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Women on the Rise:
A Single-Sex Leadership Development Program and
Its Potential Impact on the Gender Gap in Independent School Leadership

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Rachel Danjczek Clouser

2018
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Women on the Rise:
A Single-Sex Leadership Development Program and
Its Potential Impact on the Gender Gap in Independent School Leadership

by

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Doctor of Education
University of California, Los Angeles 2018
Professor Christina Christie, Chair

This multiple methods study investigated Women Rising, a yearlong women-only leadership development program, exploring the program’s impact on past participants’ career trajectories and their interest in the headship, as well as investigating the current head of school hiring process to see if gender bias exists. With those goals in mind, the study sought to answer two research questions: In what ways, if any, does a yearlong women’s leadership program have an impact on leadership career trajectories of participants? What impact, if any, does participation in a yearlong women’s leadership program have on increasing the number of women hired as heads of school?

Data were gathered from a survey sent to Women Rising past participants as well as interviews with past participants, search firm representatives, and head of school search
committee chairs. Both in the surveys and interviews, Women Rising participants showed an increase in self-efficacy, to the point that they were not only applying for leadership positions, but also comfortable negotiating for changes so that the position best fit them. Women Rising provided a much-needed opportunity for women to come together and share their experiences in what they consider to be a safe space; the relationships they built in the program, specifically stated as relationships with other women in independent schools, was cited as the greatest benefit of Women Rising. The study also showed a slight increase in interest in the head of school position after women participated in Women Rising.

Another finding was the vast disparity of identified qualities needed to be a head of school from search firms, search committee chairs, and Women Rising past participants. It is important that all three of these groups understand the position and what it entails. Also, the head of school position and hiring process is still seen as biased, limiting women’s abilities to make it into the finalist round. Without structural changes that address these biases, women will continue to face difficulty in achieving a headship position. Recommendations include the creation of a women-only head of school program and a national mentor network that women in NAIS schools can access.
The dissertation of Rachel Danjczek Clouser is approved.

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Juliet A. Williams
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University of California, Los Angeles
2018
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late father, Dr. Michael H. Danjczek, who inspired me with his own passions for lifelong learning and servant leadership. A man who dedicated his life to children in need, he is greatly missed. I hope that I have made him proud and can do even a small percentage of the work he did in his life; that would be a great accomplishment for anyone and would make the world that much better for our children and students. I miss you, dad.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

According to Data Analysis for School Leadership, 66% of schools accredited by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) had men as heads of school during the 2015-2016 school year (this number has fallen just 1% since the 1999-2000 school year; National Association of Independent Schools [NAIS], 2015). For independent coeducational schools, the number of men as heads rises to 70%, indicating that all girls’ schools account for the slightly lower number of men as heads of schools. For independent coeducational schools that include grades nine to 12, the number of men as heads increases to 76% (NAIS, 2015).

Offered by the California Teacher Development Collaborative (CATDC), Women Rising is a yearlong professional development program for women working in independent schools who are interested in pursuing advancement in school leadership. This multiple methods study explored the current environment for those pursuing independent school leadership and evaluated the Women Rising program to assess its impact on participants’ career paths and leadership perceptions of women who have completed the program.

Background of the Problem

With limited data available regarding independent school leadership, studies of superintendents provide context in regard to women and school leadership. The superintendency potential applicant pool mirrors that of the headship pool, having more women than men; women make up 70% of teachers, account for more than half of those who attain administrative certification, and compose over half of those enrolled in doctoral programs (Mertz, 2006; Torres, 2016). Yet women account for only 18-20% of superintendents (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Goldring, Gray, & Bitterman, 2013; Kerr, Rusk Kerr, & Miller, 2014). The United States Census
Bureau called the superintendency the most male-dominated executive position of any profession (Björk & Keedy, 2001), acknowledging the large gender gap that exists.

The NAIS (2010) Leadership Research Study forecasted a large turnover in independent school leadership within the next 10 years (by 2019), as older heads are nearing retirement. Schools need to explore their options for strong educational leaders as headships become vacant (Chubb, 2015; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Newton, Giesen, Freeman, Bishop, & Zeitoun, 2003). Research indicates that those in charge of hiring need to actively recruit, develop, and retain competent leaders, especially women, in order to fill numerous leadership positions (Chubb, 2015; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010).

Tallerico (2000) investigated headhunting from a critical feminist perspective in her case study of the hiring of superintendents in New York state. Tallerico found that hiring practices, school leadership norms, and societal values reflected gender stereotypes and limited access to anyone who was not a White man. This finding supports the argument that women face numerous barriers based on gender as head of school applicants. These barriers include the societal constructs of good leadership; the majority of studies on gender disparity in education leadership identify an established norm of men being seen as stronger school leadership candidates than women (Coleman, 2003; Gill & Arnold, 2015; Skrla, 1999). School leadership has historically been associated with what are thought of as masculine traits, including but not limited to problem-solving, confidence, and competitiveness (Hoang, 2009; Newton, 2006; Skrla, 1999). These are positive traits found in many leadership models, including the trait model, the behavior model, and the situational model of leadership (Northouse, 2015; Prime, Carter, & Welbourne, 2009). With leadership linked to masculinity, female applicants are at a disadvantage, as they may not be seen as natural leaders (Prime et al., 2009).
Although some research exists on independent schools, scarce research focuses on women in independent school leadership. The dissertations of Feibelman (2013), Gallagher (2017), Ostos (2012), and Pernambuco-Wise (2012) identified structural barriers for women in independent school leadership that account for the low number of women in independent school leadership, such as the gender-biased application process and the lack of female mentors. Studies of women in public school leadership reflect a similar focus on structural barriers to the superintendency. Multiple studies show that formalized mentoring programs benefit women who want to become school leaders (Montz & Wanat, 2008; Peters, 2010; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). They also show that mentors help women aspiring to be independent school leaders navigate the headship application process (Feibelman, 2013; Gallagher, 2017; Pernambuco-Wise, 2012). With a lack of women in the head of school position, women have few options for women head of school mentors.

As they experience the application process, women school leadership candidates have to defend their commitment to the job. Studies show that due to women’s familial obligations (as wives and mothers), potential employers have questioned whether women are capable of being focused, committed, and effective educational leaders (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). The final hurdle for women, if hired, is the pay gap they will face; school boards have shown that they offer female superintendents a lower salary than their male counterparts (Tallerico, 2000).

Studies of businesses and the leadership gender gap have explored women’s motivation in choosing to pursue or not to pursue leadership positions (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013; Pratch & Jacobowitz, 1996). Guillén, Mayo, and Korotov (2015) discussed the importance of one’s self-identifying as a leader in order to have the motivation to take on higher leadership positions. Women assume they are not a fit for leadership due to the lack of women in the position and
gender-biased job descriptions that emphasize managerial skills, which they perceive as male leadership traits (Hoang, 2009; Newton, 2006; Skrla, 1999).

**Problem Statement**

Independent schools have been investigating the gender gap in school leadership for more than a decade (Chubb, 2015; NAIS, 2015), and the current leadership hiring process and leadership experience for women needs to be investigated to determine what changes have occurred, if any. Even with NAIS’s acknowledgement of the large gender gap in independent school leadership, limited programs and training opportunities focus solely on taking action to address this gender equity imbalance. Most programs, such as the NAIS Fellowship for Aspiring School Heads, offer a yearlong, gender inclusive leadership training for those interested in becoming a head of school. Other programs that focus only on women interested in school leadership are overwhelmingly short-term (a week or less). For example, one well-known leadership seminar for women takes place from a Friday to Sunday. This program is advertised to women who are aspiring heads of schools.” Of the 853 past participants that were listed on their webpage in 2016, only 81 have gone on to be heads of schools. These limited duration professional development programs, particularly those under 30 hours, do not allow for a depth of learning and discussion (Boyle, While, & Boyle, 2004; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Guskey, 1999; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Short-term programs limit the ability to create and strengthen mentor relationships or networks for women seeking advancement in independent school leadership.

Women Rising attempts to address the independent school gender leadership gap by offering a yearlong single sex program for women interested in leadership. Multiple meetings over an academic year allow extended time to learn about barriers for women in school
leadership and ways to overcome them. The longer program helps women to build relationships with each other, as well as be exposed to and meet women heads of school.

CADTC operates Women Rising in two locations. The original program started in 2014 in San Francisco (Women Rising SF), and the second program in Los Angeles began in September 2015 (Women Rising LA). CATDC created this yearlong program to address the issue of gender inequity in independent school leadership, which is especially seen in the head of school position. This study sought to learn more about the current leadership search environment and how the program is successful in its support of women looking to advance in school leadership.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways, if any, does a yearlong women’s leadership program have on leadership career trajectories of participants?
   a. How does participation in such a program increase the number of women applying to the head of school position, if at all?

2. What impact, if any, does participation in a yearlong women’s leadership program have on increasing the number of women hired as heads of schools?

**Research Site and Population**

In order to better understand the current head of school hiring process and ways (if any) independent school boards factor gender into their leadership hiring decisions, as well as how gendered leadership beliefs impact applicants, it was necessary to speak directly to search firms and schools’ head of school search committee chairs. Independent schools are run by a board of trustees who have the responsibility for hiring and overseeing the work of heads of school (NAIS, 2015; Powell, 1996). Most, if not all, independent schools secure the use of a search firm
when seeking a new head of school. Schools share with the firms their requirements for candidates and the search firms spend extensive time getting to know the schools’ and boards’ objectives in order to present potential finalists. A fuller understanding of what schools are looking for in candidates was gained by speaking directly with board members who had recently chaired a head of school hiring committee, and by search firms who are responsible for gathering potential pools of qualified applicants for boards. This revealed that gender bias, conscious or unconscious, exists in the search process as well as whether leadership development programs impacted hirers when considering head of school candidates. Three search firms were interviewed, as well as four head of school search committee chairs who had recently (in the prior 12 months) hired heads of school.

Women Rising was selected because it is one of the few single-sex, yearlong programs for women who are seeking leadership advancement in independent schools. This program used gender equity studies to build its curriculum and address its theory of change (see Appendix A). Women Rising is based in California, and the program takes place in both San Francisco and Los Angeles. Women self-select into the program and commit to participating for an entire school year. If the program is successful in helping women pursuing leadership positions, the successful elements of Women Rising could be used in other women’s leadership programs or facilitate the creation of programs focused on women and independent school leadership.

All 73 past participants of Women Rising were asked to participate in the program’s evaluation via an online survey. At least two women from each cohort in each program (Women Rising SF and Women Rising LA) were interviewed about their experience, resulting in 13 interviews. Interviews helped to identify motivational factors that affect women as they plan
their leadership career paths and revealed more detail as to how the program may, if at all, increase applications to leadership positions, particularly that of head of school.

**Program Description**

Women Rising addresses the issues identified as challenges to women in school leadership and barriers to the headship: networking, mentoring, leadership styles, motherhood/family, application language, and the interview process (Feibelman, 2013; Ostos, 2012; Pernambuco-Wise, 2012; Tallerico, 2000). The program is a yearlong rather than short-term leadership program, and previous studies have shown that programs lasting more than 30 hours have more success in promoting long-term change (Boyle et al., 2004; Garet et al., 2001; Guskey & Yoon, 2009).

The topics addressed in Women Rising include: identifying the benefit of different leadership styles (Northouse, 2015; Prime et al., 2009); identifying and growing mentor relationships (Peters, 2010; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010); demystifying the application and interview process (Hoang, 2009; Newton, 2006; Skrla, 1999); investigating the work/home balance (Feibelman, 2013; Pernambuco-Wise, 2012); and creating a network of other women in independent school leadership (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Sherman, 2005). These topics were chosen based on the barriers discussed in multiple studies of women and school leadership.

The program begins with an overnight retreat at a local retreat space, followed by four meetings that are held at local independent schools. These meetings focus on self-reflection, skill building (public speaking, giving and receiving feedback, and learning how to network), peer support, and discussions about mentorship (in one cohort, participants were matched with women currently in independent school leadership while in other cohorts women were encouraged to identify a mentor on their own). By addressing these topics, the program hopes to
assist women as they become more knowledgeable about themselves and their leadership styles, create a network of women in independent schools, and ultimately allow participants to grow in confidence to apply for (and eventually gain) leadership positions.

**Significance of the Research for Solving the Problem/Public Engagement**

With little change in the independent head of school leadership gender gap, it is important to investigate reasons why such a gap still exists. Understanding what schools look for in candidates, the hiring process, and the leadership experience of women who have attended Women Rising may offer knowledge regarding what actions may support the closing of the gender gap. This study is useful to CATDC in order to track their results and make changes if needed. The findings can be used in CATDC publications that are sent to member schools to further enhance discussions regarding women in school leadership and potentially increase the number of women benefitting from Women Rising.

Beyond CATDC, the gender equity issue has been a focus of NAIS for over 30 years (NAIS, 2015). This study could be useful in showing any parts of the program that are successful so that other programs can replicate those elements to better assist women seeking school leadership. Accrediting bodies for independent schools such as NAIS and the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) present publications and conferences where the findings of this evaluation can be shared on a state and national level. Placement firms have also expressed interest in the evaluation’s findings so that they can better support gender equity in school leadership. If it is shown to be successful, elements of Women Rising could serve as a model for the creation of nationwide women’s professional development groups.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

This study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of a yearlong women’s leadership program whose goal is to help women interested in school leadership apply for and gain leadership positions, which may inspire them to pursue the headship, thus reducing the gender gap in independent school leadership. This review first examines the competing feminist theories of structural feminism and neoliberalism. The structural feminist theory argues that gender bias can only be corrected through the change of society’s structures and proposes that definitions of leadership focus on masculine traits are a result of societal constructs (Bjork, 2000; Garn & Brown, 2008; Nichols & Nichols, 2014; Stead, 2014). These constructs reinforce the gender gap in school education, which perpetuates the belief of the men-as-school-leaders mentality. This construct is especially true in independent schools where traditions preserve the upper class and its constructs, including patriarchy. The other theory, neoliberal feminism, places ownership of advancement in the hands of women. Neoliberal feminism emphasizes the importance of the individual and the need for self-efficacy (Lakämper, 2017; K. Miller & Plencner, 2018; Rottenberg, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). Women Rising leans toward neoliberal feminism, even quoting the phrase lean in on its webpage.

The review then examines a number of interventions that have tried to address the challenges women face to become heads of school, including the need for self-efficacy. An exploration of leadership development programs and gender-specific program outcomes then reveals the importance of studying a long-term women-centric leadership program. The present study investigated the potential positive impact Women Rising may have in closing the independent school leadership gender gap.
Competing Theories

To understand the theories focusing on gender equity, we must understand the difference between sex and gender. **Sex** refers to the biological category that is based on the sexual organs with which one is born (male or female). **Gender**, on the other hand, is a societal construct that has created norms and expectations of *men* versus *women*\(^1\) (Crossman, 2016). Most studies regarding gender equity utilize feminist theory, which dates back hundreds of years. Modern feminist theory is based on the women’s movement of the late 20th century; while the early women’s movement focused on looking at women as one entity in order to fight for women’s suffrage, the later feminist movement looks at individuals, social constructs, and gender identities to overcome any oppression or inequality occurring in society (Beasley, 1999; Cott, 1987).

