin to form some answers to my questions and to look at where the themes helped to start address these. This also added an additional layer of scrutiny as I had now organised the data by research questions as well as the groups. This allowed me to see in more detail the way that the themes presented themselves within the research questions and

to visually see the data across the groups. This was an important stage, as I started to see my data in a different way as the deeper I looked into my themes I gained a greater understanding of what the themes meant including patterns emerging across the data (such as confidence) that are part of a number of different themes.

For example, confidence and skills was emerging within all groups (as in the first analysis in this chapter per theme), but this now became more prominent and whilst this was themed under 'Impact of Motherhood', this was an area that I wanted to explore further. Confidence was also an area that I had spotted across a number of research questions repeatedly which needed further exploration.

This stage was when the data became complex and somewhat messy as there were many repeated topics and themes that became evident in all the research questions. For example, under RQ1 and 2 *"What are deputy headteachers school and leadership experiences? How do these experiences relate to their ambitions in wanting to become headteachers*?" answers had similarities to RQ3 "*What barriers/hurdles to promotion to headship can be identified?".* This illustrates how complex the research area is as many of the issues behind this are interrelated and there is no one reason why women are not progressing to headship. Group A (Wanting to progress to headship) and group B (not wanting to progress) had similar responses to the questions. This suggests that there are common barriers to progression to headship whether someone wants to aspire to be a head or not so why then are the similar points leading to different promotion decisions? If some of these areas were addressed perhaps, we could convert more women who are considering headship or even those that do not aspire to become a head to consider it. Another aspect that I examine in my final chapter (11) is the use of my narrative-inspired methodology and the impact that this has had on some of the participants in terms of how they could reflect on their own leadership journeys and this has enabled some of the participants to ask questions of their own journeys and perhaps why they have not considered headship before and for some changing their views on this.

This then led me back me back to step 5 and asking the question "Can I see any similarities across the groups?". This step led me to be able to reduce the data and the themes into three key headings. I did this as I felt that some of the themes overlapped and would be better suited into a condensed set of themes. (Appendix 8 illustrates this process).

Table 11: Previous themes and condensed themes.

Condensed theme:	***Previous themes:***
Female leadership and confidence	Gendered roles and skills; inspiration and ambition; Impact of Motherhood
Managing internal and external barriers	Work-life balance challenges; Gendered roles and skills; personal and systematic pressures
Perceptions of being a headteacher	Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations; Personal and systematic pressures

I condensed the themes into three areas of focus; ***female leadership and confidence***; ***managing internal and external barriers***; and ***perceptions of being a headteacher***.

I purposely added the word 'managing' to the theme of 'Managing internal and external barriers' as I wanted to illustrate the complexities that the women faced with all the different barriers and how many had described that they had to juggle and manage various competing priorities from both home and work life.

These areas would be the next stage in my exploration of the data within chapter 8.

Chapter 8: Discussion of findings from the three areas of focus/condensed themes and findings emerging from my data analysis – Step 7

8.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the findings from the three areas of focus and condensed themes looking in particular at confidence in relation to the themes. I then explore the different confidence types within my themes and look at the data provided by each group.

8.1 Findings from the three areas of focus/condensed themes:

I noticed within all the areas of focus that confidence was linked to each one. My data display stage led me to visually see these links. This had been something that had been reoccurring throughout my analysis, but I could now see three distinct areas where confidence was contributing to the progressing or not progressing to headship. In defining confidence, I looked at the Cambridge dictionary definition which stated:

"the quality of being certain of your abilities or having trust in people, plans or the future"

The following section considers the above definition and different forms of confidence within the three areas of focus.

8.2 Female leadership and confidence

From looking at this data set I then started to notice the different areas that confidence fell into such as family life. Participants were talking about the fact that headship was not flexible and that it was not compatible with a family suggesting a lack of confidence in the flexibility of the role and the reality that the role cannot change. This was linked into their perceptions of the role. In discussing gender, participants talked about 'men' being more confident than 'women', or seeming to be more confident in meetings and discussions and that there was a difference in styles from a gendered perspective. Participants felt women are more likely not to apply for headships if they felt they could not do all the required skills and often doubted their own self ability suggesting a lack of self-efficacy and perhaps imposter syndrome.

The participants talked a lot about confidence in themselves and their ability or skill set. This related back to my reading on Bandura (1986, 1997) on the work of self-efficacy and this then allowed me to begin to look at how different theory surrounding self- efficacy and confidence at work had started to link to my research. If I reflect back on Bandura's definition of self-

efficacy it has been defined as conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977:193). Within this area, if I reflect on the participants' leadership experiences and some of the areas that they discuss in relation to their skills and confidence there are many similarities between Bandura's work (1982, 1986) and theories on how personal mastery experiences and how people naturally reflect back on their past experiences and failures in assessing their capabilities to perform. The theory of imposter syndrome is also relevant here as Clance and Imes (1978) and Huecker et al (2023) describe a number of characteristics that women display that fit in with the lack of confidence and belief in themselves that could contribute to them not believing they can progress to headship. Confidence in relation to their gender is an area that has been explored through the participants views on what they feel men and women are good at and that men seem more confident than women. Again, linking to their own individual perceptions. This could be because of the societal stereotypes they have faced as examples were given by the participants discussing how they have felt judged by others that they cannot cope with both family and career. This reminded me of the work of Eagly (1997) where social role is discussed in terms of the historic division of labour between men and women and how this places them into different social roles, where men take on agentic tasks and women take on communal tasks such as child rearing. Eagly (1997) argues that roles will create divergent stereotypes about men and women. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 11.

8.3 Managing internal and external barriers

Confidence and trust in the education system was an issue raised and throughout the interviews participants referred to several reasons that concerned them about the current education system and a reason that currently put them off applying for headship. The fear of Ofsted was frequently discussed as a key barrier to progression with various examples of stories where headteachers they knew had been 'broken' by inspections or it had destroyed their confidence. This had led to the participants feeling unconfident themselves in the prospect of being the leader in charge of a school facing Ofsted. Alongside this, the perception of the current government pressures and financial strains on budget and recruitment issues were all factors that caused the participants a lack of trust in the current and future system. My literature review highlighted that the constantly changing picture within the education environment and external pressures creates substantial pressure and

challenges for school leadership (Ouston, et al, 1998; Glatter, 2012; Greany, 2016). It is these pressures that the participants are referring to within their interviews and the impact that it is having on their career aspirations. Some participants are reflecting on whether to progress to headship or to put it off a while longer to see if the landscape changes.

8.4 Perceptions of being a headteacher

Another factor to consider is that women seem to perceive that headship is more appropriate for men and they do not have confidence that the job is suitable for women, for many different reasons. We have already examined the statistics that illustrate that men continue to outnumber women at the secondary school headteacher level (Guihen, 2017). In my literature review, the Department for Education's white paper 2022, sets out a set of quality descriptors for Trusts of which one is concerned with training, recruitment, and retention of leaders and teachers throughout their careers. However, based on the issues that the participants are illustrating this is not enough on its own as they are highlighting that some of the confidence issues are coming from the job itself and the fact that it is seen as 'incompatible' with family life. Shakeshaft (1985) highlighted this within my literature review whereby they explained that a direct impediment for females in attaining administrative positions is the reality-based factor of family responsibility (Kamler and Shakeshaft, 1999).

At this stage, I started to notice a theme and pattern that directly related to my research questions. It is important to note these are based on the perceptions of the individual participants and how they view both themselves and their current career and educational landscape. There were three distinct areas that all related to confidence and trust in some form. Firstly, confidence about their gender and how men and women perform differently, and women have more self-doubt and a fear of lack of skills. Secondly, confidence and trust are related to the current education system. Both a lack of confidence in the government and education policies and also the inspection framework used by schools, Ofsted, but again also a lack of confidence in dealing with these issues. Lastly, this was combined with a lack of confidence in the role of headteacher being a job that was compatible with working Mum's and balancing career and family life. Therefore, this led me to define the different confidence types:

A. **Confidence in their skills and ability – linking to the theme of Female leadership and confidence**
B. **Trust in the education system – linking to the theme of Managing internal and external barriers and Perceptions of being a headteacher**
C. **Trust and confidence that headship is compatible with women and their assigned social roles – linking to the themes of Female leadership and confidence; managing internal and external barriers and perceptions of being a headteacher**

In exploring the key concept of confidence, I could see that there were many layers and elements to this as can be seen from above. Not only does confidence form a state of mind and affect belief in one's abilities, qualities, and judgements it is also crucial for personal development, success in various domains, and overall well-being. Confidence influences how individuals approach challenges, make decisions, and interact with others. It can influence self-efficacy, self-esteem, optimism, and resilience. There are many layers to confidence, core, contextual, external, and social validation. Our core confidence is based on our intrinsic beliefs and fundamental beliefs about ourselves, shaped by early experiences and internalised attitudes (Erikson, E, 1950). Contextual confidence levels are often situational specific and can vary across different domains, for example, academic, social, professional. Dweck (2006), illustrates through her work on Growth Mindset that confidence can be domain-specific, with individuals believing they can develop their abilities in certain areas through effort and learning. We have seen this through some of the participants wanting to learn more about the skill deficit that they believe they have. Social validation is often bolstered or diminished by external feedback. Cooley's (1902) looking-glass self-theory suggests that individuals develop their self-concept based on how they believe others perceive them, which can significantly impact their confidence. We have seen this through some of the participants when they say no one has encouraged them to be a headteacher therefore without that external validation they do not feel they are suitable. Therefore, confidence is a multi-faceted construct that encompasses self-efficacy, self-esteem, optimism and resilience. It operates at various levels, from core beliefs to context-specific and externally influenced states. It is important to acknowledge this and to look at the identified areas of confidence within the existing themes, to take a deeper look deeper look at my data

in relation to the different areas that could be affected by confidence. This would allow me to look more deeply at my research questions to start to look at potential answers and recommendations.

8.5 Findings emerging from my data analysis – Step 7

Having identified three areas based around different confidence types within my themes, the final stage of my analysis was to explore these in relation to my existing themes and to examine my data to illustrate these in action.

To do this, I revisited these three areas and started to break them down further into the identified confidence types based on the analysis in the previous chapter (7).

A: Female leadership and Confidence

- Gender and perceptions of women with families and the impact on confidence
- Lack of skills/confidence and role models and the impact on their confidence

B: Managing external and Internal Barriers

-Trust in the education system including government pressures, Ofsted and confidence in dealing with them

-Confidence and Trust to be able to have a family life and be a successful head

C: Perceptions of being a headteacher

-Confidence in relation to being a headteacher both skills and suitability

I was then able to see three distinct areas within the data and five sub strands within these that related to different forms of confidence. It will be important to explore the different forms of confidence as some relate to education and cultural factors. For example, lack of confidence in the education system such as Ofsted, but this is different to someone who lacks confidence in oneself to be able to manage this process.

8.6 Analysis of data

The next stage of my analysis was to interrogate the data to see whether the areas identified above could be evidenced within each group. Thus, the following section will illustrate examples of how the participants showed that these areas of confidence became prevalent within each focus area.

A. Female leadership and confidence

1. Gender and perceptions of women with families and the impact on confidence

2. Lack of skills/confidence and role models and the impact on their confidence

B. Managing external and Internal Barriers

3. Confidence in the education system including government pressures, Ofsted, and confidence in dealing with them

4. Confidence to be able to have a family life and be a successful Head

C. Perceptions of being a headteacher

5. Confidence in relation to being a headteacher both skills and suitability

I therefore took each group of participants and looked specifically at these areas of confidence within the three areas of Female leadership and confidence: Managing external and internal barriers and Perceptions of being a headteacher. As above these were broken down into a number of subtopics (1-5) within them which I will explore in detail in the next section examining how these were distributed across the participants interviews and the different groups.

I will discuss in turn each different area where confidence is discussed and look at the data provided to support these themes within each of the groups (A, B, C).

8.7 Female Leadership and Confidence

8.7.1 Gender and perceptions of women with families and the impact on confidence

Within group A, (those who wanted to progress to headship), the theme of confidence and gender was evident within the data, and this came through in all the participants data in various forms. Some participants described how they felt held back by their gender or the assumptions made because of their gender.

I discuss below some of the examples from the participants' interviews and what they said in relation to confidence in their gender and perceptions of women with families.

Table 12: Group A – wanting to progress to headship

Participant:	**Gender and perceptions of women with families and the impact on confidence**
Jean WDH 1 40-49 Worcester (DH for 10 years)	Gendered roles within her SLT team – men in charge of data, timetabling and curriculum. Women lead on learning and teaching and pastoral matters. Men dominating conversations in SLT meetings. Appearance – men wearing suits at a natural advantage. Wearing a suit to make her feel more credible. Guilt of being a Mum. ***"Sometimes I have to take a deep breath in meetings because the men try to dominate the conversations."*** ***"I find myself wearing power suits just to make myself credible and to give myself a voice!"*** ***"The amount of guilt I feel if don't quite make it home to bedtime."***
Emma WDH 3 30-39 Leicester (DH for 3 years)	Men do not have the same career breaks as women unless they choose to. ***"What I have observed is how other people view you, especially after coming back from maternity…Men don't have career breaks, well it's not as common"***
Sarah WDH 4 39-49 Essex (DH for 4 years)	Head's behaviour changed towards her when she fell pregnant. ***"The second I got pregnant everything changed and I was then very much challenged in everything I did"*** ***"I feel like I have to work harder to prove to people that I am capable. Yet I didn't have to do this before. It's unfair and I know a lot of the pressure I put on my perception of what I think people think. I want to prove to them all that I am good enough to be a Head with or without a child"***
Marie WDH 6 40-49 Warwick (DH for 11 years)	Gender works for and against you. ***"She makes a point of ensuring that we all get a work- life balance and leads by example herself too. She's managed to combine her headship with having a young family and she still succeeds…. I just wish all my previous headteachers had been the same. I really do think perhaps I would have looked at headship a lot earlier."***
Claire WDH 9 30-39 Herts (DH for 5 years)	Male colleagues on SLT very confident – she feels that they don't necessarily know what they are talking about, but they look confident. Pigeonholed into being a Mum. ***"I just don't possess that confidence that men do. The men on my SLT have bags of confidence and half the time, I know that they don't know what they are talking about……others assume you can't manage both family and leadership."*** ***"I think when people know you are a Mum and have a family, they somehow then pigeonhole you into that role and then subconsciously think well that's her main role now, so she won't be able to cope with leading and managing a school….Men aren't categorised in the same way."***

The data within this group provides a fascinating insight the role of gender and the societal expectations that women within this research interpret as barriers to promotion and barriers

to their own confidence to go for promotion. It is interesting to see how men are described as 'confident' or certainly that they come across as 'confident' even if the participants do not believe that they possess all the answers. One participant talks about the use of clothes to give her confidence so that she feels more like the men in suits. This is very much like the reflections I made in Chapter 3 reflective diaries in relation to clothes and confidence. The participants feel a sense of being categorised as Mums and that they are being judged on this with the participants talking about the 'guilt' they feel or that they are 'pigeonholed as a Mum' which leads others to view them as not being capable to manage both family and career. The societal view on gender is also explored when one participant talks about being pregnant and their heads view towards them changing.

Table 13: Group B – not wanting to progress to headship

Participant:	**Gender and perceptions of women with families and the impact on confidence**
Sally WDH 2 30-39 Birmingham (DT for 7 years)	As a woman feels she has to work harder to be noticed. Wouldn't apply for a job if she felt she couldn't do all the job description- men would. ***"Men and women approach the jobs very differently, the men on my team are very confident and know all the answers whereas I constantly doubt myself – I don't pretend to do things if I can't."*** ***"I've spoken to my husband about this, it's really funny because I look at a job description and think of all the things I can't do, and he will look at one and his view is the opposite it's to think of how many he can do and therefore he thinks the rest will come."***
Andrea WDH 7 40-49 Coventry (DH for 8 years)	Husband's job takes priority. Positive female mentors would understand the responsibilities that women feel that they have to take***.*** ***"My husband's job takes priority, and he earns more and is more successful than me, so I really don't need to progress any further."*** ***"If we had more positive female mentors, I think that would help encourage more women into headship as they would understand the responsibilities that women have outside work."***
Ellen WDH 10 30-39 Beds (DH for 5 years)	Men and women are better at different things. Expected for men to wear suits, women could get away with more feminine clothes. ***"Men and women do possess different skill sets there are some things that I just don't feel confident in. It's also about appearance. Men wear a suit and look smart and professional but there isn't the same expectation for women. We can wear 'pretty' dresses and still be viewed as looking smart. It's wrong really."*** ***"a colleague…has gone out of her way to learn skills that she naturally doesn't possess."***

Again, within this data there are some viewpoints from the participants in relation to their gender and how they view men as more confident and have a different set of skills; the perception that their gender is holding back. This reminds me again of the 'think manager-think male' phenomenon from my literature review. The theme of clothes is evident, however, this is viewed in a more gendered way with the view that men are expected to wear suits and women can wear feminine clothes.

Table 14: Group C – unsure about their future career progression

Participant:	**Gender and perceptions of women with families and the impact on confidence**
Natalie WDH 5 30-39 Herts (DH for 4 years)	You need to be a Superwoman to be a head and have children. ***"Women that take on headship with children must be superwoman!"***
Samantha WDH 8 40-49 Liverpool (DH for 6 years)	Men are more confident and don't have the same constraints. ***"Men are more confident than women naturally and they just don't have the same constraints as us, we are expected to do everything at home and still somehow manage a career."***

The topic of men being more confident than women is again explored within this group and the participant refers to this as 'men are more naturally confident' suggesting that this is again a gendered issue. Those women that do go onto headship with children are viewed by one of the participants as superhuman described as 'Superwoman' which again suggests that for the majority of women this is an unreachable position for women who have children because of the other demands that are placed upon them in a family. The 'superwoman' aspect has similarities with Sukaulku & Alexander's (2011) work on the imposter syndrome.

8.7.1.1 Summary

I have found the themes around confidence in relation to gender and the pressures of the societal stereotypes really interesting in relation to how this might affect their career aspirations and impact upon their confidence to progress to headship in relation to this. For many of the participants, men are viewed as naturally being more confident than women and possessing skills that women do not have. Clothes are mentioned in this section as a way of either feeling more confidence or assuming men look more confident because of the suits that they wear. The view that society also undermines women confidence because of the assumed family roles that they should take on also has an impact on their confidence in their

ability to have both family and career. We saw this through the view that you need to be superhuman or 'superwoman' to do both. The view of society's gendered expectations comes through strongly here too with the participants struggling with this view and the demands put on their gender to be able to perform the home role. The call for more female role models and the lack of confidence are both something that need to be addressed within the recommendations in Chapter 11.

8.7.2 Lack of skills/confidence and role models and the impact on their confidence

All the participants within their interviews talked about either a lack of role models for them to look up to or for more to be done to help encourage women into headship whether that was through additional training or mentoring. The below table illustrates examples from all the participants within group A of some of the barriers stopping them from progressing to headship and in turn affecting their confidence to be able to manage the role of headteacher.

Table 15: Group A – wanting to progress to headship

Participant:	**Lack of skills/confidence and role models and the impact on their confidence**
Jean WDH 1 40-49 Worcester (DH for 10 years)	Needs to see how the transition to Head would work with a family. ***"Female role models as headteachers would help the transition"***
Emma WDH 3 30-39 Leicester (DH for 3 years)	Needs to see how combining family and work would work without impacting on personal life. ***"I think I need to see more Mums as Heads, so I know it's achievable"***
Sarah WDH 4 39-49 Essex (DH for 4 years)	Encourage women to apply for headship and show them how you can combine being a Mum and Head. ***"We need to see more Mum's being a headteacher and it being the norm!"***
Marie WDH 6 40-49 Warwick (DH for 11 years)	Role models. Needs to be more female Heads to show it's possible to juggle a young family. ***"There needs to be more female Heads as role models to show it's possible to juggle a young family".***
Claire WDH 9 30-39 Herts (DH for 5 years)	More female headteachers with young children would encourage more to progress. ***"If I saw more female headteachers in my position with young children I'd be more encouraged to do it"*** ***"There needs to be more encouragement or even job shares"*** ***"We need to celebrate successful female headteachers more!"***

Overwhelmingly within this group, they call for more female headteachers to be 'visible' as role models to promote that you can have a family and be a headteacher. For many of the participants they just cannot see how this is compatible so they are calling on successful female headteachers to illustrate how this can be done to break down some of the perceived barriers.

Table 16: Group B – not wanting to progress to headship

Participant:	**Lack of skills/confidence and role models and the impact on their confidence**
Sally WDH 2 30-39 Birmingham (DT for 7 years)	Need for female role models- just assumed the role of head is something 'men do'. ***"We really need more female heads as role models as I think people assume it's a job for men!"***
Andrea WDH 7 40-49 Coventry (DH for 8 years)	Positive female mentor as they would understand the responsibilities that women feel like they have to take. ***"If we had more positive female mentors, I think that would help encourage more women into headship as they would understand the responsibilities that women have outside work."***
Ellen WDH 10 30-39 Beds (DH for 5 years)	Encouragement to progress by female headteachers is needed. ***"Women need to be encouraged to progress by other female headteachers."***

Again, this group is very similar to group A as they want there to be more role models to break this perception of the headteacher role being a male role. This group also calls for more female mentors to help build their confidence in headship as they feel other women would understand the additional family demands that they have to juggle.

Table 17: Group C – unsure about their future career progression

Participant:	**Lack of skills/confidence and role models and the impact on their confidence**
Natalie DHT 5 30-39 Herts (DH for 4 years)	Training and HR/finance and NPQH ***"I wouldn't even know where to begin with some of the HR/finance issues and I just don't think there's any amount of training that prepares you for when it's on your own making decisions. Some colleagues have done the NPQH…. nowadays I don't think it's as highly regarded as it used to be."***
Samantha DHT 8 40-49 Liverpool (DH for 6 years)	Role models/mentor ***"If I had a female mentor or role model to discuss headship with, I think this would help."***

In the last group, we can see the idea of a female mentor also being discussed although within Natalie's interview she dismisses the idea of a mentor and instead focuses more on the training side of things that she would need help with if pursuing headship.

8.7.2.1 Summary

Every participant apart from Natalie has mentioned the need for more role models and mentors within the system to help them gain confidence in considering the role of headship. This is a powerful set of data in that this is something that could be addressed to help with the lack of women secondary headteachers. It seems that they currently do not have confidence in applying for roles because they do not see enough women with families doing the role. Whilst Natalie does not think a mentor would help her progress in her career perhaps if she saw more role models doing the job as head this would encourage her to the next stage in her career. Again, the area around training was also raised by Natalie and the NPQH qualification, which will be discussed and explored in the next chapter.

8.7.3 Managing External and Internal Barriers

8.7.3.1 Confidence in the education system including government pressures, Ofsted, and confidence in dealing with them

All the participants in their interviews talked about external pressures that affected their confidence to do the role of headteacher with many explicitly referencing Ofsted, finance, HR worries, and staffing. The below table illustrates examples from all the participants within group A of the external pressures affecting their confidence in their ability to do the role of headship.

Table 18: Group A – wanting to progress to headship

Participant:	**Confidence in the education system including government pressures, Ofsted, and confidence in dealing with them**
Jean WDH 1 40-49 Worcester (DH for 10 years)	Lack of confidence in the system and Ofsted. ***"You hear so many stories about Ofsted and it being dependant on the team that you get that I'd be so worried about Ofsted inspectors and whether I got a good team or not."***
Emma WDH 3 30-39 Leicester (DH for 3 years)	Government pressures ***"The pressures of the ever-changing Government demands, and lack of support really worries me."***
Sarah WDH 4 39-49 Essex (DH for 4 years)	She has a fear of Ofsted. Has heard stories of bad inspections and impact on Head.

	"I've heard awful stories about Heads who have gone through an Ofsted inspection, and its literally broken them."
Marie WDH 6 40-49 Warwick (DH for 11 years)	HR, staffing, and teacher recruitment worries her. ***"I have been thinking of some of the things I'd need to face as a headteacher and the biggest thing that worries me is staff retention and recruitment."***
Claire WDH 9 30-39 Herts (DH for 5 years)	Not a good time to be a headteacher. ***"Now is not a good time to become a headteacher. Here's been so many cuts that I think there's a lot of pressure on headteacher's to manage budgets……I'm playing the waiting game to see what happens next with the government and with Ofsted."***

Those wanting to become headteachers share similar worries in terms of Ofsted and government pressures around the changing educational landscape and teacher recruitment crisis. Many references are made to Ofsted inspections and those inspections that they have heard of where colleagues as heads have suffered which could be an additional worry for them. For some of the participants they are 'waiting' to see whether the educational landscape improves.

Table 19: Group B – not wanting to progress to headship

Participant:	**Confidence in the education system including government pressures, Ofsted, and confidence in dealing with them**
Sally WDH 2 30-39 Birmingham (DT for 7 years)	Pressure of the job. ***"There's no reason I can think of at the present time that would entice anyone to become a headteacher – the pressure is just too much!"***
Andrea WDH 7 40-49 Coventry (DH for 8 years)	Friends experience of headship – stressed all the time. Budget cuts. Staffing issues, redundancies. ***"My friend became a headteacher, she was so stressed out all the time, I could physically see the affect it had on her. I also know that budget cuts are putting a huge pressure on headteachers which in turn is resulting in redundancies and that can't be nice"***
Ellen WDH 10 30-39 Beds (DH for 5 years)	Pressure on heads is unmanageable. Government agenda, cutbacks, budgets and finance. ***"Oh my, the pressure would be phenomenal. It's hard enough as a deputy. I can't begin to imagine it when it's just you and you are accountable for everything! Ofsted, budgets and staffing! The pressure of changing government policy every year"***

Within this group, it becomes clear that their perceived idea of the headteacher role is something that is directly putting them off considering headship. The pressure of the job is something all three participants expressed concerns about along with government agendas, Ofsted and financial worries. For this group, the pressure is seen as something that they

believe cannot be addressed and therefore this has directly impacted their decision in relation to their career aspirations and progression to headship. They simply do not have the confidence in the role of headteacher ever being manageable. The recommendations chapter (11) explores this in more detail looking at how we can support both women's confidence and the context of headship.

Table 20: Group C – unsure about their future career progression

Participant:	**Confidence in the education system including government pressures, Ofsted and confidence in dealing with them**
Natalie WDH 5 30-39 Herts (DH for 4 years)	Headship is all-consuming. HR/finance worries ***"I think one of the reasons that puts people off going for headship is the unknown…. it's all the HR and finance that puts me off…I wouldn't know where to begin."***
Samantha WDH 8 40-49 Liverpool (DH for 6 years)	Political climate associated with headship and education. ***"There's so much negativity at the moment around education and the accountability that Heads face that I just don't want to consider it at the moment."***

This group have raised similar concerns around the uncertainty of the education system but also flagged the lack of training and unknowns of headship around the HR and finance aspects of the role. This reinforces the findings of the NCTL report (2013) in Chapter 2.

8.7.3.2 Summary

The perceived pressures around the government agendas and worries surrounding this seems to be a barrier for many of the participants along with the worry of the actual job itself and the enormity of this role. Pressure is mentioned by many of the group and the view that there is the confidence in the current education system to make the role of headteacher both manageable or achievable due to several external and internal factors. Ofsted plays a big part in the worries of the participants and having to manage finance and HR situations with some participants pointing to there needing to be more support and help for these areas. In my literature review, I discussed the Department for Education's white paper 2022 and their commitment to inspect all schools by 2025 and how this added pressure may be affecting whether leaders take on headship.

8.7.4 Confidence to be able to have a family life and be a successful head

In analysing the data another area that was dominant was related to family life and how this linked to the participants not having the confidence to be able to manage both family and career. This is seen in all groups and within group A, (those who wanted to progress to headship), this is a dominant theme of the pressures of juggling home and work-life and causing potential barriers to headship. The below table illustrates examples from all the participants within this group in relation to family life.

