

2015

Secondary Principals who are Mothers: Balancing Home and Career

Turina Parker
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Turina Parker

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2015

Abstract

Secondary Principals Who Are Mothers:

Balancing Home and Career

by

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M.S., University at Albany, State University of New York, 2006

M.S., University at Albany, State University of New York, 2003

B.A., University of Albany, State University of New York, 2001

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2015

Abstract

Working mothers who are school leaders face challenges as they attempt to manage competing time demands and personal and professional responsibilities. A need exists for existing school leaders, as well as women aspiring to school leadership, to understand the coping strategies used by mothers who are also school principals. To that end, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the experiences of mothers who are school principals. Strategies used to navigate multiple roles were examined through a role conflict lens. Three overarching research questions guided this study to focus on how female principals with children accommodate their dual roles as principal and mother, what feelings are generated by the experience of managing dual roles as principal and mother, and how female principals with children respond to the demands of their roles. A purposive sample of 6 principals who are working mothers participated in in-depth interviews. Each interview was recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded to identify major themes and subthemes. The findings revealed that these mothers were impacted by the conflicting demands of motherhood and school leadership. Overwhelming responsibilities led to emotional pressures and lack of self-care for these women. This research makes an important contribution to the field of educational leadership by strengthening school leadership, facilitating a more sustainable female workforce, and increasing support for and dialogue among other women experiencing these phenomena. Current female school leaders may be compelled to serve as mentors, as the findings suggest that networking and support activities may help to combat feelings of isolation in the workplace and increase self-fulfillment.

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Dedication

To my daughters, Mya and Sky, who provided me with all the motivation I needed to persevere. Thank you for your unconditional love and patience.

Acknowledgments

To my daughters Mya and Sky, who were my motivation and source of strength from beginning to end. They are the reason I strive to maintain a balance between work and home.

To Casey, for reminding me failure was not an option. Thank you for encouraging me when I felt like giving up and pushing me when I needed it the most. I love you.

To Viva, Nitra, Shea, and Ariel for seeing me as a role model and encouraging me along the way. To Mommy, thank you for the kind words along the way.

To Dr. Johnson, thank you for your support and guidance. You gave me confidence in my ability to persevere, and challenged me to overcome the obstacles. Thank you for believing in me.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

School leaders face a multitude of challenges. These include challenges inherent in the development and maintenance of high-quality educational programs as well as those brought on by the effort to negotiate personal and professional responsibilities. Working mothers are caught between the demands of caring for their children, engaging in household chores, and fulfilling professional obligations within the workplace (DeLauro, 2010; Thompson & Beauvais, 2000; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999; Zemon & Bahr, 2005;). Role strain occurs when an individual has difficulty meeting multiple role obligations (Goode, 1960). Working mothers experience role strain when their implementation of multiple roles exhausts their supply of time and energy (Goode, 1960).

Considerable strides toward the increase of women in the workforce have been made over the past several decades. Over 50% of all American workers are women. Two-thirds of working women are either the sole breadwinner or co-breadwinners in their households (DeLauro, 2010). As a result, the issue of work/family balance has become particularly prevalent. During a 2010 visit to the Department of Labor, First Lady Michelle Obama discussed some of the challenges inherent in simultaneously managing the demands of home and career (Workforce, 2010). Research indicates that despite spending more time working outside the home, women's household and childcare responsibilities have not shifted (Buffardi & Erdwins, 1997; Loder, 2005). Many working women have continued their full domestic roles and responsibilities (Boyar, & Gregory, 2008; Carr, Grady & McCarthy, 2008; Hochschild, 1989).

Working mothers must juggle their roles within the home and at their place of employment (Korabik, Lero, & Whitehead, 2008; Smir & Harpaz, 2009). Navigating multiple responsibilities can lead to role conflict. Role conflicts occur when multiple roles have to be filled simultaneously and the time demands of each role present challenges (Redelinghuys, Botes, & Wet, 1999). The need to take time off from work to care for sick children, attend school-related and other events, and tend to routine matters such as medical appointments is ever-present (Harrison, 2008; Ward, 2004). For many women, balancing work and family is difficult (Ward, 2004).

Being a mother and an education professional are not short-term commitments (Sotirin, 2008). Both roles require significant time commitments (Harrison, 2008), the ability to manage multiple tasks (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006), significant emotional investment, and high amounts of energy and stamina (Milkie, Raley, & Bianchi, 2009). Women who seek to excel at both childrearing and their career, may be at a disadvantage within the workplace or be subject to significant role strain, leading to ineffectiveness in either or both arenas. Even in dual-parent households where both parents work, research has shown that women still take primary responsibility for the majority of domestic functions (Halpern, 2005; Loder, 2005). On average, mothers spend 31 hours per week on household responsibilities such as buying and preparing food, doing laundry, cleaning, and caring for children (Lattice Group, 2008). This increase in responsibilities results in potential conflict due to overload and competing demands (Thompson & Beauvais, 2000; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999).

While role conflict is not limited to a particular profession, there are challenges unique to the intersection of motherhood and school leadership responsibilities. Principals are often expected to work long hours and attend school-related events and board meetings that may occur on evenings and weekends (Bhindi & Dinham, 2005; Eckman & Kelber, 2010). Principal responsibilities often include attendance at community and school events, responding to crises, preparing for the opening of school, and participation in professional organizations (Copland, 2001; Said, 2011). The responsibilities of motherhood such as organizing meals, transportation, and cleaning for the household; childcare; spending quality time with children; organizing and attending activities and events; and other household responsibilities often intersect work demands (Blair & Johnson, 1992; Feree, 1991; Lieberman & LaVoi, 2011). Achieving a work-family balance is one of the biggest challenges facing women in leadership (Coleman, 2003; Loder, 2005; Shakeshaft, 2007). For many working mothers, the overlap of responsibilities contributes to stress, role strain, and fatigue—impacting their ability to meet personal or professional obligations (Noor, 2004; Shelton, 2006). There is a need for increased understanding of the role conflict that women principals experience and ways in which women in educational leadership negotiate workplace demands and parenting responsibilities.

Work and home responsibilities may leave women feeling devalued as mothers and as employees (Millward, 2006). In order to successfully negotiate parenting and career roles, women must employ personal and professional coping strategies in response to competing demands. Pressure from various responsibilities results in feelings of guilt,

frustration, exhaustion, and conflict (Cardozo, 1996). Many women suffer from *superwoman syndrome* as a result of societal gender role expectations (Marshall, 1984). Superwoman syndrome refers to the belief that women's employment outside the home should not affect their homemaker responsibilities (Herrera & Decampo, 1995). Superwoman syndrome is characterized by a desire to juggle the demands of motherhood and a career, without sacrificing home, work, or personal responsibilities (Marshall, 1984).

A number of factors influence the success of working mothers. One such factor is the ability to negotiate balance between the household and workplace (Noor, 2004; Orthner, Bowen, & Beare, 1990; Shelton, 2006). The ability to manage a wide range of varying responsibilities is particularly critical for women who maintain the dual roles of mother and school principal (Diraz, Ortlepp, & Greyling, 2003; Slan-Jerusalim & Chen, 2009; Voydanoff, 2005). Another factor is external support, including spousal support (Loconcz & Bortolotto, 2009). Lower levels of work-family strain have been associated with higher levels of perceived support (Alexander & Baxter, 2005; Loconcz & Bortolotto, 2009). Additionally, the ability of working mothers to perform optimally is impacted by adequate sleep (Burgard, 2011). Adequate sleep influences mental and physical health, as well as performance and productivity (Burgard, 2011; Novati et al., 2008; Spiegel, Knutson, Leproult, Tasali & Van Gauter, 2005). Even though female principals raising children are faced with the challenges of conflicting expectations, they are still expected to have their schools perform at increasingly high levels.

Principals are the catalysts of the development and maintenance of successful schools (Cotton, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1992; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). The school leader is responsible for setting and maintaining a clear vision and goals, establishing a consistent and shared culture, and hiring and developing staff (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Drake, 1999; Leithwood & Seashore, 2004). Of all school personnel, school principals are held most accountable for outputs (Ballou, 1999; Copland, 2001). There continues to be a wide range of challenges and demands confronting principals (Blackmore, 2004; Scott, 2003). Such demands may exacerbate the difficulty schools and districts face in recruiting and retaining principals (Gronn, 2002). There is a growing need for quality school leadership (Fullan, 2005; Gronn, 2002). Paralleling this need is a desire of women to be able both to succeed in their careers and to become mothers (Zemon & Bahr, 2005). Through analysis of the reported experiences of working mothers who are school principals, this study explores coping strategies and the dynamics of navigating professional and family responsibilities. A theoretical framework of role conflict guides data collection and analysis. Section 2 expands on the research and literature surrounding work-life balance and role conflict for working mothers.

Problem Statement

The increasing demands placed on school principals present particular challenges for women school leaders who are already facing additional stressors related to raising children. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2008), 28.5% of secondary principals were female, as compared to 71.5% male secondary principals. In 2011, 29% of secondary principals were female (National Center for Education Statistics

[NCES], 2011). The disproportionate number of female secondary principals can have implications for school districts that are in need of strong leadership. Working mothers face multiple sources of conflict with regard to meeting work and family demands. Such occurrences as working long hours, and taking time to stay at home with a sick child lead to stress and exhaustion (Giele, 2008; Livingston & Judge, 2008; Mitchelson, 2009; Omori & Smith, 2010). Work and family conflict has a negative spillover effect in the home (Slan-Jerusalim & Chen, 2009). When women are exposed to high levels of work stress and family demands, they may experience increased sickness and mental health problems (Livingston & Judge, 2008).

Female administrators, more often than male administrators, identify an overwhelming workload as a major dilemma confronting principals (Kochan, Spencer, & Matthews, 1999; Loder, 2005). Women are more likely than men to be at risk of stress and depressive symptoms (Dempsey & Sanders, 2010). High school principals reportedly work 60 to 80 hours per week (Read, 2000). The time demands of school principals have an impact on the time demands and responsibilities of motherhood. New understanding of coping strategies used by mother-principals is needed in order to address the social problem of competing demands and role strain. Managing responsibilities and time constraints in their personal lives can present significant leadership challenges for women school principals who are mothers (Loder, 2005). Understanding the ways in which women principals address the issue of work-life balance will have implications for current and aspiring female administrators seeking work-family coping strategies.

I was unable to locate any literature specific to working mothers who are school administrators in the selected New York region. In an effort to find out whether any such data exists, I contacted several local professional organizations, including the Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA), Capital District Association for Women in Administration (CADAWA), and Phi Delta Kappa, SUNY Albany Chapter (PDK). I was unsuccessful in obtaining any local data on the topic of motherhood and school leadership through these organizations. This study addresses high school principals who are mothers in a selected region of New York. This region was selected because of my proximity and access to the geographic location. This demographic was selected in order to make a local contribution to the knowledge base surrounding female principals navigating multiple roles. Female principals in the selected region navigate work and family, yet little is known about their experiences.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the experiences of women who are navigating the dual roles of motherhood and school leadership. Qualitative research is conducted when a problem or issue needs to be explored (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research methods can be used to better understand phenomenon about which little is known (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A phenomenological design is the best approach for this study because it enables understanding of the unique and complex challenges faced by working mothers. The phenomenological approach offers an opportunity to further understand the constructs of motherhood and school leadership. Through this

study I explore the issue of navigating motherhood and school leadership responsibilities.

Three central research questions guided this study:

1. Do the participants in the study perceive a conflict between their role as a principal and their role as a mother?
2. If so, how do these participants address or respond to these conflicts?
3. What strategies do female participants use to manage work and family responsibilities?

The participants selected for this study were six working mothers who are public high school principals in New York. I chose to study high school principals specifically, because the overall representation of women in this position historically is low (Bell & Chase, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989).

All participants are raising at least one child who is under the age of 18. In depth interviews were conducted in order to gather data about the strategies mothers who are school principals use to meet personal and professional demands. Interviews enabled me to explore the experience of working mothers managing the roles of motherhood and school leadership. An interview guide (Appendix C) consisting of open-ended, semistructured questions was developed to focus the interview. The interview guide focused on participants' work and home life experiences. Interview questions were designed to evoke vivid descriptions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Interviews were audio taped and transcribed following the interviews.

Phenomenological data analysis strategies were used to reveal the essence of

participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007). These include bracketing the researcher's preconceived notions about the phenomenon being studied, and grouping participants' statements into themes. Validation is one of the strengths of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Validation refers to the process used by researchers to document the accuracy of their studies (Creswell, 2007). Consistent with Creswell's (2007) standards of validation and evaluation, several validation strategies were utilized for this study: *clarifying researcher bias, member checking, and use of rich, thick description*. Section 3 will further discuss the qualitative research methodology utilized for this study.

Research Questions

Through exploration of the perspectives and experiences of women currently navigating these roles, I will address the following questions:

4. How do female principals with children accommodate their dual roles as principal and mother?
5. What feelings are generated by the experience of managing dual roles as principal and mother?
6. How do female principals with children address or respond to the demands of their roles?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to examine how a selected group of female principals in New York navigates the demands of motherhood

and school leadership. Burch (1989) suggests that rather than presenting new information, phenomenology interprets meanings already implicit to lived experience. In order to understand the issues surrounding the intersection between work and home life, a phenomenological perspective guides this study. Phenomenology seeks to uncover the nature or meaning of an experience (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994) from the perspectives of those who have experienced it (Merriam, 2002).

In this study I explore the nature of working mothers' experiences as school leaders. Through the lens of role conflict theory, the intersection of home and career responsibilities is explored. The intention is to increase understanding of the needs of working mothers who are principals, and provide new insights into coping strategies for educational leaders considering motherhood, as well as women entering the field of educational administration. I will describe how female principals respond to the challenges of managing multiple roles, and could potentially benefit women as they consider issues associated with work and family. By focusing on the ways in which working mothers cope with the construct of role conflict, I will highlight the ways in which personal and professional responsibilities affect the navigation of career and family for female school principals. In this study I describe the phenomenon of motherhood and work based on the shared experiences of six female principals. This study will provide data to policymakers and women who wish to better understand the quality of life issues affecting female principals.