Feminist theory has become a blanket term for those whose works promote equity by exposing forces that support oppression and injustice, particularly in regard to objectification, power, and patriarchy\(^2\) (Frost & Elichaoiff, 2014; McNay, 1992). Crossman (2016) categorizes feminist theories by the general approach to their studies: gender differences, gender inequality, gender oppression, and structural oppression. Two key theories for framing the study of women in school leadership are structural feminism and neoliberal feminism.

**Structural feminism.** Structural feminism explores women’s experiences through the lens of structural oppression, societal constructs, and power relations. Heavily based on the works of Foucault (Adams St. Pierre, 2000; Olssen, 2014), structural feminism helps explain the traditional belief about what a *good* school leader is, especially in regard to *masculine* leadership.

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\(^1\) For simplicity, this paper takes a binary perspective of gender but acknowledges that this conversation will shift as gender identities becomes more fluid and encompassing of all people’s gender choices.

\(^2\) Patriarchy, as defined by Weedon (1987) “refers to power relations in which women’s interests are subordinated to the interests of men” (p. 2).
styles. The history of school leadership shows a pattern of large gender gaps, particularly in the highest school leadership positions (superintendents in public schools and heads of school at independent schools). Social constructs reflected in school leadership create barriers for women pursuing school leadership, including the lack of mentors, the need to balance work and family, and the issue of self-efficacy.

Structuralism holds basic assumptions about language, meaning, and subjectivity (Olssen, 2014; Weedon, 1987). Structuralists argue that any study of underlying structures in society is going to be a biased and misinterpreted process, as the writer has been culturally conditioned (Jones, 1998). Structuralists study the subject and also the systems in which the subject was produced and exists.

By acknowledging that current discourse can be deconstructed, studies can question societal norms and truths in historical context and as constructs of those in power (Tisdell, 1998); instead of continuing gender studies in the established masculine discourse, studies can focus on women’s experiences contextually, taking into account history, language, and power. Because the gender roles have led to men being leaders and women being mothers, the power has been given to and retained by men. By acknowledging history and deconstructing it, women can help to create equity for themselves in regard to school leadership positions.

Structural feminism recognizes gender as a legitimate category of analysis (Frost & Elichaoff, 2014; Grogan, 2000) and challenges accepted norms, such as the traditional look and leadership style of a head of school. Understanding that White men have created the concept of good leadership in America allows structural feminists a context that can be deconstructed and reconstructed to be more inclusive; women cannot be studied without exploring the established structures in schools as well the society in which they exist.
Neoliberal feminism. Neoliberal feminism explores women’s experiences through the lens of individual empowerment to overcome structural biases. Most people are familiar with neoliberal feminism as expressed in Sheryl Sandberg’s (2013) *Lean In.* Sandberg argues that women need to become more self-confident and that as women take on more and more leadership positions in society, they can individually attack, and then ultimately, after they *take their places at the [board] table,* they will eradicate society’s biases. This philosophy changes equity issues from structural problems to individual problems. As for current societal barriers, Sandberg argues they can be navigated. Her main concept has three aspects: women need to internalize the revolution, *lean in* (seek and obtain leadership positions), and close the leadership ambition gap by building their self-esteem. As compared to structural feminists who believe that society needs to be rebuilt before substantial equity can occur, neoliberal feminists feel that individuals moving into leadership will eventually overpower the long-held gender biases that currently exist.

Neoliberalism is not a new idea proposed by Sandberg; years before *Lean In* was published, political theorist Wendy Brown (2006) wrote about the power that comes from people following ambitions and striving for individual goals. Neoliberalism also has its roots in the work of Foucault, who wrote about the importance of human capital and as a government mentality (Barry et al., 1996; Scharff, 2012). In neoliberalism, individuals themselves are entrepreneurs of their own life and in control of improving their situations in life (Scharff, 2012). This empowerment of the individual is celebrated by some and rebuffed by others.

Three neoliberal feminism concepts are seen as problematic to some of its opponents: the concept that gender inequalities become a consequence of individual choices, that solutions are left to the individual, and that women’s success is rooted in capitalism (Ferguson, 2017).
Looking at gender issues as an individual and not as a society limits the responsibilities of those who are biased and places the responsibility of overcoming gender bias on women. Also, neoliberal feminism does not take into account intersectionality. It is argued that these feminists are mostly middle- to upper-class White women who are able to not work and who have a spouse who shares some of the responsibility of child-rearing (Lakämper, 2017; McRobbie, 2013; Scarff, 2014). The rest of the women are left behind while others achieve their individual goals.

Neoliberal feminism, however, empowers women to challenge gender inequities independently and not wait for a greater social shift to occur. This allows women the chance to come up with creative solutions in order to overcome barriers and find success in gender-biased societies (Ferguson, 2017; Rottenberg, 2013). This ability to be responsible for oneself and one’s potential may inspire women to pursue leadership positions that they previously thought were closed to them.

**The Long-standing Belief that Men are Leaders**

As they have historically been in power, men established gender constructs through laws, religion, and economic practices that reflect patriarchal values (Acker, 1992; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). Men continue to dominate political leadership; even though women are 50.7% of American citizens (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016), there has not been a woman president, and only 20% of Senate members and 19.6% of Congress members are women (Center for American Women and Politics [CAWP], 2018). Organizations copy this same male-centric leadership expectation, putting in place structures that are designed for and fit the lives of leaders who are men (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Ibarra et al., 2013). Academic researchers mostly ignored the issue of gender and the workplace until the Women’s Movement of the 1970s (Chemers, 1997).
Even with the momentum gained from that movement, there still exists a large gender gap of women in leadership.

Women earn 57% of bachelor degrees, 60% of master’s degrees, and more than 50% of doctoral degrees, making up almost 50% of the American workforce (Catalyst, 2016; Guo, 2014; Northouse, 2015), yet they do not have equity in business leadership positions. Forty-four percent of women work at S&P 500 companies, but only 4% hold the position of CEO (Catalyst, 2016). Studies show that organizations that have gender diversity in leadership teams outperform those leadership teams that are made up of a majority of men (Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger, & Baumgarten, 2007; Welbourne, Cychota, & Ferrante, 2007). In his 19-year study of 215 Fortune 500 firms, Adler (2009) found a strong correlation between companies that aggressively promoted women to executive positions and higher profit gains. The 25 firms with the best record of promoting women were 18-69% more profitable than the medium earnings of Fortune 500 companies. It begs the question that if women in leadership can potentially improve company earnings, why are businesses still overwhelmingly led by men?

Men established the idea of what good leadership entails, and therefore leadership reflects *masculine* traits as positive leadership traits. These masculine traits include being tough, logical, and unemotional (Gardiner et al, 2000; Lambert, 2002; McGuire & Reger, 2003; S. Miller, Washington, & Fiene, 2006). In his 1959 study, Mann examined small groups and identified leaders as having six strong traits; one of those traits was masculinity. Almost 30 years later, another study also identified masculinity as a strong leadership trait (Lord, de Vader, & Alliger, 1986). In 2005, Harvard professor Stephen Pinker declared that women are not natural leaders, but men are (Sommers, 2005). This tradition of seeing masculinity as part of leadership
has led to discrimination against women leaders (Coleman, 2003; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Northhouse, 2015; Watson & Hoffman, 2004).

Evidence suggests that leadership roles are becoming more gender-neutral (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011), but the masculine construct of leadership is still pervasive (Carli & Eagly, 1999; Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014). One overwhelming argument for men as leaders is the belief that men take charge and women take care (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Hoyt, Simon & Innella, 2011; Ibarra et al., 2013; Loder, 2005). Women are acknowledged for their strength in interpersonal skills, but being caring and good with people are seen as traits that do not reflect strength, a priority leadership trait for some (Rivers & Barnett, 2015). With leadership still seen as masculine, some women have tried to adjust and be more manly in their leadership style; studies show that when women do this, they can be punished for not being feminine enough or for being labeled a bitch (a negative trait) as compared to the men’s adjective of aggressive (a positive trait) (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hoyt et al., 2011; Northouse, 2015).

Gender stereotypes, especially when it comes to leadership, are well-documented and persistent (Gorman, 2005; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Northhouse, 2015). These biases are clearly a disadvantage to women who are interested in leadership (Northhouse, 2015), not just in the business world but also in schools.

**School Leadership and the Gender Gap**

The belief that men are leaders influenced the creation of school leadership positions. In the context of school leadership, Grogan (2000) confirmed: “Those with the power to define good practice are the male administrators whose experiences form the basis for most texts and much of the early research on the profession” (p. 127). The majority of studies on gender
disparity in educational leadership support the established construct of men as stronger school leadership candidates than women (Burkman, 2011; Coleman, 2003; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). School leadership has historically been associated with what are thought of as masculine traits, including but not limited to problem-solving, confidence, and competitiveness (Hoang, 2009; Newton, 2006; Skrla, 1999). Hirers seem to continue to believe that the perceived male managerial leadership style is best for superintendents and heads, the CEOs of schools (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Nogay & Beebe, 2008).

The superintendency was created in the late 1830s to implement state initiatives and supervise teachers (Kowalski, 2005). The position has since changed and grown into a managerial and not a master teacher’s role (Blount, 1998; Newton, 2006), with superintendents seen as more like corporate leaders than experts of educational knowledge and pedagogy (Grogan, 2000). Although more women than men work at schools, men are overwhelmingly the superintendents of school districts (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Wallace, 2015).

Before the superintendency was established, male teachers led their schools in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Women were only welcomed as teachers in the mid 1800s after industrialization drew men away from teaching (Blount, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1989). As women became teachers, leadership positions were created for men (Newton, 2006). In her research of the history of school leadership, Kafka (2009) discussed the large number of women who were able to move into school leadership positions during the early 20th century, particularly during World Wars I and II (as men were serving in the military). Ella Flagg Young (as cited in Blount, 1998), the first woman superintendent of Chicago schools, stated in 1909 when she took the role, “In the near future we will have more women than men in executive charge of the vast educational system… [women are] no longer satisfied to do the greatest part of the work and yet
be denied leadership” (p. 1). However, post-World War II saw an active recruitment of men as school leaders by schools, states, and the federal government. The hiring processes at the end of World War II solidified school leadership as being for men and supported the perceived belief that men are school leaders and women are teachers (Newton, 2006; Skrla, 1999).

As the Women’s Movement of the 1960s and 1970s began, women fought for work and pay equity in schools. Title IX, signed into law in 1972, was meant to address some of the issues in school leadership regarding sex. Title IX has been beneficial, resulting in a growth of women in school leadership in the past 43 years (Long, 2010; Mertz, 2006). However, Title IX has not closed the school leadership gender gap. The current superintendent statistics support the established preconception that men are preferred as school leaders (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Long, 2010; S. Miller et al., 2006; Wallace, 2015).

In their collection of data regarding paths to the superintendency, Brunner and Kim (2010) found that the majority of men superintendents have a more direct career path, going immediately from being a secondary school principal to superintendent, whereas women tend to enter into the superintendency through a more indirect route, starting with the elementary principalship. In fact, the majority of women superintendents enter administration in elementary schools (48.3% were elementary school principals) or in district offices as specialist directors or coordinators (57.4%). Whereas most men move directly from high school principal to superintendent, most women move from being an elementary school principal to a district director/coordinator to an assistant/associate superintendent and finally to superintendent.

The men-as-school-leaders model has been in place for over two centuries. This belief is even more embedded at independent schools, as their history is steeped in the world of
patriarchy, their original purpose being the education of elite boys and assumed future leaders, as supported by the constructs of language regarding gender and leadership roles.

**Independent School Leadership**

Like the superintendency in public schools, the head of school is considered the highest administrative role in independent schools. In this study, an independent school is defined as a non-profit, self-governing body that has a goal of preparing students for colleges and universities. It is not part of a school system but stands on its own as an incorporated non-profit (typically as a 501(c)3 entity) governed by its own board of trustees (Powell, 1996). Independent schools are able to operate independently of most state and federal mandates, defining and following their own mission (Pernambuco-Wise, 2012). The NAIS states that one of the characteristics independent schools possess is that of high standards of educational equity, and yet the tuition keeps many from being able to afford an independent school (Chubb & Clark, 2015).

Although different in many ways, the superintendency and the private school headship overlap in their male-centric tradition of the definition of leadership. Similar to the gender gaps of superintendents, there are a disproportionate number of men in independent school leadership, particularly as heads of school. Looking at California as an example, where Women Rising is offered for women interested in independent school leadership, 60% of all CAIS member schools had men as heads in the 2016-2017 school year. In member schools that included or were high school level grades (9 to 12), the percentage rose to 66%. The surprisingly disproportionate number of men as heads, though, was revealed when one takes out single sex schools (11 of the 13 single sex schools in California are all girls schools). When one focused on coeducational independent schools that include or are limited to grades nine to 12, men were heads of 74% of
CAIS accredited schools. This number reflects the national statistic as men lead approximately 73% of coeducational independent schools (NAIS, 2015).

Independent schools only serve 1% of the nation’s students (approximately 675,115 students; NAIS, 2015), but this 1% is made up mostly of elite families, families whose power supports the constructs of gender bias (Persell & Cookson, 1985; Powell, 1996). Dating from their beginning, independent schools attracted parents who preferred a homogeneous community for their students and therefore chose schools that reflected their society’s norms (Heskel & Dyer, 2008; Powell, 1996; Semel, 1992). Both the formal and informal education students receive at independent schools prepares them to operate successfully in a world that is occupied by similar people (Persell & Cookson, 1985). This world was constructed by a patriarchal society. By teaching students how to function in that world rather than how to create equity, independent schools continue to support the gender gap. In order to create change, schools need to reflect on the inequalities that exist in society and that are manifested in their own school structures (Eshoo, 2015; Shakeshaft, 1989).

Independent schools were founded mostly for the education of boys, as women did not regularly attend colleges until the middle of the 20th century. In 1950, 36% of independent school students were female, which increased to 48% in 1990. The increase of girls as students resulted in many single sex schools becoming coeducational. In 1915, 95% of independent schools were single sex, but by 1979 86% of schools were coeducational. This shift increased men as school heads; when girls’ schools became coeducational, the board would often hire a man to be the new head of school (Powell, 1996), a pattern that continues today.

Independent schools began identifying themselves as family schools in the late 19th century and continue to do so today (Feibelman & Haakmat, 2010; Ostos, 2012; Powell, 1996).
The idea of the school as a family supports the patriarchal society in which they were created, one in which a man as father sets the rules and is seen as the authority figure in the household (Feibelman & Haakmat, 2010; Powell, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1989). This image of a school as a family only continues the cycle of seeing men as leaders in our patriarchal society.

Despite the fact that women hold the majority of mid-level administrative positions (such as department chairs), women only serve as heads of approximately one-third of independent schools (NAIS, 2015). Independent schools focus on holistic educational experiences for their student bodies, and the gender gap in upper leadership (namely the headship) is a learning experience for independent school students (Ostos, 2012). The images of leadership that children see at schools create the paradigm for how they see the world and make decisions (Zirkel, 2001). Seeing men as school leaders helps support and continue the societal construct of men as leaders. The gender imbalance in independent school leadership is a timely issue, as the NAIS (2015) reports that two-thirds of school heads are retiring in the next 5 years, creating an opportunity for more women to enter the head of school position.