***Table 21: Group A* – wanting to progress to headship**

Participant:	Confidence to be able to have a family life and be a successful Head
Jean WDH 1 40-49 Worcester (DH for 10 years)	She feels a pressure to manage work- life balance. There are two roles – being a Mum and 'desired career'. She feels it's impossible to be a Head with young children. ***"The pressure on me to be a Mum and have a career is overwhelming at times. The amount of guilt I feel if I don't quite make it home to bedtime is awful. I can only imagine this being ten times worse if I was the headteacher."***
Emma WDH 3 30-39 Leicester (DH for 3 years)	She works hard to juggle commitments with home and family and work. She constantly battles with family and work-life balance. ***"The amount of people that have said to me are you going to be to cope?.. It's the assumption that it's too much if you have two children."***
Sarah WDH 4 39-49 Essex (DH for 4 years)	Head telling her SLT, and young children were not compatible. Struggles with juggling responsibilities and family. ***"My previous headteacher made me feel like it was impossible to have a child and still be on SLT. She made that quite clear."***
Marie WDH 6 40-49 Warwick (DH for 11 years)	Taken a long time to become confident – being a Mum has contributed to this. **"I think you have to prove you are more resilient…. especially after coming back after having two children. It does have a knock-on effect to your confidence."**
Claire WDH 9 30-39 Herts (DH for 5 years)	Pressures on her family and her role as 'Mum' ***"It's hard coming back and everyone expecting you to just come back as confident as before and others don't help as they assume you can't manage both family and leadership."***

Within this group, despite them wanting to progress to headship, all had concerns over being able to manage their family life and work-life. In some cases, this is having to juggle the role of being 'Mum' and the pressures surrounding this and for others it is other people's perceptions of what they are capable of doing when they have a family. Some of the participants talk about the direct knock to their confidence that coming back from maternity

leave has had on them but for all the participants there seems to be a lack of confidence in headship being a career that promotes both being a Mum and having the ability to complete the job well. A lack of confidence that the job is compatible with family life.

If we examine the second group of participants, those not wanting to progress to headship, we can see that the same feelings of frustration around juggling home and work commitments.

Table 22: Group B – not wanting to progress to headship

Participant:	**Confidence to be able to have a family life and be a successful Head**
Sally WDH 2 30-39 Birmingham (DT for 7 years)	Does not want to compromise on work-life balance. ***"Whilst I don't have children at the moment it is my aim…I like my role as deputy and feel I have the work-life balance right. There is no way I would want to compromise on that at all."***
Andrea WDH 7 40-49 Coventry (DH for 8 years)	Can not commit long term due to her husband's job. ***"My husband earns more than me and has a more successful career. I need to be flexible with his work and if needs to move then we move."***
Ellen WDH 10 30-39 Beds (DH for 5 years)	Can not have a family and manage work-life as a Head. ***"Teaching is stressful, I can just about juggle everything and keep it all together. For my own well-being I simply wouldn't want to take any more on."***

Within this group, we are seeing the same issues of work-life balance illustrated and the perception that headship does not allow this especially if you have a family at home. We can see this through Sally's perception that in wanting to start a family she is aware that she cannot see it possibly fitting with headship. Andrea's views on family are different as she offers a new perspective to the data in that her husband's work role take priority over hers and therefore her family commitments mean that she cannot commit long term to a career.

Table 23: Group C – unsure about their future career progression

Participant:	**Confidence to be able to have a family life and be a successful Head**
Natalie WDH 5 30-39 Herts (DH for 4 years)	Work-life balance. Important not to have too much pressure from work. Headship is all consuming. Children are her priority. ***"I have two young children, it's just not compatible whereas my role allows me to make a difference and still make time for my family."***
Samantha WDH 8 40-49 Liverpool (DH for 6 years)	Sacrifices of well-being and family time. ***"Life is far too busy to take on anything else."***

As with group A and B the idea of family life and work-life balance and headship is something that the participants do not see as compatible. In taking on headship, their view would be that sacrifices need to be made to their well-being and family.

8.7.4.1 Summary

Within all three groups, we have seen every participant talk about work-life balance and being able to juggle home and work commitments. There is a real lack of confidence that the role of headteacher can offer them this balance. This is a real barrier for the women within my research with the data illustrating that the women do not have the confidence that the job role offers them the flexibility to juggle home commitments or to offer them a work-life balance. Within some of the participants' interviews they asked for more flexible working patterns or job shares which could all be areas to help with this this issue and something that is explored further in the next two chapters.

8.7.5 Perceptions of being a headteacher

8.7.5.1 Confidence in relation to being a Headteacher both skills and suitability

Within group A, (those who wanted to progress to headship), despite this ambition, we still see elements of all the participants within this group not having the confidence in themselves to do the job of a headteacher. This confidence takes many forms and some of this comes down to their lack of belief in themselves or that they do not possess the correct skills. Alongside this, the participants express the feeling that they cannot do a good job as a headteacher with a family. I discuss the family element in more detail in a later section but will briefly touch upon this within this part of the data analysis too. The below table illustrates examples from all the participants within this group in relation to confidence in themselves which will be followed by group B and group C's views.

Table 24: Group A – wanting to progress to headship

Participant:	**Theme: Confidence in relation to being a headteacher both skills and suitability**
Jean WDH 1 40-49 Worcester (DH for 10 years)	Believes women lack confidence in themselves. ***"I'm just not sure whether I have the confidence to put myself forward and if I could do it."***
Emma WDH 3 30-39 Leicester (DH for 3 years)	Maternity affects her confidence to do the job.

	"What I have observed is how other people view you especially after coming back from maternity leave. That's when I doubted myself and confidence."
Sarah WDH 4 39-49 Essex (DH for 4 years)	Previous headteacher knocked her confidence. ***"Before having a child there was no stopping me in terms of my confidence….my previous headteacher made me feel like it was impossible to have a child and still be on SLT…. that has affected my confidence."***
Marie WDH 6 40-49 Warwick (DH for 11 years)	She has been a blocker to headship as she thought she didn't possess the right skills. She has a lack of skills in certain areas. **"I lacked self-belief in my skills."**
Claire WDH 9 30-39 Herts (DH for 5 years)	Confidence was knocked after she returned from maternity leave. ***"I would love to progress to headship, but do you know I just don't possess that confidence that men do… I think my career break for maternity has played big part in my confidence."***

Within this group, despite them wanting to progress to headship, all had concerns over their confidence to do the job. In some cases, this has been affected by maternity breaks but for many it is a lack of self-belief and self-confidence that they can do the job.

If we examine the second group of participants, those not wanting to progress to headship, we can see that the same feelings of lack of confidence in themselves are more prevalent than group A as every participant mentions their lack of skills or confidence.

Table 25: Group B – not wanting to progress to headship

Participant:	**Theme: Confidence in relation to being a headteacher both skills and suitability**
Sally WDH 2 30-39 Birmingham (DT for 7 years)	Doesn't have the confidence to be a head. Women lack in confidence and don't try to pretend to do things. ***"The men on my team are very confident and know all the answers whereas I constantly doubt myself – I don't pretend to do things if I can't."***
Andrea WDH 7 40-49 Coventry (DH for 8 years)	Lack of confidence. If she can't do something 100%, she wouldn't apply. ***"I never want to put myself in a situation or job where didn't feel 100% confident that I could do a good job. Can I say 100% I could do headship. No, I couldn't."***
Ellen WDH 10 30-39 Beds (DH for 5 years)	Feels she has a lot of skills gaps. Doesn't have the skills or confidence for headship. ***"I don't feel like I have the skills to be a headteacher."***

Again, the same feelings with regards to their lack of confidence are evident within this group but this group talk more about how if they cannot do something one hundred percent then

they would not put themselves forward. Likewise, they illustrate their perceived lack of skills for headship and point to the fact that they feel men possess more skills than women.

The final group of participants, those unsure about their future career progression, focused on how they felt they were not ready yet for headship in terms of their confidence and skills.

Table 26: Group C – unsure about their future career progression

Participant:	**Theme: Confidence in relation to being a headteacher both skills and suitability**
Natalie WDH 5 30-39 Herts (DH for 4 years)	Isn't confident enough in all areas at present. ***"Besides, I'm not confident enough in all areas at present. There's no way I could be a head yet."***
Samantha WDH 8 40-49 Liverpool (DH for 6 years)	Not having the confidence in herself to do it. ***"I think because I haven't discussed it with anyone, I just think I'm not ready and I don't have the confidence to do it."***

Within this group, the same issues of lack of skills and confidence has emerged as in group A and B but they also talk about the lack of discussions had with them and how this has also impacted their confidence to put themselves forward. There is also a reliance on others to say that they are good enough to progress rather than making a decision for themselves. This is something that I will need to consider in my findings and recommendations in Chapter 11.

8.7.5.2 Summary

Within all three groups, we have seen every participant talk about their lack of confidence or skills to be able to do the job and role of headteacher. Alongside the lack of confidence in their skills is also the lack of training to be able to build on their confidence. This training could be through courses to upskill them in areas such as finance but also mentoring and coaching to help them build their self-confidence. This has not just been isolated to the groups not wanting to progress to headship or those unsure. It is clear that whether the confidence is through the participants feeling they lack in certain skills or whether their confidence has had a set back from maternity break(s) they are all linked to their individual confidence. Linked into this, women that take maternity breaks and having children feel that the role of a headteacher is not compatible with young children and they do not have the confidence in the job to allow them to do both roles well. Where they are aspiring for

headship, they associate this move with guilt and worry about other people's perceptions of them. Participants all discuss their lack of confidence in the education system whether it is the fear of Ofsted or financial pressures and government agendas. This is something that is causing an additional barrier to progression and something that is not easily fixed.

8.8 Summarising the reasons for not progressing to headship within each group

Throughout this section and the analysis, we have seen that despite there being three distinct groups of participants many of their reasons for not progressing to headship have been the same. Group A, whilst they deal with the same issues are motivated to want to progress to headship, and for many this is because they want to fulfil a sense of achievement of being able to reach the top of their career and they have been supported in their decision to achieve this often through a role model or someone that has encouraged them. In one case the participant has been motivated by their own life story and wanting to prove everyone wrong that they could achieve their goal of headship. This group is different from the others in that they all have intrinsic motivation for headship that allows them to overcome the existing barriers to headship.

For group B who did not want to progress to headship, whilst they have indicated they do not want to progress they have highlighted the same barriers and offered solutions to encourage more women into headship. I think this highlights the complexity of the issue that surround women in leadership and therefore by identifying that confidence is key to this solution this offers a potential solution to address some of these concerns. It is clearly not the case that for any particular group that there is a set of different reasons as to why they may want to progress or not but the underlying reasons stem from a lack of confidence in a whole host of areas relating to headship. This is something that will need further exploration within the recommendations. In the next section, Chapter 9, I summarise my findings from the data analysis and final key concepts.

Chapter 9: Findings within the study – Step 7

9.0 Introduction

Having undertaken my data analysis, I then refined my final findings. This was based on the areas analysed in Chapter 8 relating the different confidence types within the existing themes.

9.1 Final findings

This led to me identify five different areas in which confidence/trust was discussed within the data analysis in the previous chapter. These areas were:

A. Female leadership and Confidence

1. Gender and perceptions of women with families and the impact on confidence
2. Lack of skills/confidence and role models and the impact on their confidence

B. Managing external and Internal Barriers

3. Confidence in the education system including government pressures, Ofsted and confidence in dealing with them
4. Confidence to be able to have a family life and be a successful head

C. Perceptions of being a headteacher

5. Confidence in relation to being a headteacher, both skills and suitability

Through this analysis, I could see that confidence was an area that was prominent within all the groups and a barrier to progression. I was also able to see the commonalities of confidence within the areas and could condense this into three prominent areas around confidence:

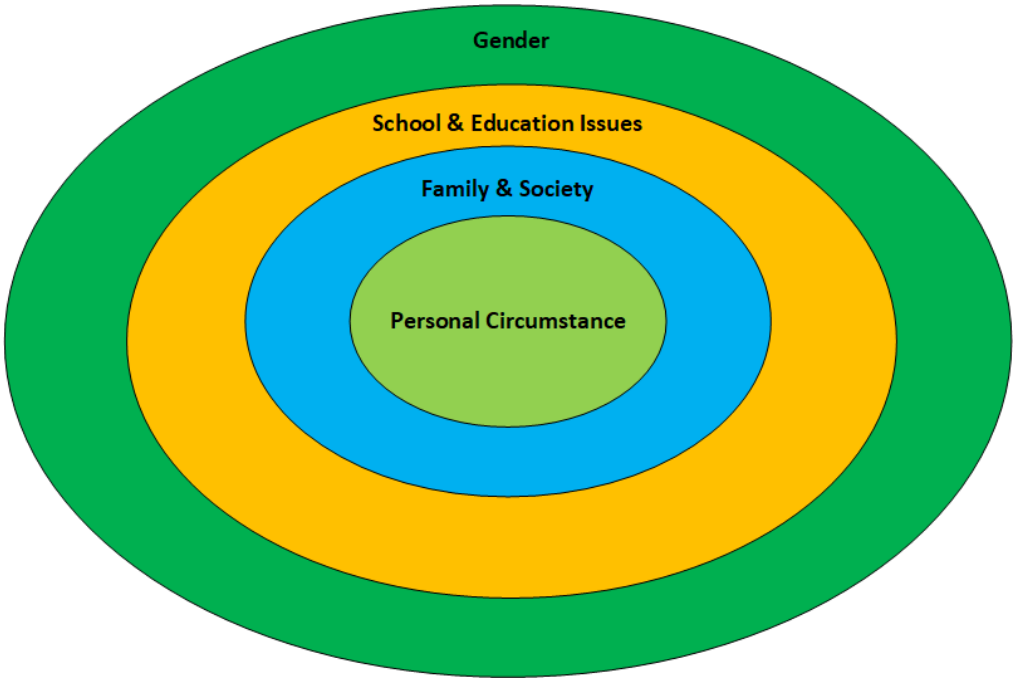
1. **Women and society** (this included 1. Gender and perceptions of women with families and the impact on confidence and 5. Confidence in relation to being a headteacher both skills and suitability). This linked into theme of female leadership and confidence and perceptions of being a headteacher.
2. **Education/school context** (this included 2. Lack of skills/confidence and role models and the impact on their confidence and 3. Confidence in the education system

including government pressures, Ofsted and confidence in dealing with them). This linked into the theme of managing external and internal barriers.

3. **Personal confidence** (this included 5. Confidence in relation to being a head). This linked into the themes of female leadership and confidence and perceptions of being a head.

I have tried to outline the interconnecting relationships of these areas through a figure (below). This illustrates how all the above areas are nested together and linked into one another. The individual personal circumstance of the woman is in the middle, then this is surrounded by their family and society followed by education issues and concerns. However, all of these link directly back to gender, which affects all of them (as this was the chosen sample).

Figure 5: Confidence/trust and the impact on women progressing into headship.



In examining the diagram, if you start by looking at the core, you will see that personal circumstances affect every other area. This is because within my research, quite often the woman's personal circumstance is directly linked to their drive and ambition to progress to headship despite facing the same barriers as the other women. The personal circumstance is then affected by family and society and the pressures on women to be able to complete dual roles such as family and career. The school and education issues are personal and systematic

pressures that may deter them such as the pressures of Ofsted and budget and the gendered SLT roles within teams that they may have experienced. Finally, gender is the dominant theme that interacts with all of this and affects the women through their experiences such as confidence issues, maternity breaks, gendered workplace roles, and their view and perception of how they are viewed in society and how headship is viewed as incompatible with motherhood.

It also demonstrates the complexity of the issue as every group expressed their lack of confidence and or trust within these areas which indicates the complexities surrounding the recruitment of women into headship.

Understanding the issues around confidence will help to find some solutions to enable those women who want to progress to have the confidence to do so. My recommendations are addressed in Chapter 11.

Whilst the above diagram helps to outline the issues faced by women deputy headteachers, it also opens up questions about how these factors can affect the women deputy headteachers career aspirations. For example, what are the political and structural issues around educational leadership and how have these influenced the women within my research? Many of the participants talked about their aspirations being directly linked to the educational environment and the fact that the agenda was forever changing. This was something that all the participants mentioned but something that some participants said had a direct impact on their decision making. The recommendations chapter (11) examines how women within my own context have been able to engage in leadership and I look at ways in which this can be developed further and the implications on practice. The above diagram looks specifically at the influence of family and society and the participants have illustrated how social and cultural perceptions have affected them in terms of their family role and responsibilities and also how they interpret their role within the family unit and the complications of trying to combine family and career. How do we change this in order to move forward and what can be done to help women perceive that it is socially acceptable to be able to have both family and career?

The next chapter (10) examines some of these questions in more detail looking at how the participants career aspirations may have been influenced by the factors discussed above.

This was also the final activity and my conclusion drawing and verification stage. This stage allowed me to step back and consider the data and what the analysed data meant assessing it against my research questions. Miles and Huberman (1994:11) claim that *"The meanings emerging from the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their 'confirmability' – that is, their validity."*

9.2 Final adjustments

From this final data analysis, I was then able to make a final adjustment to my themes and key concepts. This was because I could identify overlaps between the themes (see below) and the areas that emerged from the analysis enabled me to sharpen my final findings.

The process below illustrates how I combined the themes into the two final key concepts:

Table 27: Themes and key concepts

Area of focus in Chapter 9:	**Final findings and key concepts:**
A. Female leadership and Confidence -Gender and societal norms and impact on confidence ***(covered by final concept 1)*** -Lack of training and role models and the impact on their confidence ***(covered by final concept 2)***	**1. Impact on confidence of pressures of being a woman in leadership** a. Confidence in themselves to be able to do the job b. Confidence in the job to support their family life c. Confidence in relation to their societal sex role stereotype
B. Managing external and internal barrier -Confidence in school government pressures and confidence in Ofsted ***(covered by final concept 2)*** -Confidence to be able to have a family life (***covered by final concepts 1 and 2)***	**2. Lack of confidence and trust in headship as a route for women** a. Confidence in the system through school/government pressures and Ofsted b. Lack of female role models and mentors and training to promote confidence in the role
C. Perceptions of being a headteacher -Confidence in relation to being a headteacher (***covered by final concept 2)***	

This formed the final stage of my data analysis which was the conclusion drawing and verification which occurred during the research process itself and of course again at the end when findings will be theorised (Chapter 10). As I had been influenced by Miles and Huberman (1994) in my approach, I used this opportunity to present the findings to my participants for them to review and critique. I sent a copy of the findings and organised an online meeting for us to discuss these. All the participants were supportive of the findings and found them to be very useful to reflect on their leadership journeys. (Appendix 9 illustrates the notes kept from this online meeting). As can be demonstrated in this chapter, the data analysis process was complex and long. As I was influenced by narrative, Clandinin

and Connelly (2000) consistently acknowledge the complexity of narrative inquiry. They explain:

> *"Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated,…narrative inquiry is stories lived and told."*

The important lesson that I have learnt through my research is the need to return to the participants' transcripts frequently and reflecting on them often to enable me to know their journeys in their multiplicity, to have opportunities to make meanings from them and to constantly ask questions of the data presented. Each individual transcript and journey and each interpretation offered new insight and allowed me to be bold, imaginative, courageous and sceptical, tentative and an exploratory researcher (Leggo 2004).

9.3 Data analysis stages

The below table illustrates the various stages that my data analysis underwent.

Table 28: Thematic analysis stages from steps 1-7 as in Table 4

Chapter 6:	**Chapter 8/9**	**Chapter 10**
Themes: 1. Gendered roles and skills 2. Inspiration and ambition 3. Work-life balance challenges 4. Impact of Motherhood 5. Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations 6. Personal and systematic barriers	***Areas of focus:*** A. Female leadership and confidence -Gender and societal norms -Lack of training and role models and the impact on their confidence B. Managing internal and external barriers -Confidence in school government pressures and confidence in Ofsted -Confidence to be able to have a family life C. Perceptions of being a headteacher -Confidence in relation to being a headteacher	***Final themes/key concepts:*** **1. Impact on confidence of pressures of being a woman in leadership** a. Confidence in themselves to be able to do the job b. Confidence in the job to support their family life c. Confidence in relation to their societal sex role stereotype **2. Lack of confidence and Trust in headship as a route for women** a. Confidence in the system through school/government pressure b. Lack of female role models and mentors to promote confidence in role

9.4. Using coherent stories for illustrative purposes

As explained in Chapter 3 (3.2.4.2), the use of stories allowed me to show the participants' leadership journey clearly and logically (See Figure 2) and would allow others to view their stories in the same manner.

I illustrate below three examples of the stories created, one from those wanting to progress, one not wanting to progress and one undecided. I refer to the three below stories at times within my next few chapters. I have given examples of the stories to show how they can be used in future developmental work and within my professional role to illustrate the complexities within education and women's perceptions of headship (Chapter 11 explores this further). The stories show the personal experiences that each participant faced and illustrate how these directly correlate to my main findings. The stories are something that other women will be able to relate to and to see the relevance to their own stories offering them time to reflect on their ambitions and reasons why they may or may not choose to progress to headship.

9.5 Participant stories

The first story illustrated below is Jean's story. Jean is one of the participants that wants to progress to headship from group A.

Jean

Jean is an experienced deputy headteacher, 40-49, who has been in the role for 11 years. She is married with two children. She has spent the last 11 years in two very different schools. Teaching is her only career having started her PGCE qualification straight after university. Her first school was graded Outstanding by Ofsted and here she worked in a large senior leadership team under a male headteacher. She talks very openly about how her two school experiences as a deputy headteacher and as a woman in a senior role have been very different.

In her first role, she joined the school after being a successful assistant headteacher overseeing her previous school's English department and leading on Teaching and Learning. She had a busy role but also felt that it was very flexible with her family commitments too. Jean at this time had two very young children but she managed to juggle both roles successfully. When Jean decided to make the leap to deputy headteacher, she was aware that her time commitments may change and was conscious that she wanted to be able to still maintain her 'role at home' whilst also building her career. Jean talks a lot about being 'ambitious' and wanting to be able to have both 'career and family time'.

Jean explains that in her first role as deputy headteacher was what she perceived to be a very traditional school. The headteacher and other deputy were both male and then there were three assistant headteachers, two male and one female. Jean talked about how the roles within the team seemed quite gendered and when I asked her to explain this further, she talked about how the men in the team were in charge of data, timetabling and curriculum and the females led on learning and teaching and pastoral matters. Jean highlights that it isn't until she reflects on her first position that she realises the gendered stereotypes within the team. When asked to expand further on this she talks about the power struggle in her SLT team meetings and the men dominating a lot of the conversations. At the time Jean dismissed it as them just liking the 'sound of their own voices' and 'the male ego' and explained that 'it's just the way men are they like to show off their knowledge' more than women. Jean explained further that in this particular school, while she really enjoyed her time here, she did feel as though she was held back in terms of how others viewed her. Jean discusses how she felt the male members of the team were given more opportunities to present to Governors and that one of the reasons she looked for a second school experience as a deputy was because she felt that she couldn't progress any further in her school. Jean talks about how she feels that sometimes women lack confidence in themselves, and this can then lead to them not having the same opportunities as men.

Jean's second school experience as deputy headteacher is where she currently works and has done for the last five years. She describes her female headteacher as 'an inspiration'. She talks very openly in her interview about how she looks up to her headteacher as a role model and how she has encouraged her to 'one day' take the next step in her career and progress to headship. Jean talks about how much she has learned from her current headteacher and how she would take certain parts of her leadership style and adapt others. When she talks about being a future headteacher, she becomes quite animated and explains how she is looking forward to doing things 'her way' and making a 'positive change' in a school.

Jean also talked about appearance and dress and how she felt the men were at a natural advantage because they wore suits all the time and 'looked the part' whereas women were not expected to be in business suits which is something she now wears in her role to make her feel like she is in control. Jean talked a little bit further about this and said her 'uniform' of a suit somehow made her feel credible which she says she knows is a reflection of her own insecurities and her gender 'holding her back' but she explains

that she feels that when she wears a suit and 'feels smart' then she believes people take her more seriously. She talked a lot about how people perceive her as a female leader and the pressure she felt to have a certain leadership style. When asked to explain this further she talked about being the one on the senior team that staff would come to first to talk things through before approaching the deputy head or headteacher. Jean saw herself as the 'listener' and the one to give advice to staff on how to handle things.

Jean makes it clear that progression to headship will be when 'the time is right'. Jean talks a lot about how her time at home with the children is important and explains how her children have always been her priority and how she has felt a lot of pressure to try and manage her own work-life balance. When asked to expand further on this she talks about the guilt associated with her 'two roles', those being a 'mum' and her 'desired career'. Jean explains that she feels that if she had progressed to headship during the time when her children were young it would have been 'impossible' to juggle the two and ultimately, she feels that something would have suffered, her home life or her career. Jean talks about how she thinks progressing to headship should be made more flexible especially for women as at the moment she doesn't think it is appealing to any woman that has other family commitments. Jean openly discusses that when her children are older, she will consider 'going for headship' but explains that the pressure on her to 'be a Mum and have a career is overwhelming'. Jean discusses her feelings surrounding this and it is a source of frustration for her as she believes she can do both and would make a good headteacher but has resigned herself to the fact that she will have to wait until her children have grown up.

The second story illustrated below is Sally's story. Sally is one of the participants that does not want to progress to headship from group B.

Sally

Sally has been a deputy headteacher for seven years, she is in her thirties and currently lives with her partner with no children at present. Sally joined teaching on the government Teach First programme and decided to stay in the profession.

Sally has worked as a deputy in the same school in the Midlands for the past seven years. Prior to this she was an assistant head at a nearby school.

Sally's leadership journey in teaching happened quite quickly as she started her career as a Teach First teacher and explains that there were numerous leadership opportunities given to her. Sally talks a lot about working in a busy inner-city school and the fact that if you showed any leadership qualities then you would be encouraged and push to take on promotion. Sally describes how she went from a Teach First trainee to head of department within two years and then progressed quickly to a faculty lead followed by assistant headteacher and then deputy headteacher.

Sally has been a deputy headteacher for seven years now and explains that within this she has taken on varying roles within the team from timetabling, teaching and learning to more pastoral roles. Despite Sally's quick promotions, whilst she feels that the different roles have prepared her for headship, she is adamant that she cannot think of any reason as to why she or anyone would want to be a headteacher at present. When asked to explain further she talks about how she just isn't interested in headship and

reflects that it is perhaps because she hasn't really had any female role models to look up to and therefore has just assumed that the role of a headteacher is something that 'men do'. Sally talks about how despite being in the same school for the last seven years she has had two different headteachers, both male and not at one point has she ever thought about applying for the role of headteacher when the positions have come up. Sally talks about how she is not interested in headship but also that she doesn't have the confidence to be a headteacher and that as a woman she feels that she has to work harder to be noticed and therefore that must be even more so in such a senior position.

When we discuss further leadership experience and her abilities, Sally recalls a time when she spoke to her husband about how men and women approach job applications and interviews differently. Sally explains how she found it amusing that her husband would look at a job advert and if there were a couple of things, he couldn't do on the job description that would not stop him from applying. However, Sally talks about how if she can't do just one thing on there, she wouldn't even think about applying. Sally reflects on this in her interview and talks about it being the difference between men and women and confidence and how women lack in confidence and don't try to pretend to be able to do things like men perhaps do or she suggests perhaps her husband is just more confident than she is. Sally also refers to her current senior team and says that the men definitely come across as more confident but there are times when she knows they don't know the answers, but they somehow have 'a way of pretending they do' whereas she would rather just be honest and say if she doesn't know the answer. Sally thinks that sometimes that puts her in a vulnerable position because people assume that she is not as good as she could be in her role, and she acknowledges that this is just a feeling she has, and this is not something that anyone has directly said to her. Sally also goes onto further explain that if she was really that good at her job then surely her headteacher would have encouraged her to go for headship by now so perhaps she has reached her 'peak' at deputy headship.

Sally talks quite openly and honestly about the pressure that she puts on herself to 'look' like a leader. She describes that her academy is very business-like, and therefore everyone is expected to wear business suits and how she prefers this as there are no exceptions made whether you are male or female. The dress code for Sally is a way of hiding any lack of confidence she has, and she feels that both staff and parents take her more seriously because she 'looks the part'. Sally in her interview talks about how perceptions of how people look are not necessarily right but goes onto talk about 'how first impressions count' and looking smart cannot do any harm in people's perception of you.

Reflecting back on headship, Sally thinks about this in more detail she talks about family commitments and her work-life balance. Sally then spends a long time talking about how while she doesn't have a family at the moment, she would like to eventually have one and that the headteacher role is not compatible with her plans. Sally really enjoys her work-life balance at the moment, and she would never want to compromise on that.

Sally continues to talk about the pressure of the job of headteacher and how this is something that she doesn't ever want nor would enjoy. Sally is clear in her view, certainly now, that her career will not take her past deputy headship due to nature of the job and the additional pressures it brings and lack of work-life balance that she perceives it to have.

And the last story illustrated below is Samantha's story. Samantha is one of the participants who is undecided about whether to progress to headship from group C.

Samantha

Samantha is 40-49 and a deputy headteacher in the Northwest. She has been a deputy headteacher for 6 years and this is her second post as a deputy headteacher. Samantha currently works in a small rural secondary school that she describes as very comfortable and not as challenging as previous schools she has worked in.

Samantha is honest in her interview when she explains that taking on the headship of a school similar to the one she is in would be a different type of headship to a more challenging school and that if she ever did decide to go for headship then she would definitely consider the type of school she worked at. She expands on this by saying that while all schools will have finance and HR issues to deal with, different school contexts will bring bigger workloads and those schools that are perhaps in more affluent areas naturally have some areas of the school that run more smoothly. Samantha acknowledges that this is her own personal opinion, but she does think that her current school is relatively easy in comparison to other schools in the area and that being the head of her school would be less stressful than an inner-city school, for example.