Conceptual Framework

Role conflict and role theory serve as the conceptual framework for this study (Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005; Greenhaus & Battell, 1985; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Oates, 2007). In role conflict theory the time demands of one role impede successful performance of the other (Greenhaus & Battell, 1985; Gutek et. al., 1991; Oates, 2007). The more hours women spend at work, the more conflict they experience in their roles as mothers, and the more hours women spend in their role as mothers, the more conflict they experience in their role at work (Gutek et. al, 1991). In role theory conflict occurs when individuals engage in multiple roles that are incompatible (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Competing roles and expectations can place significant strain on an individual, and hamper quality of life (Diraz, Ortlepp & Greyling, 2003). Individuals experience conflict when situations arise where it is impossible to meet the expectations associated with various roles (Ivey & Robin, 1966). In this study I specifically focus on the role conflict between work and family life, as experienced by working mothers who are school principals. This type of conflict can be time-based, behavior-based, or strain-based (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). According to Greenhaus & Beutell (1985), time contributes to conflict when responsibilities from different domains compete for the individual's time. Behavior-based conflict occurs when the behaviors required for one role are incompatible with the behaviors required for the competing role. Strain contributes to conflict when stressors from one role affect performance in another role. Analysis of data gathered through phenomenological interviews will reveal patterns, trends, and themes as

they relate to time, behavior, or strain-based conflict. Participant's responses will aid in identifying similarities and differences in their experiences of role conflict.

Role conflict is characterized by psychological tensions that result from conflicting role pressures (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). This study will explore these pressures through examination of participants' experiences. The proposed study will provide insight into the nature of role conflict among female principals who are raising children, and the ways in which role theory applies to women juggling a multitude of personal and professional responsibilities.

Operational Definitions

Motherhood refers to the care work done by mothers and the rearing of children (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011).

Role conflict refers to the mutual interference of work and family roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Role strain refers to the difficulty faced in fulfilling the obligations of multiple roles and is comprised of variables of role conflict and role overload (Home, 1997).

Societal gender role expectations refers to the view that women should take primary responsibility for home and family (Nelson & Burke, 2002).

Superwoman syndrome refers to the mistaken belief that women's participation in employment outside of the home does not come at a cost to their responsibilities at home (Herrera & Delcampo, 1995).

Working mothers refers to women who are employed outside of the home at least 40 hours per week and have at least one child under the age of 18 living at home (Oates, 2007).

Work-life balance refers to a lack of conflict or interference between work and family roles (Frone, 2002).

Work-family conflict refers to the incompatibility of role pressures from the work and family domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Higgins, Duxbury, & Lee, 2010).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

This qualitative study includes in-depth interviews of female principals employed in upstate New York who are raising at least one child under the age of 18. The study is based on the assumption that participants will have some similarities in their experiences as mothers and principals. It is through these commonalities that prevalent themes and subthemes emerge. It is also assumed that participants have experienced some level of conflict in navigating multiple roles. I assume that there are challenges inherent to fulfilling simultaneous roles as mother and school principal.

There are a number of limitations to this study. The possibility of researcher bias limits the study. It can be argued that, since the researcher is human, the researcher inevitably affects what is learned (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I am a working mother who is currently employed as a school principal. As such, my own biases and experiences may potentially influence the outcomes of the study. As a working mother, I experience challenges related to managing multiple roles as mother and educational leader. My

experience of role conflict and my perspectives regarding the strategies and supports necessary to navigate these roles may differ from the experiences and perspectives of others. Additionally, my perception regarding balance may differ from those of the participants. For me, a healthy balance between work and home does not necessarily mean that time and energy spent on work and home is equal. Rather, my conception of the term *balance* surrounds decreased levels of stress and feeling overwhelmed in either realm—work or home. Verbatim transcription of interviews and member checking will minimize the possibility of researcher bias in the findings. The results of the study will surround only the themes that emerge from participant interviews.

The study is also limited by the number of participants. When there are a small number of participants, there is no guarantee that the informants' views are typical (Maxwell, 1996). This study uses a purposive sample of six principals, and generated thick, rich data from qualitative interviews. The participant sample is adequate to generate essential themes related to the research questions guiding this study. Another limitation is of the study, is that the methodology chosen is qualitative in nature. The data collected is based on perceptions, which allows for subjectivity and possible bias. Since this study sought to explore the experiences of participants, their personal perceptions were critical data elements.

The scope of this study is working mothers who are public high school principals in a selected upstate region of New York State. I explored the experiences of principals who are working mothers in order to understand the strategies women employ in negotiating responsibilities of parenthood and school leadership. A delimitation is that the

study focused solely on secondary school principals. Elementary school principals and higher education administrators will not be included in the study. By focusing exclusively on secondary principals, I am unable to explore what elementary or postsecondary administrators believe are the issues surrounding work and family balance. Additionally, the coverage of this study did not extend to males. The perspectives of fathers who are school principals were not included within the focus of the study. Gender differences were not considered within the study.

Significance of the Study

Principals are the catalysts to the development and maintenance of successful school buildings (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Read, 2000). This charge includes a host of challenges—uncontrollable crises, staff problems, managing conflict, human resource management, time management, and fiscal constraints (Doring, 1993; Friedman, 1997; Lawrence, Santiago, Zamoja, Bertani, & Boachino, 2008). As principals continue to strive to manage these roles and meet the needs of students, teachers, parents, and the community, it becomes increasingly important for these principals to have access to resources that will help to ensure their own well-being. Working long hours under prolonged stress is likely accompanied by lack of exercise, unhealthy practices, and decreased time spent with family and friends (Kraft, 2006). These factors may have detrimental physical and mental health implications for principals and their families, as well as implications for the schools these principals are responsible for leading (Catano & Stronge, 2006).

Findings from this study may benefit women in the selected New York State region who currently occupy or aspire to the position of public high school principal. Study findings could have relevancy for their families and those who are responsible for the training, development, and support of school principals. Role conflict increases stress levels, negatively affects the family unit, and increases the likelihood of women abandoning their career goals (Guendouzi, 2006; Oates, 2007). Women in the United States continue to express a desire to participate in both work and family (McQuillan, Greil, Shreffler, & Tichanon, 2008). Yet, in a study conducted by the Pew Research Center (2007), only 9% of mothers surveyed reported working full time as ideal. Exploring the experiences of working mothers who are public high school principals will promote a heightened understanding of the experiences of working mothers and the strategies used to navigate a variety of roles.

This study will contribute to existing research in the area of navigating work and family roles. This study seeks to explore the work and family experiences of female school principals who are mothers. The experiences of female principals must be studied in order to improve their overall quality of life in the area of family, home, and job (Conlan, 2005). Increased knowledge of strategies and supports used by female principals to effectively negotiate these dual roles could potentially decrease role strain in working mothers.

Teachers and other potential candidates for the role of principal are often disinterested due to the stressful and overwhelming nature of the position (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Perlstein, 2007). Understanding the

challenges of combining motherhood and school leadership will be increasingly important as women continue to transcend traditional gender expectations and enter educational leadership. Targeted attention to the challenges faced by principals who are mothers will enable the identification of support systems that will address these challenges. It is hoped that ultimately, working mothers will be provided with the supports needed to engage successfully in the role of school principal, without compromising their commitment to their families. This will lead to a more productive school environment for students, teachers and other constituencies, improved quality of life for the working mother (Greenhaus, Allen, & Spector, 2006), and a more attractive career field for future female school leaders.

This issue has implications for social change because of the role that women, as mothers and as educational leaders, play in shaping the lives of children—including their own and those enrolled in the schools that they are entrusted to lead. Insight into supports and strategies could aid working mothers in decreasing the impact of these multiple stressors.

Summary and Transition

This study will utilize a qualitative phenomenological approach in an effort to explore the work-family experiences of working mothers who hold positions as school principals. Although a plethora of literature addresses work-family conflict in the United States, a lack of research exists that specifically examines these experiences relative to female principals from the perspectives of women currently occupying these roles. This

section has provided a context and the necessity for such study. It has presented an overview of the problem which explores the needs and potential conflicts of working mothers who manage the roles and responsibilities of motherhood and principalship simultaneously. Role conflict theory as a means to situate the study within a conceptual framework was also presented. In role conflict theory people suffer from stress when they are faced with too many tasks and demands (Day, 2005; Guitain, 2009). The study of working mothers and educational leadership is significant because it will provide new insights into ways to manage these stressors. This has implications for improving the health and well-being of current and future mothers and educational leaders.

Section 2 will provide a thorough review of existing literature, including exploration of what the literature addresses with regard to working women, working mothers, the role of the school principal, and female school leaders. Key work-family studies will be discussed. Section 3 will present the research methodology for the study. This section will describe use of the qualitative method to conduct the study and the research tools to be used. This section will also discuss the use of phenomenological research methods to explore the experiences of mothers who are school leaders. Section 4 will provide results of the interviews conducted with study participants. Emerging themes and subthemes will be presented and discussed. Section 5 will conclude the study. Here, I will discuss the interview results and offer recommendations for further research. This section will provide an interpretation of the study findings and implications for social change. A concluding summary will be provided as the final component of the section.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

A review of existing literature was conducted to explore the research related to working mothers in educational leadership positions and the intersection between career and family responsibilities. The purpose of this section is to examine existing literature surrounding the roles of motherhood and school principals, and explore current research related to the complexities of working mothers. Research addressing women in educational leadership became prominent beginning in the 1980s with the work of researchers such as Shakeshaft (1987), Marshall (1984, 1985), and Solomon (1985). Researchers continue to be interested in the costs and benefits of women assuming multiple roles (Ahrens & Ryff, 2006; Omori & Smith, 2010; Slan-Jerusalim & Chen, 2009). Increasing female participation in the workforce, more dual-earner and single-parent families, and labor shortages all contribute to recent increased researcher interest in this topic (Duxbury & Higgins, 2005; Heymann & Earle, 2010; Loder, 2005; Slan-Jerusalim, 2009; Warner, Winter, & Breshears, 2005).

Included is a review of the literature that addresses the phenomenon of working mothers and school leadership. Both of these roles include challenging responsibilities with potential rewards. Difficulty balancing professional responsibilities and personal commitments—particularly among mothers, extends to other professions as well (Labier, 2000; Loder, 2005; Thistle, 2006). Ultimately, reconciling work and family conflict is a human and social problem (Guitian, 2009). Mothers are expected to conform to ideals of

mothering that include being available at all times with the energy to nurture their families without compromise (Malacrida, 2009).

Within this section, I will explore the ways in which the literature addresses the following topics: women in the workplace, principals, role conflict, balance, coping strategies, and policies. First, role conflict will be discussed in relation to the benefits and challenges of multiple roles, as well as the causes and outcomes. The conceptualization of balance is central to the issue of working mothers, and will be explored through the current literature. I will discuss the research as it relates to working mothers and their roles and responsibilities. Next, I will present challenges faced by school principals, in addition to discussing accountability expectations and role demands embedded in the job. Finally, this study will present literature on the coping strategies individuals and organizations employ, and existing policies surrounding working mothers. Understanding the ways in which the literature situates the phenomenon of working mothers will set the stage for an increased understanding of the experience of mothers who are school leaders.

A search for relevant literature was conducted primarily using the Walden University research database. Academic Search Complete, ERIC, and Education Research Complete were the databases used to obtain pertinent peer-reviewed literature. Search terms included working mothers, role strain, role conflict, school principals, women principals, and high school principals.

Role Conflict

Role conflict is the conceptual framework for this study. This framework is an appropriate lens through which to view this study, because it addresses the complexities

inherent in the experiences of managing dual roles. The more roles a person takes on, the greater the possibility that these roles will conflict with one another (Biddle, 1979).

Through the lens of role conflict, I explore how women handle the complex roles of mother and principal, and the impact of their workload on their experiences at work and home. For working mothers who are also school principals, the intersection of work and family demands can present significant challenges. The responsibilities inherent in leading a school building, coupled with those of raising a child, can lead to role overload and conflict (Thompson & Beauvais, 2000; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999). While role conflict is experienced by both men and women, men tend to be pulled toward work demands, while women tend to be pulled toward family demands (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Higgins, Duxbury, & Lee, 1995; Marshall & Tracy, 2009). Winkel and Clayton (2009) noted that even small transitions, such as accepting a call from a spouse at work, or checking work-related email at home, can increase the complexity of managing multiple roles.

The sense of feeling overwhelmed by multiple responsibilities is referred to in the literature as *interrole conflict*, *role conflict*, or *role strain*. While these terms may be used interchangeably in the literature, there are varying definitions, which identify these as distinct concepts. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined interrole conflict as conflict that arises when responsibilities from different life domains produce pressures that are incompatible. Role strain occurs when an individual perceives their workload as being more than they can accomplish (Ilies et al., 2007).

Role theory places focus on traditional gender roles (Impett, Gable, & Pepleau, 2005). Although there are benefits to women maintaining multiple roles, challenges arise when women are unable to balance these roles (Oates, 2007). Role conflict theory suggests that women experience conflict in combining career and family (Greenhaus & Butell, 1985). Conflict occurs when time demands of one role impede successful performance of the other (Eckman & Kelber, 2010). Role conflict theory emphasizes work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). As a result of high demands at work and at home, many mothers are at an increased risk for feeling role overload (Vilhjalmsson & Kristjansdottir, 2006). Role overload is the term used to describe the conflict that occurs when the demands in one of multiple roles exceeds an individual's available time and energy (Higgins & Duxbury, 2010). Working mothers have an increased risk for experiencing role overload compared to other employed adults because children demand more time and attention from their mothers compared to their fathers (Vilhjalmsson & Kristjansdottir, 2006). The extent to which a person experiences feelings of being overwhelmed by multiple responsibilities determines role overload (Glynn, Maclean, Forte, & Cohen, 2009). Many researchers have acknowledged the possibility of role conflict for all working mothers (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Vilhjalmsson & Kristjansdottir, 2006).