**Additional Barriers for Women**

Due to the societal construct of men as leaders, women face barriers to school leadership that men do not. Studies show that formalized mentoring programs benefit women who want to become school leaders, and mentors can help women aspiring to be independent school leaders navigate the headship application process (Feibelman, 2013; Pernambuco-Wise, 2012). A mentor is someone who acts as a guide, role model, or coach to a less experienced professional (Searby & Tripses, 2006), serving as someone to whom a person can turn for advice and support in her career search, as well as to show others that women can succeed in leadership positions (Augustine-Shaw & Funk, 2013; Peters, 2010). Numerous studies show the important role
mentors play in helping aspiring school leaders (Peters, 2010; Raskin, Haar, & Robicheau, 2010; Seibert, Sargent, Kraimer, & Kiazad, 2016). Yet with the low number of women as heads of schools, women seeking leadership positions have a limited number of potential women mentors who hold the headship position. Men have many more opportunities and options to identify mentors who are similar to themselves.

Mentoring practices have supported the perceived existence of a good old boys’ network and have served to keep White men in power (Searby & Tripses, 2006). In their 2008 study, Hoff and Mitchell found that 40% of men and 74% of women respondents believed that this unofficial group exists, resulting in some women not even trying for school leadership positions as they already felt like an outsider. In his 2005 qualitative study of 41 female school administrators, Loder cited multiple studies showing that these deeply entrenched good old boys’ networks support men, and women lack the same availability of mentors and support when applying for the headship.

In her definitive study on women in school leadership, Shakeshaft (1989) discussed the need for women to have women mentors in Women in Educational Administration. Interacting with successful women who are both mentors and role models can help women as they seek to move up the school leadership hierarchy (Raskin et al., 2010; Shakeshaft, 1989). Due to the small number of women in school leadership, both in the superintendency and the headship, some women have reached out to men as mentors. Many women with men as mentors found them to approach their advice with a masculine mentality, not taking into account the different experiences women have (Feibelman & Haakmat, 2010; Pernambuco-Wise, 2012).

There is a consensus that women need to be able to see other women succeed in the headship and to be able to seek out their advice (Augustine-Shaw & Funk, 2013; Raskin et al.,
The access to women mentors and the networks to which they connect can be as important as performance for achieving leadership positions (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 2016). Studies have shown the importance of connecting women school leaders with other women interested in the headship in order to create mentoring relationships (McGuire & Reger, 2003; Peters, 2010; Searby & Tripses, 2006).

A typical conflict for women interested in the headship that would be helpful to discuss with mentors is that between the roles of school leader and mother. Women who are mothers and are interested in school leadership often have to defend their commitment to the job. Studies show that due to women’s familial obligations (as wives and mothers), hirers have questioned whether women are capable of being focused, committed, and effective educational leaders (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). One study asked 192 undergraduates (84 men and 108 women) to rate people applying for a midlevel marketing job, with status of parent or nonparent marked on the application. Both men and women rated the mother applicants as less committed and less suitable for hiring and future promotions (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007). The construct of women as mothers is already imbedded at a young age, as shown by the college students who participated in the study, resulting in discrimination against women who have chosen to have both children and a career. Hirers are prejudiced against mothers because they have the second job of raising their family (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006).

One study that showed women in college underestimate the benefits of working mothers for children and overestimate the damage of working mothers on children (Goldberg & Lucas-Thompson, 2014). At an early age, women have been socialized to think of themselves as mothers first, adding the stress of feeling they need to balance their homes and their careers (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Pernambuco-Wise, 2012). Pressures that women face to hold school
leadership positions in a patriarchal society cause motherhood to be a new form of sexism in the workplace (Rivers & Barnett, 2015).

A study of independent school administrators (both men and women) interested in the headship asked participants to list their five greatest fears and concerns about being a head of school. Women listed the impact on their relationship with their spouse as their second highest concern and impact on their family as their third highest concern. Men listed impact on their family as their fifth concern (on a list of five) and did not list a concern about their relationship with their spouse (Scott, 1997). This pressure to be able to do it all holds women back from applying for the head of school position (Feibelman, 2013; Ostos, 2012; Pernambuco-Wise, 2012; Scott, 1997). The drive to find a balance between work and home is not a pressure men face, and may add to the reason why some women lack self-efficacy (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

Many women doubt their ability to lead schools; studies have shown that women (either with or without children) doubt their leadership abilities (AAUW, 2016; Isaac, Kaatz, Lee, & Carnes, 2012; Seibert et al., 2016; Superville, 2016). One study of women administrators showed that women who lacked self-efficacy had a harder time seeing themselves as leaders. Self-efficacy, rooted in the work of Bandura (1977, 1991), refers to one’s belief in her capability to perform successfully in different situations. Leadership self-efficacy refers to the belief that one has the ability to succeed in a leadership capacity (Isaac et al., 2012).

The doubt some women feel about their capabilities may be a result of childhood learning. Boys are taught to be confident at an early age, whereas girls tend to undervalue their achievements (Schunk & Meece, 2006). Self-efficacy continues to lessen as women grow older; a Princeton study showed women who were admitted to and attended the university and similar
colleges reported lower self-confidence and were less likely to identify themselves as leaders than equally qualified men (Keohane et al., 2011). Like the women at Princeton who expressed interest in leadership but did not pursue more prestigious offices such as the president of student government, adult women also show interest in business leadership but lack the self-efficacy to pursue certain roles. Out of 2,410 women surveyed in one study, two-thirds expressed a desire to be a senior leader but less than half (40%) were able to see themselves as being able leaders (KPMG, 2015). Where women wait to apply for leadership positions until they feel they possess all the necessary skills, men will apply even if they do not meet all the position requirements (Ibarra et al., 2013).

Participants in a study on people who showed interest in the independent school headship were asked about the greatest obstacle for attaining a head of school position. Women said self-doubt while men reported a lack of postgraduate degree (Scott, 1997). Lacking self-efficacy keeps women from applying for and can affect their ability to achieve leadership positions. Appearing confident was shown to relate to hiring and promotion decisions for applicants (Smith, 2013).

The final gendered issue for women, if offered a headship, is the pay gap they will face; school boards typically offer women educational leaders a lower salary than their male counterparts. In Correll et al.’s (2007) study, college students were asked to assess applicants for jobs, and they rated mothers as deserving of lower salaries while the opposite was true for men. Men who had children were more likely to be hired and recommended to receive much higher salaries than men without children or women, regardless of children or not. This perception of gender bias impacting salary is indeed shown to be true in heads of school’s salaries.
The income gap for women heads of schools versus men heads of schools has actually increased in the past decade. In the 2005-2006 school year, the median salary for a women head of school was $142,500 and a man’s salary was $162,000 (women made 88% of what men made). In the 2015-2016 school year, the median salary for a woman head of school was $200,008 and a man’s salary was $240,000 (women made 83% of what men made; NAIS, 2015). Based on these trends, women would benefit from programs that help them understand and practice salary negotiation.

Leadership Development Programs

Many programs focus on leadership development for people interested in school leadership. These programs offer participants the opportunity to learn and grow in their leadership abilities (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007; Corcoran, 2016; Seibert et al., 2016). Cohort models have specifically been identified as highly useful ways to address leadership development (Killingsworth, Cabezas, Kensler, & Brooks, 2010; Preis, Grogan, Sherman, & Beaty, 2007). Being in a cohort allows the opportunity for participants to share with one another and stimulates conversations (Bruner, Greenlee, & Hill, 2007; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011).

Studies show that organization of leadership development programs can be kept broad in themes and topics in order to focus on what each specific cohort may need (Bruner et al., 2007). Graduates of school leadership programs have been shown to create positive organizational transformation (Hopkins, O’Neil, Passarelli, & Bilimoria, 2008). People interested in independent school leadership may apply to the yearlong NAIS Fellowship for Aspiring Heads, one of the best-known independent school leadership development programs. This program has graduated over 580 participants since its beginning in 2004. In order to be eligible to apply for one of the 30 spots available each year, a person must work at a member school, be an
administrator for 3 or more years, have (or be working on completing) a master’s degree, and have the support of the head of school, including the school’s commitment to pay the $5,100 program fee (which does not include travel expenses). Those who do not work at an NAIS member school or who do not have the support of their current head cannot apply. These requirements make the program exclusive and unavailable to many people. The average number of women participants in the Aspiring Heads program for the past 10 years is 41%, which includes 2 years where women made up only 27% of the cohort (NAIS, 2017).

One of the major issues with school leadership development programs is the lack of focus on gender issues. Women are reluctant to share their thoughts on their gendered experiences (Stead, 2014), and many programs ignore gender altogether, either assuming it does not matter or that women need to learn to be a part of the already constructed idea of leadership (which is masculine in nature; Ely et al., 2011). Programs that ignore gender fail to help women cope with the gender biases they face and can keep women from developing fully into school leaders (Ely et al., 2011; Stead, 2014). For leadership programs to serve participants, especially women, they need to acknowledge that schools are constructed with gender biases, often led by men in a position that was created for men (Hopkins et al., 2008). Women in one study of a mixed gender leadership program shared that they felt frustrated and did not fit in the program because their comments about gender bias were ignored (Stead, 2014). To better help women who are interested in developing their skills as school leaders, single-gendered programs should be offered to serve women’s needs.

Offering women-only leadership programs allows participants to make the link between gender constructs and their experiences as women (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002). Sharing in a collective narrative allows women to understand and challenge gender constructs, opening up the
possibility of change (Stead, 2014). Women-only leadership programs increase the likelihood of women gaining leadership roles (Ely et al., 2011). Being around other women allows participants to be their authentic selves, not trying to replicate the masculine styles of leadership often emphasized in mixed gender programs (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002). Facilitators can tailor the programs’ content to take gender into consideration. Given that women have experiences different from their male counterparts, it is important that leadership development programs are created to meet women’s specific needs (Hopkins et al., 2008).

It has been shown that women can create a safe space to share and become more proactive in their career paths in single gender leadership development programs, clarifying work and family roles and facing issues specific to gender (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002). One of the programs available to women interested in independent school leadership is limited to 35 women a year. To apply, women must work at a member school of the organization and have the school commit to the $775 fee (which does not include travel and hotel). Similar to the NAIS program, these application parameters make the program unavailable for many women. Out of 852 past program participants, only 79 (9.2%) have gone on to become heads. One reason for this may be the short length of the program; the seminar is only 3 days long. That program is similar to most independent school women’s leadership programs, which last anywhere from 1-4 days, such as CATDC’s Women in Leadership workshop (1 day), the North Carolina Association of Independent School’s Women in Leadership Conference (3 days), and L+D’s Wonder Women! Program (4 days). In such a short amount of time, key leadership, cultural, and gender issues are omitted (Bruner et al., 2007).

Short-length professional development programs often show no lasting impact, and they do not allow for the creation of any network or mentor relationships. In order to make a
difference for participants, a program must take place over a longer amount of time, preferably a year, in order to have a positive impact on learning (Boyle et al., 2004; Garet et al., 2001). One study showed that 77% of 779 participants in a yearlong professional development program showed change in their practices (Boyle et al., 2004), supporting the argument that positive outcomes come from long-term programs.

Research suggests that women in independent schools would benefit from a non-exclusive, affordable, long-term leadership development program for women that focuses specifically on the gender issues they will face as they rise in school leadership positions. Women Rising satisfies these requirements, and a study of its success is imperative to see if such a program can affect the independent school gender leadership gap.
CHAPTER THREE

Research Methods

The independent school leadership gap has seen no significant change in the past ten years. Talking to leadership program participants, search firms, and head of school search committee chairs will reveal what gendered aspects of the head of school search may exist and better understand how leadership development programs may help women who are interested in applying for upper administration in independent schools, particularly to the headship position. CATDC’s Women Rising is a unique yearlong leadership program that focuses on independent school leadership and is open only to women. This study evaluates the program to see if it is successful in encouraging women to apply for the headship. By having more women entering the pipeline of potential school heads, independent schools could close the large leadership gender gap. To accomplish this evaluation, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways, if any, does a yearlong women’s leadership program have on leadership career trajectories of participants?
   a. How does participation in such a program increase the number of women applying to the head of school position, if at all?

2. What impact, if any, does participation in a yearlong women’s leadership program have on increasing the number of women hired as heads of schools?

Research Design

This study utilized a multiple methods design as it allowed me to capture data from interviews with individuals as well a large group of respondents (Merriam, 2009); the survey gathered perceptions of 42 of 73 past participants of Women Rising while also exploring the experiences and perceptions of boards’ search committees and search firms. Multiple methods
involves both quantitative and qualitative methods that complement strengths of both methods and prevent overlap of weaknesses (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib, & Rupert, 2007; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2002). This study consisted of a past participant survey (see Appendix B) and interviews of past participants, search firms, and search committee chairs (see interview protocols in Appendices C, D, & E).

The survey allowed me to gather data from past participants, including opinions and experiences of the program as well as any career changes that occurred since they completed Women Rising, and if those changes were influenced by the program. The data gathered were limited in depth of information due to the nature of a survey; most questions were closed-ended and did not allow for an expansion of experience descriptions. The interviews of past participants were limited in numbers but allowed me to ask probing questions to gain a depth of understanding about the interviewees’ experiences in Women Rising. I was able to expand on questions asked of participants and their experiences, hearing firsthand accounts and having the ability to ask probing questions to understand why they feel (or do not feel) the program helped them to achieve leadership positions.

The interviews of three search firms and four schools’ head of school search committee chairs allowed me to understand the search process and aspects that may affect women applicants. The interviews gave me the opportunity to talk to those who participate in the hiring of heads of schools and see what qualities they were seeking in head of school candidates, as well as investigate any gender bias that may have existed. In order to understand if experiences vary in different schools, my interview protocols allowed me to ask probing questions about individual schools and search firms (see Appendices D & E). The interviews also enabled me to
ask follow-up questions so that I could better understand the why behind answers as well as gather anecdotal evidence.

The Women Rising surveys and interviews asked past participants about their program experiences, which included any mentoring activities and the creation of networks. I was able to use the two forms of data collection to triangulate findings to determine if the personal experiences shared in the interviews aligned with the participants’ overall experiences. Multiple methods helped me to understand the general experience of participants and how many of the participants have advanced in their careers, whereas the interviews allowed me to ask follow-up questions and gather anecdotal evidence.

The survey sought to understand past participants’ career trajectories after the program and examine opinions of Women Rising and ways the program encouraged them to apply for leadership positions, if at all. The women’s responses were used as a way to study the success of the program in its goal for women to obtain leadership positions and perhaps ultimately apply for and gain the headship. Survey data showed the number of women who advanced in leadership since participating in the program, those who found the program worthwhile, and those who have altered their career paths after participating in the program. The survey helped with the creation of the interview themes, and the data also guided the formation of the interview protocol. I also noted comments made in the open-ended survey questions that needed further explanations so that I could ask probing questions on those topics.