Samantha talks about her role as deputy headteacher in great detail and all of the benefits of this role including being paid well and the fact that she doesn't really need her salary to increase any further. Samantha's view is that for not that much more in salary, the role of headteacher would be a significant amount more in terms of work and stress and the financial benefits just wouldn't be worth it. Samantha is keen to point out that her wage and salary is not a key motivator to her, but it is a consideration when thinking about the leap from deputy to headteacher as she does think that a lot more sacrifices in terms of well-being and family time would need to be made in taking up this role.

In assessing her role as deputy headteacher, Samantha does admit that there are times that she gets frustrated because she can see ways that she thinks her school could move forward but her headteacher doesn't always share the same views as her. It is during these times that Samantha does seriously consider wanting to become a headteacher and having the responsibility to do what she thinks is best for the school. When Samantha is asked what her main barrier is that is stopping her from doing this, she says the reality of taking on all the responsibility by herself is the thing that is the most off-putting and not having the confidence in herself to do it. Samantha talks about how it is easy to say how you might do things differently but when in that position it would be a different situation.

Samantha talks about the lack of a role model and mentor for herself and associates this with her hesitancy in taking the next step to headship. In her current school, she talks about how she finds her job role 'easy' and that her headteacher has never discussed with her the potential to move into headship. Samantha explains that in her current school no one really leaves so promotion is therefore rarely discussed and that it is the type of school where staff stay until they retire. Samantha knows that unless she moves school then the headship at her current school wouldn't come up for a long time and therefore, she assumes this is why conversations are never had about her and taking on any further responsibilities.

Samantha talks about her two school experiences as a deputy headteacher comparing the two settings explaining that she has had two very different experiences in terms of her leadership roles. In her first school, Samantha describes the school as being very 'business like' and 'corporate' and she talks about how she felt like she was always being 'kept on her toes' and constantly pushed to meet deadlines. The

environment in her first school, she describes as 'very competitive' and 'fast paced' with a high staff turnover and lots of young staff wanting quick promotions. Samantha explains that she burnt out quite quickly in her first school due to the long hours and demands and that it had an effect on her family life as she was not given any allowances for having a young family at the time. As Samantha describes her experience, she admits that she feels quite upset by it and feels that she thought at the time being a successful leader and in particular a woman that was a leader, meant long hours and never letting your guard down. In contrast to this, Samantha describes her current school as completely different and the opposite of her previous school explaining that she feels like she has perhaps now gone to an environment where being a leader doesn't mean long hours and quick pace and how this actually frustrates her at times. Samantha laughs through this part of her interview, as she finds her situation funny explaining that now she just needs to find a school where the balance is right and that leaders are respected for their own merits not for the long hours. Samantha feels like change to her current school is very comfortable and that is because no one is really interested in being a leader or promotions everyone is content in their roles. She believes the majority of staff will stay there for many years and have no interest in moving elsewhere. Samantha recognises that this is a unique situation to find herself in.

Samantha is very clear that she is unsure whether she wants to progress to headship. She is happy in her current role and says that she enjoys the balance of work and free time to spend with her family. Samantha discusses her family situation talking about how she is now at an age where taking on more responsibility could be possible as her children are now both at secondary school but she is unsure whether she wants to go any further than deputy headteacher and worries that it would change her family's dynamics.

Samantha's main barriers to progression is change to our political climate around education at the moment and the constantly changing agendas. She talks in particular about the negativity associated with headship and the increased accountability measures. Samantha's main concerns are around the stress levels associated with accountability and because of this Samantha has said that she would not currently consider headship, but she wouldn't rule it out in future years if things changed. Samantha's current role as deputy headteacher is something that she talks passionately about and says that this enables her to make change within her school and feel like she is having an impact, but she doesn't have the stress of headship and everything that comes with it.

9.6 Illustrating how the stories fit into the key concepts

If we consider figure 5 again from 9.1, we can clearly see how the three stories fit into the diagram. Each story has the participants' personal circumstances at the core of their decision-making. They are all affected by their views on their family roles even when they do not yet have children and this fits in with the key findings around gender, perceptions of women and the confidence to be able to have a family a be a head. We saw this in Sally's story when she talks about how she feels headship is not compatible with a family and that she does not want to compromise on her work-life balance. This is of course Sally's perception and we have seen

in the research how perceptions have become an important element in their decision-making process and in how they view themselves and the role of headteacher. Likewise, both Jean and Samantha also discuss their families and for Jean whilst she wants to progress to headship she has *'resigned herself to the fact that she will have to wait until her children have grown up'*. Samantha's view is that she is unsure because taking on headship might change '*her family'* dynamics but she also refers to her children being older, and that headship could be a possibility. For both women they have felt that they needed to wait until their children were of a certain age to even consider headship as a career. All three participants discuss the effect of school and education issues on their decision making and again despite whether they want to progress or not they all mention the lack of confidence that they have in themselves or compare themselves to men in their teams. The participants that want to consider headship both talk about their fact that they have had access to a role model or someone that has encouraged them to progress, and this is interesting as Sally who does not want to progress explicitly says that as no one has mentioned headship to her as a career she has assumed that she is not good enough or that it is not a suitable job for her. This links into the concept of them having the confidence to be a headteacher and their perceptions of their skills and suitability. Their lack of confidence is discussed in many ways but if we consider 'gender' we can see how their gender is affecting their decision making in a number of ways and layers. This can be seen when they describe their workplace experiences as women leaders and the way that men come across as more confident, the gendered roles within their teams and the approach that men and women take to job applications. The participants talk a lot about appearance and feeling more confident and trusted as leaders whilst dressing appropriately such as in suits and professional wear. There is of course also the effect of confidence in relation to their families and the roles they hold within these and the view that it is impossible to manage both a family and career. The stories can therefore be used to illustrate the key concepts within my research in further training sessions and within my professional work. I discuss this further in more detail in my recommendations within Chapter 11.

9**.7 Headteacher's views**

As explained previously, the headteacher's views have been collated separately and I followed the same steps to form their thematic analysis. They did not form part of the thematic analysis as I wanted this to be kept solely to the women deputy headteachers' views.

The headteacher's views were an additional viewpoint to help with my reflections and considerations within Chapter 11. They are summarised below:

Table 29: Headteacher's recommendations

Best experience is doing the job	Need more flexibility in the role	Secondment
Real-life experience rather than NPQH	Lack of female role models	Compatibility with family life
Network of support for female deputy headteachers and headteachers	Experience of accountability in schools and leading a school in the Heads absence	

The next chapter will discuss the key concepts in turn and explore them in more detail providing an analysis in relation to existing research and theory.

Chapter 10: Discussion of key concepts

10.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the main findings and key concepts from Chapter 9 through the lived experiences of my participants by making sense of their interviews and leadership journeys. This chapter looks at the findings and aims to ask the question why are the findings like this and what needs to change?

10.1 Key concepts and commentary

The findings of this study show how my participants' leadership journeys in secondary education have been shaped through their individual lived experiences. Examination of the data and main themes illustrates that despite there being three distinct groups within my participants (Those wanting to progress to headship; those not wanting to progress to headship; those undecided) there are a number of themes that are consistent across each of these groups.

1. **Impact on confidence of pressures of being a woman in leadership**
    a. Confidence in themselves to be able to do the job
    b. Confidence in the job to support their family life
    c. Confidence in relation to their societal sex role stereotypes

2. **Lack of confidence in the headship route for women**
    a. Confidence in the system through school/government pressures & Ofsted
    b. Lack of female role models and mentors and training to promote confidence in role

Within this chapter I will explore each theme and sub theme examining existing theory and looking at where my participants transcripts highlighted this.

10.2 Impact on confidence of pressures of being a woman in leadership

a. Confidence in themselves to be able to do the job

The data suggests that all women in my study showed a lack of confidence in themselves or the skills they possessed to take on headship. For some of the participants maternity breaks also added to this lack of confidence as they struggled to return to their previous levels of confidence prior to taking a break, this is discussed within the sub-theme of 'family life' and confidence.

The study illustrated the lack of belief that the women had in their individual skills to be able to take on headship they would not apply for a job unless they were one hundred percent confident, they could do it well. Why is it that women feel like this and is it more acceptable to be able to talk about confidence in relation to women than men?

In discussing confidence in women, the question posed is, is it more acceptable to talk about women and confidence and less acceptable to talk about men and confidence? My research suggests that this is because the perception of confidence and its discussion can be influenced by gender biases and societal norms. Historically, there has been a complex interplay between perceptions of confidence and gender, often resulting in different expectations and consequences for men and women. We have seen examples of this within my research where women often find themselves navigating a 'double bind' situation when it comes to confidence. If they display confidence and assertiveness, they might be seen as too aggressive or bossy, which goes against traditional gender expectations. On the other hand, if they appear more reserved or hesitant, they might be perceived as lacking confidence or competence. Stereotypes and biases about gender can also affect how confidence is perceived. The work from Powell (1993), Bem (1974) and Gray (1983, 1993) illustrated how gender stereotyping can affect women's perceptions of themselves. Whilst societal norms and attitudes are evolving, deeply ingrained biases can still influence the dynamics of these discussions. Whilst it might be more acceptable to discuss women and confidence as a way to challenge traditional stereotypes, the broader goal should be to foster conversations that address confidence and self-esteem for people of all genders, while also acknowledging the unique challenges and biases that different genders may face.

10.2.1 Imposter Syndrome

This brought to mind my earlier exploration in my literature review, particularly regarding Bandura's work (1986,1997) on self-efficacy. Bandura's research suggests that individuals with low self-efficacy tend to harbour uncertainties about their capabilities.

Alongside this, Clance and Imes (1978) and Huecker et al (2023) imposter syndrome describe several characteristics that women display that fit in with the lack of confidence and belief in themselves that could contribute to them not believing they can progress to headship. Reflecting back on Deaux (1976), they point to considerable evidence that women consistently have lower expectancies than men of their ability to perform successfully on a wide variety of tasks. The report goes onto explain how when women fail, they put this down to a lack of ability whereas men on the other hand explain the failure as bad luck or the difficulty of the task in hand. This also reminds me of the Holden et al 2021 study on first generation students and their struggles with confidence and perfectionism and the view that others have high expectations of them, which leads to feelings of stress.

My findings show a lack of confidence, wanting to please others, adapting their style to suit different audiences and not feeling qualified enough to do a good job. Clance and Imes (1978:241) state:

> *"Women who experience the imposter phenomenon maintain a strong belief that they are not intelligent; in fact, they are convinced that they have fooled anyone who thinks otherwise."*

Clance and Imes explain that self- declared imposters fear that eventually some significant person will discover that they are indeed intellectual imposters (ibid). This is also reminiscent of Bravata et al (2020) and Parkman (2016) who look at how those with imposter syndrome do not recognise their achievements. If we look back at Claire's interview, she describes this perfectly talking about how they wanted to go all the way with their studies to prove something to herself and to others (Claire, WDH, Herts, 30-39). Within their interviews the women talked about not feeling qualified enough or if there were certain elements of a job description that they could not do then not possibly thinking about applying (Andrea, WDH, Coventry, 40-49). Despite this literature being very old, it is surprising to see that this is still an issue for my participants within my research.

Within their interviews, there was certainly an overriding theme of lack of self-confidence. This included the participants who wanted to become headteachers and an anxiety around feeling like they were not doing a '*good enough'* job. Some of the women talked about the lack of confidence after coming back to work from maternity or being affected by other people's views on whether the two roles were compatible or indeed possible. Sarah in her interview described how before having a child there was no stopping her in terms of her confidence and career but her headteacher at the time made her feel like she couldn't do both and this ultimately had a knock-on effect to her confidence. (Sarah, WDH, Essex, 30-39). This link to maternity leave and confidence is discussed in more detail in the next section titled ***'Confidence in the job to support their family life'.***

Within the stories, all three illustrations showed that whether you wanted to progress to headship or not, they all talked about confidence being a barrier. Jean's story talks about *'women lack in confidence'*, Sally's story refers to '*the difference between men and women and confidence and how women lack in confidence*' and Samantha's story reflects on *'not having the confidence in herself to do it.'* In discussing the above, we must also consider how the women may have been affected by their social and cultural environments and indeed growing up and the influences they had. Are these factors that then affect them within the workplace? If so, what can be done to address this? The next section looks at one ways of supporting women with this by offering a forum to talk and discuss about their barriers to progression whether this is social or culturally related.

10.2.2 Women-only programme reflections

Within my professional work, I have also led a women-only training programme and this allowed me a further opportunity to explore the imposter syndrome. I kept notes during these training sessions in my reflective diary and noted down some of their behaviours in relation to imposter syndrome and lack of confidence. I refer back to my women-only training in the next chapter (11).

When all the women were together in a group discussing reasons as to why they had not yet progressed to headship, I started to again see patterns of behaviours that linked into the imposter syndrome for example a lack of confidence in their skills and abilities and discussions about not being good enough to be a headteacher. This mirrored the conversations I had in

my participants' interviews. Clance and Imes (1978) in their own research discuss therapy to try to overcome this syndrome explaining that a group therapy setting or an inter-actional group in where there are some other high achieving women experiencing the imposter phenomenon is highly recommended. They discuss how if one woman is willing to share her secret others are able to share theirs (ibid). Other tools are given such as how to prepare for exams or tests by changing the mind frame to '*I will do well in this exam'* rather than '*I will fail*'. Other techniques involve role play and stating to themselves '*I am intelligent. I have learned and achieved a tremendous amount*". (ibid).

Whilst this research would seemingly seem quite outdated given that it was first conducted in 1976, there are many similarities in later studies such as Huecker et al (2023), Bravata et al (2020), Parkman (2016) and the research study by Holden et al (2021) on first-generation students. These findings align with the experiences shared by the women in my research and the daily observations I have made in my current professional role. It is noteworthy that these issues continue to persist for women.

During my research and interviews, I became aware of similar feelings from the research participants in relation to why they had not progressed to headship. All of them at some point during their interview mentioned their lack of skills or confidence in relation to whether they felt able to take on a headteacher post. This was discussed in relation to confidence to be able to do the complete job of a headteacher and not having all the necessary skills and for some a confidence about their leadership skills after returning to work from maternity leave. In an article 'The Confidence Gap', Kay and Shipman (2014) discuss their research when interviewing a range of successful women and how surprised they were by their *'acute lack of confidence'*. The women still expressed a lack of confidence about their achievements and referred to just '*being lucky'* (ibid). Within my interviews the lack of confidence has come through from the women stating how they did not feel they possessed the skills for headship or wanted the extra responsibility associated with headship. Ellen (WDH, Beds, 30-39) talked about how she needed to gain all the skills needed for headship before she even thought about applying for a role and likewise Andrea (WDH, Coventry, 40-49) talked about needing to be 100% confident that she could do the role and a good job and if she was not, then she would stay in a role that she knew she did well. This underlying fear on the unknown of what headship may bring seems to be a particular barrier for the participants and something that

is causing them to feel unconfident in their current skill set within their deputy headteacher roles. Participants also talked about the different confidence levels between men and women and that men appear to be more '*confident*' than women. Research has shown that there is a gap between men and women with some men being overconfident (Barber & Odean, 2001; Lundeberg, Fox & Punccohar, 1994; Reuben, Sapienza & Zingales, 2012) and women being underconfident in their skills and performance in certain contexts (Kay & Shipman, 2014; Niederie & Vesterlund, 2007). This research spans across a period of time suggesting a continuation of the theme and no real change.

McIntosh (1985:2) in her work discusses how women feel like imposters:

> *"(Women feeling like imposters) because we know that usually those who happen to get the high titles and the acclaim…. are not 'the best and the brightest', and we don't want to pretend to be either. When we entertain nagging thoughts about whether we belong or are deserving…. we may be deeply wise in feeling anxious and illegitimate and fraudulent in these circumstances."*

Discussions and popular spokespeople such as Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's Chief Operating Officer would argue that women are not rising to the top because they are not assertive enough or they are unwilling to put themselves forward (Sandberg, 2015). However, it is much more complex than that as can be illustrated in my work above.

In discussing my own professional work, I have highlighted how I have been able to engage women within leadership discussions but for this to be developed it would need a programme designed specifically for women nationwide. This would have wider implications as it would need to be viewed as the norm and acceptable to have a pathway dedicated just to women. You would also need to engage national providers to adopt this as general practice within professional development networks. Whilst small-scale work has shown that this has had a positive effect on the women I have worked with and the participants have asked for this type of programme, we are still a long way off having something like this in place in every workplace.

10.2.3 My journey

After analysing my data, I started to reflect on my journey and some of the conversations I had both formally and informally. I realised that both myself, my female colleagues, and my participants all doubted their skills and felt that they had been lucky in gaining their posts or qualifications. I remember having a conversation with a colleague, they were telling me about their female friend who was a top surgeon, and during a conference call they asked for the European representative to give an update on the latest bowel cancer surgery and her friend had a moment where she thought *'I am 'Europe'. How did I get here? Surely, they will discover that I am not that good'.* This resonated with me as I have often wondered how I have got to the position I have, struggling to receive praise and doubting how I have achieved academic qualifications. In an article in the Journal of Imaginary Research (2020), one of the contributors Oliveira, discusses the impact of imposter syndrome on academics too. It was chosen as a topic as like my research has highlighted, it was seen to have relevance today. These feelings are not exclusive just to women, but I was pleased to hear that other women felt like this because it helped me to understand why I had these feelings and why others might experience them. The more I started to think about this the more it made sense with my research. I discussed previously how some writers in the past linked women's lower expectancies that women have for their own performances down to a self-stereotype the societal sex-role stereotype that they are not considered competent (Broverman, et al 1972; Rosenkrantz et al 1968). This links to my research and the feelings that both the participants and I discussed. This can influence women's self-perceptions and subsequently lower their expectations for their own abilities as seen in some of my participants interviews and indeed my own feelings about my abilities. As a result, women may internalise these stereotypes and start to believe that they are inherently less competent in these areas. Whilst this research is dated, my research points to this being the same now. It is complex as so many factors affect this position including gender socialisation, bias and discrimination, cultural and societal expectations which reinforce traditional gender roles, and media representation which plays a significant role in shaping societal perceptions and reinforcing stereotypes. Some of these challenges that my participants have faced are explored in the next section.

In understanding my own personal context, I also reflected on my own leadership style and influences. Having led schools and been part of a leadership team, it was important to reflect

on how I perceived my leadership and what influenced me. Whilst I have always felt that my leadership style is influenced by distributed leadership, I acknowledge that at times I have been influenced by other styles depending on the context of the school and indeed the different pressures and strains that come within different contexts. However, there have been times when my leadership style has reverted to a more positional and hierarchical style. Reverting to this style has often been influenced by the pressure from stakeholders such as governors or external bodies like Ofsted. The pressure to quickly 'fix' school improvement. The tensions illustrated here highlight the ongoing challenge of transitioning from a traditional leadership model to one that embraces and fully utilises the potential of distributed leadership. However, it raises more questions. How can schools and heads effectively balance the contributions of both formal leaders and those in non-traditional leadership roles and how do we avoid slipping back into the comfort of established hierarchies when discussing and implementing leadership practices? These are some of the complexities woven into the gendered education system that women within this research are grappling with.

b. Confidence in the job to support their family life

c. Confidence in relation to their societal sex role stereotype

The next section explores in more detail female leadership and some of the issues arising within my research in relation to gender and family pressures and the expected 'normal' behaviours women feel that need to adhere to.

10.2.4 Gender and Leadership

My findings have illustrated that the women participants are influenced by several factors when it comes to their leadership and gender. How do we change these influences and perceptions?

Views about what it means to be a leader are shaped culturally and, in most cultures, leadership is seen as masculine; decisive, assertive, and independent (Bailyn, 2006; Calas & Smircich, 1991; Dennis & Kunkel, 2004; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Powell, Butterfield & Parent, 2002; Willemsen, 2002). As per chapter 2, Chikwe, Eneh, and Akpuokwe (2024) examine the 'double bind' that women leaders frequently encounter. This dilemma requires them to display both traditionally feminine qualities (such as warmth and empathy) and

traditionally masculine qualities (such as assertiveness and ambition) to be deemed effective.. This double bind creates a significant challenge for women leaders, compelling them to carefully balance these traits to achieve leadership success.

If we consider this in relation to my findings and research, we can see that this statement suggests that the perception of leadership and the qualities associated with it are influenced by culture and in many cultures the concept of leadership is traditionally linked to masculine traits. Hence, the participants within my research are illustrating that their gender and culture norms and values play a significant role in shaping our understanding of leadership. These norms are learned and transmitted within society through socialisation processes, including family upbringing, education and media representation. It is these cultural influences that my participants have illustrated have added additional pressure to them challenging and redefining traditional notions of leaderships to be more inclusive and diverse.

Building on this, the societal positioning of women and men in relation to their upbringing and expectations is a multifaceted phenomenon deeply rooted in cultural, historical, and structural frameworks. Bandura's seminal works (1986, 1997) on social cognitive theory and self-efficacy highlight the significance of early experiences in shaping individuals' beliefs about their capabilities. As children navigate their formative years, societal norms and gender expectations play a pivotal role in influencing their upbringing. UNESCO's research on education (2017) highlights how cultural norms are transmitted through socialisation processes within families and educational institutions, impacting the choices and aspirations of both genders. Dill's examination of media influence (2009) further elucidates how mass media perpetuates gender stereotypes, contribute to the reinforcement of societal expectations. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (2020) provides insights into the economic and workplace dimensions, revealing persistent disparities and gender-based expectations in professional spheres. Additionally, the intersectionality perspective (Crenshaw, 1989) emphasises the interconnectedness of gender with other social categories, shedding light on how various identity dimensions collectively contribute to individuals' societal positioning.

My research illustrated a number of examples where the participants felt pressure on them to act a certain way after maternity leave or to how they had to adapt their leadership to suit other people’s perceptions of them.

Within the data participants discuss how their leadership adapts based on different stakeholders with some of the participants talking about how they want to be perceived as a leader and the importance of people taking them seriously. This was particularly evident when the participants talked about wanting different stakeholders to take them seriously and how they would 'dress' for the occasion to portray an element of confidence, authority and power. This reminded me of Butler's (1990) performativity and putting on 'gendered leadership'. The participants talk consciously about how their leadership is influenced by others and wanting to be seen as '*good leaders'* and line managers that are approachable and fair.

Reay and Ball (2000:145) critique a number of feminist texts on leadership and gender work for their essentialised notions of femininity in which homogenising conceptions of what it means it means to be 'female' depict women as uniformly nurtant, affiliate and good at interpersonal relationships. This fits in with how some of my participants talked about being 'fair' and 'the listener' on SLT.

Probably one of the most interesting aspects that came out of this theme was the discussion around leadership and confidence. This was particularly prevalent when the participants talked about returning to work after having children or in situations where they were considering a promotion and had a confidence crisis in their own ability and skills. All the participants discussed confidence at some point in their interview this varied in terms of whether it was about their skills or returning to work. Sarah (WDH, Essex, 30-39) talked extensively about her experience and how it affected her confidence and leadership. In discussing leadership, this is not in the sense of gender differences as explored in Chapter 2 but more so how women have adapted their leadership to their circumstance and gender. This links to Eagly and Wood's (2012) social role theory in that it provides a *"comprehensive framework for understanding how labour division leads to gender role beliefs in terms of shared assumptions about gender specific attributes; we expect that women would serve as primary caregivers for their children, when men served as breadwinners for the family"* (ibid:45). It is this role society has placed on women that is affecting the way they think about their leadership. This links back to when Marie (WDH, Warwick, 40-49) talked about how she had to '*prove herself*' and be more '*resilient*'. She talked a lot about the pressure she put on herself to prove to everyone she could be a good headteacher. Other participants discussed

how returning from a break in work for maternity had a *"knock on effect to confidence*" (Marie, WDH, Warwick, 40-49) and that there was pressure to be more resilient to show they could cope with the additional pressures. This links back to the pressure of cultural norms and the woman being the one who traditionally cares for the family and therefore having the added pressure of having to show 'everyone' they can cope with family and career.

For some the confidence they felt in their deputy head roles had a negative impact on progressing to headship because they felt their leadership style and skills were suited to their current position and they felt comfortable with this. This reminds me of Owen et al (1983) which I explored in my literature review whereby they have categorised different deputy headteacher roles and characteristics with the participants felling like their skill sets matched their role well such as being good at fulfilling the role of '*oiler*', '*auntie*' and '*knight'.* Harvey (1994) highlights that these professional identities the deputy heads are aligning themselves to limits them to looking beyond their role which again causes barriers to headship for the participants. This is very true of my research where participants talk about feeling comfortable in their deputy head role and having the *"work-life balance right"* (Sally, WDH, Birmingham, 30-39) and expressing that they *"love my job and couldn't imagine doing anything else"* (Natalie, WDH, Herts, 30-39). They all express that they feel successful in their roles and that this role suited their lifestyle. In aligning themselves to the success of these roles and identities the participants are creating a limit of their own career prospectives as they see the role of headteacher unobtainable. The unknown of what would be required from them as head meant that this made them feel unconfident and therefore, they preferred to remain in a position where they felt they could do well. This links into the how women construct their leadership identities. Pini (2005), examined women's leadership experiences in a largely male dominated industry and found that women engage in a constant self-monitoring while the men do not within this particular sample. We cannot assume that all men do not self-monitor, but it is an important study to consider in the context of my research. Billing (2011) discusses how our identities are called into question when we work in gender incongruent areas. We already know that there is a lack of female headteachers in secondary schools and a disproportionate number of females that go onto progress to headship compared to men. Therefore, you could argue that the women's perceived incompatibility with leadership or with headship in this case spills over into their processes of

constructing a leader identity and results in continual self-doubt. This also adds to the argument that women's careers are shaped not only by their personal and family commitments but also their personal choices (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005). We also need to consider that for some women within my research it was their personal choice not to take their career any further and this must be acknowledge as acceptable and a pathway they have chosen. This was discussed in my literature chapter (2) whereby some women 'reject' headship as a career. We must not assume that everyone women wants to become a headteacher but cannot due to the perceived barriers. So, in this case, those women who have identified as the 'oiler', 'knight' and 'auntie' for those that are content with this we should not try to change their view, but it is those women who perceive that headship is unobtainable due to family pressures and workload that we need to support. My research has illustrated that we need a comprehensive understanding of how society positions women and men looking at a range of perspectives and aspects, including psychological factors (such as individual beliefs and behaviours), educational influences, media portrayals and economic structures. By acknowledging the interconnectedness of these dimensions, we can develop a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the multifaceted ways in which societal norms and expectations are constructed and perpetuated. Therefore, as outlined In Figure 4, (10.1) the women's personal circumstances are very central to their ambitions for headship, and we must be mindful of this. This multidisciplinary approach recognises that gender roles are not shaped by a single factor but rather by a combination of influences that operate across different spheres of society.

10.2.5 Women and career choices and life stages

Career choices for women are likely to be made on the basis of fitting around their life stages and this is a pattern we have seen throughout the interviews with many of the participants talking about waiting for the '*right time'* or considering their career once their '*children were older'*. This is clearly shown in Jean's story, who despite wanting to progress to headship states that "*Jean openly discusses that when her children are older, she will consider going for headship*" (See Jean's story, 9.5). Samtleben et al (2019) also illustrate that for female workers, things are different: the presence of traditional gender norms in the workplace enable mothers to take longer periods of parental leave; however, they then also experience detrimental effects regarding their career advancement.