Benefits of Multiple Roles

A good balance between work and family life benefits employers, as it is linked to better life satisfaction and subsequently to workers being more productive, creative and

efficient (Zelenski, Murphy, & Jenkins, 2008). Guitain (2009) noted that while conflict does exist, benefits exist as well. Namely, work experiences can enrich family life, and vice versa. For example, Brubaker and Simon (1996) noted that enhanced self-esteem can result from achieving a balance between work and home. A dichotomy can exist with working mothers. While raising children can affect work time and energy, it can also serve as a catalyst to increased motivation and sense of urgency to succeed (Sotirin, 2008).

Causes of Role Conflict

Much of the literature discusses work and family in relation to conflicting and competing demands. The literature also presents the benefits of negotiating both work and family roles, some of which can include having a more well-rounded personality, and feelings of self-gratification (Sieber, 1974). Such benefits do not obliterate the existence of role conflict, but can help to mitigate associated stressors. Time-based conflict occurs when job and family responsibilities compete for the individual's time. Time-related conditions such as long work hours, schedule inflexibility, shift work requirements, and overtime and evening duties are consistently related to work-family conflict (Byron, 2005). Family-related stress such as marital and parental conflict can also lead to interference with work roles (Byron, 2005).

Working mothers face potential impacts on stress levels, health, and well-being (Norton, Gupta, Stephens, Martine, & Townsend, 2005). In contemporary society, there has been a shift in the role of women both at home and in the workplace. The division of labor between men and women in the household is no longer defined through an

emphasis on the household as the women's sphere and the workplace as the man's sphere (Crompton, 2006). Although men experience similar issues with regard to negotiating work and family responsibilities, women negotiating dual roles experience role strain at a higher level. As compared to men, women take on greater responsibility with regard to caring for children (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2006).

McGoldrick (2005) studied working mothers' attitudes and perceptions. Results from interviews of working mothers suggest that they are overwhelmed by childcare responsibilities. Results also suggest that working mothers' home and work lives are affected by feelings of stress, tiredness, and depletion. Additionally, working mothers often must search for reliable, affordable childcare (Poms, Botsford, Kaplan, Buffardi, & O'Brien, 2009). Employed parents with childcare problems or unreliable childcare are likely to experience multiple role strain, and as a result, work-family conflict (Poms et. al, 2009). Additionally, women work an average of one and a half months more than men do in order to maintain an effective balance between work and home responsibilities (Hochschild, 1991). Women tend to take more responsibility than men do for tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and scheduling appointments and activities (Hochschild, 1991).

Family is a significant work conflict for women (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Hochschild, 1991). While men struggle with this conflict as well, women are faced with unique biological and social constraints (Armenti, 2003; Mercer, Nichols, & Doyle, 1989). Women face expectations imposed by society that differ from societal expectations of men (Mercer, Nichols, & Doyle, 1989). Employed women are more likely than men to make work concessions for family responsibilities (Bracken, Allen, &

Dean, 2006). Determining which concessions to make, and prioritizing work and family responsibilities in an attempt to integrate the two, may heighten the level of conflict experienced by working mothers. Over the past several years, there has been an increase in the research on work-family conflict (Cinamon, Rich, & Westman, 2007). Many researchers agree that work-family conflict can be bidirectional – work interfering with home, and home interfering with work (Cinamon, 2006; Grennhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Outcomes of Role Conflict

Balancing work and family is a significant challenge in today's society (Halpern, 2005; Cinamon, et al., 2007). While many employees are devoted to their careers, they are also devoted to their families (Giutain, 2009). Consistent with the expansion of mothers and dual-career parents in the workplace, the issue of work and family has received increased attention in the literature. Work-family conflict can result in lack of satisfaction with life, anxiety, burnout, psychological distress, depression, and physical ailments (Guitian, 2009). Being a mother increases the workload at home – there is more cleaning, laundry, and food preparation to be done, in addition to transporting children to and from school and other activities (Claffey & Mickelson, 2008). In a study of 70 families with preschool children, Braun, Vincent, and Ball (2008) found that working class mothers remain at risk of being defined as inadequate mothers according to societal standards and expectations. When women begin to experience a sense of role overload or conflict, physical and psychological health may be negatively affected (Oates, 2007). In a study exploring the motivations and stresses associated with nurse managers who are full-time working mothers, Firmin & Bailey (2008) conducted in-depth interviews with 13

mothers who worked as nurse managers. The participants in this study expressed challenges in balancing work and home, self-imposed advancement inhibitions, and constant giving. The researchers found that the participants struggled with wanting both the benefits of full time employment, and the benefits of part time employment.

In their study of working mothers who were NCAA Division I head coaches, Breuning and Dixon (2007) examined the consequences of work-family conflict at work and at home. Forty-one participants from a wide variety of sports were sourced through snowball sampling. Asynchronous online focus groups were conducted over a period of 18 weeks. The researchers found the prevalence of negative consequences resulting from attempts to balance work and home responsibilities. The mothers in the study experienced significant strain on their marriages or partner relationships, feelings of guilt, and feeling that their work performance suffered.

Working mothers experience a significant amount of guilt (Guendozi, 2006; Hochschild, 1991; Medina & Magnuson, 2009). This study will explore participants' perceptions of role conflict as it relates to feelings of guilt. Mothers are often stretched to fulfill multiple responsibilities, yet they feel guilt for not meeting mothering ideals (Medina & Magnuson, 2009). Working mothers work hard to ensure that they are seen as equals in the workplace and that standards of care for their children are not compromised (Sotirin, 2008).

In a phenomenological study exploring the experiences of 10 women who were engaged in academic careers while mothering preteen children, Hirakata and Daniluk (2009) found several themes that were common among the participants. These women

experienced a sense of vulnerability, sense of isolation, sense of compromise and inadequacy, overwhelming sense of stress and pressure, lack of acknowledgment and structural support, and perceptions of positive gains.

Work-family conflicts are an increasing problem for women administrators. In an attempt to mediate potential work-family conflict, some women have chosen to remain in the assistant principal role in lieu of pursuing the principal position. Others have opted to postpone having a family (Loder, 2005). Increases in the number of hours spent working, leads to an increased likelihood of work-life imbalance (Jayita & Murali, 2009). Some women manage multiple roles of work and family with ease, while others experience significant interrole conflict (Oates, Hall, & Anderson, 2005). Interrole conflict is one condition that reduces the benefits of engaging in multiple roles (Oates, 2007). Interrole conflict negatively influences stress levels and the family unit (Guendouzi, 2006). Such conflict may also contribute to turnover, as women choose to remain home to care for children, in lieu of navigating the role conflict (Oates, 2007). In a review of existing literature, Halpern (2005) discussed several studies that demonstrate a correlation between stress and health issues, workplace absenteeism, and turnover. There is evidence showing the association between work-to-family and family-to-work conflict and poor physical health (Frone, 2003; Greenhaus, Allen, & Spector, 2006). In a review of the literature on the effects of nonstandard employment on the balance between work and family, Girard (2010) found that nonstandard work hours and working long hours could have negative effects on the family. The overwhelming responsibilities of work and home leave many women feeling invalid as mothers and as employees (Millward, 2006). A

quantitative study examining the association between role overload and women's mental health Glynn et. al. (2009) found a positive association between perceptions of role overload and poorer mental health. In this study, participants included a random sample of 716 women aged 25-54, with at least one child under the age of 17 living in the household. Telephone surveys were used to assess the association between role overload and other sociodemographic variables, including income. Linear regression was used to analyze the data. A stronger association was found between role overload and mental health than any other variables. Similarly, in a study of 155 women who were employed full time, Pearson (2008) found a negative correlation between role overload and psychological health. The results also identified a relationship between the number of children residing in the home and role overload. The findings of this quantitative study suggest that when women are less overloaded with their roles and responsibilities, they tend to experience more positive psychological health (Pearson, 2008).

A good balance between work and family life has been shown to benefit employers, as it is linked to better life satisfaction and subsequently to workers being more productive, creative and efficient (Zelenski, Murphy, and Jenkins, 2008). Job satisfaction is positively related to absenteeism and turnover (Rosenblatt & Shirom, 2005).

Balancing Work and Family

Shakeshaft (2007) contends that attempting to balance family and workplace demands is a barrier to women achieving success in educational administration. The

literature points to differences in the conception of the term *balance* (Greenhaus & Allen, 2006). Work-family balance is defined by Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) as the “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains” (p. 458). For some parents, balance refers to managing a variety of intersecting tensions, rather than achieving equilibrium (Loons & Bortolotto, 2009). Zigler (2007) suggested that principals should seek meaning, rather than balance as they manage their personal and professional lives, and embrace the notion of imbalance. Work-life balance is defined by Loehr and Schwartz (2003) as being fully engaged. This means setting clear boundaries between work and home, and participating in the activities of each without distraction. It refers to putting full attention and energy into work while at work and being immersed in family activities at home. A study of student affairs professionals examined the approaches and expectations surrounding personal and professional balance among senior student affairs officers. In this study, Beeny, Guthrie, Rhodes, and Terrell (2005) found differences in the ability of these professionals to manage personal and professional responsibilities. While some allowed their professional lives to dominate, others were impacted by an increased focus on their personal lives. In this study, men were more likely than women to rate their current levels of balance as better than average, and were more satisfied than women with their current levels of work and personal balance.

This issue has been addressed with regard to a wide range of professions. In a discussion of evolving trends in balancing work and family for future academic physicians, Harrison (2008) noted that female trainees and young physicians are

increasingly finding it necessary to manage the challenges related to simultaneous work and parenting. Harris and Giuffe (2010) reported that female professional chefs experience conflict related to work and family responsibilities, often stemming from long work hours. In a study of working female athletic trainers in the secondary school and collegiate settings, Kahanov, Loeb sack, Masucci and Roberts (2010) found that parenting and family obligations play a major role in the underrepresentation of women in this field.

Coping Strategies

Individual

A qualitative research study (Guthrie, Woods, Cusker, & Gregory, 2008) was conducted to explore the ways in which student affairs professionals defined the concept of balance in the context of balancing their personal and professional lives. The study also explored the ways in which student affairs professionals described their experience of maintaining and achieving balance in their lives. Interviews were conducted of 11 student affairs educators who exemplified personal/professional balance, as indicated by nominations from their colleagues. The researchers found four primary keys to balance: self-knowledge, intentionality, commitment to self-care, and reflection. Although these common themes were identified, it is important to note that ultimately, effective balance strategies will be unique to each individual, based on various internal and external factors that affect one's ability to maintain balance. Internal factors include barriers such as poor self-image and motivation (Shakeshaft, 2007). External factors include barriers such as stereotyping, discrimination, and work conditions (Shakeshaft, 2007). Fullan (2005)

developed a concept called cyclical energizing, which emphasizes the importance of recuperation. Greenhaus (2006) identifies resources such as self-efficacy, resilience and hardiness gained in one life domain as positively impacting on performance in the other domain. Self-care and having a high sense of well-being is one of the most significant components of work/life balance (Edgar, 2005).

Strategies used to maintain a sense of balance between personal and professional responsibilities varies widely (Guthrie, Woods, Cusker, & Gregory, 2005). In response to work and family demands, individuals may attempt to actively modify their roles, relationships, and resources (Voydanoff, 2005). Voydanoff (2005) discusses two types of adaptive strategies: increasing resources, and decreasing demands. Demands include job requirements, role expectations, and social and organizational norms. Strain is likely to increase as demands exceed ability.

Trentberth & Dewe(2005) conducted a study to explore the role leisure plays in coping with work stress. Using a sample of secondary school principals and deputy principals, the researchers found leisure fulfills an active role in coping with work stress. The importance of leisure varies widely, and is impacted by individual differences in motives and needs. In a study examining work-family conflict at home and work with 41 women who are Division I head coaches, Bruening & Dixon (2007) identified coping mechanisms these women used to achieve success at work and quality of life with their families. The most salient coping mechanisms included engaging in stress relief activities, organization and time management, prioritizing aspects of work, support networks, flexibility with hours, and family-friendly policies and cultures.

Working women, especially those who seek careers in administration, have been successful due to their personal and professional support systems (Young & McLeod, 2001). Primary social support systems include husband, workplace and family (Young & Ki-Hak, 2009). Support systems at work or home have been shown to decrease levels of role conflict in working mothers (Gronlund, 2007; Kirrane & Buckley, 2004; Alam, Sattar, & Chaudhury, 2011). Oates, Hall, and Anderson (2005) conducted a qualitative study of 32 mothers working in academia. Through use of archival interviews and a grounded theory approach, the researchers found spirituality served as an important support in helping these women to negotiate interrole conflict.

Some of the strategies used by working mothers to negotiate the roles of parenting and career include: decreasing social, educational, and personal activities that do not involve the children (Chase-Lansdale et. Al, 2003); seeking social support (Duxbury & Higgins, 2009); prioritizing, delegating, and planning (Duxbury & Higgins, 2009); being grounded in spirituality (Oates, Hall, & Anderson, 2005); purchasing household services for housecleaning and childrearing (Stuenkel, 2005); using stress management techniques (Austin, Shah, & Muncer, 2005); decreasing time spent sleeping (Sotirin, 2008); intentionally scheduling personal time (McClellan, 2005); delaying/forgoing childbearing; adapting either work or family to make the two roles more compatible (Harris & Giuffre, 2010).

The ability of working mothers to integrate work and family is not well understood (Marcinkus, Whelen-Berry, & Gordon, 2007;). McClellan (2007) surveyed women faculty, department heads, and senior administrators and asked them to give

advice to young professionals regarding the attainment of personal and professional balance. Themes and sub-themes emerging from this study included: take care of yourself; nurture your personal life; plan, prepare and organize; you can't do it all; maintain perspective; honor your spirituality.