The interviews allowed me to determine if the data gathered from surveys were reflected in what the interviewees said. In order to understand if experiences varied in the sites in certain years, as shown in the surveys, I created an interview protocol that allowed me to ask probing
questions about anomalies. The interview also let me ask follow-up questions to the data collected in the surveys, so I could better understand the *why* behind survey answers.

**Site Selection and Participants**

The focus of the study was a professional development program, CATDC’s Women Rising, whose goal is to increase women in school leadership, not exclusively the headship. In order to understand the search process and how leadership programs affect candidate consideration, it was essential that I speak to firms and school board members who chaired search committees. The three firms selected help schools find potential heads of school candidates; one is regional (specific to one area of the United States) and two were national. The four schools were chosen from those independent schools that are coeducational, have grades nine to 12, and hired a new head for the 2018-2019 school year. The largest leadership gender gap exists in schools that offer high school grades and are coeducational, the reason for the parameters of schools looked at for this study.

The Women Rising program is for women in independent schools, lasts for a year, and addresses the core barriers for women trying to achieve the headship. The program takes place in two different locations, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Annual participant numbers at each site vary from 14 to 22. Participants work at various types of schools (for example, a single-sex middle school or a coeducational kindergarten through 12th grade school) and are of different demographics (for example, years working in independent schools and job titles). They are bound together, however, by their interest in school leadership and participation in Women Rising.

**Participants.** The interviews of search firms were conducted with representatives who have participated in school head searches. The firms are well-established and reputable in the
independent school world. By talking to members of three different search firms, I was able to compare their answers and determine if the data were similar or not. Doing so also protected validity, as one search firm may be different from another in its process of identifying candidates for the head of school position. The selection of four boards’ search committee chairs was similar in that it allowed me to see if there were similarities or anomalies in head of school searches, as well as increase validity by collecting data from multiple sources.

This study utilized purposeful sampling as it only included women who have completed the CATDC Women Rising program. I sent the survey to all 73 past participants and received 42 responses. I also used purposeful sampling from past participants of at least two women per site per year (3 years in San Francisco and 2 years in Los Angeles) for the one-on-one interviews, resulting in 13 interviews that added a richness of personal stories to the data collected from the surveys. By interviewing at least two members of each cohort at each site for each year of the program, I was able to determine if experiences were similar or different and what patterns emerged from their participation in Women Rising. Doing so also protected validity, as women were chosen from each site for each year of the program, avoiding capturing data from one year and one site where there may have been some anomaly. Due to time constraints, only two to four participants were selected from each site for each year of the program for interviews to determine if experiences were similar or varied per cohort, enriching my understanding of the way women experienced the program as well as the program’s potential success in its goals. These interviews gave me a deeper understanding of participants’ experiences that could not be gained from the survey. I triangulated these data with the survey data.

**Access.** As a past candidate with one search firm, I had built a relationship with a representative of that firm. He is interested in the gender gap issue and had previously offered his
assistance in my research. He then introduced me to another search firm representative who participated in head of school searches. I contacted her initially by email, and she agreed to participate in my survey. The final search firm representative was introduced to me when she spoke at a women’s leadership conference, sharing her experience as a past head of school. She now conducts head of school searches for a national search firm. She has assisted me with past research, and I approached her to seek her assistance as one of the search firm interviewees.

To find school search committee chairs, I first researched NAIS schools that were coeducational, included grades nine through 12, and had a new head of school for the 2018-2019 school year. I emailed board chairs by accessing their information on school websites (as nonprofits, schools are required to list board members). If I was unable find email addresses or phone numbers, I emailed the school to request the information. I reached out to six board chairs who introduced me to the search committee chair (if it was not him/her), and four agreed to participate in my research.

As a participant in the first cohort of Women Rising Los Angeles, I got to know the Los Angeles facilitator very well. Through her I was introduced to the CATDC president. In order to gain approval for my research and access to the program, I emailed the CATDC president for approval. She granted approval for the project and offered me access to the program participants’ names. I later met with the CATDC president in person at a conference, where she shared her excitement about my project. She took a short video of me explaining the study to show the CATDC board. The CATDC president also gave me the contact information for the facilitator of Women Rising San Francisco, and I called the facilitator to inform her about my project and ask for her participation. Both facilitators (San Francisco and Los Angeles) were willing to share
their curriculum information. My insider status, the support of the organization, and the nature of the organization allowed for more than a 50% participation rate from past participants (42 of 73).

Participant profiles. Of the 73 past Women Rising participants, 45 women completed the program in San Francisco (62%) and 28 women completed the program in Los Angeles (38%). Each site had its own facilitator who shaped the curriculum in different ways, which may have impacted participants’ experiences. The larger number of participants from San Francisco is due to the fact that the program began there in 2014-2015, whereas the Los Angeles program did not begin until 2015-2016. All of the past participants of Women Rising were emailed twice to invite them to participate in the survey, and 42 women completed the survey; no partially completed surveys were received. Of the survey respondents, 24 completed the program in San Francisco (53% of San Francisco participants, \( n = 45 \)) and 18 completed the program in Los Angeles (64% of Los Angeles participants, \( n = 28 \)); thus, there was a slightly higher response rate from the Los Angeles participant group. Looking at the years of participation, eight women from 2014-2015 participated in the survey, 18 women from 2015-2016 participated in the survey, and 16 women from 2016-2017 participated in the survey (see Table 1).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of participation</th>
<th>San Francisco</th>
<th>Los Angeles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>40% ((n = 20))</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>61.5% ((n = 13))</td>
<td>62.5% ((n = 16))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>67% ((n = 12))</td>
<td>67% ((n = 12))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In an effort to protect respondents’ identities, limited questions about personal identity were asked. The majority of respondents identified as White (as seen in Table 2), were employed at coeducational schools, and worked at schools that include grades 9-12. This is a typical
breakdown of participants in Women Rising. For context, I note that the majority of coeducational schools that include grades 9-12 have a man as head of school (NAIS, 2015).

Table 2

**Self-Identification of Race/Ethnicity**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian, White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the women identified themselves as currently serving in some sort of leadership position at their school (76%, n = 42). As noted in Table 3, this number does not align with the 74% (n = 42) who said they agree or strongly agree that they would like a full-time leadership position.

Table 3

**Interest in Serving in a Full-Time Leadership Position**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither disagree nor agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the women who self-identified as leaders, 18 of the 32 said they were in leadership for 5 or more years, and 22 identified as serving in a leadership position that was more than 50% of their job (versus teaching; see Tables 4 and 5).
Table 4

*Years Served in Independent School Leadership (Including Past and Current Roles)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

*Percentage of Job Dedicated to Leadership/Administration (versus Teaching)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80% or greater</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-79%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-39%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-20%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A (not currently in leadership)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I emailed all past participants in January 2018 to invite them to participate in the interview portion of the study (see Appendix F). I could not send the invitation only to those participants who had or had not completed the survey since the survey tool was anonymous. I received 16 responses and interviewed 13 women based on cohort location and year; at least two women from each year and each location were interviewed. The three women not interviewed were from the 2015-2016 Los Angeles cohort, and four women had already been selected from that cohort, so I did not do the additional three, as the interviews would have been based heavily on that cohort’s experience. One reason for the large number of volunteers from 2015-2016 Los Angeles cohort could be that I participated in Women Rising that year and the women knew me, therefore making them more inclined to participate.
Because the independent school world is so small, it can be difficult to maintain confidentiality. All interviewee names, schools, and other identifying information were therefore changed and/or limited to maintain confidentiality. As shown in Table 6, interviewees were:

Kelsey and Judy, who participated in the 2014-2015 San Francisco cohort; Sienna, Danielle, and Megan, who participated in the 2015-2016 San Francisco cohort; Ariel, Karen, Jenny, and Helen, who participated in the 2015-2016 Los Angeles cohort; Rose and Elena, who participated in the 2016-2017 San Francisco cohort; and Vivian and Natalie, who participated in the 2016-2017 Los Angeles cohort.

Table 6

Past Participant Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>San Francisco</th>
<th>Los Angeles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey</td>
<td>Ariel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>Ariel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sienna</td>
<td>Karen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>Jenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>Helen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Vivian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>Natalie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent search firms also pose a problem with confidentiality because of their limited numbers. As with the past participant interviewees, minimal descriptive information about search firm representatives can be provided. Pseudonyms reflect the appropriate gender of the search firm participant. As shown in Table 7, I interviewed: Bridget, who works with a national search firm; Patty, who works with a national search firm; and Ken, who works with a regional search firm (a firm that focuses on careers based in a specific part of the country).
I was purposeful in reaching out to schools that hired a new head of school for the 2018-2019 school year so that the hiring process was fresh in the minds of the search committee chairs. I reached out to six independent schools across the United States that were coeducational and included grades nine through 12 to continue the focus on schools where the majority of heads were men. I randomly selected the six schools from a list of schools that matched the aforementioned descriptions. I did not take into account if the search chair would be a man or a woman, nor did I consider the gender of the newly hired head, so that the selection could be truly random. Because of the limited number of schools that fit those parameters, very little information about the interviewees’ schools could be revealed or else confidentiality could have been compromised. Pseudonyms reflect the appropriate gender of the search firm participant. As shown in Table 7, the following interview participants were heads of the search committees and either board chairs or board members: Andrea (whose school hired a man), Mark (whose school hired a man), Wilma (whose school hired a man), and Ruth (whose school hired a woman).

**Data Collection Methods**

I contacted past participants in December 2017 and January 2018 to conduct phone interviews. The protocol was partially guided by the survey results and allowed for follow-up probing questions to topics raised by the survey data. The interviews closed with an opportunity for the past participants to share any additional comments that were not covered by my
questions. These interviews investigated whether (and if so, how) the program affected their career trajectories and/or their interest in the headship (answering RQ 1).

I exchanged emails with CATDC in September 2017 to determine the timeline for distributing the survey and reaching out to past participants for interviews. The survey questions were intended to provide a breadth of data and covered a larger sample, while the later interviews provided a depth to the data collected by the surveys. The surveys were sent to all women who completed the Women Rising program on October 12, 2017 by email with a link to a Google form (see Appendix F). A follow-up invitation to complete the survey was sent on October 24, 2017. The survey collected participant demographics and investigated whether (and if so, how) their involvement in Women Rising may have impacted their career trajectories and their interest level in the headship (answering RQ 1). The survey was rooted in past studies of women’s educational leadership (Coronel, Moreno, & Carrasco, 2010; Eagly, Karau, & Johnson, 1992; Fulmer, 2010; Giese, Slate, Brown, & Tejeda-Delgado, 2009; Pernambuco-Wise, 2012; Wessel, Hagiwara, Ryan, & Kermond, 2015) and was designed with the help of the Women Rising facilitators and the president of CATDC. The survey was pretested with one of the Women Rising facilitators as well as two women who are interested in leadership but did not participate in Women Rising. This survey was developed and pretested twice, once in March 2017 and again in September 2017.

I emailed the survey to all past participants of Women Rising, introducing the purpose of the study and inviting women with any questions to contact me directly. It was made clear in the email and on the survey instrument that responses would be kept confidential. The survey included five questions to acquire data regarding demographics and career changes (if any) and 10 questions regarding the program, school leadership, and beliefs (with one question having 15
sub questions on a Likert-style scale). Questions included, “In what ways, if any, did Women Rising affect your career path,” “Please identify your favorite part of Women Rising and explain why,” and “Do you have any additional comments or feedback about the program?” Both closed- and open-ended questions were asked, participants were told it the survey would take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The information was then gathered electronically. Data were reviewed and used to make any necessary adjustments to the past participant interview protocol.

Data also came from one-on-one phone interviews with at least two participants per site per year (13 women). These interviews investigated whether (and if so, how) involvement in Women Rising has impacted participants’ careers, their interest level in the headship position, and any feedback they have about their involvement in the Women Rising program (answering RQ 1). The protocol was partially guided by the survey results, which allowed for follow-up probing questions to topics raised by the survey data. The interviews closed with an opportunity for the past participants to share any additional thoughts that they were not asked.

Oral consent from all interviewees was obtained from each participant in order for me to record the interviews (using the NoNotes.com phone app). The interviews were transcribed immediately by the same service. All interviews had a semi-structured interview protocol, took an average of 40 minutes, and were conducted over the phone.

**Data Analysis**

Both past participants’ survey responses and interviews of past Women Rising participants were analyzed for emergent themes regarding changes in perceptions of the head of school position and their likeliness to pursue a headship position with a focus on understanding how the program influenced those changes. Survey responses were compared and analyzed to
determine if there were patterns of past participants’ pursing greater leadership responsibilities as well as interest in applying to be a head of school. I reviewed the data, looking for themes to emerge regarding the program’s influence on women’s interest in the headship as well as their interest in other leadership positions and if they have taken on new roles after completing Women Rising.

For the open-ended survey questions, I began with open coding and a list of potential themes before moving into an analytical coding process that required more categorization and interpretation (Maxwell, 2013). Beginning my initial coding in this way allowed themes to emerge from past participants’ responses and not forcing responses into predetermined coding categories. I also used what Saldaña (2016) called “eclectic coding” (p. 51). The first time I coded, I read through all of the open-ended responses and used both structural coding (identifying phrases that relate to the research questions and are content-based) and descriptive coding (topic-focused rather than content-based). I was able to come up with themes, and then I began a second round of coding that improved on the themes by utilizing pattern coding, when “categories are constructed emergently from the reorganized and categorization of participant data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 158). This process altered and eliminated some of my original categories.

As some questions were fixed response, there was a quantitative portion where I was able to look at descriptive statistics, including means and frequency counts. Survey data were analyzed to measure changes of perceptions of leadership due to Women Rising, ratings of Women Rising, and changes in careers. Data were collected and analyzed using SPSS and coded according to the themes that emerged from responses. Analysis included the use of simple regression and multiple regression analyses to look for significant predictor variables and
significant differences across sites and years of the program. Once all data were analyzed, final themes were established and then used for interview coding.

With the themes established by the survey analysis, the past participant interviews added depth to the survey response data by providing me the opportunity to ask probing questions. Interview data were analyzed using the transcribed recordings on Quirkos software. I first categorized the interviews by using categories established in the literature about women and school leadership. I coded using broad categories for the first few, then was able to identify reoccurring themes amid the interview transcripts. I then went back and coded the first few interviews, and I used the following broad categories, each having its own subcategories: leadership (general), leadership (women-specific), leadership search process, Women Rising, and other leadership professional development. I went through each category to confirm the quotes had been coded properly, and in cases where a quote had multiple codes, that it was placed in the best fitting category. I also reread the transcripts to review uncoded parts to make sure I did not miss any important data.

Similar to the process with past participant interviews, search firm and search committee chairs’ interviews were coded to find any emerging patterns regarding gender, professional development programs, and the leadership search. Although I ultimately used the same established categories for both groups’ responses, I coded them separately so as not to bias my coding process and outcomes. As with the past participants’ interviews, both search firms’ and boards’ search committee chairs’ interviews were analyzed using the transcribed recordings on Quirkos software. I also use “eclectic coding” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 51) with these interviews. I read through all of the interview transcripts and used both structural coding and descriptive coding. I derived my original categories, then I coded a second time to improve those themes by utilizing
pattern coding. As with the past participant interview coding, this process altered and eliminated some of my original categories. My final categories (with each category having subcategories) for these two groups were: leadership searches, board/search committee, women head of school applicants, desired head of school qualities, and leadership programs.