We also know that women seem to face invisible barriers to advancement that arise from cultural beliefs about gender, workplace structures, practices and patterns of interaction that inadvertently favour men (Calas & Smircich, 2009; Ely & Meyerson, 2000), although others may argue that it is not inadvertent. Holland and Ramazanoglu (2002:163) discuss how *"gender is intermeshed with other aspects of social life".*

Eagly & Carli (2007) discuss gender bias in their work where they highlight that organisational hierarchies where men predominate, such as secondary school headship, powerfully if unwittingly, communicate that women are ill suited for leadership roles. Such bias then causes women to not be able to see themselves as leaders. Adding to this, Hymowitz (2005) discusses that there is a general perception that women are not committed to work as they have or will have children. Samtleben et al (2009) state that women also suffer from others' perceptions of them being less competent, less focused on work, and expected to stay home to take care of their young children. This perception was discussed within my research with the participants feeling like they have to work harder and be more resilient to '*prove'* themselves. Haslam and Ryan (2008:530) explain that while historically research into gender and leadership has focused on under-representation of women, they believe that women traditionally encounter a '*glass ceiling'* preventing their rise into leadership. However, I much prefer the term 'leadership labyrinth' (Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hoyt, 2010; Hoyt & Chemers, 2008) as I feel it illustrates the numerous barriers which women have to pass through and which they have illustrated within this research. We can also refer to human capital theory (Becker, 1964: Blau & Ferber, 1986) and the reason that women tend to accumulate less human capital (investments in education and careers) than men and therefore are less likely to reach top management (ibid). However, I would argue that the data suggests the opposite of this. Some participants have expressed their desire to achieve and their motivations behind this and others have rethought their ambitions or considered headship once their children have grown up. For some of the participants progression for headship did not interest them and for one participant she was happy to remain in her position as her husband was considered the main '*breadwinner*'. Draper and Michael (2003: 194) highlight that a proportion of teachers have always *"rejected headship as a career".* This is evident in Sally's story (10.5), where she makes it clear that her "*career will not take her past deputy head*". Reflecting on Chapter 2, this would also fit in with Hayes (2005) view that

some deputy heads want to remain in their positions and become '*sitting tenants'* or '*settlers*' (James and Whitling, 1998) whilst others look to be '*rising stars'* (Hayes, 2005). These terms I would argue are quite offensive in that they assume that women have just 'settled' for the best career option or are 'sitting tenants' suggesting they are not going anywhere and remain static rather than 'rising stars' which suggests that everyone should be aspiring to be a star and aim for headship. However, as we have seen within my study it is much more complex than that and for some participants headship is not a desired career nor wanted. Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2007), in their research looked at the influence of women *'following'* their partners rather than the opposite and the representations of men being the main breadwinner. It is important to note that for some of the participants they were quite happy to take a step back and to let their partner's careers take priority and this should not be seen as a barrier to headship, and this was the choice of the participant to do so.

Work in this field would suggest that constructing and internalising a leader identity is central to the process of becoming a leader (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ibarra, Snook & Guillen Ramo, 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005), then these subtle forms of gender bias may provide an additional invisible barrier that leads to women not progressing. This is then problematic as women's underrepresentation in headship positions validates the entrenches systems and beliefs that support men's position as secondary headteachers, which in turn maintains the imbalance of representation of female headteachers in secondary schools.

This is not an area that is exclusive to education, women are underrepresented in top managerial positions compared with women holding lower and mid-level management positions (Mihail, 2006). I discuss in Chapter 11, leadership development for women but some researchers have highlighted a danger in '*women only*' programmes that lack a framework and have an "*add-women-and-stir"* approach (Martin & Meyerson, 1998: 312) as they deliver the same programme to women that they would with men. If we consider the idea of women only programmes, we must also consider the wider implications that this would have on general practice and also whether all women would want to participate in such a programme.

This is something I explore in my recommendations in the next chapter.

10.2.6 Women and Identity

Some of the women within their interviews also discussed how they had to change their identity when they progressed to a senior leadership role moving from "*being a friend*" to "*being a leader"* (Marie, WDH, Warwick, 40-49). This was something she reflected on in terms of leadership, and she explained that the more senior you became the harder it became to remain friends with staff as you have to then sometimes be the person that has difficult meetings with them. This of course is just one participant talking about this but if we link this back to leadership styles discussed in 2.4.5 and Rosener's (1990) study where it highlighted that women managers put more effort into building relationships so they can understand the people they work with and if we recall Jean's narrative where she said she was seen as '*the listener on SLT*' this illustrates for some participants in this study that this could be a difficult transition for them to make.

The participants talked about how there seemed to be an almost shift in role and leadership style the more senior you became. This was echoed when Ellen (WDH, Beds, 30-39) discussed work wear and the need for her to be "*taken seriously*" so she consciously chose what she called "*power suits and heels"* to wear in her role as it made her feel more confident. If we reflect back to Chapter 1 within my personal reflections, I talked quite openly about my choices when it came to wearing suits and deliberate colours to give me confidence, so this is interesting to see this within the data too. Kaiser (1985) discusses how clothing by its very nature, represents a multi-signal capacity. Therefore, the wearing of certain clothes could be a conscious decision by the leader that they want to signal themselves as being perceived as effective (Lord & Shondrick, 2011). This also reminds me of Fuller's research (2010:2) where they refer to the headteacher *that "literally put on gendered educational leadership in a dramaturgical sense with costume, coiffure and make up."*

In discussing this transition in leadership, the participants highlighted that they felt they needed to 'look the part' by wearing clothes to reflect power and to reflect on their leadership style and how they manage people. This reminded me of Woods (2004:4) and the work on democratic leadership where they discuss how some of the traits the women have highlighted such as building relationships can be viewed as 'a more communal, fraternal, collaborative expression of democracy'. This leadership style would seem to serve well with the women participants who have highlighted their strengths in relationship-building, empathy and

communication. The participants have also raised concerns over the current educational landscape and the current agenda on raising standards and MAT structures which operate a number of schools. Whilst there is no literature on any preferred styles, some other leadership styles would not seem to be as suited to what the participants have revealed within their interviews. If we look at autocratic leadership, this is a style of leadership in which the leader holds significant control and decision-making authority. In an autocratic leadership style, the leader typically makes decisions without seeking input or feedback from subordinates or team members. Instead, the leader exercises their own judgement and imposes their decision on the group with little to no room for discussion or dissent. In some circumstances, where you need to see quick school improvement this style may be needed. Whilst the participants have mentioned that they affiliate more to interpersonal relationships and skills within their leadership, it is important to recognise that leadership styles are not inherently tied to gender, and attributing a leadership style to a specific gender is an oversimplification that does not accurately represent the diversity of leadership. In reality, the women deputy headteachers will need to use a variety of leadership styles and recognise when it is appropriate to use different styles. This led me to think about how the leadership style associated with women tends to be transformational, empowering and collaborative which is often contrasted with the traditionally associated male leadership that is more directive and authoritarian. If we think back to the participants interviews, they talked about how their experiences often led them to be assigned different roles to the men on the team and that they were often typecast into the same "caring, nurturing" roles (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). However, this discussion has evolved to include the concept of the androgynous leader. Rather than exclusively attributing certain qualities to a specific gender, this concept suggests that effective leaders can draw from both sets of characteristics and apply the most suitable ones depending on the situation (Singleton, 1993). This of course is not exclusive to women and perhaps further thought needs to be given to how we coach and mentor leaders to be able to access a range of leadership styles?

10.2.7 Work-life Balance and dual career families

Work-life balance was discussed in all groups whether they wanted to progress to headship or not. All participants discussed the importance of work-life balance and the complexities around balancing their career and family responsibilities. It is not surprising that this was a

dominant theme within the interviews as The Department for Education's Teachers' Workload Diary Survey (2019:36) found that 68% of senior leaders 'strongly disagreed' with the statement*, "I can complete my assigned workload during my contracted hours."* Senior leaders reported working 12.3 hours a week 'out of hours' (i.e., before 8am, after 6pm and in weekends) and deputy headteachers reported working 54.3 hours during the working week (ibid: 47).

All the participants discussed the demands of their jobs and long hours and the incompatibility of having a family particularly a young family. If we recall Sarah's (WDH, Essex, 30-39) story she discussed how her headteacher told her that her role on the senior leadership team and having a young baby did not work. Marie (WDH, Warwick, 40-49) discussed how she must work around her childcare commitments often working late at night when the children are in bed. This was a similar pattern for the participants who had young children. Some of the participants also discussed the pressure on them when returning to work and the expectation that it was an impossible task which made them work even harder often putting in very long hours as they did not want to be seen as failing or not as competent after their return to work. Indeed, one of the main concerns from those women that were unsure of headship or for those that did not want to progress to headship was the idea that their workload would increase further as a headteacher. These intensive workloads seem to be commonplace and something that the participants did not feel they had much control over. Earley (2013) illustrates that teachers' and leaders' workload and the expectation of 'out of hours' working, is a defining feature of the current, performative educational landscape. Linked to this, women felt an additional pressure to work harder to prove they could manage their senior roles with a family.

However, it is not just the hours that the participants have highlighted as being an issue, but my research has illustrated that the social and cultural issues surrounding them as women have influenced their perceptions on work-life balance. When we start to look at the Dual-Career Conflict theory, this theory examines the potential conflicts and challenges faced by individuals in dual-career relationships. It explores the various sources of conflict, such as role overload, work-family interference, and career sacrifices. Kanter (1997) and Voydanoff (2004) have made notable contributions to understanding dual-career conflict and by reflecting on these we can start to relate some of the issues expressed by the participants in

relation to dual-career families. For many of them, the role of headteacher was not a viable option with family life and certainly not something they would even consider until their children had grown up. Family matters such as marriage and children influence aspirations and children influence aspirations and achievements in women's goals (Hite and McDonald, 2003). All the participants demonstrated a huge commitment towards their family life and children and were very protective over this taking priority over work. This fits in with the theory that women are more likely than men to see the family role as part of their social identity (Haar and O'Driscoll, 2005). Those that had children, most of them talked about promotion when their children were older. Research from Keene and Reynolds (2005), Osnowitz (2005) and Perone et al (2005) also points to female headteachers not being willing to compromise on their home lives or family roles and as a result may give up potential promotions. Wilson (2003) poses an argument on this which is that women seem to accept their oppression because they are socialised to be different from men. Whilst this is a strong argument, it is reminiscent of McIntosh (1985) where I discussed the hierarchy of culture and Wilson (2003) seems to be positioning the argument that women accept their oppression because they are socialised to be different from men. This socialisation process can reinforce the traditional gender roles and expectations in that women learn to believe that their role is to be nurturing and self-sacrificing, while men are taught to be dominant. However, as with many arguments, it is important to note that this argument has been subject to criticism and debate and of course, it is more complex than women's acceptance of oppression. Factors such as structural inequalities, systemic discrimination, and power dynamics also play a significant role in perpetuating oppression.

Lyness and Brumit (2005), Mc Donald et al (2005), Smithson and Stokoe (2005) explore the theory that career goals are often adapted to meet other life circumstances and that family responsibilities influence career success and satisfaction. This too is supported by Hite and McDonald (2003), who claim that family matters, marriage and children, influence aspirations and achievements in women's goals.

This links into many arguments based on research and evidence that shows that women in dual-career families carry a greater amount of domestic and childcare responsibility than their male counterparts (Lewis, 1997; Lewis & Cooper 1998). Shakeshaft (1989) also concluded from her research that "*home and family provide obstacles for women*". This along with more

working hours required in a successful career can lead to high levels of stress among women (Hocschild, 1997). To add to this further, some of the participants felt that the image created of them as a 'mother' went against them and Coleman (2000) within her research points to something similar when she explains that:

> *"It would appear that women who are married and who have children…. Maybe identified more strongly with a domestic type"* (ibid).

This fits in with the themes explored within the research of women feeling like they have to prove themselves worthy of being able to cope with headship and a family. The guilt associated by many of the women for wanting a career and family and the '*expected*' societal behaviours that include women in the 'caring' role at home offer additional pressures. These societal views and pressures that women feel were exacerbated during the COVID 19 pandemic where these responsibilities became more pronounced. It seems fitting to discuss these as the pandemic has illustrated *the "undervalued and unpaid emotional labour of women"* (Gomez 2022). The pandemic has seen the role of women in the workplace being discussed more frequently and the impact of the role at home for women and the impact on their working lives is beginning to be documented (Chung, 2020; Promundo, 2020; United Nations, 2020; Wenham et al., 2020). In fact, Power, 2020 refers to this period as a '*gender regressive*' pandemic and that women are entering a "*third shift"* (Chung, 2020; Power, 2020). Gomez et al (2022) discuss that school leaders are impacted greatly by this third shift because of the number of responsibilities that they have for the emotional well-being of their own family members, but also that of their staff, students and sometimes even the families of their own students.

Sisodia, S & Rocque, S, (2023) explore the underpinnings of gender bias within the context of work-life balance. Their study explores the persistent gender biases that affect work-life balance for women in professional settings and highlights that the effort to balance work and family responsibilities generates significant stress and anxiety amongst employees. This stress often leads to work-related conflicts, particularly affecting women who typically bear a disproportionate share of domestic duties. It also explores how gender biases in the workplace can impede women's career advancement and these biases often manifest in the expectation that women should prioritise family responsibility over professional

commitments, which can limit their opportunities for promotion and professional growth. The study calls for a more equitable approach to managing work-life balance, recognising that addressing gender bias is crucial for the well-being and career advancement of women in the workplace.

The overall feelings of the participants demonstrate that there is a struggle for them to achieve a work-life balance in their current roles and worries of what this would look like if they progressed to headship. The educational culture and increasing workloads have become a barrier for some of the participants looking to progress to headship and a personal dilemma for some to seek a more balanced lifestyle especially those that have young children. The participants seem to be accepting that the demands of their jobs means that their work-life balance will suffer because of this.

My research findings suggest that HR policies within education need looking at to address the work-family conflict that has emerged from the data. The participants pointed to more flexible working practices such as job shares for headteachers. Moodly, (2021:201) discusses how leaders (men and women) need to apply themselves to "*stimulating re-thinking around policy-planning and implementation"* and disrupt *"traditionally accepted processes*" to ensure that women are "*represented at the highest levels of leadership.*"

In addressing some of the work-life balance concerns within education and in particular senior leadership and headship roles, this could combat the lack of women wanting to progress from deputy to headship. Whilst policies would help with this, there is more underlying social and cultural factors that cannot easily be fixed that is currently influencing the work-life balance for the participants within my study.

10.3 Lack of confidence and trust in headship as a route for women

a. Confidence in the system through government pressures & Ofsted
b. Lack of female role models and mentors and training to promote confidence in role

10.3.1 Government concerns and Ofsted pressures

Within the theme of lack of confidence and trust in headship as a route for women, a number of points arise. Firstly, the need for further training around the transition to headship and in

particular the lack of confidence some women may have in making this transition. I discuss this in more detail later on. There are also concerns around government agendas and Ofsted which could also be addressed through training. However, the leadership of women and what it means to be a female leader showed that many women feel a pressure on them to adapt their style especially after returning from maternity leave. Marie (WDH, Warwick, 40-49) felt that after returning from maternity leave after having two children she had to '*play people the right way*'. She went onto to explain that she felt she needed to be more resilient and prove herself to your peers that she could succeed in her role. Creating an image of a leader who can '*do everything'*. This image is unhelpful as we should not be celebrating individual women who can achieve this, but we should be looking collectively at how we can make this happen for more women by making positive changes.

The perception of what the participants felt being a headteacher would be like were very much focused on the accountability and the areas that they felt they would struggle in. They all talked about Ofsted at some point in their interview and the accountability and pressure that went with this. Sarah (WDH, Essex, 30-39) described the Ofsted process as '*breaking*' some of the headteachers she knew. Participants acknowledge the need for accountability but there was a general apprehension about Ofsted inspections and managing these as a new headteacher. Other areas discussed were HR and finance areas and they felt as a deputy headteacher they had not had enough exposure to these areas and therefore this would leave them vulnerable in the role of headteacher. One participant who did not want to progress to headship discussed how the educational landscape was the biggest factor putting them off headship referring to the constantly changing government agendas and cutbacks. Ellen (WDH, Beds, 30-39) felt that her current role was already pressurised enough, so the thought of the next steps was just incomprehensible. A survey conducted by the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) (Dec 22), claims that *"more school leaders than ever before are considering leaving the profession and fewer and fewer middle leaders are aspiring to take on the job because they see how punishing it is".* The same report claims six in ten current headteachers have considered changing jobs in the past year because of increased stress levels (ibid). The current teaching strikes that are taking place (2023) are adding to the lack of confidence in the system and within the NAHT report (Dec 2022) the general secretary, Paul Whiteman describes the educational landscape as bleak *"The anger and even despair we*

ae hearing from our members right now is unprecedented. School are telling me they cannot continue to run their schools in the current circumstances" (ibid). These additional pressures in the current educational climate are adding additional barriers and a lack of confidence in the educational system making the progression to headship even harder for the participants to consider.

Therefore, all participants showed reservations in the headship role, some more than others. Whilst those wanting to progress to headship were excited by the chance to shape the culture of a school and make a real difference, they also expressed their fears around the education climate and accountability and referred several times to the pressure and demands of the job. It is important to note here that these factors would not be exclusive to women and that in considering the external factors such as government pressures and Ofsted inspections that this is a wider issue across the education sector and something that needs to be addressed for all.

10.3.2 Lack of skills for headship and appropriate training

There is research that looks at how women are more likely to progress to headship at a later age than men (Eckman 2004; Riehl and Byrd 1997; Shakeshaft, 1987). This could be linked to the factors discussed previously in terms of having a family and other commitments. The participants also discussed there was a lack of training or inadequate training for the preparation of headship. In particular, some of the participants discussed a lack of skills in certain areas. The lack of skills or qualifications to do the job would link in with Coleman (2002) who noted that in the UK, women and men thinking of advancing their careers to headships are likely to obtain further qualifications. Logan (1999) and Peterson and Runyun (1999) argue that this desire for more qualifications could be linked to self-esteem and confidence (as with the first section in this chapter). For some of the participants they talked about having to prove their worth and feeling an extra pressure to gain qualifications to legitimise their qualifications to do the role of head.

Participants did have knowledge of existing qualifications such as the NPQH, but many felt that the qualification on its own was not relevant enough for them and they sought a more personalised approach for women. Natalie (WDH, Herts, 30-39) explained within her interview that it is the unknown of headship that puts people off. Whilst participants

acknowledged the NPQH was good in terms of the theory of being a headteacher they all felt that more hands-on experience would be more beneficial. For many of the participants it was the practical elements of headship such as finance and HR that caused them to worry. This was the same result when the NCTL (2013) interviewed NPQH graduates on the areas that they needed more help to develop, with Managing Budgets scoring the highest at 77%, closely followed by HR and legal issues at 69%. This suggests that this is still an area that deputy headteachers do not feel they have had adequate training and preparation in. Participants also discussed the role of a mentor and the importance of this when starting a headship. Mentoring relationships have been recognised as one organisational tool for increasing leader performance and career advancement (Dougherty & Dreher, 2007). This would also fit in with the views of the headteachers I interviewed who discussed the loneliness of being a headteacher and that having someone to turn to or talk to was important. The headteachers interviewed also flagged the need for more secondments before taking on headship to give real life experiences of what it is like to be a headship along with a support network for headteachers.

Another area that came through in the interviews was that some of the participants talked about the lack of conversations surrounding their career which in turn led them to believe that were not suitable or capable. We saw this when Samantha (WDH, Liverpool, 40-49) said, "*no one has ever had a conversation with me about progressing to headship*". Day et al (2009) would suggest that failing to receive validation for one's leadership attempts can affect self-confidence and the motivation to seek developmental opportunities, experiment and take on new leadership roles. De Rue & Ashford (2010) highlight how this can weaken one's self-identity as a leader.

Within the interviews one of the questions that was asked was around inspiration and motivation. This was to establish whether something could be done in relation to the reasons that may or may not influence women's aspirations for headship. The participants' views on inspiration and motivation varied, with some of the interviewees talking directly about a particular person that had influenced them whilst others referred to personal situations and circumstances that motivated them to achieve. If we recall Sarah (WDH, Essex, 30-39) she talked passionately about a former teacher that inspired her along with wanting to '*prove everyone wrong'* due to her personal circumstances. In fact, most participants when asked

about their reasons for headship either discussed a former teacher or headteacher that had inspired them, or they wanted to be a role model and make a difference. Where the women had positive experiences with role models or former teachers, they were more likely to want to progress to headship. Some of the participants talked about female headteachers that had inspired them as they had observed how they managed to combine work and family life. However, this was not exclusive to female heads as one participant explained that her male teacher was a role model for demonstrating work-life balance and commented that he would often encourage staff to make time for themselves. Sarah (WDH, Essex, 30-39) described a female teacher that had inspired her from the age of 17 whereas Emma (WDH, Leicester, 30-39) discussed being her own inspiration as she was the first in her family to go to university, so she sees this as an opportunity to become a role model in her family. Marie (WDH, Warwick, 40-49) describes her inspiration and motivation as being her current female headteacher, admiring her for the way she manages her work and family commitments and commenting that if she had met her earlier in her career that potentially she would have been inspired to take on headship earlier.

A common theme within motivations for becoming a headteacher was around social justice. Those that talked about progressing to headship wanted to do so to make a difference. If we look back at Emma's interview (WDH, Leicester, 30-39) she talked about only taking on headship if it was a '*special place'*. When I unpicked this further with her, she talked about a school that she could make a difference in, an inclusive school that encouraged everyone to achieve. There was a real sense of the participants feeling like they could make a change and a difference in their role and that it would be a privilege to shape a school culture. These values were key drivers in their motivations. This is something that could be considered when looking at ways to encourage more women into headship.

Within the interviews many women discussed the lack of female role models, and this is something that the current headteachers also stated as a possible way to encourage more women into headship. The lack of female role models in particular women in headship with young families was something that the participants felt would have a huge impact on women who were perhaps considering headship. Participants also discussed the role of a mentor in helping and how it would be beneficial to have other women to talk things through with, so that they did not feel judged or uncomfortable. Having access to a female mentor was

something that the participants who wanted to progress to headship all discussed. This links to the literature in Chapter 2, where Ragins and Kram (2007) and Scundura, 1992) highlighted mentoring as a catalyst for career advancement. Where the participants had a female role model or mentor, they seemed to be more prepared to take the next step into headship feeling prepared and more confident in themselves. Day and Allen (2004) argue that role modelling can act as a powerful tool in building career self-efficacy and lead to career success. Connecting the concept of female role models to related ideas, various mechanisms can explain the positive effects observed, such as the heightened sense of belonging and increased self-confidence experienced by women (Dennehy and Dasgupta, 2017) – aspects prominently highlighted by the women during their interviews. Swiss (1996) explains that role models are important for all female employees regardless level and age, but special attention must be given to newly employed females. This could apply to newly appointed women in headship posts looking for that additional support and coaching.

The lack of female role models can make it difficult for women to aspire to headship or to see themselves as fit to be a headteacher. This was examined in a study comparing experiences of women law associates where they found that those firms with fewer women partners were less likely to experience gender as a positive basis for identification with senior women and less likely to perceive senior women as role models with legitimate authority (Ely, 1994). Whilst this research is quite dated, my research indicates that participants indicate that more positive role models would help them in wanting to progress. So, the fewer female Heads we have the more troublesome this becomes. However, for some women it may just be that are not aware of other successful female headteachers, and this is where the participants suggested that more needed to be done to promote female headteachers and to celebrate their success.

10.4 Summary of research findings and addressing the key research questions

The following section illustrates how the findings directly link into the key research questions which I have indicated throughout as RQ1,2,3 and 4 within the main text.

My research involved a range of women of different ages, marital status and career views. In exploring the two main concepts from my research, pressures of being a woman in leadership and the lack of confidence in a headship route for women many topics within this have been

explored. Some of these topics covered the barriers to headship (linked to RQ3) and whilst family and work-life balance are not new to research, they act as another validation that we need to consider these barriers to address the issue of women not wanting to progress to headship. Confidence and trust in the education system is a topical area as the last few years have seen a lot of additional pressures on leaders such as the COVID pandemic and of course the impact of COVID on the women's role at home (RQ3). With recruitment at an all-time low, education has become a less desirable career and therefore encouraging more women in headship become more difficult. Participants not only talked about the lack of confidence in the education system but also the fear of the financial situations and Ofsted inspections. Lack of support for future headship troubled the participants and the need for more female role models and mentors. All of these along with the pressures of being a headteacher and the scrutiny of Ofsted have offered additional barriers for women to consider when thinking about career progression (RQ3).

Whilst many of these factors cannot be solved immediately, the participants did call for more women ambassadors as headteachers and mentors and this could help to start to change the perception that headship is more suitable for men or for women whose children have grown up or those that do not have children (RQ4). This was evident when the participants talked about putting their career on hold until their children were older and putting off headship until they felt they could dedicate more personal time to it. We also examined how confidence amongst women and their self-efficacy was a barrier for all the groups whether they wanted to progress to headship or not (RQ 1&2).

Confidence is something that my study has highlighted as problematic for women's progression to headship, and this has been shown in many different forms (RQ1,2,3). In the confidence in themselves and the perception that they do not have the skills to progress but also the confidence and trust in the system to support a family-friendly work approach. The effects of imposter syndrome as a psychological phenomenon have been evident within the participants' interviews where they feel like they are not worthy of the success they have achieved and fear that they will be exposed as a fraud. Some of this could be down to the additional challenges that women face as leaders in education and gender-based discrimination and stereotypes. Participants have described within their interviews that they perceive they have to work harder than their male counterparts to prove themselves and be

taken seriously. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, which can manifest as imposter syndrome. The women within my study also expressed that they felt like they had to constantly prove their worth to their colleagues and superiors, leading to feelings of insecurity (RQ1,2,3).

The system itself is not entirely to blame although the lack of flexible work systems does not help but for many societal stereotypes has added a layer of complexity to the issue. Many of the participants felt stereotyped by their gender and perhaps confirmed to their role as *'Mum'* and having to juggle all the family life and work-life. Participants talked about how *'you couldn't have both'* and if you did you were deemed *'Superwoman'*. Therefore, it is a complex problem which involves many different elements much of which is engrained in societal views (RQ1,2,3).

The concept of confidence is multifaceted and has played a significant role in my findings. Self-confidence and self-esteem have been discussed in relation to the participants own beliefs in their abilities and judgements. Confidence in relation to gender and potential gender disparities have highlighted some of the consequences this has had on the participants which in turn has affected some of the participants in aspiring for headship leadership roles and whether they see themselves as suitable (RQ1,2,3). My research has also explored political confidence and trust in the current education systems and processes. All of these factors have contributed to how the concept of confidence is pervasive and has touched on many aspects of my participants behaviour and their view of how society perceives their gendered role to behave (RQ3). My research into this area has allowed me to deepen my understanding of the factors thar influence confidence, its consequences, and how it can be nurtured or improved in different contexts. All of which are explored in the next chapter.

In summary, women in leadership roles face a number of challenges and this is evident within the participants' interviews. Their interviews have highlighted several unique challenges including the lack of female representations in headships, the prevalence of unconscious bias, and the need to balance work and family responsibilities. Women are also often expected to conform to traditional gender roles, which can limit their ability to take on leadership roles. Despite these challenges, women have made significant progress over the years, and whilst more women are taking on leadership roles, more needs to be done, they are still under-represented in the top leadership roles (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Hoff et al, 2006; Kellar, 2013;

Sanchez & Thornton, 2010; Smith, 2011; Tucker & Fushell, 2014; Wallace, 2002, 2004; Wallace & Wallin, 2015).

It is evident that many factors affect whether a women aspired to take on a headship or not, but there seems to be some obvious areas that need exploring more in order to inform future research and practice. Blackmore (2013:151) argues that *"it can no longer be argued that women lack the necessary skills or ambitions or that the pool of qualified women does not exist. The question therefore becomes whether organisations recognise the escalating expectations of leaders together with the intensification of educational labour pitted against the demands of managing family/work conflict."*

As illustrated within this chapter, whilst individual factors have been looked at, there are many complexities that add to the women's career aspirations which cannot be solved easily. These factors are dependent on the individual's life experiences and can stem from their influences growing up and whether or not they have had a role model to motivate and inspire them. Social pressures and stereotypes can significantly affect the participants' view on whether they should or should not pursue their career aspirations along with the additional pressures of having to be seen as a successful mum balancing both home and work-life. So, whilst there are no easy fixes to the above, my next chapter will consider my findings to date and will try to offer some solutions that have arisen from my research.

Chapter 11: Conclusions and Recommendations

11.0 Introduction

"*Male teachers 'twice as likely to want headship. Women teachers are less likely to see themselves as a head*" (Teacher TAPP poll, October 2021). As the quote suggests, the latest survey results are still unchanged in terms of equal numbers of men and women seeking headship posts in secondary schools and the arguments around this are complex. However, my research has identified some areas that could be explored further and some recommendations that I will take into my professional role to continue to encourage women that want to aspire to headship to do so.

This chapter brings all my research findings together relating back to the title of 'Societal pressures and confidence dilemmas in women deputy headteachers' pursuit of headship in secondary schools'. It also examines the findings from the headteachers that I interviewed and considers their recommendations.

The previous chapters considered my participants leadership journeys and the reasons that they wanted or did not want to progress to headship. Their individual interviews revealed the complexities around their professional lives and home situations and how gender interacted with a series of circumstances such as personal, family society and education issues. (As in Figure 5, Chapter 9). This reflected how confidence and trust impacted on women progressing into headship and the complexity of the issues and perceptions within each group and how there is no easy fix to the recruitment of women into headship.

The findings of my study show how my participants' career journeys in secondary education have been shaped by a number of factors. Whilst every participant had a different leadership journey to tell, there were many commonalities across all the participants their lived experiences.

Within this chapter, I reflect on the main findings of this study, consider recommendations for policy making and training opportunities and also consider the limitations of my research. Finally, I consider other key areas of research that I believe would strengthen this and existing research around why there is a lack of female secondary headteachers.

