

Deciding Which Way To Turn:

The Career Histories and Professional Aspirations of Women Deputy Headteachers



Aims

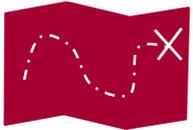
To explore the ways in which women deputy headteachers, as **potential aspirants to headship**, make sense of a) their careers in secondary education and b) the headteacher role.



Why is this important?

Men continue to outnumber women at the secondary headteacher level (DfE, 2015).

This sends the message to women teachers that educational leadership is **inaccessible**, and models **inequitable** gender relations to young people (Fuller, 2015; Harris, Muijs and Crawford, 2003).



Findings

Three super-ordinate themes emerged:

- Managing constraint
- Motivating forces
- Perceptions of secondary headship and the future



References

Department for Education (2015) *National statistics first release: school workforce in England (Revised)*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/series/statistics-school-workforce> (Accessed: 2 June 2016).

Fuller, K. (2015) 'Learning Gendered Leadership: A Discursive Struggle', in Reilly, E. C. and Bauer, Q. J. (eds.) *Women Leading Education Across the Continents: Overcoming the Barriers*. London: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 181 – 186.

Harris, A., Muijs, D. & Crawford, M. (2003) *Deputy and Assistant Heads: Building Leadership Potential*. Coventry: University of Warwick.

Research Questions



How do women deputy headteachers ...

- make sense of their **career histories**?
- experience **deputy headship**?
- perceive **secondary headship**?
- envisage their **future professional selves**?

Methodology



This qualitative research project was guided by the principles of **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve women. All worked in academy or local authority secondary schools across England at the time of interview.

Conclusions



Heterogeneity: Far from a homogeneous group, the women in my sample had experienced and made sense of their career trajectories very differently.

Risk: All participants, whether they aspired towards headship or not, perceived the headteacher role to be highly precarious. They believed headship posed a risk to their occupational stability and reputation.

Reflection: Deputy headteachers need more time and space to make careful, considered decisions about their professional futures.