**Role Management**

When I proposed my project to CATDC, I did so as a past participant. I shared that my goal was to study how Women Rising helps women on their school leadership career path. My study was not to evaluate the program, but rather to examine past participants’ career paths and reflections on how the program impacted them. By presenting my interest in the program in this way, I did not have a problem receiving buy-in from CATDC and the facilitators of Women Rising.

I introduced myself to past Women Rising participants in the same way, as a fellow alumna of the program who is interested in gathering data regarding their experience in program. I was clear that my study was approved by CATDC and that their answers were confidential. I kept my intent broad in order to not sway potential study participants to be more positive or negative about their time in Women Rising. I expressed to them that my intent was to seek out information about their experience in Women Rising. This sentiment was expressed in my original email that contains the survey link and was reiterated before my interviews with past participants.

I contacted the search firm representative via email, sharing with them the general overview of my project. Two of the search firm representatives knew me personally, so I did not need to introduce myself. When I introduced myself to the other search firm representative, I identified myself as a doctoral student and an independent school faculty member. I let each
search firm representative know about my focus on women, professional development, and the headship, and my interest in the current head of school hiring environment. I did not openly express my interest in gender imbalance in the headship, although it was likely inferred by my study’s focus.

When reaching out to head of school search committee chairs, I introduced myself as a doctoral student and independent school faculty member. I shared with them that I was researching the head of school hiring process, and I kept my stated intent broad so as not to affect any responses they gave me if they agreed to participate in my study. After the four members agreed, I still kept my focus broad (on the process of hiring a head of school) so as not to skew any potential information regarding gender and the search process.

**Ethical Issues**

No ethical issues arose during to my study of Women Rising. The search firms and schools and board members were kept anonymous. Board members were also voluntary members of their school boards and were not paid by the schools, and therefore faced no issues regarding job security, etc. I shared my problem statement with CATDC so they were clear on the purpose of my study. Participants in Women Rising do not work for CATDC and were therefore not in jeopardy as a result of sharing their experiences with me. It is still important that participants’ names be held in strictest confidence, as some addressed current and past school leaders with whom they worked.

I ensured confidentiality by using pseudonyms for participants, and all data gathered, including recordings and transcripts, were saved on my computer with password protection. The NoNotes.com app is a secure service that guarantees security for sensitive information that is saved on their secure online format. I downloaded transcripts to my password-protected
computer, and I also backed up information on a flash drive that was kept in a locked drawer in my office.

**Credibility**

A potential threat to the study is my personal bias. As a past participant who had a positive experience, bias may have led me to draw conclusions that are not credible. I did not participate in the survey or interviews in order to gather the opinions of others. To further mitigate bias, I used direct quotes from surveys and interview transcripts. Using verbatim responses from respondents should have helped to mitigate my biases. I also used purposeful sampling of the Women Rising population to be able to understand other participants’ perspectives. I included data points by gathering past participants’ perspectives in order to avoid issues of bias, reactivity, and insufficient evidence. In addition, collecting multiple data points from boards and search firms allowed for triangulation of data.

Another threat to the credibility of my study is generalizability of my findings. With only three search firms and four search committees of schools, the hiring process may not be universally represented. As Women Rising is a unique program that occurs in California, it may not translate well in other places conducted by different facilitators. Even within California, the two locations of Women Rising are different, resulting in variation of specific issues that affected program curriculum. Therefore, the ways in which Women Rising impacts participants may have depended on curriculum shifts that were unique to each site.

My findings highlight the general search process and characteristics for which schools search when hiring a new head of school to investigate whether this is a gendered process or not, something NAIS and search firms can investigate further. The Women Rising program findings may be useful to other leadership programs for women in independent schools to consider
adapting, but I did not generalize the results to any other population besides the specific one represented by the sample (i.e., all women interested in independent school leadership are not represented by past participants of Women Rising).

Although my sample size for interviews may be small, it is reflective of the small size of independent schools and the leadership program, and it was sufficient enough to reflect the participants’ overall experience. One issue may be respondents’ honesty since the data I collected were self-reported and qualitative. I could not assess whether respondents were being truthful. I did my best to design a survey and interview protocol that would not lead respondents to answer in either a positive or negative way.
CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Even after decades of discussion by NAIS, there are far fewer women serving as heads of school in independent schools than men (Chubb, 2015). This gendered leadership issue is compounded by the fact that the percentage of women in the headship remains far below the percentage of women working in independent schools (NAIS, 2015). The purpose of this study was to investigate the role a women-only leadership development program played in influencing women to advance in independent school leadership as well as to investigate its potential impact on women applying to the headship position.

In this chapter, the findings from the study are presented. Data were collected from surveys completed by 42 Women Rising past participants (57.5%, n = 73) as well as semi-structured interviews with 13 Women Rising past participants, three search firm representatives, and four head of school search committee chairs. Specifically, the findings in this chapter address the following research questions:

1. In what ways, if any, does a yearlong women’s leadership program impact leadership career trajectories of participants?
   a. How does participation in such a program increase the number of women applying to the head of school position, if at all?

2. What impact, if any, does participation in a yearlong women’s leadership program have on increasing the number of women hired as heads of schools?

Understanding past participants’ perspectives regarding barriers related to pursuing a head of school position and understanding the current head of school search process may help NAIS address the lack of women in head of school positions.
The chapter is divided into two parts. First, there is a focused discussion on data collected about the Women Rising experience of past participants and its potential impact on leadership career trajectories, addressing RQ1. Second, a discussion of the head of school hiring process, the head of school position, and women’s opportunities to become heads of school is presented, addressing RQ2.

**Women Rising**

Women Rising’s goal of helping women interested in school leadership is achieved through neoliberal feminism and the driving idea that women need to go out and get the positions they want, not waiting for society’s structures to change (Cornwall, Gideon, & Wilson, 2009; Rottenberg, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). By encouraging this method of career pursuit, participants were able to articulate their career needs, move into leadership positions, and negotiate for positions that fit their skills. They also found a benefit from creating professional connections with other women in their cohort.

**Impact on career.** The focus of Women Rising is not on careers, but rather on building leadership skills. Yet there was an overwhelming response regarding the impact the program had on women’s careers. Even if it is not a planned aspect of the program, Women Rising is helping past participants determine their career paths and pursue the positions they want. The survey asked past participants to rate their responses to the statement, “Women Rising has positively affected my career path,” on a 5-point Likert-style scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. As seen in Table 8, answers to the question had a mean of 4.1, showing a strong positive response to the effect the program has had on participants’ career paths. These data show that Women Rising does help participants as they plan their career trajectories, even though this is not a published goal of the program.
Table 8

**Women Rising’s Effect on Participants’ Careers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women Rising has positively affected my career path</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.932</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When cross-tabulating years of participation with Women Rising’s positive effect on careers, using the same 5-point scale described previously, the data show that with more time spent away from the program, the mean increased and standard deviation decreased (see Table 9). Women who have been out of the program longer were more likely to recognize that Women Rising had a positive effect on their careers. This finding implies that the longer the women were out of the program, the more of a benefit Women Rising had on their careers.

Table 9

**Cross-Tabulation: Year of Participation and Positive Effect on Career Path**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of participation</th>
<th>1 (Strongly disagree)</th>
<th>2 (Disagree)</th>
<th>3 (Neither disagree nor agree)</th>
<th>4 (Agree)</th>
<th>5 (Strongly agree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Career guidance.** The desire for career guidance was the reason why some women participated in the program. Again, Women Rising does not advertise itself as a career-focused program, and yet women joined to gain guidance and advice about moving into leadership positions at independent schools. Women who were interviewed by phone were asked why they participated in the program. The majority of women mentioned that they chose Women Rising to help them with career guidance (62%, \( n = 13 \)). For example, Kelsey shared:

I thought, “How do I do this? Where do I start?” And so, Women Rising came up on the CATDC website, and I thought it would be a good thing to do... to sort of see – if I can
get more clarity around the career path and, like, being in administration. To how, like, go about doing that.

There was an assumption that a program focused on women in independent school leadership would offer career guidance, even though the website lists the program’s foci as: defining leadership style and vision, exploring strategies and skills needed to effectively lead a group, projecting one’s best authentic self, communicating effectively, and bridging the role of colleague and supervisor (CATDC, 2017). Although career guidance is not a driving force of the program, it was a benefit of participation in the program.

One reason career guidance was a benefit to participants was the exposure the program provided in regard to career paths they may not have considered prior to the program. Five of those surveyed and six of those interviewed mentioned that Women Rising gave them the opportunity to explore different leadership career options. In one survey, a respondent wrote:

I finally saw women in positions of leadership at all levels. It was a necessary view, as only four women have been part of the program admin team at our school, and only in the last 5 years (of 17). Still, the primary leadership roles are held by men. Seeing “normal” women in positions of leadership was inspiring, normalizing, and necessary for me to see a future in education.

Six of the past participants interviewed shared similar thoughts (although because of the anonymity of the surveys the same women may be commenting). Helen shared,

It really freed me to think about difference…. One of the women in my group had been a math teacher, and she had just become the director of admission at a small school. And I was like, “Oh! I never thought about being a director of admission.”
Women Rising gave these participants the opportunity to see a broader picture of career options than the one they had when entering the program.

**Reflection on career trajectory.** After learning about career options, Women Rising gave women time to think about their futures in independent school leadership. Participation in the program led women to think about where they were in their careers and how they would like their careers to progress and evolve. Women mentioned in both the survey open responses and the interviews the benefit of having the time for personal reflection. One survey response was:

> Being given time to reflect and create intentions for myself while learning from the experiences of others was an extraordinary experience. It’s a part of the reason I’ve decided to go back to school before applying for other leadership positions. I want to be very clear on my purpose.

This idea was mirrored by Vivian:

> I did a lot of self-reflection…They planted the seed which felt great. And I, of course, after every time we met, had some kind of discussion or whatever it is, an article, if you check out, you just get you do your own kind of investigations and researches. So really, they planted the seeds in many ways.

Past participants used their time in the program to reflect on their purpose and their career paths. This led many to move into new positions after their completion of the program.

**Advocating for self.** The need for self-advocacy is important because research has found that many women feel the need to possess all of the skills and qualifications listed on a job posting (Gallagher, 2017; Ibarra et al., 2013; Pernambuco-Wise, 2012). This can be a barrier for women seeking to move into a leadership position. This study found that just over half of the women interviewed (54%, n = 13) mentioned their feeling of having to take every step necessary
if they hope to achieve the headship (for example, from classroom teacher, to lead teacher, to dean, to division head, to assistant head of school, and finally head of school). Danielle said, “I still honestly feel like it’s not appropriate for me at this point to just go straight there because I haven’t done the hierarchical steps.” Women are focused on having all the skills listed on a job description, which may be limiting women applicants for the headship. With the emphasis on neoliberal feminism, though, Women Rising encourages participants to lean in and go after what they want without feeling they need to go above and beyond in building ideal resumes.

**Taking on leadership positions.** The neoliberal feminist concept of leaning in embraced by Women Rising helped participants pursue leadership positions at their own schools or move on to a different school to take on more of a leadership position. Fifty-four percent (n = 13) of past participants spoke about their new positions and how Women Rising was an asset to them achieving those positions. Vivian, a member of the 2016-2017 Los Angeles cohort, replied:

> 75% of the women in my class were able to move on to new positions, their objective, whether they knew it or not, was they’re unhappy with where they were, and they needed something different…By our celebratory meeting at [our facilitator’s] house, we went through every single teacher that wanted change basically got it in a positive way.

With more than half those interviewed citing Women Rising as part of their move into school leadership, this finding suggests the program does have an influence on women moving into leadership. This attribution to the program shows that Women Rising is supporting women as they plan career trajectories that include leadership positions.

Not only did past participants apply for and accept positions as they were listed, but also more than half of those interviewed (54%, n = 13) shared that they advocated to create/alter leadership positions to which they were applying. Kelsey explained,
I convinced my administrators to create a sort of role for me, also teaching [while continuing to teach] …Women Rising gave me more clarity for sure around my career, but it also gave me a voice to go and ask for this position. These past participants not only sought out a leadership role, but also created one that was best for their interests and skills.

The shift from relying on others to lift them into leadership before the program and the change into advocating for self after the program is exemplified by Helen, a member of the 2015-2016 Los Angeles cohort. She shared that the reason she joined the program is because someone asked her to participate: “Interestingly, I was encouraged to sign up for it…I don’t know if I would have applied actually had I not been invited – interestingly.” Her repetition of the word “interestingly” mirrored her vocal tone of reflection about the impact of a person encouraging her to be a part of the program. After going through the program, she was comfortable enough to advocate for a new position:

I had an amazing conversation [with the head of school] and said, “I want to be part of your team and help you to develop this vision, but I don’t think that the title and position that are available are really commiserate with my experience or what I can bring to your school.” And just asked if he’d be willing to floor alternate titles and roles, and he was. And so, they created this position for me.

The program seems to increase women’s ability to embrace self-efficacy and neoliberal feminism’s idea of seeking out what they want and not waiting for someone to offer it, which in turn may influence the number of women applying for leadership positions (Sandberg, 2013).

Increased interest in becoming a head of school. Women Rising is a leadership program for women in independent schools. Although it is not directly focused on the headship, this
highly visual, highest-ranking school position is a focus of many discussions about gender inequality in leadership in independent schools (Chubb, 2015). The survey asked past participants to reflect on their interest in the head of school position both before and after taking part in the program. The data show that after completing the program there is a small shift toward more interest in the headship (see Table 10 and Figure 1). Although not statistically significant, there is a shift of women moving toward considering the headship, even though this is not a goal of the program. It would be interesting to see if there was more of a change of opinion in the position if Women Rising did more work around the head of school position.

Table 10

*Change of Interest in Applying to Be Head of School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEFORE I participated in Women Rising, I was interested in becoming a head of school</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFTER I participated in Women Rising, I was interested in becoming a head of school</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Past participant interest in applying to be a head of school.*

**Woman Rising as an opportunity to build professional connections.** As Helen and three other women joined because someone else encouraged them to do so, some past participants
shared that they signed up for Women Rising in order to create and build networks (31%, n = 13). “It wasn’t the program,” Danielle stated, “it was meeting other women who might be in that similar – it was just the opportunity to crack out of my professional sphere of people.” The theme of building relationships was repeated throughout the interviews, with all past participants saying network building was a benefit of the program.

Sixteen survey responders mentioned the benefit of networking in their open response answers (38%, n = 42), and all 13 past participants interviewed discussed creating a network as a benefit of being part of Women Rising. One survey response stated:

The women that I was able to connect with have been instrumental in assisting me in continued professional growth. This was evident in personal interest and support – one fellow participant contacted me when I was applying for my [current] position to offer support.