11.1 Reflecting on my findings

My research was undertaken to investigate what women deputy headteachers say about their career aspirations for headship and whether they do or do not want to progress to headship. Through the influence of narrative, it aimed to explore the 'lived experiences' of ten deputy headteachers who each told their individual leadership journey starting from when they first became teachers to their current role as deputy headteachers. It aimed to understand some of the complexities as to why women would or would not want to progress to headship specifically addressing:

RQ1: What are deputy headteachers school and leadership perceptions and experiences?
RQ2: How do they these perceptions and experiences relate to their ambitions in wanting to become headteachers?
RQ3: What barriers/hurdles to promotion can be identified?
RQ4: What enablers to promotion to headship can be identified?

Having been influenced by narrative as a framework to create the live leadership journeys of the women, two key concepts emerged from the data: Pressures of being a woman in leadership and a lack of trust and confidence in headship as a route for women. Within these two concepts sub-themes around confidence emerged specifically at their own confidence and skills, confidence around headship being a job that could support their family life along with trust and confidence in the current educational system including Ofsted. The lack of female role models and mentors to promote confidence was also an area that emerged within the data. All of these areas stemmed from the women's perceptions of themselves, how others viewed them and indeed how they perceived the education sector including the role of headship.

11.2 Reflecting on my contribution to knowledge

One of the aims of my research was to add further evidence to the existing research on gender and education in particular women in secondary school education and the lack of female secondary headteachers. The findings within this thesis enhance our understanding of what it is like to be a woman in leadership in education and the perceived barriers and constraints. This study makes a methodological contribution to the working field of gender and

educational leadership by using narrative-influenced inquiry as a methodology and allowing this to highlight some of the key areas that we need to focus on in education to encourage more women into headship. This study has gone someway in illustrating the strengths of using a narrative influence when looking at complex issues such as reasons why women may or may not want to progress to headship. The use of this narrative influence has allowed me to understand the lives of individuals and the complexities, this was crucial to finding out more about the key issues.

Whilst the sample within the study was small, my research highlights that not all women deputy heads will aspire to headship and therefore we should not treat them all as one group. Focused research would be more valuable looking directly at those women who do want to progress or who perhaps are undecided, and this more individual and personal approach would allow for us to understand the key constraints and barriers further. This would in turn allow us to have a better understanding as to why we have under representation within secondary school headship with women.

Through looking at the interviews of the women, this study has provided an insight into the different lived experiences of the deputy headteachers and their own perceptions as to why they would or would not want to progress to headship. Some of the insight into their motivations and barriers have allowed us to see the complexity of every individual journey. One of the most interesting elements of the research and findings was around the pressures that the women felt in their leadership positions to be able to do their job whilst also being a mother (in some cases) and having the confidence and trust in both educational systems and themselves to do the job. My findings suggested that for the participants the lack of regular dialogue, mentoring, and female role models in headship was a barrier to promotion. The findings suggests that by sharing and understanding feelings around confidence and self-belief amongst fellow peers and female mentors/role models this would be a way of developing themselves to allow professional and reflective opportunities (McLay & Brown, 2000). Linked into this my research highlights that professional development opportunities have not always catered for the needs of my participants with many of them asking for more practical workshops on operational issues particularly in areas that they perceive a lack of skill set in. The current professional programmes such as the NPQH offer an element of 'headship'

preparation but a personalised route for women needs to consider the element of discussion, mentoring and networking. This is an area that has not been considered in terms of the individual journey of the women and potential reasons why they do not take on headship. Likewise, my research illustrated the lack of trust and confidence in the current educational system and whilst it is evident in the present time that there are similar feelings amongst all leaders and teachers which has been evident through the teacher strikes, my research has highlighted the need to discuss these pressures and turn to existing female headteachers to offer support and guidance. The lack of female role models and existing female headteachers promoting the role is something that my research suggests would be beneficial in attracting more women deputy headteachers to headship. For some participants, they do not see enough women in these positions and in particular women with children as headteachers and therefore they do not see headship as a compatible job to have with a family.

Taking all my findings into consideration, this chapter will look at some suggestions to improve headteacher recruitment amongst female deputy headteachers.

11.3 Limitations of the study

Whilst the data and research within my study was in depth and rich and exploratory in nature it focused on ten women who were currently deputy headteachers exploring their potential future career paths. The sample was chosen with no prior knowledge of their ambitions for the future at the time of recruitment.

The study was also very gender-based due to the topic of the research and whilst I did interview two existing male headteachers, future research would benefit from interviewing both male and female deputy headteachers to ascertain whether they report the same barriers and motivators for wanting or not wanting to progress to headship.

Another limitation, which I mentioned in an earlier chapter is that I did not capture the ethnicity of my participants, and this could have provided another strand to potential barriers and motivators for women and their career experiences and stories. This would be a good next step for my research to look into how race and gender could potentially affect a women career's journey. This is something that Moorosi, Fuller and Reilly (2018) have looked at in their research which specifically looked at Black women school principals in three different

contexts. Within their research they examined leadership and intersectionality looking at constructions of successful leadership among black women. Their analysis suggested that Black women leaders' constructions of success are shaped by overcoming barriers of their own racialised and gendered histories.

There would also be scope within my future research to gather information prior to interview on whether the women wanted to progress to headship this could then determine the set of questions asked to explore in more detail the barriers that women perceive in their career progression and perhaps for more group discussion work to talk through possible solutions and ways forward.

11.4 Implications of the research on the participants

Utilising a narrative-influenced approach in the study enable participants to view their personal journey and gain insights into their identified primary barriers. Referring to Frank (2010:50) and the following question *"How might people's lives change if they heard their own stories which enhanced reflective awareness and if they heard others' stories with a more generous sense of what makes these stories viable representations of the lives those storytellers live?"*

This method also allowed the participants to see the similarities in their journeys and discuss them openly after they were presented with the research findings. The open dialogue that this created allowed the women to feel a sense of confidence that they were not alone with their barriers or perceived barriers and many of them discussed how this type of research would be beneficial to discuss in women only forums and groups. The coherent story creation captured their journeys succinctly and participants thought that this enabled them to reflect on their key factors personal to their own individual leadership journey. They also highlighted that the stories acted as a good way for others to be able to connect with their stories and see similarities with their journeys. Narratives can have a purpose of educating and expanding the participants frame of reference (Plesner, 2011) and therefore open up lives to aspects that they are not normally, or at least not knowingly, aware of. Again, the participants commented that this was useful to see as for some it highlighted that some of their worries concerning headship were the key barriers to applying and that if they addressed these skills

gaps then there would not be any further barriers other than themselves. It allowed the participants to understand their experiences and to be able to interpret them allowing them to be more able to understand their situations.

11.5 Implications for Future Research

One area for possible further study would be to explore women with educational leadership at different stages in their personal lives and to correlate this with career expectations. My research specifically looked at women who were deputy headteachers but perhaps another source of research would be to particularly look at age demographics and to examine the patterns within this. In addition to this, I discussed in Chapter 3 my own journey and how my previous career influenced my ambitions. It would be a logical next step to look at whether having a prior career to teaching affects career aspirations and motivations, as was the case in my circumstances. Whilst my research has highlighted that the additional family pressures on women have constraints on their careers there are other assumed caring responsibilities that women could face such as caring for elderly relatives that may affect career trajectories too. Confidence came out as a key area affecting women and again this is not just affected by women taking career breaks to have children. Other possible age demographics that might be interesting to explore would be women going through the menopause and the effect that this has on women's confidence and their career-making decisions. I think this age demographic especially in relation to confidence would prove a valuable and a next step to my research.

11.6 Recommendations for Practice

Despite research into women and leadership and reasons as to why women may not progress to headship the statistics are still not showing equality in women as headteachers in secondary schools. The same reasons have been discussed in existing literature around family commitments and work-life balance. This links back to my research and the need for women to self-reflect on their leadership journey and their perceived barriers such as confidence in their skill set or their situations in relation to home life and other responsibilities. It is important to note that the key issue of confidence that has emerged from my research is not a deficit-view of confidence because it is not that the women are lacking skills but their

perspective is making them focus on this. My recommendations are based on trying to allow women to recognise and build upon their existing strengths and capabilities. This strength-based approach within my recommendations aims to build on the strengths of the women and for them to identify and leverage existing strengths and competencies encouraging them to recognise their achievements and capabilities. They also focus on empowerment by allowing individual women to take a proactive approach to overcoming challenges and building confidence. By shifting from a deficit view to a strengths-based approach, individuals are more likely to develop a healthier, more confident self-image, and be motivated to grow and achieve their goals.

This long-term strategy is something that my recommendations for practice below are based on and aims to provide opportunities for women to develop confidence, self-awareness, skills, and strategies to address and balance work-life and personal life. Alongside this the use of mentoring and support networks. Existing research from O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) and Weyer (2007) suggests that these strategies have been identified as important elements in ensuring that women progress to senior positions in organisations. Healy and Lieberwitz (2013) discuss the use of mentors to promote self-confidence and offer guidance. I also take into consideration at this point the recommendations that arose through my work with the headteachers and I noticed they fitted in within my recommendations. A reminder of their recommendations are listed below, and I have coded below where I have considered these within my recommendations:

Table 30: Headteacher recommendations in relation to my recommendations

Best experience is doing the job Recommendation 2	Need more flexibility in the role Recommendation 5	Secondment Recommendation 2
Real-life experience rather than NPQH Recommendation 1	Lack of female role models Recommendation 3/4	Compatibility with family life Recommendation 5
Network of support for female deputy headteachers and headteachers Recommendation 1/ 3	Experience of accountability in schools and leading a school in the Heads absence Recommendation 2	

11.6.1 Recommendation 1: Women-only National Professional Qualification NPQ

See Appendix 10 for flyer

The first recommendation I will explore is women-only developmental programmes. This recommendation directly addresses the key concepts of the pressures faced by women in leadership and the lack of confidence in pursuing headship roles. By providing a platform for women to connect with peers and share their experiences and concerns, it creates an opportunity for them to discuss their strengths and identify areas for improvement. My research has illustrated that group talk and sharing narratives with women in similar situations offers an environment that promotes discussion around the pressures that women in leadership face and offers a forum for discussion to help support their development further. There is also strong support and research to suggest that this is beneficial to women (Wentling 2003).

Within my research, my participants and women that I have worked alongside in a professional role have been asking for women only training sessions. Some of the reasons for this is the feeling that women understand the additional responsibilities that they face when trying to juggle a career and homelife. Women predominantly but not exclusively take on more caring roles within the family dynamics whether that is childcare or looking after elderly relatives (Gautun and Hagen 2010). My research highlighted that these caring and family responsibilities for some created additional barriers to progression. Whilst there are more couples taking on shared paternity leave and roles within society there is still a gendered construction that makes women feel responsible for the caring side of their family as seen in my research. The women only approach to courses is where this can help as it offers a forum for women to be able to share their experiences and to talk openly about how they balance their working lives with their caring responsibilities. Like with my research, the shared leadership journeys offers the opportunity for women to talk about their experiences and to see themselves as a 'collective' rather than an individual and that in order to change the current view on women as headteachers then it is something that we must all do together by promoting the role to each other and supporting this career choice and decision. This experience of 'talking' and self-reflecting is an important element that has emerged from my research and therefore an important step to put in place to illustrate to women not just their own leadership journey but other women's.

As part of my professional work, I have used my research on women in leadership to inform working practices to try to encourage more women into headship. One of the key areas that

came out of my research was the need for more women-specific training and so I therefore approached the Teaching School I worked with and asked whether it would be possible to run a NPQH just for women. After meeting with the professional provider this was approved. The women-only route is designed specifically with the following in mind:

- Increasing the number of women in leadership positions is a government priority
- The Teaching School involved wished to contribute to this commitment by offering a NPQH women-only cohort to support schools to increase diversity in leadership
- NPQH women-only is for women in headship roles or aspiring towards headship in coming years. It is hoped that this will contribute to raising the profile and importance of supporting women with their career within education Identifying and supporting more women with their career progression into leadership
- The creation of local, regional, and national networking opportunities to share experiences, such as job sharing and flexible working creating the potential for development through coaching, mentoring and group discussions to raise aspirations and self-limiting beliefs

All of the above attributes have been discussed in relation to my research findings such as the need for more networking, discussion on self-belief, and also the opportunity to raise the profile of women in leadership and to promote those women already in headship as role models and mentors.

The value of women-only programmes does have support from research findings. Wentling (2003) suggests that appropriate education and training is of critical importance to women's career development. When examining previous women-only programmes, I came across a programme that was trialled in Australia titled 'The High Impact Women in Leadership'. The main findings from this programme revolved around learning how to manage as a leader, learning how other women make the transition and building support and overcoming real or perceived barriers to career success (Clarke, 2011). It also reported that the majority of women on the programme had improved their levels of self-confidence and felt more confident to tackle workplace issues (ibid). Chuang, S. (2019), highlights the potential of women-only training programs to address gender disparities in the workplace while also acknowledging the complexities and challenges associated with their implementation. Adding to this, Chasserio, S. and Bacha, E. (2024) examined women-only training programmes

as tools for professional development. Based on the transformative learning theory, they analysed a French women-only training programme that aimed to develop women's soft skills in their professional contexts. The analysis of this study found that beyond 'fixing their lack of skills' – including self-limiting behaviours, low feelings or self-efficacy and difficulty claiming one's place, the programme triggered a transformational learning experience at the individual level and modified the surveyed women's attitudes and behaviours at work.

Taking this onboard, within my professional capacity I looked at how we could encourage more emerging leaders across my Trust to select different leadership pathways and part of this design was to allocate everyone on a leadership pathway with a mentor. The pathways are not exclusive to those wanting to progress to headship as they are designed to suit leaders from all levels, emerging leaders from early career teachers up to executive headteachers. The women on this pathway not only have access to the women-only NPQH but they also have led sessions on preparing them for headship such as finance and HR, again areas that came out directly from my research as areas that the participants felt they needed more support with. The sessions are women-only and allow the group to not only discuss any concerns they may have and more importantly to assure each other that their self-doubts can be talked through in a safe environment. The discussion element of the course is the most important part in terms of my research and the need for more opportunities for women to get together to share their stories and reflect on them. One of the sessions is on imposter syndrome and this workshop often sees the women relating to the theory and understanding themselves better which in turn gives them a new sense of confidence. On reflecting on previous all women training, one of the most useful aspects of the course that I ran was the opportunity for women to reflect on imposter syndrome and how this might relate to them. The collected view and different stories shared was a real turning point for many women and a powerful self-reflection tool. The creation of coherent stories (*as seen in Chapter 10.5 – where three stories are presented*) will also be used within these sessions as a training tool for women to consider the participants stories and to use these as a reflection tool for their own perceived barriers and discussion point. As mentioned before in this chapter, to be able to see other leadership journeys is an important part of allowing the women to self-reflect and find commonalities in their experiences.

11.6.2 Recommendation 2: Additional CPD workshops added to the NPQH

My research illustrated that whilst the participants knew of some of the national qualifications available to them, they felt that some of their gaps in skills such as finance and HR were creating additional barriers to headship. This is directly linked to the key concept of 'Confidence in themselves to be able to do the job' and reminds us of the participants' views when they discussed that if they could not complete one hundred percent of a job role they would not want to apply for it. By tailoring a CPD programme that directly addresses some of the areas that the women felt they needed more support with this allows them to build confidence within these areas and confidence in pursuing the role of a headteacher.

These areas of concern were making the participants feel underprepared for headship and willing to take on 'the unknown'.

The NPQH qualifications have given a good starting point for future heads understanding school culture and implementation processes, but they are missing some of the day-to-day operational practical activities that all heads need and want to know more about. If we look back at the headteacher's findings, they called for more secondments and practical experience for deputy headteachers to be involved in the everyday running of a school in the role of a headteacher. This aligns with the views from my participants and their feelings around more practical workshops on HR/finance and operational issues. If we consider Zhang and Brundrett's (2010) research in relation to my findings, they consider the case for informal and experiential learning. Gunter and Ribbins (2002) argue that leadership and leadership development are not primarily about skills, techniques and capacities but can only be *"understood through the gathering of professional experiences from within contextualised settings"* (p. 388). Within Zhang and Brundett's (2002:154) study they illustrate how three leaders in one primary school considered that formal programmes '*do not help run the school day to day'*. This aligns with the views of the headteachers interviewed and indeed my research from the participants and the call for more skill specific training. This also links into Riley and Mulford (2007: 87) who explain that *"the increased complexity of leadership will require greater individualised or personalised support programmes".* The study also highlighted views whereby staff talked about training courses not being as useful as experience. Earley & Evans (2004:330) discuss "*that the most significant experiences were*

frequent on-the-job -workplace rather than workshop – rather than off-the-job." My research points to the need to develop an additional programme that would run alongside the NPQH qualification that would combine a series of workshops on HR, finance, accountability and operational issues along with a secondment and shadowing experience to fully prepare the future heads for their transition to headship. These workshops would be run by experienced headteachers as a way of helping future headteachers to have an open discussion about the everyday experience of a being a headteacher. This fits closely with Earley and Bubb (2014) who identified *'working with an effective headteacher, and everyday work experience'* as two activities that assisted in leadership learning. This also fits with my research and the views of the headteachers and their recommendations.

11.6.3 Recommendation 3: Women as mentors

My research highlighted that when the participants have a good female role model or mentor then they were more likely to be part of the group who were considering headship.

This recommendation directly addresses the key concept of women's lack of confidence in pursuing headship roles. Participants' specifically requested more female mentors to facilitate discussions about headship and to boost their confidence, both in their own abilities and in the compatibility of the headteacher role with women.

Those who had not experienced career-related talks or had female role models were less likely to consider headship as a career. Therefore, the use of mentors for women is something that I will take forward into practice and something that I have already started to do. There is evidence that women benefit from coaching or mentoring support although some would also argue that women-only programmes can lend themselves to '*fixing women'* rather than dealing with structures and cultures to assimilate women into an existing male-dominated workplace rather than accommodating the needs of women (Kolb et al, 2003:11). However, in a study of men and women who had reached director level, women identified having a mentor who not only offered coaching and advice in management techniques but also acted as a role model were critical to their success (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003). To add to this, the literature on women in leadership suggests that women have little access to mentors who are women (Eagly & Carli 2007; McGinn & Milkmann 2012) and this places women at a disadvantage. This is something that came out strongly within my research the need for role

women as role models within secondary headships and the coaching and mentoring of women within those positions to offer guidance and advice. The use of female mentors also allows the women to learn from each other and to establish a network of support. Role models who are women can also have a positive impact on the development of women as leaders (Ragins & Cotton 1999; Ragins et al, 2000; Ely et al 2011) and challenge organisational power imbalances which we have already noted that there are within secondary education headship. My research illustrates the need for mentorship. The participants were themselves asking for more mentors and more frequent conversations about their career aspirations.

11.6.4 Recommendation 4: Women as role models

As with recommendation 3, this relates directly to the key concept of women having a lack of confidence in the headship route for women. The participants within my research called for more role models and more opportunities to celebrate women in headships to illustrate the different situations that women may face when being a headteacher. The effects of highly successful role models have previously received mixed views as previous research illustrates that it can have both an inspiring and deflating effect. This reminds me of the term 'Superwoman' that was discussed previously in my research where I discussed that this term had negative connotations as it suggested that you had to be superhuman to be a woman headteacher and manage your personal and work-life. However, whilst we acknowledge that research has pointed to examples where women being exposed to highly successful women has led to them being discouraged (Hoyt and Simon, 2011) several studies have shown the opposite.

Successful women of different contexts and background can be inspiring for women and something that they use as a way to demonstrate success is attainable. Simon and Hoyt (2013) found that women exposed to media images of women in non-typical roles has greater leadership aspirations than those exposed to images of women in stereotypical roles. The use of female role models as headteachers was certainly something that all the participants wanted more exposure to, and they felt that would be motivational and that more exposure to these women was crucial in allowing other women to see their success. I think the important point to highlight here is that we are using women role models to show that only some women can achieve this but by using a collection of women from different backgrounds

and family circumstances it makes the job seem more attainable as they will be people they can relate to.

The Department for Education and schools should look towards promoting more women role models within leadership campaigns to highlight that leadership in schools can be compatible with family life. All of the women within my research talked about the lack of role models which made it harder for them to identify with being a female headteacher. Promoting women with a range of different family circumstances would certainly help to break down barriers and this could be aimed at a range of ages and life stages such as family commitments, caring responsibilities and women going through the menopause. All areas that could affect women's confidence when applying for senior roles within schools.

11.6.5 Recommendation 5: Changes in policy-making/flexible working

My final recommendation addresses both key concepts: the pressures faced by women in leadership and their lack of confidence in pursuing headship roles. To address women's concerns about balancing the job with family life, changes in policy and more flexible work approaches are necessary. Additionally, the underrepresentation of women in headship roles and pay inequality contribute to the perception that headship may not be a suitable career path for women.

My research highlights that women do not have trust and confidence in headship being a compatible role for them. Over the years there has been more discussion on flexible working within schools and calls for Trusts and schools to adopt more flexible working processes. This is probably the area that could make the biggest difference in terms of moving forward on recruiting more female headteachers but also the area that is likely to take the longest to change. This is something that I have seen change over the last few years and the encouragement of flexible approaches is something that I have seen in some schools with the encouragement of co-headships. Bush (2011) has researched succession models and discussed new models of leadership within his work. Bush refers to the NCSL (2007:10) new models of headship which are *'emerging to cope with the demands of modern school leadership'* of which co-headship is one of three models that is referred to. However, Thomson (2009) notes that this model is *'too soon to ascertain whether this is an effective supply solution*' (ibid:41-2). In agreement with Thomson, this is still an area that is still in its

infancy and something that more schools should consider when looking at their recruitment processes.

Alongside this, the pay gap still exists both within the private a public sector and within schools this gap is still evident. In a report, Closing the Pay Gap in Education (Dec 2021) Female headteachers earn on average £5,700 less than male headteachers overall. This gap is widened as women reach their 50s as they typically earn £11,300 less and £13,500 less for female headteachers aged 60 or over.

Flexible working and equality in pay is something that needs to be continued to be looked at to ensure that working practices for women and fair and equal.

11.7 Reflecting on my doctorate

Throughout my thesis and my research design, I have built in periods of reflection to allow me as a researcher to constantly re-engage with the interviews I have been exploring and to consider the complexities within it. Therefore, it seems appropriate to again reflect upon my studies and journey at this point.

At the start of my doctoral studies in 2014, there was very little research on women as deputy headteachers and as I began my research journey, I found that this was an area of interest for some other doctorate students who have since published their doctorates (Chagger, 2012; Guihen, 2017; King, 2021). This was a useful reflection point as they too were concerned with this as an area of inquiry in education and I was not alone in my thoughts and feelings around this. I often found it hard to understand why there was limited research on this area especially with so few women going onto secondary headship compared to men and in comparison, to primary headship. As I work in secondary education and have experienced the process of progressing from deputy headteacher to headteacher I had some privileged insight into this area and at first worried that this may disadvantage me in my research, but I soon came to realise that through using a reflective approach I was able to step back from my own situation and to understand the varied lived experiences and stories that my participants told. Their leadership journeys and interviews allowed to gain a greater insight into the how complex their journeys could be. Some of the experiences told were surprising and very different to my own and it was at this point that I realise how important the influence of narrative was to ensure that every participants' individual experiences were told.

When I conducted my research, the amount of data to transcribe and collect was overwhelming at first and this is where my structured methodology helped me to structure the analytical part of my data. This was the most exciting stage of my research as I was able to see the emerging themes from each participants' interview and suddenly my research started to make sense, and this gave me the confidence to start to put together the common themes. Despite there being such differences in my participants' career journeys it was interesting to see how there were so many similarities in terms of motivations and constraints including the perceptions that they had of what it would be like to be a headteacher. The work that I did with my participants helped me in my professional career as I was exposed to a range of different reasons why women had not progressed, and this understanding enabled me to start looking at ways to help encourage more women within my professional role to consider progressing from deputy to headteacher. The power of a study influenced by narrative has been effective in exposing the different constraints faced by different individuals. My understanding of women's confidence and the potential impact of imposter syndrome has been pivotal in my professional work, and I have used this understanding to plan women-only seminars and mentoring.

My journey from deputy headteacher to headteacher has allowed me to add to my research but it has also now exposed my thinking to the other areas faced by women and to understand that not everyone wants to progress to headship and that this group of women are happy within their current role and that we should not assume that those that do not progress are not doing so because of certain barriers, constraints or perceptions. More importantly, it is the group of women who are undecided or those who want to progress to headship that we need to consider and look at more effective ways to support and guide these women into future headteacher roles. Reflecting on this sentence makes me realise that this is a doctorate written by a headteacher who is looking for practical ways to deal with the shortage of women headteachers and to help find ways to help women fulfil their headship aspirations or encourage them as appropriate. I have used my research to build on my women-only programme and to shape future training both internally in my workplace and on a regional and national level. My research has allowed me to discuss my findings with national providers and to make suggestions as to how we can support women further with not just women-only courses but with additional mentoring opportunities and network events.

My research has allowed me to gain confidence in this area of education and to continue with my work both as a researcher and also within the educational field working with women as deputy headteachers and helping them to progress to the next step of headteacher.

11.8 Conclusion

Before starting my research project in 2014, very little was known about the career trajectories of deputy headteachers. As a group, deputy headteachers have received very little literature but more academics have started to look at this particular group. Therefore, very little is known about this group in terms of career motivations, experiences and perceptions. As my research has evolved so have others and more has come to light on the journeys of deputy headteachers. However, when compared to the studies and literature on headteachers and their career journeys, there is still very little on deputy headteachers in comparison. This means that if we do not have this understanding then we cannot truly understand the reasons why women do not want to progress to headship. In exploring the lives and career aspirations of women deputy headteachers, I hope that I have gone someway into exposing further some of the perceptions of the women and portrayed a better understanding of this group in the issues they face in their day-to-day careers.

The underrepresentation of women in secondary headship is something that is ongoing and slow to change over the years. Whilst my research has started to build on and explore the complexities surrounding the issues there is still more ongoing work and research that needs to be undertaken. I hope that my research has offered a small insight into some of the complexities that women deputy headteachers have faced and offered some solutions to try to encourage more women into headship. Future reflection on women's confidence and the pressures that women face from a societal point of view will need to be continually addressed in order to keep changing women's perceptions of what it is like to be a headteacher. Alongside this, the perceptions of education and headship and work-life balance and flexibility are all areas that need to be addressed if we want to encourage deputy headteachers to progress to headship no matter what gender they are.

References

Adler, N. J. (1993). An international perspective on the barriers to the advancement of women managers. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 42*(4), 289–300. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1993.tb00745.x.

Aleandri, G., & Russo, V. (2015). Autobiographical Questionnaire and Semi-Structured Interview: Comparing Two Instruments for Educational Research in Difficult Contexts. Procedia—*Social and Behavioral Sciences,* 197, 514-524. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.179.

Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, *1*(3), 385-405. https://doi.org/10.1177/146879410100100307.

Bailyn, L. (2006). Breaking the mold: *Redesigning work for productive and satisfying lives.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Bandura, A. (1986). The Explanatory and Predictive Scope of Self-Efficacy Theory. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology,* 4, 359-373.https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1986.4.3.359.

Bandura, A. (1994). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 61–90). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control.* W H Freeman/Times Books/ Henry Holt & Co.

Barber, B.M., & Odean, T. (2001). Trading is Hazardous to Your Wealth: The Common Stock Performance of Individual Investors. *Journal of Finance,* 55 (2), 773—806.

Bass, B.M. Avolio, B.J. and Atwater, L. The Transformational and Transactional Leadership of Men and Women.(1996). *International Review of Applied Psychology* 45 (1) 5-34.

Bastick, T. (2000). Why teacher trainees choose the teaching profession: Comparing trainees in metropolitan and developing countries. International Review of Education, 6(3), 343–349.

Beal CC. (2013). Keeping the story together: a holistic approach to narrative analysis. *Journal of Research in Nursing*. 18(8):692-704. doi:10.1177/1744987113481781.

Becker, G (1964). *Human Capital, A theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education.* Columbia University Press.

Bem, S. L. (1974). The measurement of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 42*(2), 155–162. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0036215.

Bem, S. L. (1993). The lenses of gender: Transforming the debate on sexual inequality. Yale University Press.

Billing, Y.D. (2011), Are Women in Management Victims of the Phantom of the Male Norm? *Gender, Work & Organization,* 18: 298-317. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2010.00546.x.

Blackmore J. (2013). A feminist critical perspective on Educational Leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 16(2), 139–154.

Blau, Francine D. & Ferber, Marianne A. (1986). *The economics of women, men, and work*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

B Blaxter, L. H., & Hughes, C. (1996). C. and Tight. *M (1996) How to Research*.

Borgerson, J. and Rehn, A. (2004), General Economy and Productive Dualisms. *Gender, Work & Organization,* 11: 455-474. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2004.00242.x.