Kushnir & Melamed (2006) studied the effects of home demands, personal decision control, and shared decision control at home on burnout and satisfaction with life. Using a sample of 133 working mothers, the researchers found in families, shared decision control is a coping resource. Spousal support is an important factor in reducing conflict between work and family life (Kirrane & Buckley, 2004). Examples of spousal support include care given during the time of illness, emotional support, counseling, and advice (Bernas & Major, 2000; Alam, Sattar, & Chaudhury, 2011). These gestures minimize fatigue and irritation (Bernas & Major, 2000). A qualitative exploration of working mothers' experiences found that both practical and emotional support provided by husbands was important to the sense of well-being of married working women (Thorstad, Anderson, Hall, Willingham, & Carothers, 2006). There is a need for women to have access to female administrators to serve as mentors as they aspire to administrative positions (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). To investigate the relationship between the level of interrole conflict working mothers experience and whether they felt a spiritual connection to their careers, Oates (2007) conducted a quantitative study of 200 well educated working mothers. Quantitative methods were used in an attempt to empirically validate the relationship between spirituality and decreased tension due to

role conflict. Results of the study indicated working mothers who felt a high level of spiritual connection to their careers, reported less interrole conflict.

Organizational

Spreitzer (2006) found strong support for the idea that individuals thrive when they are embedded in contexts with high social resources, such as connections, bonds and support. Organizations would benefit from supporting employees as whole people, and finding ways to enhance the business' performance while creating time and energy for employees' personal lives (Friedman, Christenson and DeGroot, 1998). In a study surrounding work-family conflict, researchers identified several strategies employers could implement to assist nurses in mitigating the tensions between work and home. These included flexible scheduling, and educational and child-care support (Firmin & Bailey, 2008). Mothers who work in settings that provide flexibility to meet the needs of their families demonstrate lower role conflict (Gronlund, 2007).

Women in the Workplace

Historically, women have struggled to be recognized as equals within the workplace (Albee & Perry, 1998). Goldin (1992), in a study of women college graduates in the twentieth century, concluded that those graduating between 1900 and 1920 had to make a distinct choice between family and career. In 1920, Congress established the Women's Bureau in the U.S. Department of Labor to investigate the conditions of women workers and promote their welfare (Berggren, 2008). The belief that the male and female sexes are vastly different - with different needs, values, and abilities—has

permeated the history of both women and men in both the workplace and the home (Ferree, 1990; Williams, 2000).

Working Mothers

In the early history of the United States, women faced significant barriers to entering the workforce. These barriers came in the form of both societal attitudes and expectations, and policies that encouraged role division. An example of this is a 1903 bylaw passed by the New York Board of Education, prohibiting married women from teaching or, consequently, becoming administrators (Shakeshaft, 1999). Working mothers continue to be impacted by the view of the ideal worker as someone who prioritizes work above all else (Stone, 2007; Mason & Eckman, 2007; Bennetts, 2007). Current studies indicate that working professionals accept the inherent conflicts between work and family, as a result of embedded cultural expectations (Mason & Eckman, 2007). The culture of the American workplace places women in the position of often having to meet conflicting family and work obligations (Stone, 2007).

Over time, women, including married women and mothers, have increasingly become a part of the workforce. This has been driven by changes in social norms. The percentage of mothers in the labor force increased from 45 percent in 1965, to 78 percent in 2000 (Bianchi, Robinson & Milkie, 2006; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001). According to the U.S. Department of Labor and Statistics (2006), 95% of mothers with children under the age of 18, are employed. Researchers cite financial reasons among the top reasons mothers choose to return to the workforce after giving birth (Baxter, 2009). Additionally, women choose to work for personal fulfillment.

Career success can create a healthy level of self-esteem (Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge & Piccolo, 2008). Self-esteem can be directly linked to a woman's sense of accomplishment (Kwan, Lu Lu & Hui, 2009). New opportunities for women have led to more women electing to find ways to prioritize both family and career (Hakim, 2000). For those who choose to retain full time employment, burnout becomes a major factor (Mason & Eckman, 2007; Stone, 2007). Working mothers experience burnout at a higher rate than other employees (Mason & Eckman, 2007). Working professional women often work long hours, while attending to significant family demands at home (Stone, 2007).

Principals

History of the Principalship

The position of school principal, which began formally in the 1920s, has evolved over time (Sergiovanni, 2001). As one-room schoolhouses expanded to include multiple classrooms during the early 20th century, management needs arose. This need was initially addressed by teachers, who held both teaching and administrative responsibilities. As schools and responsibilities continued to grow, so too did the need for management. Teacher leaders became full time administrators, with responsibilities for areas such as financial operations, building maintenance, personnel, discipline, and curriculum coordination (Seyfarth, 1999). During the 1970s, federal involvement in schools increased, and principals began to take on additional responsibilities (Beck & Murphy, 1993). Until the 1980s, when the accountability movement became prevalent,

principals continued to serve primarily as school managers. The federal government began to place increased emphasis on school improvement, student achievement, and accountability measures (Beck & Murphy, 1993). The responsibilities of the school principal expanded to encompass not only management, but also, instructional leadership and school reform (Sergiovanni, 2001; Jenlink, 2000). Just as family roles and expectations have evolved, the principal position has evolved over time. The role of the principal has continued to expand throughout the past several decades, as the challenge to adequately prepare students for success in a global economy has heightened.

The role that the school principal plays in sustaining student achievement is monumental. Yet, perhaps at a time where quality school leadership is needed most, there are shortages in the availability of qualified applicants. While shortages extend across all grade levels and geographic locations, there is a particular need for qualified candidates to fill the position of high school principal (Whitaker & Turner, 2000). Whether the leadership shortage is actual or perceived is debated in the research literature. The pressure to attract high-caliber candidates may lead to the perception of a shortage in the candidate pool (Pijanowski, Hewitt, & Brady, 2009).

Administrative positions' greatest untapped pool of candidates is women (Mertz, 2006). Women continue to be underrepresented in school principal positions, particularly at the secondary level (Loder, 2005). Historically, the position of secondary school principal has been dominated by males (Shakeshaft, 1989). High school principals are more often male, and elementary principals are more often female (Newton, 2006). Glass et. al. (2000) noted that men occupy high school principalships at a much higher rate than

women. These researchers indicate that three times more men than women serve as high school principals. In a study examining the career progress of secondary school principals in Greece, Kaparou & Bush (2007) conducted in-depth interviews with six female principals. The findings of this study indicate that under-representation of women in administrative positions was largely due to factors which include covert discrimination, gender stereotypes, and social constraints due to their defined roles. This study will explore participants' perceptions of such constraints and barriers. Researchers such as Christman & McClellan (2008) and Lorber (2005) agree that societal expectations differ between men and women.

Role Demands

School principals face wide range of challenges and have significant responsibilities (Thompson & Bauvais, 2000; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999). Working long hours, participating in evening and weekend activities, managing crises, and improving school performance, is part of what the position entails (Copland, 2001; Metzger, 2006). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008) reports that school administrators typically work more than 40 hours per week, and frequently attend to work responsibilities at night and on the weekend. Principals face exorbitant amounts of stress (Ripley, 1997). The demanding nature of the role can make it difficult for school principals to balance their personal and professional lives (Read, 2000).

Public schools often demand that administrators be instantly available (Bailyn, 2000; Read, 2000). In addition to time demands, challenges inherent in the principalship

include stressors related to meeting the needs of various constituencies, and increasing test scores (Ziegler, 2007). Tomic & Tomic (2008) identified several recurring themes with regard to the stressors that most significantly impact the school principal. More is crammed into principals' days than ever before, due to technological supports such as the Internet and cell phones. Principals are faced with a heavy and continuous workload, which results in a preoccupation with work. A primary expectation of the school principal is to implement best practices for increasing student achievement (Whaley, Cox & Cox, 2002; Hunt, 2008; Waldron, McLesky & Redd, 2011; Waldron, McLesky & Redd, 2011). This requires principals to stay abreast of current trends, research, and best practices, develop and implement action plans, and train and support teachers. The school principal is expected to serve as the instructional leader, and to be able to demonstrate student achievement through improved test scores and other accountability measures (Hunt, 2008; Duke, Grogan, Tucker, & Heinecke, 2003). School reform efforts, including public access to school test results and school district sanctions for not meeting adequate yearly progress expectations, increase principals' stress levels and heighten the challenge of the role (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009; Wheatley, 2006). The vast responsibilities of the role make fulfilling the requirements of the principal position almost impossible (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Copland, 2000). There is an unrelenting pace – meetings, crises, responding to phone calls and emails, teacher observations – resulting in little time for breaks. Paperwork demands resulting from district and state demands are significant (Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998). High school principals average between 60 and 80 hours per week (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Read, 2000). Kraft (2006) found that

those who work long hours and/or under prolonged stress are subject to decreased exercise and time with family, increased isolation, and unhealthy diets, all of which can lead to mental and physical health conditions.

School activities regularly occur after the school day ends and on weekends. Principals are often responsible for attending, as well as managing schedules for activities such as book fairs, open houses, parent teacher conferences, and PTA meetings (Williamson & Blackburn, 2009). They are also often responsible for making connections within the community, which includes attending community activities, and seeking grants from external sources (Portin, Shen, & Williams, 1998).

Researchers have noted decreased interest in the principal position (Marzano, McNulty, & Waters, 2005). Forty-seven percent of public school teachers have the credentials necessary to hold administrative positions, but many are unwilling to take on administrative roles. This is a result of the perception that principals are overworked (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001). Principals tend to experience high levels of burnout due to the demands of the role (Friedman, 2002; Hogden, 2005; Oplatka, 2002; Tomic & Tomic, 2008).

As instructional leaders, principals are expected to promote and insure effective instruction and improve student outcomes (Tornsen, 2009). In order to meet accountability demands, principals must focus more heavily on outcomes (DuFour, 2002). Principals' jobs can rely on student test results (Mayo & White, 2001). The 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) increased expectations for student achievement, and in doing so, exacerbated demands for school principals. As a result of this act, Title I

schools that fail to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress based on annual standardized test scores for two or more years, are subject to mandatory school improvement, corrective actions, or restructuring (National Education Association, 2010). Replacing school staff, including administrators, may be a part of school improvement or restructuring efforts.

The overall responsibility for student achievement and high-quality outcomes lies with the principal (Tornsen, 2009). In 2010, the Obama administration announced a new school classification, Challenge Schools, as part of a new school accountability framework (National Education Association, 2010). To support the goal of improving the nation's 5,000 lowest performing schools within the next five years, the administration, through the published document *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (2010), defined three categories of low-performing schools. These categories include the lowest performing 5 percent of schools in each state, the next lowest performing 5 percent of schools in each state, and additional schools that continue to demonstrate significant achievement gaps (National Education Association, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Schools in these categories are directed to adopt specific, targeted intervention models, which may include replacing the principal as part of transformation or turnaround efforts (National Education Association, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Principals and Work-Life Balance

Much of the existing literature related to school principals and work-life balance focuses on the challenges inherent in integrating the two (Day, 2005). School principals face job stress, loneliness, exhaustion, and significant time demands, resulting in disruption to family life (Queen & Queen, 2005). While the percentage of female principals has increased over time, a significant gender discrepancy remains. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), the percentage of female elementary principals during the 2007-2008 school year was 59 percent at the elementary level, as compared to 29 percent at the secondary level. Increased time demands, including frequent evening and weekend activities, may serve as a deterrent to women trying to meet home and work demands (Alley & McDonald, 1997; Marshall & Kasten, 1994). Additionally, the role of high school principal has traditionally been associated with males (Pounder, 1994).

Oplatka and Mimon (2008) studied women principal's conceptions of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in their career. Based on the accounts of 15 female principals, job satisfaction was low. In an examination of how women administrators negotiate their personal and professional lives, Loder (2005) suggests "the overwhelming responsibility for managing work-family conflict falls largely on women administrators" (p. 769).

Work-family conflict has been cited as the primary reason why there are fewer female administrators (Noddings, 2003). Despite making up a high percentage of the

teaching workforce, women continue to make up a much smaller percentage of school administrators (NAESP, 1998; Banks, 2000). The demands of the school principal position do not afford women the time needed to balance their personal and professional lives (Sherman, Clayton, Johnson, Skinner, & Wolfson, 2008). Research suggests that challenges related to managing the roles of mother and principal simultaneously may lead women to choose motherhood over administration (Glass, et. al., 2000). Glass et. al. (2000) refers to two paths that women must choose between – the “mommy track” and the “career track”. These researchers assert that women follow the mommy track when they choose to remain in teaching rather than move into administration, despite having earned the requisite administrative credentials (Glass et. al., 2000). Women entering the field of school administration have historically been unmarried, have not had children, or have children who are older (Loder, 2005). Researchers have found that the career pathways of female educational leaders are impacted more by family responsibilities than the career pathways of men (Glass, et. al., 2000; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006).

National Policies

Work-Family Balance

In response to the significance that family holds for many people, companies have begun to implement family-friendly policies to attract and retain talented employees (Guitain, 2009). The issue of work-family balance extends beyond the United States. Countries have put various policies in place to support working mothers:

- Hungary, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Spain enable women to reduce their working hours in the first 9 – 12 months after the birth of their child (Devin & Moss, 2005).
- Swedish public funding covers 100% of preschool provision and 75% of care for younger children (Warren, Fox, & Pascall, 2009).
- In France, the work week was reduced to 35 hours in large companies in 2000, and in small companies in 2002 (Warren, Fox, & Pascall, 2009).
- In Sweden, parents are allotted 480 days of parental leave, which can be used flexibly on either a full or part time basis, in addition to 10 days' paternity leave and allowance (International Labor Organization, 2005, as cited in Warren, Fox, & Pascall, 2009).

In a review of the history of international policies of the United Nations (UN) with respect to women as workers and caregivers of young children, Bould (2006) identified family policy has revolved primarily around the provision of child care for working mothers. In the 1970s and 80s, the private sector moved toward providing benefits that are explicitly recognized as work-family, such as maternal leave and child care (Berggren, 2008).