In her phone interview, Judy talked about how Women Rising

was a group of women talking about their struggles moving up a ladder to have more responsibilities, taking on more leadership, finding a voice, that probably allowed [her], as various things happened in [her] school, to say okay, yes. To raise [her] hand and say okay, [she’ll] go forward.

Even though only four sought out the program for networking purposes, it is seen as a benefit to leadership career building by most if not all participants. These benefits affecting past participants’ careers are those that were not advertised as part of Women Rising. There are aspects of the program that are value-added from being with other women in independent schools.
Specifically mentioned in regard to relationship building was the opening retreat. Five of the women interviewed appreciated the retreat as a time to get to know each other. Karen stated that: “I think the retreat was essential. I loved the opportunity to get away together at the beginning.” Jenny echoed the idea of the opportunity to get to know the other members of the cohort: “I liked the beginning retreat model, and that kind of concentrated the amount of time together in a separate location. I think that’s a really good bonding piece.” The opening retreat is only one night, but five women discussed the impact it had on their experience in the program because of the opportunity to get to know the other women in their cohort.

**Areas of improvement for the program.** Most women did not point explicitly to parts of the program they would change. Four women mentioned that the books selected for reading could be eliminated or abridged, and three mentioned wanting more meetings and time together as a cohort. Other than those issues, there were few issues that multiple participants raised as areas as growth.

**Differences in curriculum for cohorts.** Without a structured curriculum, each cohort had similar but not identical experiences. This led to confusion on the survey, as past participants explained that they did not remember completing certain parts of the curriculum. This could be due to their not remembering an experience, but it also may have been caused by certain experiences not being offered as part of their cohort. On the survey, ten women noted that they either did not remember doing a part of the program listed or said they did not have the listed experience as part of their program. Not being able to remember experiences in which they participated may reflect a lack of impact, but it could also be that that the element was not offered. This cannot be determined based on the data collected for this study.
For example, the Stand and Deliver organization’s presentation (focusing on public speaking) was offered as part of the San Francisco curriculum. It was valued by more than half of the participants (57%, n = 7). “We did the Stand and Deliver professional development. That was, in my mind, one of the best things I did in terms of just really working on my public speaking skills,” Sienna commented. Stand and Deliver was not offered in Los Angeles as the Stand and Deliver organization has offices in San Francisco but not Los Angeles.

**Creative projects.** Some cohorts worked with creative projects and reflection journals. Facilitators could and sometimes did add these elements into the program. Not all women were interested in these creative projects, and instead were looking to do more constructive work with leadership in the program. During the phone interviews, five women (38%, n = 13) mentioned that the “inspirational” projects (labeled by them) were not helpful. Ariel shared, “Our activities, we were just cutting out pictures of magazines and putting them on an art board. I mean, just those kind [of] time wasters.” This statement is referring to the “vision boards” some cohorts created. No one else in the surveys or phone interviews described these projects as either helpful or not helpful, which may be a matter of personal choice that affects a small number of participants.

**No benefit from the program.** Some women indicated that they did not attribute a career benefit to Women Rising. On the survey, three women strongly disagreed with the statement “Women Rising was helpful in my pursuit of leadership/administration positions” (7%, n = 42). Only two of those responded in the open-ended section, one stating she “already had the position” and the other stating she was not interested in pursuing a new position at this time. This finding implies that those who already have a focused leadership career trajectory may not benefit as much from the program. Four of the women interviewed (31%, n = 13) expressed that
Women Rising had no impact on their career trajectory. Ariel from the 2015-2016 Los Angeles cohort explained,

I do not think that it drastically changed the trajectory of my career because I think I was already on the correct trajectory. It was like one cog of the many cogs that I have been setting up that are part of my leadership path. But I don’t think it was a game changer.

Again, this lack of impact by the program may be a result of women who are already on a leadership path not needing additional assistance with career trajectories. The other three women who shared that Women Rising did not affect their careers were all members of the 2015-2016 San Francisco cohort, which may imply that that cohort’s curriculum may have affected their experience.

**Women Head Applicants**

Whereas Women Rising embraces the *lean in* style of feminism in order to help more women obtain leadership in independent schools, the head of school position and process show evidence that there needs to be a societal change aligning with structural feminism theory. In order to best understand the process of hiring a head of school and what women will experience if they apply for the position, I interviewed those intimately involved with the process: search committee chairs who recently hired a head of school and search firms who are regularly involved in head of school searches. Through these interviews, I learned that participation in leadership programs like Women Rising is not considered during the application process. That said, the interviews revealed a perception of gender bias and the need for structural change if gender balance of heads of school is to be achieved.
Head of school search process.

Search committee. The head of school hiring process begins with the board of trustees, as they are responsible for hiring the head of school, and either the chair of the board will head this process, or they will nominate a chair from the members of the board. The head of school search committee tends to be primarily made up of board members, and each committee make up will vary slightly depending on the school and its current board chair. The committee make up is important, as potential applicants and search firms believe that boards have gender bias in the head of school hiring process.

One of the people interviewed for this study was Andrea, chair of the head of school search committee, an executive board member but not the president. Her search committee included: her, the president of the board, as well as other board members. It also included three teachers and one alumni council member. Mark, also not the board chair but an executive board member, had a committee made up of five board members, two faculty members, the head of a local organization, and a past board chair. Carolyn was the board chair, and her committee was composed of two board members, one department chair, three alumni, three parents, and three teachers. Lynn, a member of the board of trustees, had a committee make up of six current board members, one past board member, three faculty members, and the head of the upper school.

It is important to consider the impact that board members may have on the process, as there is a perception that women will face bias from the board. All three of the search firms and six of the past participants discussed board gender bias. When speaking about women head candidates, Bridget said, “Add to this finally the bias that I think is inherent in boards.” The comments regarding board biases were echoed by past participants, including Jenny who explained, “There’s so many, what do you call that, implicit biases when [boards are] looking at
resumes. For example, including gender, including race, ethnicity, educational backgrounds, etc.” Whether the bias is real or not, there is a belief that women applicants will face bias from the hiring committee if it is made up primarily of board members, which may deter them from applying to a head of school position.

Perhaps the perception of bias comes from the belief that the majority of board chairs and members are men. All three search firms and four of the interviewed past participants mentioned this. Ken shared:

And so right off the bat that sort of changes the parameters of what someone’s working at. There aren’t that many – I’m not sure what the percentage of chairs or trustees – like the head of the board. How many of them are women or people of color? … From my perspective, where I think a big change would hopefully occur, is in the trustees’ selection and the creation of the search committee.

Past participant Helen also spoke about the majority of boards being made up of men as members, “Who makes headship hiring decisions? Because if the board of trustees…is any indication, it’s a bunch of older men. And so, if we want to have more female heads, we need more diverse school boards.” If women feel they are facing a perceived bias of men on the board, this may influence their interest in and applications to head of school positions. If they feel that the process will be unfair due to their gender, why should they try to compete again male applicants?

**Search firms.** Many head of school search committees hire search firms to help them gather a pool of qualified applicants for the head of school position. A search firm works with the search committee to define desired qualities for their next head of school, and then the search firm submits portfolios of potential candidates after vetting applications and interviewing
candidates. The search committee then selects candidates they would like to proceed with in the search process.

All four chairs of the search committees mentioned search firms, and three of the four schools hired search firms (due to budget constraints, Wilma’s school did not hire a search firm). Andrea explained her experience with the search firm she used: “They submitted probably – a very, a large group of – a large group of dossiers to myself, and I review them with the president of the board. And we culled that down to probably half of what they gave us.” Search firms are an important group to interview, as they are involved in multiple head of school searches each year, giving them unique perspectives on the hiring process of heads of school.

**Desired qualities of a head of school.** How do people see a “good” head of school? Each of the interviewed groups, search firms, search committee chairs, and past participants, had different ideas about what qualities a head of school should have. There is minimal overlap between the groups and qualities, which shows that those who hire for the headship and those who may become heads are coming from different perspectives about the role of the head of school. There is a disconnect about what the job is versus what different groups perceive it to be. These conflicting ideas affect those who may be applying for the position and those who are hiring for the position.

In the process, I asked all of the interviewees to list the top qualities of what they would say made a good head of school. As seen in Table 11, there was little overlap among responses. Search firms rated fundraising and diversity of applicants as most important, search committee chairs rated prior experience and communication as most important, and past participants rated faculty support and fundraising as most important. If Women Rising decides to add elements that
focus on encouraging participants move into the headship, considering these qualities discussed by search firms and search committee chairs may be useful when building new curriculum.

Table 11

*Desired Head of School Qualities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Search firms</th>
<th>Search committee chairs</th>
<th>Past participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior head experience</td>
<td>2 of 3</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
<td>0 of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity in applicant pool</td>
<td>3 of 3</td>
<td>3 of 4</td>
<td>0 of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising experience</td>
<td>3 of 3</td>
<td>1 of 4</td>
<td>5 of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good communicator</td>
<td>0 of 3</td>
<td>4 of 4</td>
<td>4 of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of geographic area</td>
<td>0 of 3</td>
<td>3 of 4</td>
<td>0 of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports faculty</td>
<td>0 of 3</td>
<td>0 of 3</td>
<td>6 of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student focused</td>
<td>0 of 3</td>
<td>1 of 4</td>
<td>3 of 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Experience and diversity.* Search firms and committee chairs were somewhat aligned in the quality of prior head of schools experience, fundraising experience, and the need for diversity in the applicant pool. Ken shared, “I think oftentimes, many search committees seem to want a standing head to be, or a sitting head to be, part of their pool, so that limits who they’re looking at.” This is important since there are few women heads of school, so women are already at a disadvantage in the application process. Head of school search committee chairs almost never go through the process more than once, as compared to the experience of search firms. The interviewees were aligned in their focus on prior head of school experience. Ruth shared that:

> We wanted an experienced head of school. You know, somebody who’s been there and done that. You know, we did look at several candidates that were, you know, rock stars as heads of upper school, you know, but I think we were thinking that someone with headship experience would be better for what we’re looking for.

If primary experience is such a valued quality, the majority of women will be kept from the candidate pool since there are so few women heads. This gender limitation is also shown in the desired quality of having a diverse candidate pool but not hiring a “diverse” (not a White man)
candidate. Patty shared the idea of committees wanting diversity in the candidate pool, specifically gender diversity: “They want to see a diverse pool of candidates and then, for whatever reason, one by one they still hire a man.” Search firms have a unique position, as they experience the search multiple times a year across a variety of school and see the outcomes of searches. Of the four schools randomly selected to be involved in this study, three hired men as the next head of school.

The chairs discussed the gender diversity of their applicants, sharing that the majority of their candidate pools were men. Andrea said:

It was very predominantly men, and we tried really hard to find some female candidates, and we could not. I mean, we did find some, like there were some, quite honestly, that we put in the mix because they were women. And they’re – and they’re just starting out as many woman candidates as head of school. It’s just that simple. We tried really hard. We really – we were hoping to get a candidate – we were hoping – we were hoping to at least have people in the mix, and we did, but they just didn’t come through well enough.

Wilma’s school was unique in comparison to the other three as they did not hire a search firm. Instead, they posted the job on various websites. Even with the opportunity for anyone to apply without having to be vetted by a search firm first, there was a low number of women applicants. Wilma shared,

Well, we had 19 total that applied…only two females out of 19, which was interesting. But I realize just because the percentages aren’t there to maximize a little more balanced – and I don’t know why. I just – I really don’t know why.

Women are missing from the pool, whether by selection of the search firm or search committee, or they are not applying for the position. Schools may find larger numbers of women applicants
if they ask women’s leadership programs like Women Rising to send the position notice out to their past participants.

**Fundraising.** Although search committees did not emphasize the need for experience in fundraising, search firms and participants understand this to be a large part of the head of school position. All three search firm representatives mentioned fundraising, but only one of the search committee chairs mentioned that quality. Search firms think this is important part of the position. Patty commented, “Any exposure to fundraising…it’s a really big part of the job.” Past participants also recognized fundraising experience and financial acumen as important (38%, \( n = 13 \)). Sienna said, “When I think about being a head of school, so much of that work is marketing and development and fundraising.” Fundraising is not a topic covered in Women Rising, and it may be useful to consider adding it to the curriculum so that women can speak to the subject comfortably.

**Good communicator.** Search firms did not mention the need for good communication skills, but all four committee chairs emphasized the importance of hiring a head who was articulate. Mark said, “It’s so important for the head of school to be out and communicating effectively with all parts and constituencies of our community. And so, it’s just [the candidates’] ability to show that.” Addressing communication skills, Vivian said, “I really do feel public speaking … even if you don’t know what you’re doing, if you’re a great public speaker you can pull it off … public speaking is a huge part of it.” It could be that since search firms interview each candidate by phone or in person before adding them to the candidate pool, they take good communication for granted and do not state it explicitly as a desired quality. That said, the emphasis the search committee placed on it shows that adding programs like Stand and Deliver to Women Rising is important to build women’s communication skills.
**Geography.** One quality that three of the search committee chairs mentioned was the need for candidates to know about the location of the school and how the community functions. None of the search firms or past participants mentioned needed geographical knowledge. Andrea talked about the importance of knowing where the school was located:

I would say some who had an ability, who could be connected with our community. Our school is located in [the northeast] …do they have an orientation towards our location? Where we’re located? And do we get a sense of their commitment to being in this area of the country. That mattered.

Mark made a similar statement, although his school is located in a different part of the county:

“We are located in [the south] and there are differences culturally. And so, I think, sometimes – it was not required or mandatory, but we certainly valued people that had experience geographically in the south.” This skill is more of a life experience and learning the ability to be comfortable in different regions of the country.

One hundred percent \((n = 3)\) of search firms and 25% \((n = 4)\) search committees interviewed shared that they feel women may be reluctant to move even to advance their career. If this is the case, women can lose the experience gained from living in different communities. Search firm representative Ken shared:

What I’ve heard [from candidates] is geographic limitations. They are not necessarily willing or able, you know, for personal and family reasons, to maybe up and move across the country as it seems like certain male heads might be, or candidates might be.

With a limited number of independent schools and an even smaller number of head of school positions being available each year, this issue may be affecting the number of women applying. That said, none of the past participants mentioned a concern about moving in their interviews.
fact, one past participant discussed how she recently moved across the country for a position and her husband relocated for her career.

Past participants did not mention concern about moving for a position, but they did discuss that their families impacted their career choices, implying that women may still be torn between their roles of wife and mother and school leader. All three interviewed groups spoke about this conflict. All three search firms (100%) mentioned women and families, as did one search committee chair (25%, n = 4) and 11 past participants (85%, n = 13). Search firm representative Patty shared that:

It’s a huge job, and it is really very demanding of your time. When you think about how much heads – on how much time they spend at school, and if you’ve got a family – and women tend to be kind of the glue holding it together, and all that stuff – it may be that they just feel it’s too overwhelming and you don’t have the ability to commit to that kind of time.

Past participant Karen expressed her experience in pursuing school leadership as a family decision between her and her partner:

The biggest challenge for me has been an internal struggle, which means – what kind of woman do I want to be? And so, heading into this, my husband and I really haven’t decided whether or not we’re going to have children…. We knew that it was one path or the other path kind of situation.