Bowring, M. A. (2004) 'Resistance is not futile: liberating Captain Janeway from the masculine–feminine dualism of leadership', Gender*, Work and Organization*, 11(4): 381–40.

Boydell, K.M., Gladstone, B.M., Volpe, T., Allemang, B. and Stasiulis, E. (2012). The production and dissemination of knowledge: A scoping review of arts-based health research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforchung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research.* 13(1), Art. 32. http://nbnresolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1201327.

Boz, Y., & Boz, N. (2008). Kimya ve matematik o¨g˘retmen adaylarının o¨g˘retmen olma nedenleri. [The reasons of becoming teachers of chemistry and mathematic pre-service teachers]. Kastamonu Eg˘itim Dergisi, 16(1), 137–144.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
Bravata, D. M., Watts, S. A., Keefer, A. L., Madhusudhan, D. K., Taylor, K. T., Clark, D. M., Nelson, R. S., Cokley, K. O., & Hagg, H. K. (2020). Prevalence, predictors, and treatment of impostor syndrome: A systematic review. Journal of General Internal Medicine, 35(4), 1252–1275.
Broverman, I.K., Vogel, S.R., Broverman, D.M., Clarkson, F.E. and Rosenkrantz, P.S. (1972), Sex-Role Stereotypes: A Current Appraisal. *Journal of Social Issues,* 28: 59-78. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1972.tb00018.x.
Brown, M and Ralph, S. (1996). Barriers to women managers' advancement in education in Uganda *International Journal of Educational Management* vol. 10 p. 18-23.
Bruner J (2002) *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods* (3rd ed.). Gosport, England: Oxford University Press.
Buckland, Fiona (2017). Feeling like an impostor? You can escape this confidence-sapping syndrome. *The Guardian* (September 19).
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/19/fraud-impostor-syndromeconfidence-self-esteem.
Burgess, R.G. (1984). In the Field: *An Introduction to Field Research (*1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203418161.
Bush, T (2011) Succession planning in England: new leaders and new forms of leadership, *School Leadership & Management*, 31:3, 181 198, DOI: 10.1080/13632434.2010.545383
Butler, J. (1990). Gender trouble: *Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
Buunk, B. P., Collins, R. L., Taylor, S. E., VanYperen, N. W., & Dakof, G. A. (1990). The affective consequences of social comparison: Either direction has its ups and downs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59*(6), 1238–1249
Cadman, C., & Brown, J. (2011). TESOL and TESD in remote aboriginal Australia: The ‘‘true’’ story? *TESOL Quarterly*, 45(3), 440-462.
Calas, M. B., & Smircich, L. (1996). Thematic Editorial on Gender, Race, Class and Organization. *Organization*, *3*(4), 459–460. https://doi.org/10.1177/135050849634001
Calás.M.B., Smircich, (2009): Extending the Boundaries: Reframing “Entrepreneurship as Social Change” *Through Feminist Perspectives*. *AMR,* **34**, 552–569, https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2009.40633597 Calás, M. B., & Smircich, L. 1991. Voicing seduction to silence leadership. *Organization Studies,* 12(4): 567-601.
Chagger, R. (2012). An investigation into the reasons why Deputy Headteachers either decide/not decide to take the journey to Headship (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Birmingham, UK.
Chasserio, S. and Bacha, E. (2024), "Women-only training programmes as tools for professional development: analysis and outcomes of a transformative learning process", *European Journal of Training and Development*, Vol. 48 No. 3/4, pp. 455-477. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-12-2021-0210
Chaplain, R. P. (2008). Stress and psychological distress among trainee secondary teachers in England. Educational Psychology, 28, 195–209.
Chan, K. W. (1998). The role of motives in the professional development of student teachers. Education Today, 48(1), 2-8.
Chuang, S. (2019), "Exploring women-only training program for gender equality and women’s continuous professional development in the workplace", *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 359-373. https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-01-2018-0001
Chamberlayne, P., Bornat, J., and Wenfraf, T. (2000). The Turn to Biographical Methods in *Social Science -Comparative Issues and Examples.* Routledge, London.

Chikwe, C.F., Eneh, N.E. and Akpuokwe, C.U., 2024. Navigating the double bind: Strategies for women leaders in overcoming stereotypes and leadership biases. *GSC Advanced Research and Reviews*, *18*(3), pp.159-172.
Chung, H., and T. Van der Lippe. (2018). "Flexible Working, Work–Life Balance, and Gender Equality: Introduction." *Social Indicators Research*.
Clance, P. R., & Imes, S. A. (1978). The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice, 15*(3), 241–247. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0086006.
Clandinin, D.J. and Connelly, F.M (2000). *Narrative Inquiry, Experience and Story in Qualitative Research,* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
Clarke, M., (2011). Advancing women's careers through leadership development programs. *Employee Relations*, *33*(5), pp.498-515.
Clarke, V. and Braun, V. (2014) Thematic Analysis. In: Teo, T., Ed*., Encyclopaedia of Critical Psychology*, Springer, New York, 1947-1952. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-5583-7_311
Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
Coleman, M. (1996). The Management Style of Female Headteachers. *Educational Management & Administration*, *24*(2), 163,174. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263211X96242005.
Coleman, M. (2000) `The Female Secondary Headteacher in England and Wales: Leadership and Management Styles in *Educational Research*, Vol. 42, No. 1, pp. 13 - 27.
Coleman, Marianne & Earley, P. (2005). Leadership and management in education.
Collard, J & Reynolds, C, Eds. (2006). Leadership, Gender & Culture in Education: Male & Female Perspectives. *J Educ Change* **7**, 355–357. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-006-9002-x.
Cooley, C.H. (1902). Human Nature and the Social Order. Scribner's.
Cooley, V. E., & Shen, J. (2003). School accountability and professional job responsibilities: A perspective from secondary principals. *NASSP Bulletin,* 87(634), 10-25.
Coulter, C. A., & Smith, M. L. (2009). The construction zone: Literary elements in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, 38(8), 577–590.
Cranston, N. (2007). Through the eyes of potential aspirants: Another view of the principalship: *School Leadership and Management* 27 (2): 109-28.
Crenshaw, K. W. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine. University of Chicago Legal Forum, (1989,139–168).
Creswell, J. W., & Tashakkori, A. (2007). Differing perspectives on mixed methods research. *Journal of mixed methods research*, *1*(4), 303-308.
Crick, J. M. (2021). Qualitative research in marketing: What can academics do better? *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 29(5), 390-429. https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2020. 1743738.
Crotty, M. (1998), The Foundations of Social Research, *Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process,* First Edition, Sage Publishing.
Crotty, M. (2003). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Cubillo, L. (1999). Gender and leadership in the NPQH: an opportunity lost? *Journal of In-Service Education*, 25(3), 545-55.
Cubillo, L. and Brown, M. (2003) Women into Educational Leadership and Management: International Differences? *Journal of Educational Administration*, 41, 278-291. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09578230310474421
Day, R. and Allen, T.D., (2004). The relationship between career motivation and self-efficacy with protégé career success. *Journal of vocational behaviour*, *64*(1), pp.72-91.
Deaux, K. (1976). The Behaviour of Women and Men. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole
Deci, E. L., Ryan, R. M. (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behaviour. New York: Plenum.

Dennehy TC, Dasgupta N. (2017). Female peer mentors early in college increase women's positive academic experiences and retention in engineering. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.*;114:5964–5969.
Dennis, M. R., & Kunkel, A. D. (2004). Perceptions of men, women, and CEOs: The effects of gender identity. Social Behaviour and Personality: *An International Journal*, 32: 155- 172.
DeRue, S. and Ashford, J. (2010). Who will Lead and Who will Follow? a Social Process of Leadership Identity Construction in Organizations.
Diener, E., & Crandall, R. (1978). *Ethics in social and behavioural research.* U Chicago Press.
Dill, Karen E, (2009), How Fantasy Becomes Reality: Seeing Through Media Influence. New York: Oxford University Press.
Dougherty, T.W. and Dreher, G.F., (2007). Mentoring and career outcomes. *The handbook of mentoring at work: Theory, research and practice*, pp.51-93.
Draper, J. and McMichael, P. (2003) 'Keeping the show on the road? The role of the acting Headteacher', *Educational Management & Administration*, 31(1), pp. 67–81
Draper, J., & McMichael, P. (1998). In the Firing Line? The attractions of secondary headship. *Management in Education*, *12*(2), 15–20.
Dreher, G. F. (2003). Breaking the Glass Ceiling: The Effects of Sex Ratios and Work-Life Programs on Female Leadership at the Top. *Human Relations*, *56*(5), 541–562. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726703056005002
Druskat, V. U. (1994). Gender and leadership style: Transformational and transactional leadership in the Roman Catholic Church. *The Leadership Quarterly, 5*(2), 99–119. https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(94)90023-X.
Dwek, C.S. (2006). Mindset: The New Psychology of Success. Random House.
Dyson, A.H and Genishi, C (1994). *The Need for Story Cultural Diversity in Classroom and Community*. The National Council of Teachers of English.
Eagly, A. H. (2007). Female Leadership Advantage and Disadvantage: Resolving the Contradictions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *31*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00326.x.
Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2012). Social role theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (pp. 458–476). Sage Publications Ltd.
Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2003). The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence. *Leadership Quarterly*, 14, 807–834.
Earley, P. and Evans, J., (2004). Making a difference? Leadership development for headteachers and deputies—ascertaining the impact of the National College for School Leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *32*(3), pp.325-338.
Earley, S. A. (2013). Department for Education. Working lives of teachers and leaders – wave 1 report. Working lives of teachers and leaders - wave 1: core report (publishing.service.gov.uk).
Eckman, E.W. (2004) Similarities and differences in role conflict, role commitment, and job satisfaction for female and male high school principals. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, **40**,3, 366–87.
Elliott, C., & Stead, V. (2009). Learning from Leading Women's Experience: Towards a Sociological Understanding. *Leadership*, *4*(2), 159–180. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715008089636.
Ely, R.J. and Meyerson, D.E., (2000). Theories of gender in organizations: A new approach to organizational analysis and change. *Research in organizational behavior*, *22*, pp.103-151.
Ely, R.J., (1994). The effects of organizational demographics and social identity on relationships among professional women. *Administrative science quarterly*, pp.203-238.
Ely, R.J., Ibarra, H. and Kolb, D.M., (2011). Taking gender into account: Theory and design for women's leadership development programs. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *10*(3), pp.474-493.
Emden C (1998) Theoretical perspectives narrative inquiry. Collegian. 5, 2, 30-35.

Emden, C., Sandelowski, M. (1998). The good, the bad, and the relative, part 1: Conceptions of goodness in qualitative research. International Journal of Nursing Practice, 4, 206–212.
Emmel, N. (2013). Sampling and choosing cases in qualitative research: A realist approach. SAGE Publications Ltd, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473913882
Epitropaki, O., & Martin, R. (2004). Implicit leadership theories in applied settings: Factor structure, generalizability, and stability over time. Journal of Applied Psychology, 89(2): 293-310.
Erikson, E.H. (1950). Childhood and Society. W.W.Norton and Company.
Esteves, J, (2020), Journal of Imaginary Research, joir_vol6_final_rf.pdf (ed.ac.uk).
Fenstermaker, S, and West, Candace (1995). *Doing Difference. Gender and Society* 9 (1): 8-37.
Fitzgerald, T. (2002). Changing the deafening silence of indigenous women's voices in educational leadership, *Journal of Educational Administration* vol. 41, p. 9-23.
Foster, D, (2019), 'Teacher recruitment and retention in England', Briefing Paper for the House of Commons taken from House of Commons Library.
Fournier, V. & Smith, W. (2006). Scripting masculinity. Ephemera www.ephemeraweb.org, 6(2), 141-162.
Francis, B. (2010) Re/theorising gender: female masculinity and male femininity in the classroom? *Gender and Education*, 22, 5, 477-490.
Frank, A.W., (2010). In defence of narrative exceptionalism.
Frechtling, J., & Sharp, L. (1997). User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed Method Evaluation**.** Alexandria, VA: National Science Foundation.
Fullan, M. (2015). The new meaning of educational change, 5th Edn. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
Fuller, K (2017), Women secondary head teachers in England: Where are they now? *Management in Education* 31.
Fuller, K. (2010) Talking about gendered headship: how do women and men working in schools conceive and articulate notions of gender? *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 42, no. 4: 363-382.
Fuller, Kay. (2014). Gendered educational leadership: Beneath the monoglossic façade. *Gender and Education*. 26. 10.1080/09540253.2014.907393.
Galanaki, E., Papalexandris, N. & Halikias, J. (2009) Revisiting leadership styles and attitudes towards women as managers in Greece: 15 years later. *Gender in Management:* An International Journal, 24(7), 484-504illborn, D. 1989. *'Race', Ethnicity and Education: teaching and learning in multi-ethnic schools*, London: Unwin-Hyman/Routledge.
Gautun, H. and Hagen, K., (2010). How do middle-aged employees combine work with caring for elderly parents? *Community, Work & Family*, *13*(4), pp.393-409.
Gibbs, G. (2002). Qualitative data analysis: explorations with NVivo. Open University.
Gillborn, D. A. (1989). Talking heads: reflections on secondary headship at a time of rapid educational change. *School organization*, *9*(1), 65-83.
Glatter, R. (2012). Persistent Preoccupations: The Rise and Rise of School Autonomy and Accountability in England. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *40*(5), 559–575. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143212451171.
Goldhaber, D. Gross, B. and Player, D. (2008). Are public schools really losing their best teachers? The career transitions of North Carolina teachers. Paper presented at AERA, March 26, in New York.
Gomez, L. N., & Corsi, E. (2022). If Teaching Is a Female Dominated Profession, Why Are So Few Leading the Profession? *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, *0*(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/19427751221137926.
Goodhill, Olivia. (2016). Brilliant "Frauds": Is impostor syndrome a sign of greatness? Quartz (February 1). https://qz.com/606727/is-imposter-syndrome-a-sign-of-greatness/

Gray, H. L. (1989). Gender Considerations in School Management: Masculine and Feminine Leadership Styles. In C. Riches, & C. Morgan (Eds.), *Human Resource Management in Education* (pp. 120-123). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
Gray, H.L. (1993). 'Gender issues in management training.' In: OZGA, J. (Ed) Women in Educational Management. Buckingham: Open University Press.
Greany, T. and Waterhouse, J. (2016), "Rebels against the system: Leadership agency and curriculum innovation in the context of school autonomy and accountability in England", *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 30 No. 7, pp. 1188-1206. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-11-2015-0148.
Grissom, J. A., Egalite, A. J., and Lindsay, C. A. (2021). How principals affect students and schools: A systematic synthesis of two decades of research. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation
Grissom, J., Mitani, H., and Woo, D. (2019). Principal preparation programs and principal outcomes. Educ. Adm. Q. 55, 73–115. doi: 10.1177/ 0013161X18785865
Grogan, M & Shakeshaft, C. (2011). Women and Educational Leadership.
Gronn, P. (2003) Distributed Leadership. In K. Leithwood, P. Hallinger, K. Seashore-Louis, G. Furman-Brown, P. Gronn, W. Mulford and K. Riley (eds) Second International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration, Dordrecht: Kluwer.
Guihen, L (2017), *"The two faces of secondary headship: Women deputy head teachers' perceptions of the secondary head teacher role",* Sage Publishing.
Guihen, L. (2020) Using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore the career experiences of women deputy headteachers. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *43*(5), 526–540. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2019.1693537
Guillaume, Y. R., Dawson, J. F., Otaye-Ebede, L., Woods, S. A., & West, M. A. (2017). Harnessing demographic differences in organizations: What moderates the effects of workplace diversity?. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *38*(2), 276-303.
Gunter, H.and Ribbins, P. (2002). Mapping leadership studies in education: towards a typology of knowledge domains. *Educational management & administration*, *30*(4), pp.359-385.
Haar, Jarrod & O'Driscoll, Michael. (2005). Exploring gender differences in employee attitudes toward work-family practices and use of work-family practices. *Equal Opportunities International* 24. 86-98.
Haig, Brian. (1999). Feminist Research Methodology. 10.1016/B978-008043349-3/50021-9.
Hallinger, P. (2018). Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership. Educ. Manag. Adm. Leadersh. 46, 5–24. doi: 10.1177/1741143216670652
Hall, S. (1996) 'Who Needs "Identity"?', in S. Hall & P. du Gay (eds) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: SAGE.
Hall, V. (1996). Dancing on the Ceiling: A Study of Women Managers in Education. London: Paul Chapman.
Harris, A, Muijs D, Crawford M (2003) *Deputy and Assistant Heads: Building Leadership Potential*. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.
Harvey, J., & Katz, C. (1985). If I'm so successful, why do I feel like a fake? The imposter phenomenon. St. Martin's.
Haslam, S. A., & Ryan, M. K. (2008). The road to the glass cliff: Differences in the perceived suitability of men and women for leadership positions in succeeding and failing organizations. *The Leadership Quarterly, 19*(5), 530–546.
H Harvey, M. (1994). Empowering the primary school deputy principal. *Educational Management & Administration*, *22*(1), 26-38.ayes, T (2005) *Rising Stars and Sitting Tenants: A Picture of Deputy Headship in One London Borough and How Some of its Schools are Preparing their Deputies for Headship*. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.
Healy, G. and Lieberwitz, R., (2013). Women union leaders: Influences, routes, barriers and enablements. In *Gender and Leadership in Unions* (pp. 73-109). Routledge.

Hertling, E. (2001). Retaining principals. Eric Digest, 147. Retrieved from the World Wide Web, June 17, 2001, http:lleric.uoregon.edu./publications/digests digest 147.htmi.
Hewitt, J. P. (1989). *Dilemmas of the American self*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
Hite, L. M., & McDonald, K. S. (2003). Career Aspirations of Non-Managerial Women: Adjustment and Adaptation. *Journal of Career Development*, *29*(4), 221–235. https://doi.org/10.1177/089484530302900401.
Hochschild, A. (1997), The Time Bind. Working USA, 1: 21-29. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-4580.1997.tb00019.x.
Hoff D. L., Menard C., Tuell J. (2006). Where are the Women in school administration? Issues of access, Acculturation, advancement, advocacy. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 4(1), 53–60.
Hoff D. L., Mitchell S. N. (2008). In search of leaders: Gender Factors in school administration. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 27(2), 1–19.
Holden, C. L., Wright, L. E., Herring, A. M., & Sims, P. L. (2024). Imposter Syndrome Among First- and Continuing-Generation College Students: The Roles of Perfectionism and Stress. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *25*(4), 726-740. https://doi.org/10.1177/15210251211019379
Holland, J and Ramazanoglu, C. (2002). Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices. Sage Publications Ltd.
Holloway, I. (1997). Basic concepts for qualitative research. London: Blackwell Science.
Howson, J. (2011). John Howson—Oxford university Department for Education. Retrieved from http://www.education.ox.ac. uk/about-us/directory/professor-john-howson/ Jacullo-Noto, J.
Hoyt, C.L. and Simon, S., (2011). Female leaders: Injurious or inspiring role models for women? *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *35*(1), pp.143-157.
Huecker MR, Shreffler J, McKeny PT, Davis D. Imposter Phenomenon. In: StatPearls. StatPearls Publishing, Treasure Island (FL); 2023. PMID: 36251839.
Hughes, S., Pennington, J. L., & Makris, S. (2012). Translating Autoethnography Across the AERA Standards: Toward Understanding Autoethnographic Scholarship as Empirical Research. *Educational Researcher*, *41*(6), 209–219. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12442983.
Hutchings, M. (2002) A representative profession? Gender issues, in: M. Johnson & J. Hallgarten (Eds) From victims of change to agents of change: the future of the teaching profession (London, IPPR).
Hymowitz, C. (2005, June 14). Women often discover their business talent after kids are raised. *Wall Street Journal* (Eastern Edition), p. B-1.
Ibarra, H., Snook, S. and Guillen Ramo, L., (2010). Identity-based leader development. *Handbook of leadership theory and practice*, *657*, p.678.
Ingersoll, R. (2003). Out-of-field teaching and the limits of teacher policy.
Ingersoll, R. M., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of educational research*, *81*(2), 201-233.
James, C., & Whiting, D. (1998). The Career Perspectives of Deputy Headteachers. *Educational Management & Administration*, *26*(4), 353–362. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263211X98264002
Jansen, C., & du Plessis, A. (2020). The role of deputy principals: Perspectives of South African primary school principals and their deputies. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 51, 157-175.
Janesick, V. J. (1999). A Journal About Journal Writing as a Qualitative Research Technique: History, Issues, and Reflections. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *5*(4), 505–524. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049900500404.
Jegatheesan, B and Stake, R. (2008). Access, a zone of comprehension, and intrusion. In *Access, a Zone of Comprehension, and Intrusion* (Vol. 12, pp. 1-13). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
Jirasinghe, D.J. and Lyons, G. (1996) *The Competent Head*. Falmer Press.

Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (Eds.). (2002). Narrative inquiry as professional development. New York, us: Cambridge University Press.
Jonassen, D.H. (1997), *Mind Tools for Schools*, New York: Macmillan.
Kaiser, S. B. (1985). The social psychology of clothing and personal adornment. Macmillan.
Kamler, E., & Shakeshaft, C. (1999). The role of search consultants in the career paths of women superintendents. In C. C. Brunner (Ed.), *Sacred dreams: Women in the superintendency* (pp. 51-62). Albany: State University of New York Press.
Kanter, R.M. (1977) Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy. Russell Sage, New York.
Kay, K., & Shipman, C. (2014). *The confidence code: the science and art of self-assurance--what women should know*.
Keats, PA (2009) Multiple text analysis in narrative research: visual, written, and spoken stories of experience. *Qualitative Research* 9(2): 181–195.
Keene, J.R. and Reynolds, J.R., (2005). The job costs of family demands: Gender differences in negative family-to-work spillover. *Journal of family Issues*, *26*(3), pp.275-299.
Kellar A. L. (2013). *Where are we now? Changing demographics and perspectives of women in educational administration (Unpublished master's thesis)*. The University of Toronto
Kezar, A. (2000) The Importance of Pilot Studies: Beginning the Hermeneutic Circle. *Research in Higher Education* 41, 385–400. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007047028758.
Khumalo, J.B., & Van der Vyver, C.P (2020). Critical skills for deputy principals in South African secondary schools. South African Journal of Education, 40(3), 1-10.
Kılınç, A. Ç., and Gümüs, S. (2021). What do we know about novice school principals? A systematic review of existing international literature. Educ. Manag. Adm. Leadersh. 49, 54–75. doi: 10.1177/1741143219898483
King, Kelley. (2021). Barrier to the Hiring of Women for Independent School Headship. Walden University ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2021. 28776793
https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/4150/1/Chagger13EdD.pdf.
Klassen, R.M., Yerdelen, S., Durksen, T.L., (2013). Measuring teacher engagement: The development of the engaged teacher scale (ETS). Frontline Learning Research, 1 (2) (2013), pp. 33-52.
Kolb, H., Klugman, J., and Morton, M., (2014), July. Persistent gender inequality in the world of work. In *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* (pp. 133-152). The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.
Konig, J., & Rothland, M. (2012). Motivations for choosing teaching as a career: Effects on general pedagogical knowledge during initial teacher education. Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 40(3), 289–315.
Kruger, M. (1996) Gender issues in school headship: quality versus power? European Journal of Education, 31(4), 447–462.
Kwan P (2011) Examining the mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relation between responsibilities and career aspiration of vice-principals. *International Journal of Educational Research* 50(5–6): 349–361.
Kyriacou, C., & Coulthard, M. (2000). Undergraduates' views of teaching as a career choice. Journal of Education for Teaching, 26(2), 117–126.
Kyriacou, C., Kunc, R., Stephens, P., & Hultgren, A. (2003). Student teachers' expectations of teaching as a career in England and Norway. Educational Review, 55(3), 255–263.
Lafrenière, D and Cox, M. (2012). Means of Knowledge Dissemination: Are the Café Scientifique and the Artistic Performance Equally Effective? Sociology Mind. Vol.2, No.2, 191-199. Published inline April 20212 in Scientific Research.
Lambert, C, Jomeen, J, and McSherry, W. (2010). Reflexivity: a review of the literature in the context of midwifery research. British Journal of Midwifery, 18(5), 321-326.

Lambrecht, J., Lenkeit, J., Hartmann, A., Ehlert, A., Knigge, M., and Spörer, N. (2022). The effect of school leadership on implementing inclusive education: How transformational and instructional leadership practices affect individualised education planning. Int. J. Inclusive Educ. 26, 943–957.
Lämsä, Anna-Maija & Sintonen, Teppo. (2001). A Discursive Approach to Understanding Women Leaders in Working Life. Journal of Business Ethics. 34. 255-267. 10.1023/A:1012504112426.
Leggo, Carl. (2004). The heart of pedagogy: On poetic knowing and living. Teachers and Teaching. 11. 439-455. 10.1080/13450600500238436.
Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1999). The relative effects of principal and teacher sources of leadership on student engagement with school. *Educational administration quarterly*, *35*(5), 679-706.
Leithwood, K., Harris, A., and Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. Sch. Leadersh. Manag. 40, 5–22.
Lewis, S (1997). Family friendly employment policies: a route to changing organisational culture or playing about the margins. Gender, work and organisation 4 (1) 13-23.
Lewis, S., & Cooper, C. L. (1988). Stress in dual earner families. In B. A. Gutek, A. H. Stromburg, & L. Larwood (Eds.), *Women and work. An annual review* (Vol. 3, pp. 139-168). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
Liljenberg, M., & Wrethander, M. (2020). Leadership for school improvement – linking learning to leading over time. *Professional Development in Education*, *49*(1), 30–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2020.1752288
Lockwood, P., & Kunda, Z. (1997). Superstars and Me: Predicting the Impact of Role Models on the Self. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73, 91-103.
Lodico, M., Spaulding, D. & Voegtle, K. (2010). Methods in Educational Research: From Theory to Practice, 2nd Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
Logan PJ (1999). *An Educational Leadership Challenge: Refocusing Gender Equity Strategies*. Available at www.aasa.org/publications/tap/ 2000summer/logan.html.
Lord, R. G., & Shondrick, S. J. (2011). Leadership and knowledge: Symbolic, connectionist, and embodied perspectives. The Leadership Quarterly, 22(1), 207–222. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.12.016.
Lord, R.G. and Hall, R.J., (2005). Identity, deep structure and the development of leadership skill. *The leadership quarterly*, *16*(4), pp.591-615.
Lundeberg, M.A., Fox, P.W. and Punccohar, J. (1994) Highly Confident but Wrong: Gender Differences and Similarities in Confidence Judgments. Journal of Educational Psychology, 86, 114-121.
Lyness, K.S. and Kropf, M.B., (2005). The relationships of national gender equality and organizational support with work-family balance: A study of European managers. *Human Relations*, *58*(1), pp.33-60.
MacBeath, J. (2006), School Inspection and Self-Evaluation: Working with the New Relationship, Routledge, London.
MacBeath, J. (2011) 'No lack of principles: Leadership development in England and Scotland', School Leadership & Management, 31(2), pp. 105–121. doi: 10.1080/13632434.2010.525029.
Mainiero, Lisa A., and Sherry E. Sullivan (2005). "Kaleidoscope careers: An alternate explanation for the "opt-out "revolution." *Academy of Management Perspectives* 19.1: 106-123.
Major, B., Testa, M., & Bylsma, W. H. (1991). Responses to upward and downward social comparisons: The impact of esteem-relevance and perceived control.
Mallon, T.A. (1984). A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries. Penguin Books: New York.
Malterud K. (2001) Qualitative research: standards, challenges, and guidelines. Lancet ;358(9280):483-8. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(01)05627-6. PMID: 11513933.
Marshall, J.(2007). The gendering of leadership in corporate social responsibility. Journal of Organizational Change Management 20, no. 2: 165–81.