In a November 2008 poll, 35% of women indicated that President Obama would best meet the needs of women if he addressed “family and work-life balance” issues, whereas only 22% chose the economy as their top concern, and 10% chose pay equity (Appelbaum & Milkman, 2009). Clearly, concerns surrounding the integration of work and family are prevalent. While international policies are not directly addressed through

this study, it is important to note that the conceptualization of work-life balance issues is extensive. This study intends to address these concerns by highlighting the experiences of women who integrate work and family on a daily basis, as they navigate motherhood and school leadership.

Literature Related to the Method of Study

Additional examples of phenomenological research related to this study are provided in this section. Leberman and LaVoi (2011) conducted a phenomenological study to explore the experiences of working mother volunteer sport coaches. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight working mothers who are also coaches, and analyzed for themes. Findings of the study suggested similarities between the reasons for coaching and notions of being a good mother, including spending time together, developing life skills and role modeling. The study also highlighted reciprocal benefits of motherhood, working and coaching.

A phenomenological study conducted by Millward (2006) aimed to understand the experiences of women upon their return to work following maternity leave. Interviews of eight women were analyzed using interpretive phenomenological analysis to identify transitional themes. Results indicated women tended to struggle with prevailing their rights, needs and concerns as mothers, while simultaneously maintaining their identity as valued and functional members of their organizations.

Harris & Giuffre (2010) used in-depth interviews of 33 women with professional experience as chefs, to explore the experiences of female professional chefs. The researchers attempted to understand how women in a male-dominated occupation

managed barriers related to balancing work and family responsibilities. Findings included prevalent work family conflict, particularly among women with children. The researchers found work family conflict was the overwhelming reason for a career change by women who had left professional kitchen work. This study is consistent with other studies that found that women, particularly mothers, experience conflict with regard to meeting the demands of home and career (Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1989; Stone, 2007).

Literature Related to Differing Methodologies

This study uses a qualitative, phenomenological research approach. In comparison to other research methods, this is the most appropriate methodology for exploring the dynamics combining career and motherhood, from the perspective of women experiencing the phenomenon firsthand. Current literature discusses the benefits and limitations of a wide range of research approaches, and points to phenomenology as the approach most closely aligned with the goals of this study.

A quantitative approach would not have been appropriate for this study, as quantitative research seeks to explain the causes of an issue, whereas qualitative methods are concerned with understanding the issue or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Quantitative methods generate numerical data, which is impersonal and lacks the thick, rich description of personal experiences sought for this study. A quantitative approach examines specific variables and hypotheses (Creswell, 2007). Traditional notions of quantitative research, including random sampling, reliability and validity, are not appropriate in the qualitative context (Osborne, 1994).

Existing literature supports mixed methods when one type of research is not sufficient to address the research problem or answer the research questions (Farquhar, Ewing & Booth, 2011). A qualitative, phenomenological approach will provide a comprehensive investigation of the phenomenon studied. Causal-comparative research seeks to investigate possible cause and effect relationships (McCombs, 2003). Basic causal-comparative designs involve selecting two different groups and comparing an independent variable to a dependent variable (Gay & Airasian, 1992). Since this study does not involve the comparison of multiple groups, a causal-comparative approach would be inappropriate. Descriptive research most commonly uses surveys. Through the use of use data to test a hypothesis, this research method aims to systematically describe the characteristics of a given population or area of interest (Issac & Michael, 1995).

In contrast to quantitative methods, qualitative research does not include a pre-determined set of variables to study (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research requires researchers to establish a relationship of trust and sensitivity with participants, spend a considerable amount of time analyzing data, and produce an extensive report that details the participant's point of view in an unbiased manner (Creswell, 2007).

Summary

Working mothers face increasing challenges in managing time, roles, and responsibilities (Marcinkus & Hamilton, 2006). The demands of the principalship impact the ability of women to maintain optimal management of personal and professional responsibilities. School principals have a significant impact on learning and achievement

(Fuller, Young, & Orr, 2007). This review of the literature revealed a dearth of research addressing the dual responsibilities of motherhood and school principal. There is a significant amount of literature that addresses leadership as a whole, and that is gender-neutral. Much of the research on female educational leaders examines barriers to women entering the leadership workforce (Shakeshaft, 2007). Trying to balance workplace demands and family responsibilities was described as a barrier to women achieving success in educational administration (Shakeshaft, 2007). While researchers have begun to explore work and family conflict within academic institutions, there is a need for continued investigation of working mothers' experiences of their multiple role obligations as principals and mothers. In particular, the literature points to a need to further explore the relationships between role overload and psychological health (Pearson, 2008), support systems to reduce role ambiguity (Yu, Lee, & Tsai, 2010; Firmin & Bailey, 2008), and policies to support female employees who are juggling work and family responsibilities (Jo, 2008; Pearson, 2008; Harrison, 2008; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). A number of differing methodologies offer valuable insights into the constructs of working mothers, school leadership, and role conflict. Several quantitative approaches to inquiry surfaced in the literature. For example, using a descriptive approach, Losoncz and Bortolotto (2009) explored the use of cluster analysis to simultaneously consider the different aspects of the work-life nexus. Utilizing survey data, 6 homogenous groups of working mothers were identified. Subsequent descriptive analysis of the 6 groups was employed. The research found work-life conflict was associated with long working hours, work overload, and lack of support from others.

Similarly, a sequential explanatory mixed methods study examined contributing factors to work family conflict among secondary school athletic trainers. Pitney, Mazerolle, & Pagnotta (2011) utilized a Work Family Conflict Questionnaire to a random sample of 415 individuals selected from the National Athletic Trainers Association Database. 14 individuals participated in follow-up interviews. Descriptive statistics were obtained to examine perceived Work Family Conflict. Similar to other studies noted in the literature, the researchers concluded a large number of work hours per week and lack of control over work schedules affected the perceived level of work family conflict.

The literature addresses the roles of the working mother, roles, and responsibilities of school leaders, and women in educational administration. There is significant attention to the demands of motherhood and the ability of working mothers to balance or integrate their work and family responsibilities (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Ilies, Schwind, Wagner, Johnson, DeRue & Ilgen, 2007; Aluko, 2008). This section provided a review of the relevant literature related to the attempts made by working mothers to manage family and professional responsibilities. Section 3 will describe the nature of the study, including the research design, questions guiding the research, context for the study, ethical protections, role of the researcher, data collection and analysis methods, and validity measures.

Section 3: Research Method

In an effort to understand women's perceptions of their roles as mothers and school leaders, this study is designed to explore the experiences of working mothers who are employed as secondary school principals in upstate New York. A phenomenological approach was selected in order to describe the lives of the participants, capture their experiences, and ascertain the meaning they give to their experiences as working mothers and school leaders.

Research Design

A qualitative, phenomenological research design was used. Qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings (Golafshani, 2003). Phenomenological research is one of the most common methods used in qualitative work (Hatch, 2002). By talking with participants in their natural environment (Miles & Huberman, 1994), I was able to gather the information necessary to examine the lives of working mothers who are principals. Researchers use qualitative methods in order to understand the observed regularities in what individuals do, or what they report as their experiences (Locke, Spirdoso, & Silverman, 2000). Consistent with this research paradigm, this study intends to understand the phenomena of working mothers in leadership positions within the school setting.

Much of the current literature highlights the challenges that mothers face in managing excessive workloads, while still attending to family responsibilities (Hochschild, 1997; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Marshall & Tracy, 2009; Steiner, 2007; Gamles, Lewis, & Rapoport, 2006). This study will expand upon existing research, and

address a gap in the literature related to the wellness practices of working mothers who are school principals.

Through qualitative interviewing, this study sought to interpret the meanings of the experiences of female school principals who are faced with managing multiple roles. The qualitative interview data obtained from working mothers who have experienced the phenomenon of motherhood and school leadership deepens understanding of the range of participants' experiences (Goulding, 2005). Other research methods, such as quantitative approaches, would not have been able to capture the in-depth data obtained through discourse with participants.

Qualitative, phenomenological interviewing is the most relevant methodology for providing an in-depth, detailed exploration of the experiences of mothers who are school principals. Phenomenological interviews differ from traditional interviews, in that traditional interviews are designed to obtain answers to predetermined questions (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). Phenomenological inquiry seeks to ascertain the basic beliefs and assumptions of participants (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). In phenomenology, interviews are collaborative, and designed to elicit rich, thick description through dialogue (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). Open-ended questions are used to explore the participants' experiences, and additional questions may emerge from the dialogue (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). There is a breadth of data that can be obtained through the use of phenomenological research. Interviews are semi structured, and interview protocols are used to guide the conversation and focus the interview around particular themes (Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). Phenomenological

interviews allow for the exploration of the individual personal experiences and perspectives of participants. In phenomenological research, personal engagement with participants is necessary to understand the full meaning of the participants' experience (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Since the study seeks to gain insight into what working mothers report to be their experiences in their roles at work and home, obtaining data directly from participants, in their own words, is the best manner in which to gather this information. Through phenomenological interviewing, a deeper understanding of the needs of this group of school leaders, and how they manage, can be developed.

Qualitative researchers are concerned with understanding behavior from the participant's frame of reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). A qualitative, phenomenological interview approach will provide the level of detail and inquiry necessary to explore the experiences of working mothers who are school principals. Bracketing in phenomenological interviewing occurs when the inquiry is performed from the perspective of the researcher (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998), and also when the researcher sets aside his/her own preconceptions (Miller & Crabtree, 1992). During participant interviews, I set aside my own preconceptions, and attempt to understand the essence of managing dual roles from participants' point of view (Kvale, 1996). To aid in the process of bracketing, I listed the preconceptions that I am consciously aware of, and engaged in dialogue with my dissertation committee chairperson about these presuppositions.

A phenomenological perspective will be used to guide this study because the study intends to describe the ways in which participants understand what it means to be a mother and a school principal. Phenomenological research is used when the researcher is

looking to describe the meaning of “individuals’ lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). What sets phenomenology apart from other approaches, is that it focuses on the meaning that participants attribute to their experiences, rather than simply a description of their observed behaviors (Polkinghorne, 1983). In phenomenology, the emphasis is on the interactive process that enables individuals to make sense of and find meaning about social situations (Creswell, 2007).

The type of phenomenology is interpretive. Interpretive phenomenology involves interpreting the narratives provided by participants (Lopez & Wills, 2004). With interpretive phenomenology, the researcher attempts to make sense of the meaning of events and experiences to the participants themselves (Smith & Osborne, 2003). In phenomenological research, the researcher uses open-ended questions and dialogue to reflect on and interpret the participant’s story. General meanings are derived from what the experience means to the people who have had the experience (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenology, human experiences are used as valid sources of data (Van Manen, 1990). This study draws upon the experiences of working mothers and their perspectives on work and family roles.

The goal of this study is to understand the experiences of working mothers who are school principals. In-depth, semi-structured interviews will be used to examine the home and work experiences of working mothers employed as school principals. Data collection for a phenomenological study consists of interviews with up to ten participants (Creswell, 2007). Interviews provide more detailed information than other forms of data collection, such as surveys (Kvale, 1996). Researchers use interviews to understand the

meaning of participants' experiences (Kvale, 1996). The interviews will prompt participants to discuss their personal and professional responsibilities and their attempts to manage parenting and school leadership roles.

Quantitative research methods were not appropriate for this study because the purpose surrounds exploration, whereas quantitative methods are used to test hypotheses (Creswell, 2007; Holliday, 2007; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research produces in-depth information and findings not arrived at by means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Similarly, a mixed methodology approach would not have been appropriate for this study. Mixed methods focus on collecting, analyzing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2007). The quantitative aspect of mixed methodology is what renders this approach inappropriate for the purposes of this study. The quantitative and qualitative paradigms do not parallel in their study of phenomena (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). In quantitative research for example, sample sizes are much larger than those used in qualitative research (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002; Creswell, 2003).

Ethnographic research methods were beyond the scope of this study. Ethnography typically places focus on cultural and ethnic factors (Spradley, 1979; Sangasubana, 2011). While there are some similarities between phenomenology and ethnography, namely that both methods seek to understand how other people see their experiences (Spradley, 1979), the lens of ethnography extends to encompass cultural viewpoints. The result of ethnographic research is a cultural description (Creswell, 2007). This study will

result in a description of the phenomenon of working mothers, with no particular cultural emphasis.

Case study research methods do not fit the focus of this study. Case study research seeks to describe one or more cases in-depth (Creswell, 2007). Rather than an in-depth exploration of individual cases, this study seeks to describe the meanings that participants attribute to their shared experiences.

The use of grounded theory would have been premature in relation to the goals of this study. Grounded theory would have led to the creation of categories of data leading to the construction of theory (Moustakas, 1994). While this study will create categories of data about working mothers, the construction of theory is beyond the scope of this study. Rather than using the data to develop a theory, this study will use the data generated from in-depth interviews, to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of participants.

Research Questions

The study will investigate the following questions:

1. How do female principals with children accommodate their dual roles as principal and mother?
2. What feelings are generated by the experience of managing dual roles as principal and mother?
3. How do female principals with children address or respond to the demands of their roles?

Context for the Study

This study will take place in an unidentified region of upstate New York. The region includes four counties and has a population of approximately 826,000 (Census Bureau, 2009). According to *CDD* (2011), since 2000, the region has grown 5.5%. The average selling price for homes in the region is \$228, 424. The 2010 unemployment rate was 6.9%, as compared to 8.0% for New York State, and 9.1% for the country. During the 2004-2005 school year, free/reduced lunch eligibility was 33.5% (CDD, 2011). There are a total of 43 public school districts in the region, with over 124,000 students enrolled. In 2013, approximately 50% of secondary principals in the region were male. As of 2015, approximately 65% of secondary school principals in the region are male. The region is diverse, and includes urban, suburban, and rural communities. The setting for the study was selected for several reasons. First, the location for the study allowed for a diverse set of perspectives, thereby offering the potential for the emergence of a wide range of themes and new understandings. Second, the selected region is conveniently located, ensuring that I was able to travel to participants' homes or schools to conduct interviews.