With such a high number of past participants talking about a work/life balance (85%, n = 13), it may behoove Women Rising to add the topic of family to the curriculum so that women can talk about it as a group and perhaps have the opportunity to speak with a woman head who has children.
Faculty support and pedagogy expertise. Unlike search firms and search committees, past participants work with the head of school on a regular basis. Because of their experience in schools, they may be more focused on what they look for as teachers. The largest shared quality amongst past participants was a person who supports faculty (46%, n = 13). Megan stated,

You need a head of school who trusts that the faculty is doing what they are able to do and then you have to make the trust that the head of school has your back and will support the teachers and their expertise.

This need for support in the classroom is something that was not considered by the search firms and committees, which is interesting as, of the three groups, the ones who work daily with the head of school are past participants.

Their experience as teachers may also account for the quality of knowledge of curriculum and teaching pedagogy that four women discussed (31%, n = 13). Rose said, “I’d say the leaders that I appreciate the most are really great pedagogues. And they really think about their practice, they think about their learners.” The majority of Women Rising participants were or are teachers, so that may be one of the reasons their focus is on the academic aspects of schools. That said, only three past participants interviewed mentioned the quality of being student-focused, and none of the search firms or search committees mentioned students. The position is often believed to be more of a CEO-type than that of a school leader. If this is the case, it is important for women to understand what they will be doing if they take on the head of school position, and it may be important to reflect on the position in the independent school community to confirm whether it is business-focused or not student-focused, or if it is a balance of the two.

Applying for the headship. Looking at women’s perceptions about facing bias in the application process, past participants were asked on the survey to rate their opinion of the
statement, “I feel confident that if I were to apply for a leadership/administrative position I would not be subjected to gender bias.” Responses were given using a Likert-style 5-point scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. As shown in Table 12, there was overall agreement that the statement felt somewhat untrue, showing that women perceived that they may face bias due to their gender when applying for leadership.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applying for Leadership and Gender Bias</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel confident that if I were to apply for a leadership/administrative position I would not be subjected to gender bias</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The survey also asked past participants to respond to the statement, “I feel that women are less likely to be seen as good leaders than men,” using the same Likert-style 5-point scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. Figure 2 shows that women expressed that there is gender bias when considering “good” leadership. Fifty-two percent (n = 42) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that gender bias exists when people consider good leadership. All three search firms, one of the search committee chairs, and 10 past participants discussed this bias in regard to women applying for the headship position.
Figure 2. Past participants’ responses to “I feel that women are less likely to be seen as good leaders.”

From her experience as a search firm representative, Patty commented that,

No one ever says it out loud. The discrimination is pretty hidden, and it takes various forms. They may just talk about how well she is going to do with donors, or just say, “I don’t see that person as being a fit at our school.”

Past participant Jenny went even farther, voicing how the bias will affect her decision to apply for the headship in the future: “I also think the data around the headship – it’s like, why should I apply when I know I’m not a legit candidate anyway?” Again, whether this bias is real or not, people who are part of the search process and potential applicants view it as biased.

Leadership programs and candidate consideration. When asked about the impact that attendance at leadership development programs has on applications to the headships, three themes emerged: short-term programs do not have any impact on hiring decisions, graduate degrees are considered as part of the application process, and leadership programs do not assist people in their careers (see Table 13).
Table 13

Leadership Development Programs’ Impact on Hiring Decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-term programs do not impact hiring decisions</th>
<th>Search firms</th>
<th>Search committee chairs</th>
<th>Past participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degrees are considered when applications are reviewed</td>
<td>3 of 3</td>
<td>1 of 4</td>
<td>0 of 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership programs do not assist people when hired</td>
<td>3 of 3</td>
<td>0 of 4</td>
<td>0 of 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of the past participants commented on short-term leadership programs and hiring decisions, which makes sense since they are in the process as applicants and not reviewing potential candidates. All three search firms mentioned that they had not seen participation in a non-graduate degree leadership program affect application decisions. When asked directly about whether she has seen a school take into account leadership development programs that candidates had taken part of, Bridget simply responded, “No.” Only one search committee chair mentioned leadership programs; Andrea shared, “The independent school community has different retreats or has different development, professional development opportunities that they put on, seminars or whatever – I don’t recall that ‘leadership’ per say, that those mattered.” These answers address RQ2, which asked, “What impact, if any, does participation in a yearlong women’s leadership program have on increasing the number of women hired as heads of schools?” With application reviews, it does not seem that a program like Women Rising is noted by search firms or hiring committees.

What does seem to matter for applicants is showing that they have obtained a graduate level degree. All three search firms, all four search committee chairs, and 10 of the 13 past participants interviewed commented on the importance of having a master’s degree (or higher). Andrea discussed how not having an advanced degree kept one candidate from the finalist pool,
“We definitely had a candidate who got knocked out because…they were applying to be a head of school, but they had never gone back to school to get a masters.” Past participants also commented on their need to earn a graduate degree if they wanted to be considered for positions. For example, Danielle stated, “I applied to this [graduate] program to spend $25,000 and get higher educated so that I could maybe get a job…it seemed to be important.” Although short-term programs were not considered when reviewing head of school applicants, having a graduate degree was a strong theme in almost every interview, and potentially something Women Rising should encourage women to pursue.

**Leadership programs are not seen as being useful for candidates’ career performance.**

The benefits of leadership programs when serving in school leadership were not mentioned by any of the search committee chairs or past participants. All three search firms mentioned that leadership programs, whether degree programs or not, may be helpful when applying but are not very useful after a candidate is hired. Ken commented, “Conceptually it makes sense. I don’t know for sure whether it’s paid dividends for those who have done it.” This finding begs the question, then, what are the curricula of leadership programs and will they be useful when a woman finds herself in the headship?

**Summary**

The results of the study address two areas related to women in leadership positions in independent K-12 schools: the impact of Women Rising on past participants and how the program may impact women’s applications for the headship position. In regard to Women Rising and its impact on participants, the surveys and interviews revealed a few major subthemes: the impact of the program on career trajectories, areas of growth for the program, and the impact of the program on their interest in the headship. The other major theme of the impact on women’s
applications revealed four major subthemes: a lack of overlap in understanding what qualities are wanted/needed in a head of school, a perceived bias in the hiring process, impediments to women applying to the headship, and the need for a graduate degree in order to be considered seriously for a headship.

In Chapter Five, I will discuss these findings and make connections to the literature presented in Chapter Two. There will also be a discussion of the study’s limitations as well as the implications of the findings and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The need to look at the gender gap in independent school leadership, particularly the headship position, is as important now as it ever was. With the prediction that a large number of heads of school will be retiring in the near future, it is critical to create a process that allows for more diversity of those who will lead independent schools for the next generation. Although many studies have looked at the barriers women face, few have investigated ways to lessen the leadership gender gap. This study attempted to do so by investigating a professional development program for women interested in independent school leadership. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways, if any, does a yearlong women’s leadership program have on leadership career trajectories of participants?
   a. How does participation in such a program increase the number of women applying to the head of school position, if at all?

2. What impact, if any, does participation in a yearlong women’s leadership program have on increasing the number of women hired as heads of schools?

This chapter presents a summary of the study’s key findings presented in Chapter Four, as well as limitations, and implications for action. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

Summary of Findings

One of the largest pieces of information to come from the study suggested that the seemingly competing theories of structural feminism and neoliberal feminism can and should be used together to take on the challenges of gender bias that have contributed to the school
leadership gender gap. In order to create substantial lasting change, independent schools need to reflect on the gender inequalities that exist in society and that are manifested in their own school structures (Shakeshaft, 1989). At the same time, neoliberal feminism helps individuals see themselves as entrepreneurs of their own life and in control of improving their situations in life (Scharff, 2012). Women cannot wait for society and schools to change; they need to be empowered to pursue independent school leadership positions.

Women Rising’s encouragement of women has led more women to consider and take on leadership careers with more responsibilities. This neoliberal feminist approach allows women the chance to come up with creative solutions in order to overcome barriers and find success in gender-biased societies (Ferguson, 2017; Rottenberg, 2013). Women Rising encourages women interested in school leadership to take ownership of their career trajectories and not be discouraged by gender biases that exist. This alone may lead to more women in the head of school candidate pipeline, therefore causing an eventual small shift in numbers of the headship.

The biased hiring process, however, will still create monumental hurdles for those women who pursue headship positions. Structural feminism challenges accepted norms, such as the traditional look and leadership style of a head of school (Frost & Elicaoff, 2014; Grogan, 2000). Understanding that White men have created the concept of what a good head of school looks like and acts like allows structural feminists a context that can be deconstructed and reconstructed to be more inclusive. Until the larger societal issue is addressed, women will continue to face excessive challenges when applying to be a head of school.

Although these two theories address gender inequalities in different ways, that does not mean one should be ignored in order to focus on the other. Both structural and neoliberal feminism can help to close the head of school gender gap. A larger structural change has to occur
in order to create more opportunities for women at the higher leadership levels in independent schools, but women need to feel that they can apply for head of school positions now and not wait until the application process is completely unbiased. Only with both pieces can more women be able to move into the headship.

**Major theme 1: The importance of increasing self-efficacy.** One way the use of neoliberal feminism is helpful in Women Rising is the empowerment of the individual. The literature points to the need for women to feel confident in their leadership skills and be ready to take on more leadership responsibilities (AAUW, 2016; Isaac et al., 2012; Seibert et al., 2016; Superville, 2016). Both in the surveys and interviews, Women Rising participants showed an increase in self-efficacy, to the point that they were not only applying for leadership positions, but also comfortable negotiating for changes so that position best fit them. This growth in leadership confidence was cited as a direct outcome of the program, although multiple reasons may account for the increase.

The program also showed a slight increase in interest in the head of school position after women participated in Women Rising. Although it is not a program geared specifically toward the headship, participation in Women Rising is influencing women to consider the highest leadership position in independent schools. This increase in interest is the first step in greater numbers of women’s applications to the headship; if they are not in the candidate pool, women cannot increase head of school numbers. Studies have shown that women wait to apply until they feel they have met every skill listed on a job posting (Ibarra et al., 2013). By encouraging women to not only apply, but also to ask to have jobs tailored to their strengths, Women Rising is showing positive results towards increasing women’s applications to leadership positions.
Major theme 2: Creating opportunities for community building among women. As discussed previously, women become more proactive with their career paths in single gender leadership development programs (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002). The fact that all past participant interviewees and a large majority of survey responses cited “networking” as a key benefit of the program shows that Women Rising is providing a much-needed opportunity for women to come together and share their experiences in what they consider to be a safe space. In mixed gender programs, women have been frustrated that their comments on gender issues were ignored (Stead, 2014), and Women Rising focuses on those gender issues conversations.

Independent school leadership programs that ignore gender issues fail to help women cope with the gender biases they face and can keep women from developing fully into school leaders (Ely et al., 2011; Stead, 2014). Women Rising has created a program that focuses on such gender issues, and the outcomes show that past participants identify that as the major factor for their seeing Women Rising as benefiting their careers. Women Rising confirms past studies that show that women-only leadership programs increase the likelihood of women gaining leadership roles (Ely et al., 2011). The relationships they built in the program, specifically stated as relationships with other women in independent schools, was cited as the greatest benefit of Women Rising.

Part of this ability to create meaningful relationships amongst participants has to do with the women-only part of the program. It is also important to point to the length of Women Rising as a tool to help bring women together. Studies have shown that in order for professional development programs to have a positive impact, they need to take place over a longer period of time, preferably a year (Boyle et al., 2004; Garet et al., 2001). Women Rising’s yearlong
program gave participants the chance to build connections between each other, creating a network that previously did not exist.

**Major theme 3: Addressing barriers with other women.** Those relationships built with other participants and with the facilitators and guest speakers, allowed women to learn more about school leadership and better plan their career trajectories. By introducing participants to women in leadership positions, including the headship, Women Rising allowed women to see other women successful in the headship and to be able to seek out their advice. Studies have shown that this exposure to women leaders is key to helping women identify themselves as potential leaders (Augustine-Shaw & Funk, 2013; Raskin et al., 2010; Searby & Tripses, 2006). Women Rising was able to increase participants’ understanding of different ways people can lead and the different ways leaders can look.

One issue that past participants raised was the conflict between the roles of school leader and wife/mother. The pressures that women face when holding school leadership positions in our patriarchal society has led to motherhood becoming seen as a disadvantage to women interested in moving up in leadership (Rivers & Barnett, 2015). The stress of feeling they need to balance their homes and their careers is an ongoing issue that many women experience (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Pernambuco-Wise, 2012). By seeing women in school leadership who are also wives and mothers, past participants were able to ask questions and form a better understanding of what the role entails and enter into discussions about their concerns.

**Major theme 4: The gendered head of school position and hiring process.** One of the findings to come from comparing all three interview groups was the vast disparity of qualities needed to be a head of school. It is important that everyone—applicants, search firms, and search committees—understand the position and what it entails. Although there can be differences from
school to school, it is important to establish the majority of the head’s responsibilities so that women understand what they would be applying for so that search firms can best guide committees and so that committees know what the head of school does in the entirety of the position, not just the aspects of which they may already be aware.

The majority of studies on gender disparity in educational leadership support the established construct of men as stronger school leadership candidates (Burkman, 2011; Coleman, 2003; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). This study aligns with those findings, showing that the bias may be unconscious but still in existence. The perception of bias was reported by some in the interviews as a deterrent to women pursuing the head of school position. Until the process is seen as fair and equitable, women may avoid applying because they do not think they will be seen as valid candidates.

There has been discussion regarding the lack of women as heads of schools for decades in NAIS (Chubb, 2015). The lack of women as heads of schools is compounded by the fact that the percentage of women heads of school remains far lower than the percentage of women working in independent schools (NAIS, 2015). The search firms interviewed as well as one of the search chairs expressed the gender bias that occurs in leadership hiring.

There needs to be implicit bias training at the board level and with others involved in the hiring process. The existence of conscious and unconscious biases has created invisible barriers between anyone who is not a White man and the head of school position. It would be helpful for each school to investigate and institute hiring policies at the board level that will help mitigate all biases, including that of gender bias.
Limitations

There were limitations to the study in regard to the Women Rising program. First, it is not a head of school leadership development program. It does meet the other parameters outlined, that of a single-gender, yearlong independent school leadership program, which is why it was selected for this study. It limits the applicability of the data on leadership programs and the head of school position. Women also self-select into program, showing that they already had interest in school leadership. It may be difficult to determine if the program inspired them to pursue certain leadership positions, or if they would have applied without participating in the program. Some women were responding 3 years after they participated in the program, and the number of years away from Women Rising may limit or alter their memories of the program and its impact on their career. There were demographic limitations since the program is only offered in California and has only served 73 women. This restricted the findings to a small group of women. There are also limited voices from search firms and head committees, so information gained in this study cannot be applied universally.