Martin, J. and Meyerson, D., (1998). Conformity, resistance, and disorganized coaction. *Power and influence in organizations*, pp.311-348.
Mason, J. (2002). Qualitative researching (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
McBeath, A. (2006). Getting Districtwide Results. *Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform*.
McDonald, P., Brown, K. and Bradley, L., (2005). Have traditional career paths given way to protean ones? Evidence from senior managers in the Australian public sector. *Career Development International*, *10*(2), pp.109-129.
McGinn, K. L., & Milkman, K. L. (2012). Looking up and looking out: Career mobility effects of demographic similarity among professionals. *Organization Science, 24*(4), 1041–1060.
McGivney, V. (1993) Participation and Non-Participation: A Review of the Literature; in EDWARDS, R., SIEMINSKI, S. & ZELDIN, D.(eds) (1993) Adult Learners, Education and Training (London, Routledge/Open University Press).
McIntosh, P. (2019). On Privilege, Fraudulence, and Teaching as Learning: Selected Essays 1981--2019 (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351133791.
MacIntyre A. (2007). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (3rd ed.)*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
McLay, M. (2008). "Headteacher career paths in UK independent secondary coeducational schools: Gender issues." *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 36, no. 3: 353-372.
McLay, M. and Brown, M., (2000). The under-representation of women in senior management in UK independent secondary schools. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *14*(3), pp.101-106.
Michailidis, M.P., Morphitou, R.N. and Theophylatou, I., (2012). Women at work equality versus inequality: barriers for advancing in the workplace. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *23*(20), pp.4231-4245.
Mihail, D.M. (2006), "Internships at Greek universities: an exploratory study", *Journal of Workplace Learning*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 28-41. https://doi.org/10.1108/13665620610641292
Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). Qualitative data analysis. London: Sage.
Miner, John. (2005). Role motivation theory. Organizational behavior I: Essential theories of motivation and leadership. 1. 319-336.
Mishler, Elliot G. (1995). "Models of narrative analysis: A typology." *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 5: 87-123.
Moodly, A. (2021). Divergence of Perspectives on Women and Higher Education Leadership? In Conversation with Men in Leadership. South African Journal of Higher Education. PG - 184-203
Moran, A., Kilpatrick, R., Abbot, L., Dallat, J., & McClune, B. (2001). Training to teach: Motivating factors and implications for recruitment. Evaluation and Research in Education, 15, 17–32.
Moreau, M-P., Osgood, J., & Halsall, A. (2007). Making sense of the glass ceiling in schools: an exploration of women teachers' discourses. *GENDER AND EDUCATION*, *19*(2), 237-253. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250601166092.
Morley, Louise. (2012). The rules of the game: Women and the leaderist turn in higher education. Gender and Education. 25. 10.1080/09540253.2012.740888.
Mowat, J. G., and McMahon, M. (2019). Interrogating the concept of 'leadership at all levels': A Scottish perspective. Prof. Dev. Educ. 45, 173–189. doi: 10.1080/ 19415257.2018.1511452
Nicholls, J. G. (1975). Causal attributions and other achievement-related cognitions: Effects of task outcome, attainment value, and sex. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 31*(3), 379–389. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0076505.
Niederle, M & Vesterlund, L (2007). "Do Women Shy Away from Competition? Do Men Compete Too Much?" The Quarterly Journal of Economics, MIT Press, vol. 122(3), pages 1067-1101
Nind, N (2011) Participatory data analysis: a step too far? *Qualitative Research* 11(4): 349–363.
Noble, C., & Moore, S. (2006). Advancing women and leadership in this post-feminist, post EEO era. Women in Management Review, 21, 598–603.

O'Reilly, D., and M. Reed. (2010). 'Leaderism': An evolution of managerialism in UK public service reform. Public Administration 88, no. 4: 960–78.
O'Reilly, D., and M. Reed. (2011). The grit in the oyster: Professionalism, managerialism and leaderism as discourses of UK public services modernization. Organization Studies 32, no. 8: 1079–101.
Oakley, J. G. (2000). Gender-based barriers to senior management positions: understanding the scarcity of female CEOs. J. Bus. Ethics 27, 321–334. doi: 10.1023/A:1006226129868
Olsson S. (2002) `Gendered Heroes: Male and Female Representations of Executive Identity', *Women in Management Review* 17: 142-51.
O'Neil, D.A. and Bilimoria, D., (2005). Women's career development phases: Idealism, endurance, and reinvention. *Career development international*, *10*(3), pp.168-189.
Oplatka, I., & Tamir, V. (2009). `I Don't Want to Be a School Head': Women Deputy Heads' Insightful Constructions of Career Advancement and Retention. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *37*(2), 216–238. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143208100299
Orchard, J. (2002). 'Will the Real Superhero Stand Up? A Critical Review of the National Standards for Headteachers in England'. International Journal of Children's Spirituality 7: 159-169.
Osnowitz, D., (2005). Managing time in domestic space: Home-based contractors and household work. *Gender & Society*, *19*(1), pp.83-103.
Ouston, Janet (1998). "Managing in turbulent times." *Reflecting on school management*: 122-33.
Ouston J., (ed.), (1993). *Women in Educational Management*, Longman.
Owen, P.R., Davies, M. and Wayment, A. (1983) 'The role of the Deputy head in secondary schools', Educational Management & Administration, 11(1), pp. 51–56. doi: 10.1177/174114328301100106.
Özgenel, M., and Karsantik, I. (2020). Effects of school principals' leadership styles on leadership practices. Malays. Online J. Educ. Sci. 8, 1–13.
Padgett, D. K. (2013). Qualitative research. Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Social Work, 1-9. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.013.330.
Paechter, C. (2003). Masculinities and femininities as communities of practice. *Women's Studies International Forum, 26*(1), 69–77. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(02)00356-4.
Paechter, C. (2006) Masculine femininities/feminine masculinities: power, identities and gender, Gender and Education, 18:3, 253-263, DOI: 10.1080/09540250600667785.
Pannell, S., Peltier-Glaze, B. M., Haynes, I., Davis, D., and Skelton, C. (2015). Evaluating the effectiveness of traditional and alternative principal preparation programs. J. Organ. Educ. Leadersh. 1:3.
Papanastasiou, C., & Papanastasiou, E. (1998). What influences students to choose the elementary education major: The case of Cyprus. Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies, 3, 35–45.
Parkman, A. (2016). The imposter phenomenon in higher education: Incidence and impact. Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 16(1), 51–60.
Patton, M.Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. 2nd ed. California, USA: Thousand Oaks.
Perrone, K.M., Webb, L.K. and Blalock, R.H., (2005). The effects of role congruence and role conflict on work, marital, and life satisfaction. *Journal of Career Development*, *31*, pp.225-238.
Peterson, V.S, & Runyan, A.S, (1999). *Global Gender Issues,* 2nd edn. Colorado: Westview.
Peteet, B. J., Montgomery, L., & Weekes, J. C. (2015). Predictors of imposter phenomenon among talented ethnic minority undergraduate students. The Journal of Negro Education, 84(2), 175–186.
Petty, J (2019) Creating stories from parents' premature birth experiences to engender empathy in nursing students. Last accessed on 21/9/2021.

Pinar, W.F. (1975) 'The analysis of educational experience', in W.F. Pinar (ed) *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists*, Berkely, CA: McCutchan.
Ping-Chun Hsiung (2010) Keting Ji Gongchang (Living Rooms as factories), Chongqing University Press, Qualitative Methods Case Study Series, Chongqing, China.
Pini, B. (2005). Interviewing men: Gender and the collection and interpretation of qualitative data. *Journal of sociology*, *41*(2), 201-216.
Plesner, U., (2011). Studying sideways: Displacing the problem of power in research interviews with sociologists and journalists. *Qualitative inquiry*, *17*(6), pp.471-482.
Polkinghorne DE (1998), Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences. SUNY Press, Albany NY.
Polkinghorne, D (1995) Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis, International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 8:1, 5-23, DOI: 10.1080/0951839950080103.
Powell, G. N. (1993). *Women & men in management* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
Powell, G. N., Butterfield, D. A., & Parent, D. (2002). Gender and managerial stereotypes: Have the times changed? Journal of Management, 28: 177-193.
Power, K. (2020) The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the care burden of women and families, Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy, 16:1, 67-73, DOI: 10.1080/15487733.2020.1776561.
Prescott, P.A. and Soeken, K.L. (1989), The potential uses of pilot work. Nursing Research 38: 60-62.
PricewaterhouseCoopers (Firm)Great Britain. Department for Education and Skills, corp creators. (2007) *Independent study into school leadership: main report.*
Priest, H., Roberts, P., & Woods, L. (2002). An overview of three different approaches to the interpretation of qualitative data. Part 1: Theoretical issues. Nurse Researcher, 10(1), 30.
Promundo. (2020). "COVID-19 Demands That We Pay Attention to Who Does the Care Work–And How We Support Them." Promundo News, March 18.
Punch, Keith, (2006), *Developing Effective Research Proposals*: London, Sage Publications.
Ragins, B.R., &Cotton, J.L. (1999). Mentor functions and outcomes: A comparison of men and women in formal and informal mentoring relationships. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **84**, 529–550.
Ragins, B.R., Cotton, J.L., &Miller, J.S. (2000). Marginal mentoring: The effects of type of mentor, quality of relationship, and program design on work and career attitudes. *Academy of Management Journal*, **43**, 1177–1194.
Ramsey, E., & Brown, D. (2018). Feeling like a fraud: Helping students renegotiate their academic identities. College & Undergraduate Libraries, 25(1), 86–90.
Reay, Diane and Ball, Stephen*, (2000) Essentials of Female Management*, London, Sage Publications.
Reuben, E., Rey-Biel, P., Sapienza, P., & Zingales, L. (2012). The emergence of male leadership in competitive environments. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, *83*(1), 111-117. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2011.06.016.
Rhodes, C. and Brundrett, M. (2005). 'Leadership succession in schools: a cause for concern', *Management in Education,* Vol. 19, (5) 15-18.
Rhodes, C. and Brundrett, M. (2006). *'The identification, development, succession and retention of leadership talent in contextually different primary schools'*, project report, National College for School Leadership. Available at: http://www.ncsl.org.uk/publications (last accessed 16 April 2019).
Rhodes, C. and Brundrett, M. (2009). Growing the leadership talent pool: perceptions of heads, middle leaders and classroom teachers about professional development and leadership succession planning within their own schools, *Professional Development in Education*.
Ribbins, P. (1997). Editorial: Twenty-Five Years of Educational Management & Administration. Educational Management & Administration, 25(3), 211-212. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263211X97253001.

Richards, L and Morse, J, (2007), *User's Guide to Qualitative Methods,* London, Sage Publications
Richards, L. and Morse, J.M. (2007) Readme First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Methods. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.
Riehl, C., & Byrd, M. (1997). Gender differences among new recruits to school administration: Cautionary footnotes to an optimistic tale. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 19(2), 45-64.
Riessman, C. K. (1993). Narrative analysis. London: SAGE Publishing.
Riley, D. and Mulford, B., 2007. England's National College for School Leadership: a model for leadership education? *Journal of Educational Administration*, *45*(1), pp.80-98.
Roller, M. (2012). Interviewer bias and reflexivity in qualitative research - Research design reviewhttp://www.rollerresearch.com/MRR%20WORKING%20PAPERS/Qualitative%20Research%20Design-2015.pdf.
Rosener, J. B. (1990). Ways Women Lead. Harvard Business Review, 68, 119-125.
Rosenkrantz, P., Vogel, S., Bee, H., Broverman, I., & Broverman, D. M. (1968). Sex-role stereotypes and self-concepts in college students. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, *32*(3), 287.
Saban, A. (2003). A Turkish profile of prospective elementary school teachers and their views of teaching. Teaching and Teacher Education, 19, 829–846.
Sakulku, Jaruwan and James Alexander. (2011). The Impostor Phenomenon. International Journal of Behavioral Science 6(1): 73-92. http://bsris.swu.ac.th/journal/i6/6-6_Jaruwan_73-92.pdf.
Salih, S., & Butler, J. (Eds.) (2004). *The Judith Butler reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
Sammons, P., Thomas, S., Mortimore, P., & Walker, A. (1998). Practitioners' views of effectiveness. *Improving Schools*, *1*(1), 33–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/136548029803010117.
Samtleben, C.; Bringmann, J.; Bünning, M.; Hipp, L. (2019) What Helps and What Hinders? Exploring the Role of Workplace Characteristics for Parental Leave Use and Its Career Consequences. *Soc. Sci. 8*, 270. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8100270
Sanchez J. E., Thornton B. (2010). Gender issues in K–12 Educational Leadership. *Women in Leadership Journal*, 30, 1–15.
Sandberg, S. (2015). *Lean in*. W H Allen.
Sandelowski, M. (1995), Sample size in qualitative research. Res. Nurs. Health, 18: 179-183. https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.4770180211.
Sargeant, J;(2012) Qualitative Research Part II: Participants, Analysis, and Quality Assurance. *J Grad Med Educ* 1 March 2012; 4 (1): 1–3. doi: https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-11-00307.1.
Shakeshaft, C. (1985). Strategies for overcoming barriers to women administrators. In S. S. Klein (Ed.), *Handbook for achieving sex equity through education*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
Shakeshaft, C. (1987). *Women in educational administration*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Shakeshaft, C. (1989). The Gender Gap in Research in Educational Administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *25*(4), 324–337. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X89025004002
Shakeshaft, C. (1998). Wild Patience and Bad Fit: Assessing the Impact of Affirmative Action on Women in School Administration. Educational Researcher. 27. 10-12.
Sharp, W.L., & Walter, J. K. (2012). The principal as school manager (3rd ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.
Shaw, M. (2006). 'New signs of crisis in leadership recruitment'. *Times Educational Supplement,* 13 January, p. 2. London.
Sherman, A., (2000). Women managing/managing women: The marginalization of female leadership in rural school settings. *Educational Management & Administration*, *28*(2), pp.133-143.
Siegel D (2015) *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (2nd edn). New York: Guilford Press.

Sisodia, S. and Rocque, S.R., 2023. Underpinnings of gender bias within the context of work-life balance. International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 8(1), pp.988-994.
Silverman, D. (2016). Qualitative Research. Sage publishing, London.
Simon, S. and Hoyt, C.L., (2013). Exploring the effect of media images on women's leadership self-perceptions and aspirations. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *16*(2), pp.232-245.
Sinclair, C. (2008). Initial and changing student teacher motivation and commitment to teaching. Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 36(2), 79–104
Singleton, C. (1993). Women deputy headteachers in educational management. *Managing the Effective School, Paul Chapman, London*, 163-176.
Smith J. (2011). Agency and Female Teachers' career decisions: A Life History Study of 40 Women. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 39(1), 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1741143210383900.
Smithson, J. and Stokoe, E.H., (2005). Discourses of work–life balance: negotiating 'genderblind 'terms in organizations. *Gender, Work & Organization*, *12*(2), pp.147-168.
Southworth, G. (1998) Leading Improving Primary Schools. The Work of Headteachers and Deputy Head. London, Falmer Press.
Spradley, J. (1979) The Ethnographic Interview**.** Holt Rinehart & Winston, New York
Spreizer, A. (2009), Report Handbook on Autobiographical Pedagogical Approaches for working with Second Generation Migrants.
http://www.bridge2g.eu/userfiles/file/handbook/Handbook.pdf, 15.
Stanley, L and Wise, S. (1983). *Breaking Out*: London. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (1993), Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology. 2nd edition. London: Routledge.
Stead, V and Elliott, C (2009), Women's Leadership, Palgrave Macmillian, London.
Steedman, Ph. (1991) 'On the relations between seeing, interpreting and knowing', pp. 53-62 in F. Steier (Ed.) Research and reflexivity. London: Sage.
Styles, J (1979). Outsider/Insider: Researching Gay Baths. Urban Life 8, pp-135-52.
Swiss, D. (1996). *Women Breaking Through: Overcoming the Final 10 Obstacles at Work*, Princeton, NJ: Peterson's/Pacesetter Books.
Tahir, L.M., Musah, M.B., Hassan, R. and Ali, M.F., 2023. Published Articles on Deputy Principals From 1980 to 2020: A Systematic Literature Review. *SAGE Open*, *13*(4):21582440231202848.
Taylor, C., McAleavy, T., Jones, C., (2017), Educational Development Trust, System leaders: Headteachers and the improvement of government schools in England Lessons from England in the transformation of school leadership.
Thabane, L., Ma, J., Chu, R. *et al. (*2010) A tutorial on pilot studies: what, why and how. *BMC Med Res Methodol* 10, 1. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-10-1.
Thien, L. M., Adams, D., Kho, S. H., and Yap, P. L. (2022). Exploring value driven leadership: Perspectives from school leaders. J. Res. Leadersh. Educ.
Thomson, P., (2009). *School Leadership-Heads on the Block?* Routledge.
Trinidad, C. and Normore, A.H. (2005), "Leadership and gender: a dangerous liaison?", Leadership & Organization Development Journal, Vol. 26 No. 7, pp. 574-590. https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730510624601.
Tucker J. L., Fushell M. (2014). A narrative inquiry: Absence of women in Educational Leadership – A Canadian perspective. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice*, 29, 61–72.
UNESCO (2017). Education Transforms Lives. http://www.unesco.org.
United Nations. (2020). UN Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women. 9 April. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf.
Van Teijlingen, E., Hundley, V. (2001) The importance of pilot studies. Social Research Update, 35.

Veenman, S. (1984). Perceived problems of beginning teachers. *Review of educational research*, *54*(2), 143-178.
Vinnicombe, S. and Singh, V., (2003). Women pass a milestone: 101 directorships on the FTSE 100 boards. *The Female Report*.
Voydanoff, P. (2004). The effect of work demands and resources on work-to-family conflict and facilitation. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*(2), 398–412. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2004.00028.x.
Wadsworth, B.J., 1996. Piaget's theory of cognitive and affective development: Foundations of constructivism. Longman Publishing.
Walker, A., & Kwan, P. Y.-K. (2010). Leadership in diverse cultures. In P. Peterson, E. Baker, & B. McGraw (Eds.), International Encyclopaedia of Education (3rd ed., pp. 824-831). Oxford: Elsevier.
Wallace J. (2002). An equitable organization: Imagining what is 'not yet'. *Educational Management & Administration*, 30(1), 83–100.
Wallace J. (2004). Learning to lead: Women School Administrators in Twentieth century Ontario. *Oral History Forum/d'histoire orale*, 24, 87–106.
Wallace, J., & Wallin, D. (2015). 'The voice inside herself': transforming gendered academic identities in educational administration. *Gender and Education*, *27*(4), 412-429.
Webster, L., & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching.* Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
Wenham, C., J. Smith, and R. Morgan. (2020). "COVID-19: The Gendered Impacts of the Outbreak. "The Lancet395 (10227): 846–848.
Wentling, R.M., (2003). The career development and aspirations of women in middle management revisited. *Women in management review*, *18*(6), pp.311-324.
Weyer, B. (2007), "Twenty years later: explaining the persistence of the glass ceiling for women leaders", *Women in Management Review*, Vol. 22 No. 6, pp. 482-496. https://doi.org/10.1108/09649420710778718.
Wild, J. (1955). The Challenge of Existentialism. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
Willemsen, T. M. (2002). Gender typing of the successful manager: A stereotype reconsidered. Sex Roles, 46: 385-391.
Wilson, D., (2004). Human Rights: Promoting gender equality in and through education. *Prospects*, *34*(1), pp.11-27.
Wilson, F. (1995) *Organizational Behaviour and Gender*. London: McGraw-Hill.
Woodiwiss, J., Smith, K., & Lockwood, K. (Eds.) (2017). *Feminist Narrative Research: Opportunities and Challenges*. (1st ed.) Palgrave Macmillan UK.
Woods L et al (2002) An overview of three different approaches to the interpretation of qualitative data. Part 2: practical illustrations. Nurse Researcher. 10, 1, 43-51.
Woods, P. A. (2004). Democratic leadership: drawing distinctions with distributed leadership. *International journal of leadership in education*, *7*(1), 3-26.
Yin, R.K. (2010). Qualitative Research from Start to Finish. Guilford Press.
Young, B. J. (1995). Career plans and work perceptions of pre-service teachers. Teaching and Teacher Education, 11(3), 281–292.
Young, M. D., & McLeod, S. (2001). Flukes, Opportunities, and Planned Interventions: Factors Affecting Women's Decisions to become School Administrators. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *37*(4), 462–502. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X01374003.
Zhang, W, and Brunrett, M (2010). School leaders' perspectives on leadership learning: the case for informal and experiential learning. Management in Education 2010 24:4, 154-158.

Websites accessed:

ASCL report (Dec 2021) Closing-the-gender-pay-gap-in-Education-a-leadership-imperative.pdf (ascl.org.uk). Last accessed on 10th August 2023.
Bera code of ethics (2011) – last accessed on 20/4/2019
https://www.bera.ac.uk/files/2011/08/BERA-%20Ethical-Guidelines-2011.pdf
Closing the Gender Pay Gap in Education: A leadership imperative (naht.org.uk) – (Dec 2021(. Last accessed on 15th October 2022.
Department for Education (20 July 2017), *School Workforce in England: November 2016,* London, Maintables: SFR21/2017 Table 9a www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2016 (last accessed on 10/4/19).
Department for Education (2018), School Workforce Census report. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2018. Last accessed on 8th September 2020.
Department for Education (April 2022), School Workforce in England 2022, School workforce in England, Reporting year 2022 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk). Last accessed on 10th August 2023.
Department for Education White Paper (2016) Educational Excellence Everywhere (publishing.service.gov.uk). Last accessed on 12th August 2020.
Department for Education, (April 2022). School Leadership in England 2010-2020. School leadership in England 2010 to 2020: characteristics and trends (publishing.service.gov.uk). Last accessed 10th August 2023.
Equal Opportunities Commission annual report and accounts (2006 to 2007). Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equal-opportunities-commission-annual-report-and-accounts-2006-to-2007 (21/5/18).
Fawcett Society, last accessed on 5.4.19 Fhttps://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/close-gender-pay-gap.
Future Leaders Trust article taken from The Guardian. www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2015/feb/11/lack-of-female-headteachers-gender-diversity-education. Last accessed on 26.10.2018.
Global Gender Gap Report (2020), WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf (weforum.org). Last accessed on 4th November 2023.
Government Equalities Office (18 August 2016) *Mandatory Gender Pay Gap Reporting: Public Sector Employers* Consultation Document
https://consult.education.gov.uk/equality-framwork-team/gender-pay-gap-reporting-public-sector (last accessed on 10.4.19).
NAHT > Our Priorities > Our policy areas > Recruitment and retention – (Dec 2022) – last accessed on Jan 2023.
National College for Teaching & Leadership DSBM Phase 3 Module 2: Analysing the strategic direction in school https://www.nationalcollege. org.uk/transfer/open/dsbm-phase-3-module2-analysing-the-strategic-direction-in-school/ strategic-analysis-of-resources/dsbmp3m2-s5-t1.html [online resource] (accessed 14/12/2016).
NSCL report (2003), Growing tomorrow's leaders: Microsoft Word - randd-growing-tomorrows-school-leaders-full.doc (ioe.ac.uk). Last accessed on 4th June 2019.
Smooth, Peter. (2003) NSCL report, Leading from the Classroom taken from Leading from the classroom (ioe.ac.uk), last accessed on September 11, 2021.
Teacher recruitment and career intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic - Teacher Tapp – (October 2021) – last accessed on 5th Dec 2022.
Teacher workload survey (2019) Department for Education. (accessed 14/12/2016) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/855933/teacher_workload_survey_2019_main_report_amended.pdf.

The Guardian, http://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2016/jan/25/how-to-lead-like-a-woman-in-a-mans-world. 'How to lead like a woman in a man's world'. (TDA research) Last accessed on 24.10.18.
Wigdortz, B. and Toop, J (2016), 'The School Leadership Challenge: 2022', taken from https://www.ambition.org.uk/-/school-leadership-challenge-2022/ last accessed on 4/4/19.

Appendices – Appendix 1

Ethics approval

LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

LONDON MET RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW FORM

For Research Students and Staff

Postgraduate research students (MPhil, PhD and Professional Doctorate): This form should be completed by all research students in full consultation with their supervisor. All research students must complete a research ethics review form before commencing the research or collecting any data and no later than six months after enrolment.

Staff: This form should be completed by the member of staff responsible for the research project (i.e. Principal Investigator and/or grant-holder) in full consultation with any co-investigators, research students and research staff before commencing the research or collecting any data.

Definition of Research
Research is to be understood as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship*; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction. It excludes routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes such as for the maintenance of national standards, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research."

Scholarship is defined as the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases."

London Met's *Research Ethics Policy and Procedures* and *Code of Good Research Practice*, along with links to research ethics online courses and guidance materials, can be found on the Research & Postgraduate Office Research Ethics webpage:
http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/current-students/research-ethics/

London Met's Research Framework can be found here:
http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/current-students/research-framework/

Researcher development sessions can be found here:
http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/current-students/researcher-development-programme/

This form requires the completion of the following three sections:

SECTION A: APPLICANT DETAILS
SECTION B: THE PROJECT - ETHICAL ISSUES
SECTION C: THE PROJECT - RISKS AND BENEFITS

SECTION A: APPLICANT DETAILS

A1	Background information
	Research project title: **Gender and leadership: How do women deputy headteachers negotiate their leadership identities/subjectivities in secondary schools in England?**
	Date of submission for ethics approval:21/12/15
	Proposed start date for project: Jan 2015
	Proposed end date for project: July 2018
	Ethics ID # (to be completed by RERP chair):

A2	Applicant details, if for a research student project
	Name: Jodie Ann Long
	London Met Email address:jodieannlong@yahoo.com and JAL0528@my.londonmet.ac.uk

A3	Principal Researcher/Lead Supervisor Member of staff at London Metropolitan University who is responsible for the proposed research project either as Principal Investigator/grant-holder or, in the case of postgraduate research student projects, as Lead Supervisor
	Name: **Prof. ALISTAIR ROSS**
	Job title: Lead Supervisor
	London Met Email address: **a.ross@londonmet.ac.uk**

SECTION B: THE PROJECT - ETHICAL ISSUES

B1	The Research Proposal
	Please attach a brief summary of the research project including: • Background/rationale • Research questions/aims/objectives • Research methodology • Review of key literature in this field & conceptual framework for study • References If you plan to recruit participants, be sure to include information how potential participants in the study will be identified, approached and recruited; how informed consent will be obtained; and what measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data **See attached RD1 form**
B2	**Research Ethics**

	Please outline any ethical issues that might arise from this study and how they are to be addressed. ***NB*** *All research projects have ethical considerations. Please complete this section as fully as possible using the following pointers for guidance. Please include any additional information that you think would be helpful.* • Does the project involve potentially deceiving participants? Yes/**No** • Will you be requiring the disclosure of confidential or private information? **Yes** • Is the project likely to lead to the disclosure of illegal activity or incriminating information about participants? Yes/**No** • Does the project require a Disclosure and Baring Check for the researcher? Yes/**No** • Is the project likely to expose participants to distress of any nature? **Yes**/No • Will participants be rewarded for their involvement? Yes/**No** • Are there any potential conflicts of interest in this project? Yes/**No** • Any other potential concerns? Yes/**No** **If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain.** All participants will be given an information sheet (see attached) which gives details about my project and my consent form (see attached) outlines a description of the project, requirements from the participant and approximate timings for their involvement in the project. Therefore, no participants are being deceived in any way in terms of my brief. My research project abides by the BERA code of ethics (2011), and I will ensure that all participants in the research understand the process in which they are engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported. In accordance with the data protection Act (1998) I will comply with the legal requirements in relation to the storage and use of personal data and lock all data away in secure cupboard and password protect any work that I will be analysing and using. As with all research projects, my main necessity will be to gain the consent and cooperation from my participants and the institutions they were working in. To do this I will give them consent forms and work around basing my project around 'informed consent'.I will explain to my participants the study and any potential risks and benefits of the study. I will inform all participants that they are free to withdraw consent from the project and at any time without prejudice. All participants will be given the opportunity to attend a briefing session on my findings before I submit my final research report. All participants will be anonymised throughput the project. There are very slight risks of participants becoming distressed through my research. In my pilot project (Module ED8005 – Conducting Educational Research: a Pilot Study) one participant shows some signs of upset when talking through her past leadership experiences. I have organised for participants to have access to sources of counselling – The Samaritans on 116 123 and through my union ASCL hotline on 0116 299 1122
B3	Does the proposed research project involve: • The analysis of existing data, artefacts or performances that are not already in the public domain (i.e. that are published, freely available or available by subscription)? *Yes/**No*** • The production and/or analysis of physical data (including computer code, physical entities and/or chemical materials) that might involve potential risks to humans, the researcher(s) or the University? *Yes/**No*** • The direct or indirect collection of new data from humans or animals? ***Yes**/No* • Sharing of data with other organisations? *Yes/**No*** • Export of data outside the EU*? Yes/**No***

B4	**If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain.** Data will be collected from my participants about their personal experiences. As above, it will be collected with informed consent and anonymised. Voice recordings collected through their diaries and will be stored in a safe manner – password protected, safely stored.
B5	Will the proposed research be conducted in any country outside the UK? If so, are there independent research ethics regulations and procedures that either: • Do not recognise research ethics review approval from UK-based research ethics services? *Yes/**No*** and/or • Require more detailed applications for research ethics review than would ordinarily be conducted by the University's Research Ethics Review Panels and/or other UK-based research ethics services? *Yes/**No*** **If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain.**
	Does the proposed research involve: • The collection and/or analysis of body tissues or fluids from humans or animals? *Yes/**No*** • The administration of any drug, food substance, placebo or invasive procedure to humans or animals? *Yes/**No*** • Any participants lacking capacity (as defined by the UK Mental Capacity Act 2005)? *Yes/**No*** • Relationships with any external statutory-, voluntary-, or commercial-sector organisation(s) that require(s) research ethics approval to be obtained from an external research ethics committee or the UK National Research Ethics Service (this includes research involving staff, clients, premises, facilities and data from the UK National Health Service (NHS), Social Care organisations and some other statutory public bodies within the UK)? *Yes/**No*** **If you answered yes to any of the points above, please contact your faculty's RERP chair for further guidance.**
B6	Does the proposed research involve: • Accessing / storing information (including information on the web) which promotes extremism or terrorism? *Yes/**No*** • Accessing / storing information which is security sensitive (e.g. for which a security clearance is required)? *Yes/**No*** **If you answered yes to any of the points above, please explain. To comply with the law, researchers seeking to use information in these categories must have appropriate protocols in place for the secure access and storage of material. For further guidance, see the Universities UK publication Oversight of Security Sensitive Research Material in UK Universities (2012).**

SECTION C: THE PROJECT - RISKS AND BENEFITS

C1	Risk Assessment

Please outline:

- the risks posed by this project to both researcher and research participants
- the ways in which you intend to mitigate these risks
- the benefits of this project to the applicant, participants and any others

Slight risks: Some participants may find the interview process or diary keeping emotional as they will be describing their journey to leadership and some of the hurdles that they may have faced. There would be a risk of data being accessible if I hadn't put the following processes in place: data protection, locked cabinet, anonymised work

- the ways in which you intend to mitigate these risks

Confidentiality: participants will not be identified in the study. I will anonymise all details as soon as I transcribe them. No one will have access to the data other than myself so I will be the only person aware of my participants' names. All data will be stored in a locked cupboard. Digital data from the voice recordings will password protected and stored on an external drive which will be locked away. All names and locations will also be anonymised so that participants cannot be identified.