Measures for Ethical Protection

The protection of human participants in any research study is critical (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2000). Following approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board, a description of the study (Appendix A) was provided to all potential participants. Initial contact was made via email. Professional email addresses were obtained through school district websites and the local BOCES directory. Participants who met the study criteria were provided with a written consent form

(Appendix B). Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to their participation in the study.

I contacted each participant by phone or email to schedule one- hour interviews to be held at a location mutually convenient to the researcher and participant. At the onset of each interview, principals were reminded that their participation is voluntary and that they can decline to participate or terminate the interview at any time. All participants were be assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. Specific names of schools or particular information that would enable a reader to identify individual schools will not be used. Only the researcher will have access to the interview data. All information will be handled with confidentiality. All information collected from the participants was reviewed for its potential to harm participants if published. Any such information was omitted from published reports. Audio recordings will be kept confidential, stored in a secure location, and will be maintained for five years. Following the five year storage period, data will be removed from any hard drive storage. Audiotapes will be erased.

Role of the Researcher

This study reflects my personal interest in the phenomenon of working mothers who are educational leaders. I have decided to focus this study at the secondary level, as a result of my experiences as a high school administrator. I am interested in examining the experiences of women who are in positions similar to that which I currently occupy. I have been a school principal for eight years, and am raising two young children. Prior to my current role as a high school principal, I served as an elementary principal, assistant principal, and curriculum coordinator.

According to Creswell (2003), qualitative researchers must address strategic, ethical, and personal issues during data collection. A phenomenological study needs to begin with the researchers' exploration of their personal experiences regarding the phenomenon being studied (Hatch, 2002; Creswell, 2003). Phenomenological researchers need to engage in bracketing, by setting aside biases and separating impressions and feelings during data collection (Hatch, 2002; Moustakas, 2004). I personally conducted all interviews, and engaged in bracketing by setting aside my personal feelings during interviews.

This research reflects my acknowledgment that not all working mothers who are school principals will have had the same experience or the same perspectives on their experiences. I do not know any of the participants personally. This lack of familiarity with the participants helped to mitigate researcher bias and may have led to participants being more candid. A level of detachment heightens the ability of the researcher to remain objective (Hutchinson & Wilson, 1994). In order to establish researcher-participant relationships, I reminded participants prior to each interview of the measures taken to protect their confidentiality.

As I began my doctoral studies and entered into my third year as a school principal, my first child was born. Immediately, my experience as a school principal shifted to encompass the dynamic of motherhood. My experiences as both a mother and an educational leader became increasingly ridden with stress, guilt, and conflicts between home and work. Questions of how to divide my time and priorities began to arise on a daily basis. I faced a dilemma in finding ways to ensure that I continued to perform at

work with the same level of energy, enthusiasm, and targeted focus on instruction and educational excellence, while maintaining family responsibilities in a way that didn't compromise my ability to be a good mother. I was, and continue to be, motivated by the desire to succeed both at home and at work. I have developed strategies to aid in achieving a balance between home and work, and have experience role conflict and role strain. I have also experienced the positive benefits of having both a successful and fulfilling career, and raising energetic, beautiful daughters.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

The first step was to select participants for the study using a purposive sample. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants due to specific characteristics (Patton, 2002). This sampling method is based on the assumption that the researcher seeks to understand and gain insight, and therefore must select a population from which the most can be obtained (Merriam, 1998). In qualitative research, the researcher selects participants who can best help to understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2007). Mothers who are currently occupying roles as school principals were identified as being the best able to provide in-depth, information regarding their experiences within these roles. In an effort to obtain rich data related to how working mothers cope, I decided to use principals who are currently raising children at home. I chose not to include principals who have raised children who are over the age of 18. A consideration was that the issues facing school principals are very different from those faced even a few years ago. As such, the parenting and work challenges will differ.

Another consideration when establishing the selection criteria was the school demographic. I chose to focus on high school principals to limit the sample, and because women are traditionally underrepresented in the role of high school principal (Pounder, 2004). This study sought to uncover the unique perspectives of women who are serving in traditionally male-dominated roles as high school principals. Participants selected for the study are currently employed as public high school principals in the selected region and have at least one child under the age of 18.

I obtained the names of high school principals in the selected region from the local Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) database and public school district websites. BOCES provides shared educational services to public school districts within the region, and maintains listings of each school district and their administrative personnel. This information is available on the BOCES website. Individual school district websites were consulted as well, to ensure accuracy of information. Within the 24 public school districts in the selected region, there were 13 high school principals who were female. While the websites provide names of secondary principals within these regions, they do not provide demographic data. Only names, position, contact information, and school information are included.

The target population for the study includes six female public high school principals in the selected New York State region, as identified through the BOCES and Supervisory Districts Directory (2011). The number of participants was limited so that I was better able to gain deeper insight into participants' experiences. Limiting participants allowed for a more in-depth analysis and exploration (Creswell, 2007). According to

Moustakas (1994), small samples are sufficient when they are analyzed thoroughly. A sample size of six legitimately enabled an analysis on the basis of phenomenological methods (Moustakas, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2007). This study focused on the experiences of high school principals, because traditionally, women have been underrepresented in educational leadership at the high school level. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2004), there are twice as many male principals as female principals in U.S. public high schools.

Data Collection

Procedure

The first step in the collection of data involved obtaining the names of all female secondary principals within the selected region. Next, a letter was sent electronically to all participants. The letter described the study and asked the principals to respond via phone or e-mail if they were interested in participating. Follow-up phone calls were made within one week after distribution of the letter. During the follow-up phone call, it was determined whether or not the participants meet the criteria for selection. An informed consent form was provided electronically. The first six principals who agreed to participate and who met the study criteria were selected for inclusion in the study. Sample sizes in phenomenological studies generally range from 2 to 10 (Morse, 1994; Boyd, 2001; Creswell, 2007). This range of participants is large enough to allow for saturation of data, and small enough to enable analysis of the rich, thick data that emerges. Creswell (2007) recommends interviews with up to 10 participants for a

phenomenological study. Samples of this size make it possible to obtain rich data and develop outcomes emerging from the analysis of that data.

Interviews

Phenomenological interviews were used to explore the issue of negotiating personal and professional responsibilities for working mothers employed as school principals. Interviews were scheduled to occur at the participant's home or place of work, at a time selected by the participant, and mutually agreed upon by the participant and researcher. The interviews will enable the participants to discuss their lived experiences as mothers and as educational leaders. Phenomenological interviews aim to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by individuals in a given situation (Moustakas, 1994). I am interested gaining insight into the phenomena of motherhood and school leadership through exploration of how individual women perceive their experiences as mothers and school principals. According to Creswell (2007), phenomenological interviews are used to uncover the underlying meaning of participants' experiences. In this study, the goal of the interviews is to uncover the meaning that women attribute to their roles as principals and mothers.

Participants completed a written consent form prior to the interviews. They were informed that the interview would be audio taped, and designed to last approximately one hour. Participants were asked to provide their personal email address, and were provided with an electronic copy of the interview questions prior to the interview. Participants were reminded of the voluntary nature of their participation, and that they had the right to

decline to participate at any time. A conversational interview guide was used to focus the interview and to ensure consistency across interviews (Appendix C). The questions used in the guide were developed following the development of the study research questions and throughout the development of the study. Prior to developing the interview guide, I reviewed interview protocols used by other researchers exploring work-life balance issues. As I explored the types of information that were most important to gather from the interviews, and as salient topics arose in the literature, I created open-ended questions that would lend themselves to in-depth conversation between me and the participants. The conversational guides provide guidance to the researcher related to what main questions to ask (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). According to Patton (2002), interview guides ensure a level of consistency across interviews, while providing the researcher with the flexibility to establish a conversational style. Qualitative interviews are flexible (Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenological interviews allow for flexibility and allow participants' perspectives to emerge. Siedman (1998) explains that the structure of the interview shapes the meanings made and conveyed by the researcher and participant. Open-ended questions were used to structure the interviews and elicit meaningful answers from participants. All audio recordings will be maintained for a period of 5 years and erased at the conclusion of the study. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Notes were taken during the interviews. Notes include documentation of participants' nonverbal reactions and responses. Following the interview, participants were provided with the researcher's interpretations of the interview and asked to provide feedback.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis consists of identifying, coding, and categorizing patterns found in the data (Bryne, 2011; Creswell, 2007). The steps encompassed within the phenomenological method include bracketing, or setting aside the researcher's views, identifying significant statements, clustering themes, synthesizing themes into textual and structural description, and developing a composite description of the meanings and essences of experiences (Creswell, 2007). The focus of the analysis is to understand the meanings of the descriptions provided by participants. Data were coded and analyzed for emerging themes and subthemes. The analysis focused on themes emerging from participant interviews. In qualitative research, the data is represented in figures, tables, or a discussion (Creswell, 2007). For this research study, the data is represented through discussion.

Participant interviews were audio recorded and transcribed following each interview. Transcriptions include the literal statements, as well as relevant nonverbal communications (Hycner, 1985). I composed notes during the interviews, and documented non-verbal communications. Immediately following each interview, I developed reflective field notes. These document my reactions to the interviews, and became part of the data analysis. The research questions guiding this study and the lens of role conflict provided the framework for data analysis. Data analysis included reading and rereading interview transcripts, as well as listening to the entire recording several times (Hycner, 1985).

During the next phase of analysis, I determined the relevancy of participant responses to the research questions. Close reading of the written responses and interview transcripts allowed for the identification of participants' ideas and meanings (Creswell, 2007; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I set aside data that did not appear relevant to the research questions. I categorized participant responses based on predetermined themes addressing the research questions. These themes include role conflict, role strain, balance, and coping strategies. Additional themes emerging directly from participant responses were also used. NVivo software was used to organize the data, and offers a coding structure that allows for the coding of discrepant data. The next step in the data analysis was to integrate the results into textural, structural, and composite descriptions for each participant. Textural descriptions were written using the validated themes (Moustakas, 1994). Structural descriptions were developed based on the textural description and imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, a composite description of the essence of each of the participants' experiences was developed (Moustakas, 1994).

Validity

Validation attempts to assess the accuracy of the research findings (Creswell, 2007). Maximizing the validity of a qualitative study aids in increasing its reliability (Golafshani, 2003). This study utilized several validation strategies frequently used by qualitative researchers, including member checking, and use of rich, thick description (Creswell, 2007). The use of detailed, descriptive language was used to provide a comprehensive description of the experiences of participants.

Member Checking

Member checking is a validity method whereby the researcher shares the interpretations of the findings with participants (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). I shared with participants my understanding of what was disclosed during the interviews and asked for feedback regarding my interpretations.

Rich, Thick Description

Rich, thick description will be used to describe the participants and their experiences in detail. According to Patton (2002), rich, thick description “provides the basis for qualitative analysis and reporting” (p. 437). It paints a picture for the reader, and enables the reader to understand the findings, as well as the feelings and meanings of participants (Bui, 2009). Through rich, thick description of the participants’ experiences, I clearly represent a relationship between the lived experiences of the participants, and my analysis.

Summary

This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of working mothers, and the complexities of the role of the secondary school principal. Rich, thick descriptions resulting from semi-structured interviews were used to provide a vivid depiction of the perspectives and realities of participants. As the researcher, I was responsible for carrying out the study, including ensuring reliability and validity, and protecting participants’ rights. In Section 4, I will present the findings and a discussion of the prevalent themes that emerged.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the study, through which I examined the experiences of working mothers who are employed as secondary school principals. This chapter includes a description of the methodology used in this study. Results of the research will be discussed as they relate to the major themes and subthemes, non conforming data, evidence of quality, and the relationship of the research questions to the findings.

Generation, Gathering, and Recording of Data

After receiving signed consent from each of the six participants, respondents were interviewed using an open- ended interview guide. The interview guide helped to structure the data collection to answer the research question of how working mothers perceive their experience of raising children while working as a school leader. Data were collected from six working mothers who were employed as school principals. Each participant engaged in a semi structured interview, which lasted approximately 1 hour. All interviews occurred in settings agreed upon as convenient for the researcher and participant. Locations included participants' offices, phone, and restaurants. These data were analyzed using NVivo software, which coded and categorized the data. NVivo aided in coding data for a deeper analysis (QSR International, 2008). The categories provided a

structure for analyzing the data in relation to the research questions guiding the study. In phenomenological research, the data is combined into themes and subthemes that serve to organize and validate the research (Colaizzi, 1978; Connelly, 2010). Consistent with the tenets of phenomenology, the data was reviewed and analyzed in order to thoroughly understand participants' experiences (Colaizzi, 1978; Connelly, 2010). Field notes were used to capture the feelings and nonverbal observational data that emerged during each of the interviews, and additional codes that emerged from the data were included. The themes and subthemes that emerged during the analysis were provided to participants for validation. Data analysis continued until relevant categories and the relationship among these categories was determined.

Data Track Systems

The data collection and recording methods offered insights into the participants' interview responses and led to thorough analysis procedures. The transcribed participant responses confirmed emerging findings and allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' personal viewpoints. Interview questions were used to guide the discussion, in an attempt to encourage the participants to reflect thoughtfully on their experiences, and to uncover salient viewpoints as they relate to the research questions. In each of the interviews, participants provided data useful for identifying the essence of the shared roles of motherhood and school leadership.