Because participation in the surveys and interviews was voluntary and the surveys were anonymous, some of the data from those sources could potentially be from the same women. Although the findings are still useful, the data may be skewed if the same source is quoted twice as evidence for a finding. Finally, I am personally biased as a past participant in Women Rising who had a positive experience in the program. As I discussed earlier, I tried to mitigate personal bias by using direct quotations from other past participants and not including my own opinions in either the survey or the interviews.
Recommendations

**Women Rising.** I encourage CATDC to conduct a 5- and 10-year follow-up to discover if any past participants became a head of school, and if so, do they attribute that to Women Rising? It is also suggested that CATDC begin a women-only head of school development program or alter Women Rising to add elements that more definitively introduce participants to the head of school position. With a demonstrated increase of interest in the headship even without being focused on the headship, Women Rising may be able to see an even higher increase of interest in the position if they add key elements to the current program.

Women Rising lacked a formal mentorship program, though. With the 2016 AAUW study showing that access to women mentors and the networks they connect being as important as performance for achieving leadership positions, the program should consider adding this important piece in the future. Creating relationships with women leaders is an important element that is missing from the program, as mentors can help women aspiring to be independent school leaders navigate the headship application process (Feibelman, 2013; Pernambuco-Wise, 2012).

**Creating women-only leadership programs.** Women who participated in Women Rising overwhelmingly pointed to the importance of the relationships they formed as part of the program, and the impact the other cohort members had on their own career trajectories. Even if the creation of multiple sites across the country is not possible, then there should be guidelines and encouragement for women to create informal networking and relationship building groups in their areas.

The best-known yearlong leadership program devoted to people interested in the head of school position is the NAIS Aspiring Head Program. NAIS should evaluate this program to determine if it is inclusive and serves all participants, considering the literature that shows
women are not as comfortable sharing in mixed gender groups and that women’s issues tend to be dismissed or not addressed in mixed gender programs. They should also actively recruit women, particularly women in their 20s and 30s to participate in the program. Women have less direct routes to school leadership and tend to wait until they feel their resume is *complete* (Brunner & Kim, 2010; Ibarra, 2013). This study and the literature show that most women need encouragement in order to strengthen their beliefs in their leadership skills.

**Creating an NAIS mentor-network for women.** Mentors can play an important role in helping aspiring school leaders (Peters, 2010; Raskin, Haar, & Robicheau, 2010; Seibert et al., 2016). Because of the lack of women in school leadership, it can be difficult for women in independent schools to identify mentors. NAIS may want to create a list of potential women mentors for women in membership schools. By having the ability to access women from across the country, more women can identify women mentors who are willing and able to guide them when they have questions and are seeking advice. Because of all of the benefits that come from having a mentor, a formal mentoring program would be helpful so that those who volunteer are prepared to best serve those seeking out a mentor.

**Recommendations for Future Study**

One study that would be helpful to conduct in the future would be to research the make-up of search committees. By investigating the number of board members on the committee, including the numbers of men and women members, the impact of women as board chair, and other similar questions could be telling when it comes to who makes it to the finalist round and who is ultimately selected. The process is very much a part of the perceived bias, and a study that looked at independent school search committees would reveal important information about how education and policy could best serve schools in the future.
This study only investigated one leadership program. A further area of research could be a comparative study of women who complete a yearlong coed program to that of a single-gender program. It would be important to determine how similar or different the outcomes were and whether women felt their gendered issues were addressed. Another comparative study could be between a shorter length women’s leadership program (1 week or less) and a yearlong women’s leadership program to discover what elements overlap and the benefits and limitations of each.

**Final Thoughts**

As a woman leader in independent schools, I was inspired to reflect on ways people have been trying to affect the headship gender gaps. I have spent decades hearing the same reports, and in my frustration to work on a solution I created this study. Although independent schools only serve 1% of the nation’s students (approximately 675,115 students; NAIS, 2015), this 1% is made up mostly of elite families, families whose power supports the constructs of gender bias (Persell & Cookson, 1985; Powell, 1996). Change will need to be supported and perhaps led by those already in leadership. Allowing this 1% to see women in positions of power and authority may help support future gender beliefs.

It was frustrating at times to see the plethora of studies making the same statements about gender inequities in the 21st century and to verify that schools in the United States, although they are making progress, are still very reflective of leadership ideals established in the 19th century. Although structural feminists are right, the system needs to be built from the ground up, neoliberal feminists are giving women the chance to do their own small part in the hope that it will lead to a great change in the future. My hope is that one more decade does not go by with the same statistics of gender and the headship.
APPENDIX A

CATDC Women Rising Theory of Change

Increase number of women in higher leadership positions in independent schools

Redefines leadership (no longer male centric)

Diversifies school leadership

Empower women to apply for/take on leadership roles (increase women’s applications)

Be proactive when faced with gender inequities/injustices

Trusting in one’s leadership skills and abilities

Become more confident in leadership and self-advocacy

Establish the importance of self-reflection

Strategically plan career path/making informed career decisions

Able to articulate and understand personal leadership style

Established safe space for women to grow, learn, and take risks

Creation of a support network of women

Skill building (Public speaking, giving/receiving feedback, learning how to network)

Peer discussion/Team building

Mentor matching with current women in leadership
APPENDIX B

Women Rising Alumnae Questionnaire

Thank you for your completing this brief questionnaire about Women Rising. Your participation is appreciated, and all survey respondents’ identities will be kept confidential.

* Required

1. Where did you participate in Women Rising? * Mark only one.
   San Francisco   Los Angeles

2. Year of participation in Women Rising: * Mark only one.
   2014-15   2015-16   2016-17

3. What was your title/position during the year you participated in Women Rising? *

4. Current job title(s): *

5. Current number of years working in independent schools: * Mark only one.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   11   12   13
   14   15+

6. How many years have you served in an independent school leadership position (including past leadership positions held, if any)? * Mark only one.
   1 year   2 years   3 years   4 years   5+ years   Not applicable

7. Does your current school include grades 10-12? * Mark only one.
   Yes   No

8. Is your current school: * Mark only one.
   Co-educational   Single gender - girls   Single gender - boys

9. Are you currently in a leadership position at an independent school? * Mark only one.
   Yes   No

10. What percentage of your job is dedicated to leadership/administration (versus teaching, advising, etc.)? * Mark only one.
11. **How many leadership/administration positions have you applied for after completing the Women Rising program (both within your school and outside of your school)?** *Mark only one.*

None 1 2 3 4 5+

12. **I identify as (select all that apply):** *Check all that apply.*

American Indian or Alaskan Native  
Asian  
Black or African American  
Latina/Hispanic  
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander  
White  
Other  
Prefer not to answer

Please indicate the extent to which you agree to each of the statements.

13. **I am interested in holding a full-time leadership/administration position.** *Mark only one.*

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree  
Strongly agree

14. **Additional comments:**

15. **Women Rising affected my career path in independent schools.** *Mark only one.*

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree  
Strongly agree

16. **Additional comments:**

17. **I consider myself an effective leader.** *Mark only one.*

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree  
Strongly agree
18. Additional comments:

19. BEFORE I participated in Women Rising, I was interested in becoming a head of school. * Mark only one.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree            Strongly agree

20. AFTER I participated in Women Rising, I was interested in becoming a head of school.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree            Strongly agree

21. Additional comments:

22. As a woman, I feel/would feel respected as an independent school leader/administrator. * Mark only one.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree            Strongly agree

23. Additional comments:

24. I feel confident that if I were to apply for a leadership/administrative position I would not be subjected to gender bias. * Mark only one.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree            Strongly agree

25. Additional comments:

26. I feel women are stereotyped into “caring” (i.e. mother) roles that are seen as not fitting for leadership/administration. * Mark only one.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree            Strongly agree

27. Additional comments:

28. Overall, I am satisfied with my work/life balance. * Mark only one.
29. Additional comments:

30. (Answer only if you live with your partner) I am responsible for more than 50% of household duties (cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, if applicable) Mark only one.

31. Additional comments:

32. My choice to have children or not is/was impacted by my decision to be a school leader/administrator: * Mark only one.

33. Additional comments:

34. I feel that women are less likely to be seen as good leaders than men. * Mark only one.

35. Additional comments:

36. Women Rising was helpful in my pursuit of leadership/administration positions. * Mark only one.

37. Additional comments:

38. Women Rising changed my understanding of being a woman leader/administrator. * Mark only one.
39. Additional comments:

40. Women Rising has positively affected my career path. *Mark only one.

41. Additional comments:

42. I would recommend Women Rising to a friend or colleague. *Mark only one.

43. Additional comments:

44. How useful were the following Women Rising elements? (on the 1-5 scale) *Mark only one per row.

- Mentorship program
- Ability to network with other women in the program
- Opportunity to listen to women heads of schools discuss their experiences
- Reading and discussing the book used in the program
- Reflecting on your own leadership style
- Skill building (e.g. discussing how to have difficult conversations)
- Reviewing the application process (e.g. resume writing, interviews)
- Other:

46. What was the most impactful part of Women Rising? (on the 1-5 scale) *Mark only one per row.

- Mentorship program
- Ability to network with other women in the program
- Opportunity to listen to women heads of schools discuss their experiences
- Reading and discussing the book used in the program
- Reflecting on your own leadership style
- Skill building (e.g. discussing how to have difficult conversations)
- Reviewing the application process (e.g. resume writing, interviews)
- Other:
47. Why was it the most impactful part of Women Rising?

48. What was the least impactful part of Women Rising? * Mark only one.

- Mentorship program
- Ability to network with other women in the program
- Opportunity to listen to women heads of schools discuss their experiences
- Reading and discussing the book used in the program
- Reflecting on your own leadership style
- Skill building (e.g. discussing how to have difficult conversations)
- Reviewing the application process (e.g. resume writing, interviews)
- Other:

49. Why was it the least impactful part of Women Rising?

50. Is there anything else you’d like to share about Women Rising and your experience in the program?

Thank you for completing the survey!
APPENDIX C

Women Rising Past Participant Interview Protocol

Thank you for participating in my study about Women Rising. This interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Everything that you discuss with me during this interview is confidential, so please feel free to speak openly. In order for me to accurately record our conversation, I would like to digitally record it so that I can later transcribe the interview verbatim. The recording will not be shared with anyone else. If there are points during the interview where you would like the recorder off, please feel free to ask me to stop the recorder and I will do so. Do you have any questions before we get started? … Okay, let’s begin.

1. What do you consider to be a leadership position at an independent school?

2. Tell me about your career path. What led you to this position and what are your plans for the future?

3. What challenges have you/are you facing as you pursue your career (in leadership positions)?

4. Tell me about how you feel gender impacts your applying to leadership positions (if at all).

5. What do you think are the characteristics or qualities that a head of school needs to have in order to be successful?

6. A study showed that women account for about 33% of independent/private school heads. Why do you think this is?

    (Follow-up) What do you think may be reasons that keep some women who are interested in school leadership from pursuing administrative positions?

7. The percent of women in the headship has changed by only a few percent in the past decade. What do you think could be done to make the headship more balanced between men and women?

8. One of the things that came out of the Women Rising questionnaire was the increased interest of past participants in the headship. Was that the case for you? If so, how did your experience in Women Rising lead to a change in your opinion of considering the headship?

9. Have you thought about leaving independent schools to get a leadership position elsewhere (Public schools, non-profits, etc.)? If so, why? Did Women Rising affect your decision?

10. What led you to participate in Women Rising?

11. What things did you hope to get out of your Women Rising experience?
12. Tell me about your Women Rising experience.

13. What was the most impactful part of the program for you? Why?

14. What was the least impactful part of the program for you? Why?

15. Do you think Women Rising helped (or will help) you rise in a leadership position? Why or why not?

16. If you were to design a leadership program for women in independent schools, what would it look like?

17. What else do you want me to know that I haven’t asked you yet?
APPENDIX D

Search Firm Interview Protocol

Thank you for participating in my study about Women Rising and the head of school search process. This interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Everything that you discuss with me during this interview is confidential, so please feel free to speak openly. In order for me to accurately record our conversation, I would like to digitally record it so that I can later transcribe the interview verbatim. The recording will not be shared with anyone else. If there are points during the interview where you would like the recorder off, please feel free to ask me to stop the recorder and I will do so. Do you have any questions before we get started? … Okay, let’s begin.

1. What are the three to five most common characteristics schools list as priorities for head of school candidates?

2. What have you seen as characteristics or qualities that a head of school needs to have in order to be successful?

3. What is the ideal prior experience for a head of school to make him/her attractive as a candidate?

4. Are there any observed differences in those who apply for the head of school positions?

   Probe: Years of experience? Type of experience? Gender? Ethnicity?

   Follow up: What, if anything, can you tell me about the participation of women as applicants for recent head of school searches?

5. A recent NAIS study showed that women accounted for only 1/3 of independent school heads. Why do you think this is?

   (Follow-up) What do you think may be reasons that keep some women who are interested in school leadership from pursuing administrative positions?

6. What are ways in which candidates can strengthen their opportunities to become head of school finalists?

   (Follow up) What impact do leadership development programs have on applications? Any types that are highlighted by search committees?

   (Follow up) How can leadership development programs like Women Rising help (if at all) a candidate’s chances?

7. What else do you want me to know that I haven’t asked you yet?
APPENDIX E

Independent School Board Interview Protocol

Thank you for participating in my study about your head of school search process. This interview will last approximately 40 minutes. Everything that you discuss with me during this interview is confidential, so please feel free to speak openly. In order for me to accurately record our conversation, I would like to digitally record it so that I can later transcribe the interview verbatim. The recording will not be shared with anyone else. If there are points during the interview where you would like the recorder off, please feel free to ask me to stop the recorder and I will do so. Do you have any questions before we get started? … Okay, let’s begin.

1. Describe the “ideal” head of school candidate for your school when you started the search.
   - What characteristics or qualities did you want your next head of school to have? Why those?

2. Who was on the search committee (connection to school)?
   - How would you say the committee was or was not diverse?

3. What was the ideal prior experience for the candidates to make them attractive to you as a candidate?

4. What elements (if any) strengthened applicants’ chances to becoming a head of school finalist?

5. What elements (if any) weakened applicants’ chances to becoming a head of school finalist?

6. Talk me through the school’s process of searching and hiring your current head of school (application? interviews? number of rounds?).

7. How did you come to your final selection for head of school?

8. I’m researching a leadership program that may potentially help women who are pursuing the headship. How did leadership development programs (of any sort) help a candidate’s chances (if at all)?

9. A recent NAIS study showed that men account for approximately 66% of independent school heads. Why do you think this is?
   - What do you think may be reasons that keep some women who are interested in school leadership from the headship?
10. What else do you want me to know that I haven’t asked you yet?
Hello!

I am Rachel Clouser, and I am a graduate student at UCLA, a dean at La Jolla Country Day School, and a participant of the Women Rising Program (Los Angeles, 2015).

I am writing to ask for your participation in a study about the Women Rising Program. The California Teachers Development Collaborative (CATDC) has approved my study of the program, and the purpose of the study is to evaluate the Women Rising program and the experience of women in and interested in independent school administration.

Please complete this brief survey about the Women Rising program; the survey should take roughly 20 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain confidential. If you have further questions, please email (rclouser@ljcds.org) or call (951-212-9317).

Thank you in advance for your participation in this study.
Rachel Clouser

<link to study>
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