Participants' distress – I have provided all participants with two helpline numbers for them to use if at any point they feel they need to talk someone.

- the benefits of this project to the applicant, participants and any others

In terms of benefits my research offers a fresh and original approach to leadership and gender and to the position of women as deputy headteachers. It will highlight any potential barriers that women currently face and therefore will bring these to the foreground for headteachers and the education sector to address.

Please ensure that you have completed Sections A, B, and C and attached a Research Proposal before submitting to your Faculty Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP)

Please sign this form and submit it as an email attachment to the Chair of your faculty's Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP) and cc all of the staff and students who will be involved in the proposed research.

http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/current-students/research-ethics/

Research ethics approval can be granted for a maximum of 4 years or for the duration of the proposed research, whichever is shorter, on the condition that:

- The researcher must inform their faculty's Research Ethics Review Panel (RERP) of any changes to the proposed research that may alter the answers given to the questions in this form or any related research ethics applications

- The researcher must apply for an extension to their ethics approval if the research project continues beyond 4 years.

Declaration

I confirm that I have read London Met's *Research Ethics Policy and Procedures* and *Code of Good Research Practice* and have consulted relevant guidance on ethics in research.

Researcher signature: jalong

Date: 20/12/2015

Feedback from Ethics Review Panel

	Approved	*Feedback where further work required*
Section A	x	
Section B	x	The concerns below have been addressed in this revised application. **Reviewer 1** I have looked at this application for approval and it seems fine at a general level. There are a number of points to feedback (pending your agreement) as follows: 1. **Pilot phase**: ideally the student should have had approval prior to the pilot especially as she notes that one interviewer showed 'signs of being upset'. 2. **Voice recordings**: these are likely to be digital rather than 'tape recordings' and thus need to be treated as any other non-paper data - so password protected, on an external drive/usb and safely stored. Given the small number of deputy heads involved and if locations are known, it would be easy to identify them. If they make disclosures, that could be an issue. 3. **Information sheet and consent form**: this could be set out more clearly - there is some repetition, and it is hard to follow in places. A Q&A approach is often helpful to ensure clarity. The info sheet starts by addressing 'you' but moves to 'participants'. Keeping personal is useful but whichever, it just needs to be consistent. What is the purpose of second interviews? This should say their consent will be sought again. The student needs to give her contact information at LondonMet not a private email and it must include the name and contact details of a supervisor should potential participants have questions which they prefer to address at a different level. I have a couple of questions about methods which may be my not understanding - sample size and how by selecting different types of situation will give sufficient data about context-relevance; the diary and what the researcher will learn - they are very time consuming to analyse and it would be interesting to see what the participants might gain from them. I would also be interested in what the learning might be for e.g. those concerned with careers in schools, organisational development etc. The research is exploratory and descriptive which should be very useful and it would be good to consider practical/policy implications in relation to women's promotion. I hope this is helpful.

		Reviewer 2 I too think that the ethics form is fine in general, although I agree with [Reviewer 1] that the info sheet and consent form could do with the revisions suggested, and the form should elaborate on the security measures for the audio-recordings as [Reviewer 1] outlines. I also wondered about the sample size and whether 5 one-hour interviews will generate the depth of data sufficient to underpin a doctoral-level piece of research, but that is for the student and her supervisor to consider, I guess.
Section C	x	
Date of approval		4th January 2016
NB: The Researcher should be notified of decision within <u>two</u> weeks of the submission of the application. A copy should be sent to the Research and Postgraduate Office.		
Signature of RERP chair		Klaus Fischer

Appendix 1: information sheet and project consent

TEMPLATE LETTER TO PARTICPANTS

Narrative research: What women deputy headteachers say about their career aspirations for headship

Dear participant,

I am writing to invite you to be involved in a research project about women deputy headteacher's career aspirations and whether they want to progress to headship. I am asking for your participation to understand the reasons why women may or may not choose to progress to headship.

I would like to conduct the interviews in June 2015 to the following June 2016. The interviews will be approximately one hour to one and half hours long. The interviews will take place at your workplace (or a destination of your choice) at a time convenient to you. The interviews will be tape-recorded. Your participation is of course voluntary. You will be given a consent form prior to the interview.

The study is part of a research project in conjunction with the London Metropolitan University. It has been given ethical approval by the Department's research ethics committee. For more information and to arrange an interview please email Jodie Long at xxxxxxxx.

I hope you will be able to collaborate on this research project.

Best wishes

Jodie Ann Long

Research Student

London Metropolitan University

CONSENT FORM

Narrative research: What women deputy headteachers say about their career aspirations for headship

I understand that:

- The aims of this project is to gather information on women deputy headteachers and their views and experiences of leadership in secondary schools in the UK
- My participation in this project will be an interview which will be recorded and last approx. 1-1.5 hours
- My participation in this project is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from participation at any time
- The information gathered from me will be anonymous (no one will be able to identify which responses I have given)

I accept that the information gathered from me will be used in academic and other literature to raise awareness about women as deputy headteachers and why they choose or not choose to progress to headship. This information may also be used as part as an ongoing training programme.

Signed: ……..

Appendix 2: Full set of interview questions and interview schedule

Interview questions and prompts

Interview questions: These semi-structured questions were aimed to help aid the participants' in telling their stories and therefore they have not been asked in a particular order and some questions may have been added to or not been needed as part of the interview process. Questions have been adapted/re phrased where necessary. Questions were not always used if participants were confident in telling their story and in these cases, prompts were used.

- *Can you tell me about your experience of education and schooling from secondary school to higher education and what made you become a teacher?*

- *Can you talk to me about your career to date and any experiences of other women you know in teaching?*

- *How long has it taken you to become a deputy headteacher?*

- *Have you had any workplace experiences as a woman that you want to talk about?*

- *Can you tell me more about any staff members that had a positive influence on you?*

- *How confident do you feel as a woman in your workplace and in your role?*

- *What barriers do you think there are for women wanting to progress to headship?*

- *Talk to me about how you perceive yourself as a leader and does your appearance ever come into this?*

- *Do you have a particular leadership style? Do you adapt this in different situations?*

- *Lots of women have previously talked about pressures of family and career. How true is this for you and what are your experiences of this and feelings towards this subject?*

- *What do you think would make headship easier for women with children?*

Interview Schedule

Participant :	Semi structured interview :	Recorded diary: ***Only for participant 1 and 2***
Participant 1	25th June 2017 at 4pm	W/c 13th July for a week
Participant 2	6th July 2017 at 3pm	W/c 13th July for a week
Participant 3	18th August 2017 at 10am	
Participant 4	14th September 2017 at 4pm	
Participant 5	27th October 2017 at 10.30am	
Participant 6	14th December 2017 at 9am	
Participant 7	8th February 2018 at 4pm	
Participant 8	22nd February 2018 at 10.30am	
Participant 9	11th April 2018 at 11am	
Participant 10	30th May 2018 at 5pm	

Appendix 3: Taped diaries

Example extract from taped diary

Monday

I have just returned from school after a long evening. I had a series of meetings today followed by Governors and a parents' evening. I hadn't really thought about my own leadership journey and identity until I started to participate in the research that I am currently helping with, and it has really made me think about how I am perceived. Today, I sat in a parent meeting with my colleague who is male, and the parent of the child was directing all of their questions to my male colleague. This isn't something that happens all the time but today I noticed it. The father also referred to me as 'Love' and 'Sweetheart' both of which highly irritated me, and it made me wonder why it was acceptable for me to be referred to as this, yet my male colleague was spoken to with respect. It reminded me of a time when a parent came to the school gate, clearly angry and demanding to see the Headmaster – assuming they were male when in fact our headteacher is female! I wonder how many times these assumptions are made?

After the parent meeting this morning, I also had Governors and a parents' evening – all in all a very long day! During the governors meeting, I again started to make some observations about how male and female members of the team presented themselves within the meeting. Again, something that I wouldn't have even considered before taking part in research. I noticed that the male members of the team when questioned, talked a lot and often without substance to their answers, I knew this because I knew the topics they were talking about and quite frankly they had made some of their answers up! I would never dare to do that but somehow, they seem believable and get away with it! The male members of the team I observed, all come across very confident and believable. Some of the women in the team are more quietly spoken and less confident but they are good at their jobs, in fact I would say better than some of the men on the team but somehow they do not seem as confident in this governors meeting. However, saying that our Head is female, and she comes across very confident, very clear and authoritative. It has made me really start to think about how different individuals present themselves and in fact the differences between some of the men and women on the team. It has even made me reflect on my own behaviours and insecurities too. I have always felt nervous presenting in front of the governors. I don't why – perhaps it is because they are all older than me and professionals and I feel like I need to perform for them to accept me? I'm not sure, but it is something I am going to reflect on.

Right, that's enough for tonight. It's late and I'm getting tired.

Appendix 4: Final set of interview questions; headteacher interview questions

Interview questions: These semi-structured questions were aimed to help aid the participants' in telling their stories and therefore they have not been asked in a particular order and some questions may have been added to or not been needed as part of the interview process. Questions have been adapted/re phrased where necessary. Red questions have been adapted based on the pilot.

- *Can you tell me about your experience of education and schooling from secondary school to higher education and what made you become a teacher?*
- *Can you talk to me about your career to date and any experiences of other women you know in teaching?*
- *Have you had any positive or negative workplace experiences as a woman that you want to talk about?*
- *Can you tell me more about any staff members that had a positive influence on you?*
- *Talk to me about how you perceive yourself as a leader and does your appearance ever come into this?*
- *Do you have a particular leadership style? Do you adapt this in different situations?*
- *Lots of women have previously talked about pressures of family and career. How true is this for you and what are your experiences of this and feelings towards this subject?*
- *What do you think would make headship easier for women with children?*
- *Do you feel like there is an additional pressure put on women wanting a career and family?*
- *Have you ever had any mentoring within your roles?*

Headteacher Interview questions: *These semi-structured questions were aimed to help aid the headteachers in answering how they got from deputy head to head and the support they had. They also look at ways in which they were supported or ways they support future headteachers in their current roles. The questions have not been asked in a particular order and some questions may have been added to or not been needed as part of the interview process. Questions have been adapted/re phrased where necessary.*

- *Can you tell me about your journey from deputy head to head?*
- *Did you receive any support in your transition from deputy to head? If so, what was this?*
- *What do you think would encourage more women into headship?*
- *What do you think stops women deputy headteachers from progressing?*
- *How do you support aspirant Heads in your school?*
- *Do you offer any mentoring or coaching to deputy heads wanting to progress?*

Appendix 5: Example extracts of highlighting initial themes

Stage 1: highlighting themes within transcripts

Having children/Being a Mum/Pregnancy
Education
Influence
Leadership
Headteacher influence
Flexible working
Lack of training/preparation for headship
External barriers

Didn't do very well at school. At secondary school, I was very PE based. Went to lots of clubs and activities. Did Ok on my GCSES but not very well really. Got my Maths and English and an A in PE but everything else was D's and F's. Then I got pregnant at the age of 17 and was told by my teachers that I wouldn't go to university and that I'd ruined my life completely. I sat my A levels 7 months pregnant and did OK got two ds. I spent two years bringing up my daughter having part time jobs and then I applied to University and got an unconditional offer for Greenwich. My Mum supported me fully in going to University. Didn't really enjoy University at all it was a means to an end. I absolutely knew I wanted to go into teaching. I found the whole process really hard because of having my daughter but I did what I needed to do to be able to teach. So, I guess for me school and education wasn't really an overly positive experience, yet I still went back. I've now been a deputy Head for 7 years.

Absolutely. Yes, things might be harder or take longer to achieve but there's no reason why you can't juggle the two. More needs to be done to support mums with career prospects.

So, I think that my PE teacher at the time was just amazing and inspiring. She was inspiring, she was a PE teacher started as an NQT she then went onto to be a head of sixth form and did an amazing job at that. She encouraged me to follow my dreams of being a teacher. I quickly learnt that being a PE teacher could lead onto other things; I wouldn't be where I am today without her support. I went onto to do my teaching practise at that school, and I actually met a number of women leaders- female heads of department. I realised what I did like about what they did and what I didn't like. When I got my first teaching job the head there was amazing, he demonstrated that you can have a family and be really good in terms of getting staff to go along with you and have impact and it was there that I saw the impact he had on the school really quickly. It was from here that I went from teacher of girl's PE to Head of Girls PE to Head of PE to Head of Faculty with whole school responsibilities and this embedded where I wanted to go in terms of assistant headship. Looking at curriculum and

Absolutely. I think it's important for headteachers to model that and to show that you can still have a family life. There's a national shortage of headteachers and people are put off by the long hours and demands as it is. There needs to be more flexibility in the system to show that it can work with a family and that it doesn't matter if you are male or female.

Understanding headteachers and a culture that encouraged you to be able to juggle both. Different headteachers have different leadership styles and it can make all the difference. If

you are encouraged to embrace a work-life balance and to have time to spend with your family, then it can work. It doesn't mean leaving early every night, I understand the late nights come with the senior position, but I think the freedom to go home early one night to see your child without feeling guilty would make work-life so much easier. If you have a happy senior leadership team surely it helps with overall school morale. There are so many issues with morale at the moment in schools across the nation that we are in danger of losing so many good teachers. If my school had a crèche that would be even more better but I know realistically some of these things can't happen, but surely more flexible working policies would be better for everyone. I don't know how any women gets to a senior position with young children and manages to balance the work and home life. Does anyone exist that has achieved this?

I've worked with two heads that have been people who want to micromanage. The challenges of working with my recent head has been challenging everything you do and not being able to run with a project and to get to the end of the line with that project which at times has bordered on bullying which has not helped, no actually that's driven me to want to be better as a leader to not make silly mistakes but it has also made me realise there are lots of different leaders and it's about, it's reinforced to me about getting to know how to get the best out of people and this leader they don't try to get the best out of people. I can see within the team my role changed very much it has become about looking after your team and you need a balance of people to provide support and encourage them in what they are doing.

It's no coincidence that this happened when I was pregnant and before I could do no wrong.

You'd hope so wouldn't you. I just hope that other people don't go through what I did. If that is the norm, then we are never going to change the norm in terms of women being headteachers. It's a lot about confidence for those becoming Heads. I think this puts women off as they often don't see themselves as confident as men.

Appendix 6: Tables illustrating the topics within the themes across each group

Table 6.1: Comparing the theme of Inspiration and motivation across groups A, B, and C

Theme: Inspiration and motivation	
Group A Wanting to progress to headship:	• Ready for headship and finally have the confidence • Proud of achievement and wants to go to the top-headship • Prove you can achieve your ambition • Frustrated with career and felt held back by family commitments • Only one to go to university- wants to be head to show you can achieve • Wants to be role models for others • Positive role models influenced them to want to be a Head • Make a positive change and have an influence
Group B: Not wanting to progress to headship	• Husband's job takes priority • Need more encouragement to become a head • Use of female mentors and role models in headship to inspire/motivate more female heads
Group C: Undecided on headship	• Making an influence as a head • Shape vision as a head

Table 6.2: Comparing the theme of work-life balance challenge across groups A, B, and C

Theme: Work-life balance	
Group A: Wanting to progress to headship	• Impossible to be a head with children • Guilt associated with work and having children • Like flexibility of DH role – family time and can manage workload • Wouldn't have confidence to put themselves forward for headship to manage workload • Not sure whether you can balance home and having a child with headship • Need to see more female heads with children to show it's possible
Group B: Not wanting to progress to headship	• Teaching is stressful – couldn't take on any more for their well-being • Want children in future and headship and children isn't manageable • Like current DH role and well-being – gives the right balance • Not prepared to sacrifice family life
Group C: Undecided on progression to headship	• Family and personal circumstances come first • Inflexible hours and late meetings stop women going into headship • Easier for husband's job to take priority – his hours do not impact childcare

Table 6.3: Comparing the theme of Impact of Motherhood across groups A, B and C

Theme: Female leadership and identity	
Group A: Wanting to progress to headship	• Pressure to be a Mum and on SLT • Pigeonholed as a Mum • Lack of confidence after maternity leave • Others' views that you can't be on SLT and have a young family • Proving your good enough to be a head with or without a child • Having to be more resilient if you have children • Changing perceptions of your ability if you have children
Group B: Not wanting to progress to headship	• Men are more confident than women • Men and women possess different skills • Different expectations for men and women – men wear suits, women wear 'pretty' dresses • Don't want to apply for a job unless I can 100% do all of it • Don't have confidence for headship
Group C: Undecided on progression to headship	• Not confident enough in all areas to be a head • Haven't been asked about career progression • Men are more confident than women • More discussions/mentors needed

Table 6.4: Comparing the theme of gender and confidence in leadership aspirations across groups A, B, and C

Theme: Perceptions of being a head	
Group A: Wanting to progress to headship	• Needs to be more female heads with children as role models • More encouragement needed for women to go into headship • More job shares in headship needed • Celebrate female heads
Group B: Not wanting to progress to headship	• Budget cuts putting pressure on heads • Friends' experience of headship is stressful • Crisis in headteacher recruitment • Pressure of current climate • Strain of Ofsted, budgets, government pressure
Group C: Undecided on progression to headship	• So much negativity around education • Accountability that heads have • DH position can still make a change • Strain of headship

Table 6.5: Comparing the theme of personal and systematic pressures across groups A, B and C

Theme: Barriers and constraints	
Group A: Wanting to progress to headship	• Worries around staff recruitment and retention • Ofsted fears • Budget and financial pressure on schools • Changing government agendas • Pressures and worries associated with headship
Group B: Not wanting to progress to headship	• Haven't got an understanding of finance or staffing – don't have the confidence • Not confident enough to apply for headship • Not ready for headship – do not have all the skills • Will not apply for headship unless 100% confident they can do the job • HR worries and staffing- not confident
Group C: Undecided on progression to headship	• Lack of training that gives you the confidence to take on headship • Unknown of headship • Not having the confidence to take headship on • HR/finance issues

Appendix 7: Comparing themes across groups A, B and C

Table 7.1 – themes relating to RQ3 – a comparison by groups

Key: Bold text indicates the topics; red text indicates the themes.

Group A	Group B	Group C
• Pressure to be mum and have a career -Work-life balance challenges and Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations • Guilt of balancing family and career – Work-life balance challenges and Impact of Motherhood • People's perceptions of being a Mum and on SLT – Impact of Motherhood • View that you can't have a young family and be Head – Impact of Motherhood • Gendered roles- Impact of Motherhood • Mums are pigeonholed as 'Mum' – Impact of Motherhood • Career breaks and confidence – Impact of Motherhood • Need to be more resilient and prove yourself after having children – Impact of Motherhood • Staffing worries – Personal and systematic pressures	• Lack of skills- Impact of Motherhood • Confidence- Impact of Motherhood • Too stressful- Personal and systematic pressures • Budget cuts – Personal and systematic pressures • Government pressure- Personal and systematic pressures • Ofsted- Personal and systematic pressures • Flexibility of DH role – Impact of Motherhood	• Making an influence on their school in DH role- Impact of Motherhood • Happy in DH position- Impact of Motherhood • Unknown of headship- lack of confidence- Impact of Motherhood and Personal and systematic pressures • HR/finance worries- Personal and systematic pressures

Table 7.2 – themes relating to RQ4 – a comparison by groups

Key: Bold text indicates the topics; red text indicates the themes.

Group A	Group B	Group C
• Job share- **Impact of Motherhood** • More female headteachers with children as role models- **Impact of Motherhood** • Make positive changes as a head- **Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations/Inspiration and ambition** • Wanting to make decisions as heads – **Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations/Inspiration and ambition** • Shape future lives – • Achieve ambition of being a head- **Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations/Inspiration and ambition Perceptions of being a head**	• Female mentors to encourage women into headship – **Impact of Motherhood** • Female role models- **Impact of Motherhood**	• Being able to make an influence on a school- **Gender and confidence in leadership aspirations/Inspiration and ambition**

Appendix 8: Condensed set of themes

New theme:	*Previous themes:*
Female leadership and confidence	Leadership; inspiration and motivation; Female leadership and identity
Managing internal and external barriers	Struggle with work-life balance; leadership; barriers and constraints
Perceptions of being a headteacher	Perceptions of being a headteacher; Barriers and constraints

Comparison of themes within groups

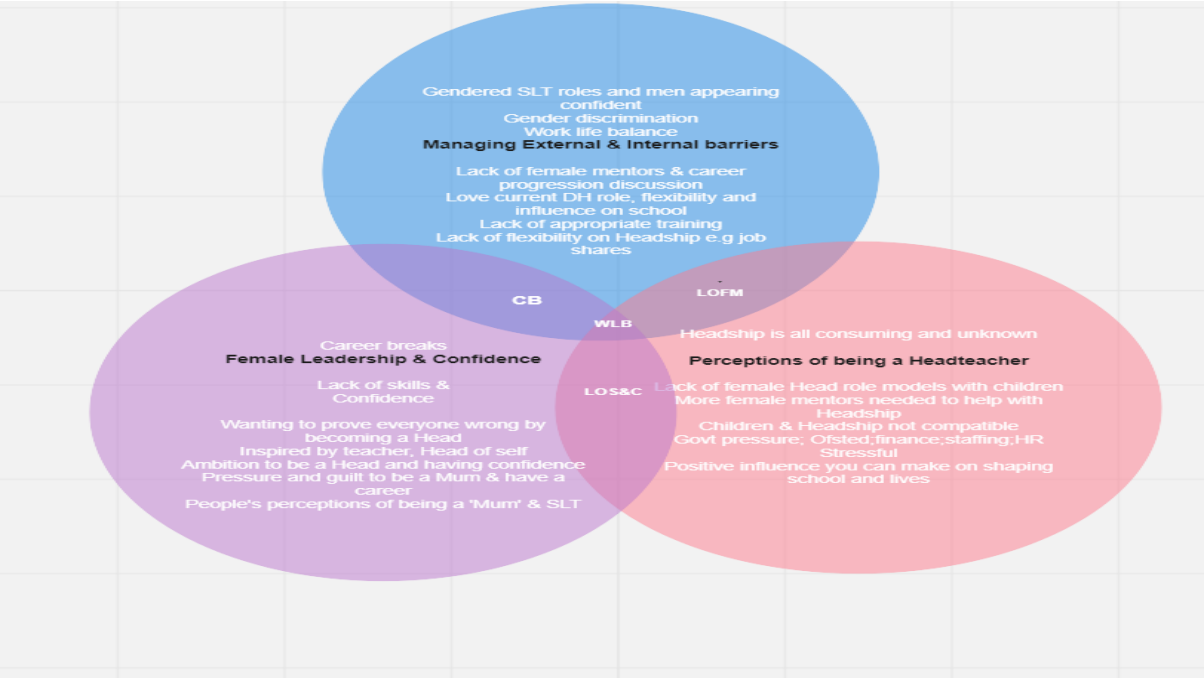
Female leadership & Confidence

Managing external & Internal Barriers

Perceptions of being a headteacher

	Group A: Wanting to progress to headship	**Group B: Not wanting to progress to headship**	**Group C: Undecided**
Q1&2: What are deputy headteachers school & leadership experiences? How do these experiences relate to their ambitions in wanting to become headteachers?	• Lack of skills and confidence • Gendered SLT roles • Flexibility of DH role • Men appearing confident • Career breaks impacting on confidence/career • Ambition to do better • Proving everyone wrong • Inspired by headteacher or self	• Lack of skills • Lack of confidence • Too stressful • Budget cut worries • Government pressure • Ofsted pressure • Like flexibility of DH role • Having children and headship not compatible	• Frustrated at times as a deputy • Not having confidence • Lack of skills • Work-life balance important • More conversations about career progression needed as they didn't always happen • Lack of female mentors • Love their current role as deputy head • View that Headship is all consuming
Q3: What barriers/hurdles to promotion to headship can be identified?	• Pressure to be a Mum and have a career • Guilt of balancing family and career	• Lack of skills • Confidence • Too stressful • Budget cuts • Government pressure	• Making an influence on their school in DH role • Happy in DH position

	• People's perceptions of being a Mum and on SLT • Gender discrimination • View that you can't have a young family and be a head • Mums are pigeonholed as 'Mum' • Career breaks and confidence • Need to be more resilient and prove yourself after having children • Staffing worries • Gov agendas, Ofsted, accountability worries	• Ofsted • Flexibility of DH role • Having children and headship not compatible	• Unknown of headship • HR/finance worries • Lack of appropriate training • Negativity in education
Q4: What enablers to promotion to headship can be identified?	• Job share • More female headteachers with children as role models • Make positive changes as a Head • Wanting to make decisions as a Head • Shape future lives • Achieve ambition of being a head • Need to be more flexibility in role • Finally having the confidence to be a head	• Female mentors to encourage women into headship • Female role models	• Being able to make an influence on a school


Gendered SLT roles and men appearing confident
Gender discrimination
Work life balance
Managing External & Internal barriers
Lack of female mentors & career progression discussion
Love current DH role, flexibility and influence on school
Lack of appropriate training
Lack of flexibility on Headship e.g job shares
CB
LOFM
WLB
Career breaks
Female Leadership & Confidence
Lack of skills & Confidence
Wanting to prove everyone wrong by becoming a Head
Inspired by teacher, Head of self
Ambition to be a Head and having confidence
Pressure and guilt to be a Mum & have a career
People's perceptions of being a 'Mum' & SLT
Headship is all consuming and unknown
Perceptions of being a Headteacher
LOS&C
Lack of female Head role models with children
More female mentors needed to help with Headship
Children & Headship not compatible
Govt pressure; Ofsted;finance;staffing;HR
Stressful
Positive influence you can make on shaping school and lives

Appendix 9: Notes from online meeting with participants

Meeting held on 14th December 2022 at 4pm –via TEAMS call

This meeting was held to brief the participants on the main findings and key concepts from the research. It was also used as a chance for participants to share their views on the findings and to discuss their individual stories and the use of these in further training. Below illustrates some of the notes kept during the meeting and key points arising.

Participant 1: I think the key concepts are really interesting as I often wonder how many more women would progress to headship if they had the confidence to do so and also had more encouragement!

Participant 4: Absolutely, if women could just see other people as headteachers with the same responsibilities it would help. I know if I saw another woman with children as a head and was encouraged more, I would definitely consider it.

Participant 1: The problem is it just isn't promoted as a career for women with families. And the whole trust thing is so relevant especially at the moment. Think about all the strikes and people leaving the profession. We just don't trust the government to make the right decisions at the minute. It hard enough to recruit headteacher's let alone at the moment with the unrest over Ofsted inspection, pay and conditions.

Participant 5: I think the use of the coherent stories as a training aid will really help and benefit other women as it helps you identify with other people's situations and realise that you're not alone. I think once women start talking and realising that they feel the same it can be a really powerful empowerment tool to rally them together to support each other. More support networks will be beneficial.

Participant 9: I love the idea of having more role models and perhaps a poster campaign celebrating other female headteachers. I'd love to be involved and help out if I can?

Participant 7: I too would like to continue to help out and work on raising awareness on the issues.

Appendix 10: NPQH flyer- women- only