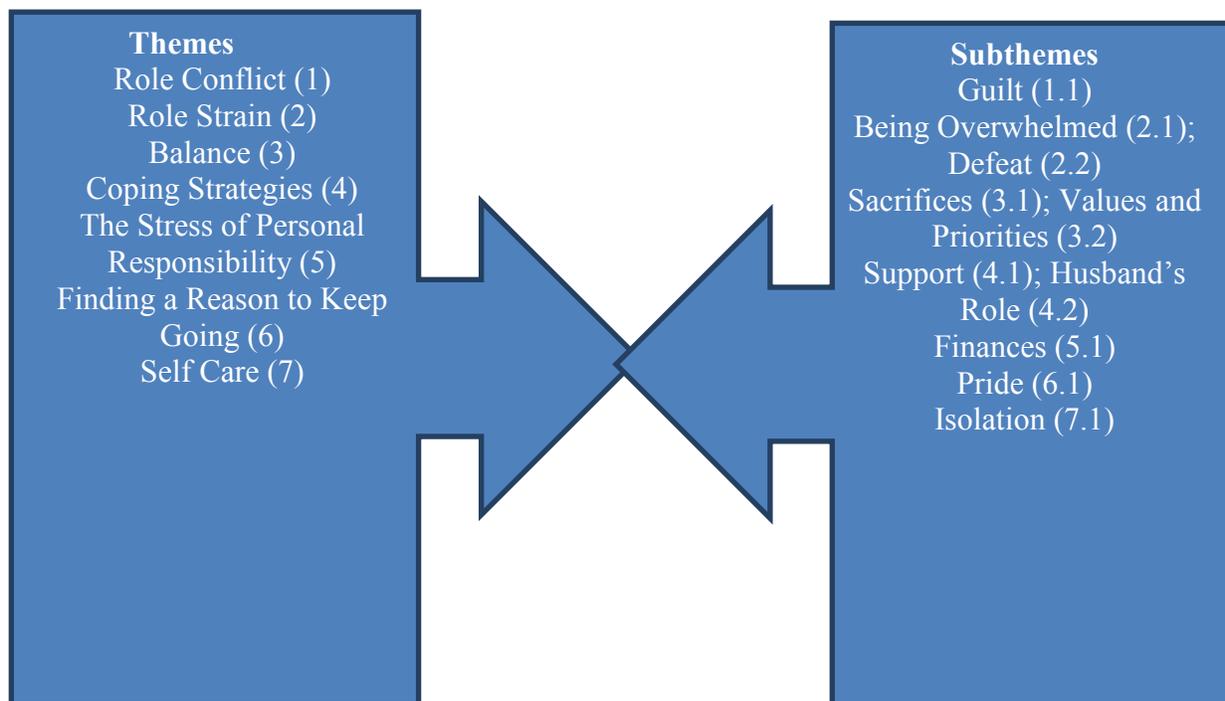
The Findings

Participant responses to interview questions resulted in the identification of salient themes related to the research questions. Anna, Geraldine, Susan, Christine, Bonnie and

Becky shared their experiences as school principals and mothers. At the time of the interview, their children ranged from 7 to 15 years old.

Themes emerging from the data included seven themes and ten subthemes. The themes include Role Conflict, Role Strain, Balance, Coping Strategies, The Stress of Personal Responsibility, Finding a Reason to Keep Going, and Self Care. Subthemes include Guilt, Being Overwhelmed, Defeat, Sacrifices, Values and Priorities, Husband's Role, Finances, Isolation and Pride. Figure 1 and Figure 2 provide graphic depictions of the themes and related subthemes.

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Figure 1. Themes and Subthemes

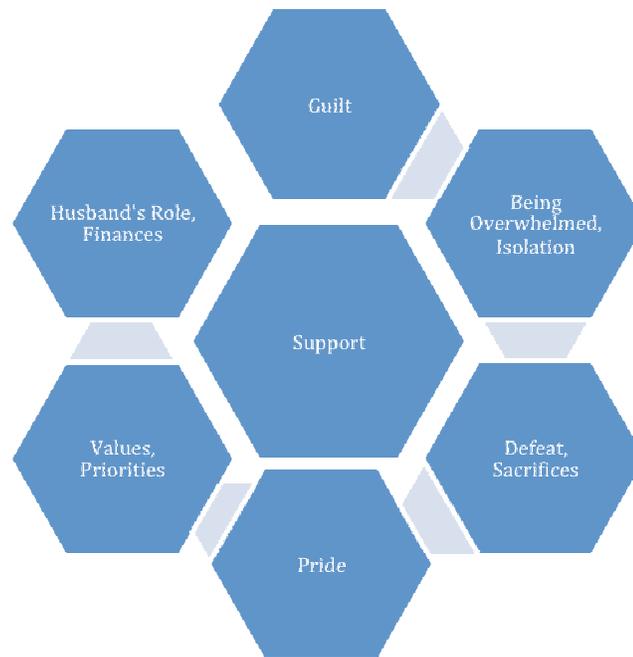


Figure 2: Subthemes

Participant Profile

The participants in this study were 6 female secondary school principals. The ages of participants' children ranged from 7 to 15 years. 4 of the women had 2 children. The remaining 2 women each had 1 child. 3 participants were married, 2 were single, and 1 was unmarried, but in a long-term relationship. The teaching experience of the participants ranged from 8 to 15 years prior to entering school administration. Their range of experience in the role of principal was 3 to 17 years.

Theme 1: Role Conflict

From a phenomenological perspective the theme of role conflict most closely represents the participants' experiences of the conflicting intersection amongst roles as mothers and as school leaders. During the interviews, each participant was asked to describe the experience of managing personal and professional responsibilities. The responses centered on feelings of frustration, conflict, inadequacy, and devotion to both home and career. These working mothers valued family and their roles as school leaders. They identified conflict related to time, multiple commitments, and the fluid nature of responsibilities that may arise such as having to remain at work late to manage a student behavioral incident, or meet with an angry parent. Repeatedly, participants described having difficulty compartmentalizing their roles. Each woman referenced thinking or tending to work while at home, and vice versa. "When I'm at home I'm thinking about work, and when I'm at work I'm thinking about things that I need to take care of at home. It's an ongoing cycle." (Jenny, personal communication, August 1, 2013). Coding and analysis of the interviews revealed terms and phrases that repeatedly emerged, which described the women's constant need to make choices and negotiate. The significance of the concept of role conflict emerged as an area that participants repeatedly focused on and wanted to discuss..

The conceptual model of role conflict provided a framework for understanding how participants experienced and described the management of their personal and professional roles. This framework helped to create a deeper understanding of what it

meant to be a school principal with responsibilities for raising children at home. The work and family demands placed on the participants seemed to conflict with traditional role expectations of mothers. Each of the participants described challenges related to managing parenting responsibilities and home maintenance, while attempting to fulfill expectations as school leaders. Participants expressed the negative consequences of managing these dual roles, but also expressed the satisfaction and sense of fulfillment that accompanied having such important roles: “I can’t think of anything more rewarding than being a mother. I also couldn’t imagine myself doing anything more rewarding than leading a school. I get to be a support for both students and teachers. It’s an amazing feeling when you can put your all into it and do it well.” (Susan, personal communication, May 9, 2013).

Theme 1:1: Guilt. For all participants, conflicting work and family roles exacerbated feelings of guilt. Participants described having guilt as a result of having to make sacrifices at home, or at work. Participants described blaming themselves for not meeting their own high standards, or for not finding ways to take better care of themselves. The working mothers tended to accept these feelings as a natural consequence of managing multiple responsibilities. There seemed to be an acceptance of shouldering the responsibility for ‘doing it all’, and a common understanding that keeping things in balance meant understanding that there would always be some level of overlap between work and home. While all participants noted that they made every effort to attend critical activities with their children, such as awards ceremonies, parent-teacher conferences and doctor appointments, they also noted that there were sacrifices that had

to be made. Several women stated that the decision to combine work and family required sacrifices that impacted their children and families. Christine said, “I used to be home for all vacations and during the summer. The kids miss that. They ask who’s going to take them fishing in the summer and take them to the park. I miss them terribly.” (personal communication, June 4, 2013).

Participants frequently cited feelings of guilt surrounding perceived decreases in productivity and effectiveness at work. Several women described being less available for teachers, due to the heavy workload. This was a significant source of guilt, because serving as a resource for teachers represented a part of the principal role that was important to them. They described feeling guilt both at work and at home, because there is too much work to be completed. These women expressed frustration over spending increased time in meetings or trainings, decreased face-to-face time with teachers and students, and rushed interactions with teachers throughout the course of the school day.

Theme 2: Role Strain

As participants discussed their experiences as working mothers and school leaders, they described thoughts, feelings and perceptions consistent with role strain. Participants were unified by the experiences of leading a school in an era of increasing demands and accountability, while raising children.

Responsibilities have increased. It’s no longer manageable. There’s no way to focus fully and give your best both at home and at work....Teachers are stressed and you have to be there for them. I am mentally exhausted by the end of the day. (Geraldine, personal interview, July 5, 2013).

Coding identified a common set of feelings and perspectives that were a part of the subculture of these working mothers. Prioritizing the needs of family and work over the needs of themselves was a common theme. The need to place self-care on the back burner was readily accepted and recognized, but was also a significant element in the feeling of role strain. In striving to meet demands at work and home, participants often managed multiple tasks and responsibilities, and experienced the strain of meeting expectations that were unable to be fully met.

Theme 2.1: Being overwhelmed. Participants felt that the role of the school principal was overwhelmingly busy, and they did not feel that there was time to meet the high expectations that they had set for themselves. While they expressed a desire for help, primarily at work, there was a shared belief that adequate supports at work were essentially non-existent. In most instances they related that there was no one to delegate to. In other instances they noted that it was easier to “just do it myself.” As school leaders, the respondents valued the ability to maintain control and oversight – even if the outcome meant some form of personal sacrifice.

The theme of being overwhelmed most closely resembles the tenets of role overload, which can be described as the extent to which a person feels overwhelmed by her total responsibilities (Glynn, Maclean, Forte, & Cohen, 2009). Participants described the combined demands on their roles at home and work as being abundant, and used rich, vivid language to describe the difficulties inherent in accomplishing all of their obligations. “It just can’t all be done – that’s the reality. You have to make choices and figure out what works for you, because it’s just too much. You can work all day and night

and still won't get everything done." (Susan, personal communication, May 9, 2013).

There was a common perception that it was impossible to fully satisfy all of the demands placed on them.

Theme 2.2: Defeat. Participants valued being able to meet all expectations – both those of others, and those that were self-imposed. Numerous anecdotal examples were shared that illustrated that asking for help was the last resort and that not being able to manage professional and personal responsibilities represented some level of failure. Repeatedly, anecdotes were given about resistance to seeking help until a point of desperation had been reached. One participant went to a doctor for help coping with anxiety. She had begun crying at work frequently and was unable to control her emotions. Another participant reluctantly began taking medication to cope with her depression and anxiety. She had reached a point where she knew that she could not continue to manage without seeking help. She too, was impacted by overwhelming emotions and frequently found herself crying while at home and work.

While it was important for participants to do a good job of meeting expectations at work and home, they began to develop a realization that meeting all work obligations can be near impossible, and can come at the expense of family and self-care. Once this realization began to occur, participants began to question their ability to cope with the pressures of multiple roles and competing responsibilities. A participant named Geraldine noted that although she loved her position as a school principal, she questioned how much longer she would be able to continue. She said:

I'm considering whether the stress of the job is worth it....If I could afford to quit tomorrow, I would, because the stress level is so high. I don't really want to leave, but there is no support - you'll continually get exhausted. (personal communication, July 5, 2013)

Another participant named Jenny said: "At this point I don't care. I can only do what I can physically do." (personal communication, August 1, 2013). Christine said, "I have to remember that it is just a job." (personal communication, June 4, 2013)

Theme 3: Balance

The concept of balance seemed to shape participants' experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon. Participants described the challenges and rewards of balancing dual roles as mothers and school leaders. Each of the participants related the importance of being able to balance motherhood and career. Although they each noted self-care as an ideal component of balance, the reality of their daily demands led to the shared concept of balance as being able to manage prioritized work and family demands. When this was achieved, even when self-care was lacking, women felt that they had achieved a satisfactory home and career balance. The overlap of home and responsibility often created conflict. This required participants to make choices about which activities and tasks to prioritize. For example, Anna often works from home in the evening – checking and responding to emails, reviewing lesson plans, completing reports, etc. While discussing the concept of balance, Anna stated, "Sometimes I have to put my work aside at night to let my kids have their time and help them." (personal communication, June 15, 2013). This was her way of maintaining a work-life balance and managing priorities.

Theme 3.1: Sacrifices. In relation to home and family, the participants identified a variety of sacrifices that were necessary in order to manage their multiple responsibilities. Numerous participants provided examples of conscious decisions that were made to forego personal needs and various aspects of home-based responsibilities. The women felt that their situations were typical of the experience of working mothers. They acknowledged that making sacrifices was an inevitable part of the experience of the working mother. Geraldine described the sacrifices that she made in order to manage school leadership and mothering responsibilities:

The main sacrifice is that I do everything for everyone else, and nothing for myself. I don't have a workout schedule or anything to decompress, because from the moment I get home, I'm running busy. I'm not able to get up early because I need sleep. Since I've been an administrator I've not been able to keep up with a workout routine. I'm an avid reader – my escape things are books, and I haven't had time to do that. Other sacrifices are family get togethers or things that I just can't get to because I have a game or a board meeting or something else that I have to be at...I've sacrificed being home to tuck my daughter in at night.

(personal communication, July 5, 2013)

Most of the participants expressed challenges with finding time for themselves. Several participants related anecdotes of sacrificing personal time in order to manage work and home responsibilities.

Theme 3.2: Priorities. Participants found it necessary to continually make adjustments in prioritizing their multiple demands. Whether family or work demands

were placed as a main priority was dependent on the nature and context of the demand. Each of the participants prioritized their children's medical needs – including sick children, and doctor appointments. They also prioritized attendance at school events. Interestingly, there was a disconnection between what participants described as their top priorities, and the reality of their daily responsibilities. Findings from this theme suggest that stated and intended priorities did not always parallel daily priorities. For example, participants stated that family was a priority. While this was the intent, participants described many instances where they were unable to prioritize family due to work demands. Participants described being unable to attend family events, not being home to make dinner or spend quality time with their children, and not having the time or energy to nurture spousal relationships. “I would say there were times that it's been very hard on my family.” (Christine, June 4, 2013). Participants expressed feelings of discomfort with these situations, but expressed that there were limited options. Since work demands such as attendance at board meetings and responding to crisis situations were essential to the role of the school principal, these situations took priority over stated or intended priorities at home.

Theme 4: Coping Strategies

Participants described several strategies for coping with the phenomenon of motherhood and school leadership. Specific strategies varied amongst participants, and choice of strategy seemed to be related to personal preferences and personality traits, rather than the degree of effectiveness of any particular strategy. That is, one particular coping strategy didn't seem to be any more or less effective than another. Rather,

participants used the strategies that seemed to fit best within the context of their available time, resources, and personal preferences. Participants tended to utilize coping strategies to either revitalize themselves mentally/physically, or to organize themselves in order to increase efficiency and be better able to meet demands. Coping strategies geared toward revitalization included self-care activities such as reading a book, talking with a supportive friend or family member, spending quality time with friends or family, taking a walk or exercising, and sleeping. Coping strategies geared toward organization and creating structure included using technology to plan ahead and keep track of scheduled activities and tasks, using technology to keep up with email communications, creating daily task completion checklists, and reporting to the office on weekends to organize the physical space and work without interruption. Jenny detailed some of the organizational strategies that she employs: “I keep one calendar for personal and professional use. I block out time on my calendar, even if it’s not a real appointment, so no one schedules anything. I try to be proactive.” (personal communication, August 1, 2013).

Theme 4:1: Support. It was clear that all participants attributed great value to the existence of support systems. Each of the participants noted individuals who served as a resource and in some way, helped them to manage personal and professional stressors. The extent of the availability of supports varied amongst the participants. Many noted the significance of spousal support in helping to ameliorate the impact of role strain. The role of the spouse as a support was described primarily in terms of lessening the impact of time-based conflicts and understanding that the women’s role as homemaker was impacted by their professional demands. The women all related the importance of having

a partner who understands that the role of the principal can conflict with traditional mothering roles. Participants expressed that having a supportive spouse was critical to their ability to manage multiple responsibilities. One participant, Geraldine, noted the absence of a supportive spouse. “I take care of everything. I always have to have a backup plan, and make sure that my supervisor knows.” (personal communication, July 5, 2013). She described the challenges inherent in not being able to depend on her spouse for assistance with the household, and responsibilities related to their daughter. This lack of support was a major contributor to her eventual inability to cope with work and family demands.

Participants also discussed support in terms of friends and family who were available to provide childcare assistance and lend a listening ear when needed. Several of the participants depended on parents and other family members to assist with childcare, either on a regular basis, or in cases of emergency. Some participants described being able to talk with trusted friends and family members, to varying degrees. Most participants seemed guarded with regard to sharing details about work with friends and family, either because they wouldn’t completely understand, or because the nature of the principal role and confidentiality requirements require boundaries to be set, even with trusted friends and family members.

Most participants reported having a limited support system at work. Becky noted, “Once you become an administrator you lose your camaraderie. That’s what I miss. You’re not a part of the faculty.” (personal communication, June 11, 2013). Some women felt that they could talk with their supervisor if they were particularly stressed or

had a pressing concern. Others noted that they had a few trusted colleagues with whom they could trust and confide in, and who served as a support.

Theme 5: The Stress of Personal Responsibility

As participants discussed their experiences, stressors seemed to shape their perceptions and experiences. The women described feelings of personal enrichment from being able to raise their own children, while positively impacting the children at their schools through effective leadership. They also described an immense sense of responsibility to fulfill these roles satisfactorily. In most cases, participants strive to work harder to meet the demands of the work and mother roles, and in doing so, experienced high levels of stress. “The demands of running a school and a household are extremely demanding. There’s little room for error when being a principal, or a mom. You don’t want to fail – they are important responsibilities, so you want to get it right.” (Anna, personal communication, June 15, 2013). Although these women utilized coping mechanisms to aid in navigating their dual roles, this did not change the demands or the effort associated in order to meet the expectations of the mothering and principal roles.

Theme 5.1: Finances. All participants noted having entered the principal position with a sincere passion for educational leadership, and improving teaching and learning. Many of the participants also noted the role of finances as they carry out their roles as working mothers. Anna and Geraldine noted having primary financial responsibility for their households. “Money is very stressful. There are things that need to be done – home repairs, car repairs, and providing for the needs of a child.” (Geraldine, personal communication, July 5, 2013). When describing the tensions inherent in their roles, they

detailed the stressors associated with home and car maintenance, child care and costs related to raising their children, and being the primary financial provider in the home. Other participants noted the role of finances in being able to provide a preferred lifestyle for their children and families. They discussed the importance of being financially stable, and wanting to provide the best for their children, including saving for college, and providing family vacations and activities that would create positive, lasting memories for their families. Jenny noted, “Money is also an issue. There are memories that you want to be able to create for your family – vacations, activities, experiences that help to make it all worth it.” (personal communication, August 1, 2013). Another participant, Becky, stated that money was one of the primary benefits of the position. She advised that women entering into the position should only do so if the financial benefits are worth it. For her, the increase in salary as compared to salary that she had been receiving as a teacher was significant. As a single mom, this was particularly critical and made the role of principal desirable (personal communication, June 11, 2013).

Theme 6: Finding a Reason to Keep Going

The theme of finding a reason to keep going most closely represents participants’ perceptions of motivational factors that impact their experiences as mothers and school leaders. Many of the participants emphasized their desire to serve as role models for their children. Their responses centered around the perspective that they wanted their children to grow up with a strong work ethic, and that they wanted to be able to model this for their children. Their hopes were to provide a home environment grounded in high expectations, and the modeling of behaviors that will lead to success in the workplace.

Becky described the profound impact that her mother had on her, and in turn, the impact that she wanted to have on her children.

Growing up, I saw my mother work so hard to make a good life for us. She was really a superwoman. She went to work everyday and still made time to take us to activities, cook dinner every night, and take care of things at home. I learned a lot from her....I want my children to see me as strong, resilient, capable. I don't want my kids to ever feel like there's anything that they can't do....I want them to know the value and the results of hard work. I want them to look at me and know that I worked hard and succeeded. I want them to look back and be proud and know that I was a good mom. (personal communication, June 11, 2013)

Theme 6.1: Pride. Pride emerged as a salient subtheme. Each of the participants expressed experiences that provided validation for what they do each day, both at home and at school. Geraldine's response represents the similar thinking of the other participants.

I see her do things and hear her say things that emulate mom, and she doesn't even know it. Because of my job, she overhears a lot of my conversations with parents, teachers and students. I will overhear her talking with her friends, and she will say, "if someone is bullying you, you need to tell someone." She says things that she's heard me say....Her leadership skills are developing. She has a very good conscience about what's right and wrong. She mediates conflict with peers, because of the way that she's seen me do discipline. I'm very proud of her. (personal communication, July 5, 2013)

Geraldine's description of the rewards of being a mother and a principal is her way of saying that moments like these make it all worth it. The participants noted that benefits of combining motherhood and school leadership include experiencing the growth and development of their children in ways that are uniquely impacted by their personal and professional roles.

Theme 7: Self-Care

While all of the participants noted the importance of self-care, there was a common theme of experiencing challenges to being able to consistently prioritize self-care activities. Despite each of the participants citing exercise as a preferred self-care activity, only one participant noted being able to exercise regularly. Most participants described postponing exercise until they reached the point of experiencing high levels of stress and nearing the inability to cope. When participants reached that point, they engaged in exercise as a coping strategy, and in order to try to preserve their emotional health. This self-care strategy was reactive, rather than preventative and this seemed to be a continual cycle for most participants. "It helps when I exercise. So when I'm really stressed I'll go for a long walk. I should do it more often – I wish I could, but it's one of those things that just doesn't make the top of the priority list. There just aren't enough hours in the day." (Anna, personal communication, June 15, 2013).

Participants noted lack of time and energy as barriers to being able to engage in self-care activities. The balance of personal and professional responsibilities seemed to include work and family obligations and demands. Once these demands were met, most participants lacked the time to engage in preferred activities such as reading, or spending

time with friends. Others noted a lack of energy, rather than time, as the primary challenge. One participant, Geraldine, described being so mentally exhausted at the end of the day, that all she wanted to do was sleep. Several other participants echoed this sentiment.

Theme 7.1: Isolation. The principal position is an extremely lonely position, according to many of the participants. “I would say the position is incredibly lonely. There just isn’t an opportunity for interacting much with other administrators.” (Susan personal communication, May 9, 2013). Several participants described the need to create boundaries with staff members, and as a result, having to limit interactions with teachers and other staff members, beyond the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Becky described her feelings of isolation as a principal:

When I left my previous job, I had a really close knit group of people that I worked with. So I left the security of my colleagues. Once you become an administrator you lose your camaraderie. That’s what I miss. You’re not a part of the faculty. I have the other principals, but it’s not the same. (personal communication, June 11, 2013).

Participants noted that the principal position doesn’t lend itself to socializing with colleagues outside of work, or “letting your hair down”, particularly if one lives in the same geographic location as the school in which they lead. Participants also noted that as the school leader, the principal models behaviors that instill a sense of calm and confidence throughout the school building. When the participants experienced feelings

that were in opposition to these – chaos, lack of confidence, there were few people on a day-to-day basis that they felt that they could express these feelings to. In these instances, participants reported feeling incredibly isolated.

Only one participant discussed feelings of isolation in relation to gender. Christine referenced the “good boy network” and noted that she was keenly aware of being one of the few women in her position. Christine noted being interested in meeting other female principals, as her current role included minimal opportunities to network with women who shared her experience of working as a mother in a field traditionally dominated by males (personal communication, June 4, 2013).

Relationship of Research Questions to Findings

This study set out with the intent of uncovering the experiences of working mothers who are secondary school principals. Following is a synthesis of the results of the study, in relation to the research questions guiding this study.

RQ1: How do female principals with children accommodate their dual roles, as principal and mother?

The findings of this study indicate that participants share a strong commitment to their roles as mothers. The participants unanimously expressed a desire to prioritize their children and families. Similar to the each of the participants, Susan spoke of the pride she felt when prioritizing key events in her daughter’s life:

I’ve never missed anything of hers that’s been important. When I tell her that I’m going to do something, I make sure that I follow through, because that’s important. (Susan, personal interview, May 9, 2013).

It was generally accepted by participants that there would be conflicts between work and home. They mediated these conflicts by finding ways to increase efficiency both at work and at home, setting boundaries when necessary, and making efforts to engage in self-care activities when possible.

RQ2: What feelings are generated by the experience of managing dual roles as principal and mother?

A significant finding in terms of the feelings generated by the phenomenon of motherhood and school leadership, was that the women all experienced high levels of stress, anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed. Data analysis indicates that these women experience demanding roles both at home and at work. Each participant identified the emotional challenges of meeting expectations as a mother and as a school leader.

Geraldine described her feelings of depression:

I had been increasingly more depressed. My anxiety level at work was increasing, and I was not myself. I was snapping at my daughter or husband, and my patience was short. I went to the doctor for help coping with anxiety and the feelings I was having – and I'm not one to advocate for medication – I'm a control freak – I feel like I should be able to manage things myself, but its gotten to the point where there was too much going on at home and at school...I was crying all the time...Things got bad enough that I am just returning to work. I had to take a health/medical leave of absence. (Geraldine, personal interview, July 5, 2013).

Each of the women interviewed shared similar experiences, all of which pointed to an exceedingly high workload and emotional stress. They shared a common

understanding that their roles as principal and their roles as mother were important. As such, they felt a strong desire to perform optimally in both the work and home realms.

Participants felt passionate about being available for and prioritizing their children, although this commitment to their children led to feelings of guilt and anxiety over failure to meet work demands. Several of the participants discussed experiencing guilt in both the work and family realms. These women frequently questioned their decision to combine work and family. Participants attempted to mediate this conflict through positive self-talk. They described reminding themselves that while working and raising a family was challenging, it was not impossible. There was a common experience of managing to keep things in balance by taking things day by day, and focusing on the positive outcomes, both at home and at work.

Participants described their lives as being exceptionally busy. Multi-tasking was an accepted norm. They adapted to being busy by finding ways to ensure that the most important tasks and responsibilities were prioritized. Participants seemed to accept being busy as a part of the subculture of working mothers. There seemed to be an overall commitment to managing the multiple roles of mother and school principal.

RQ3: How do female principals with children address or respond to the demands of their roles?

In relation to home-based responsibilities, participants used a variety of strategies to address household and childcare tasks. Many of the participants relied on their husbands and parents for support with childcare responsibilities. With regard to household tasks, participants gave examples of taking on primary responsibility for

traditional gender based roles such as cooking and cleaning, but related their experiences of not being able to get everything done.

Participants identified self-care as an area that was important, but that they felt unable to devote enough attention to. For example, the women noted the importance of exercise and taking time to engage in enjoyable or relaxing activities, but expressed challenges to finding the time for these activities. Two of the women discussed the use of medication as an intervention for responding to the feelings related to demands and stressors. Both participants viewed the use of medication as a last resort - an option that they had not considered or thought of as desirable, until they had reached a point of extreme anxiety and sense of being overwhelmed. One participant noted, “ I finally broke down and went to see a doctor. I’m not usually one to advocate for medicine, but...” (personal communication, July 5, 2013).

One strategy employed by these women may best be described as taking a few moments to cope. This includes venting to a trusted friend or family member, or taking a walk to get away from home or school for a brief moment. The women shared the challenges to finding personal time for themselves, but noted the importance of finding a way to prevent themselves from ‘exploding’. For most of the participants, they created time and space for themselves as a last resort, despite verbally acknowledging the importance of taking care of themselves. Many participants seem to lack the ability to regularly address the need for engaging in activities that may help to ameliorate the negative effects of stress resulting from role conflict and strain.

Discrepant Cases and Nonconfirming Data

There was no nonconfirming data that was identified in this study. The structure of the study provided an opportunity for participants to share their experiences within a shared phenomenon. Although the individual experiences of participants varied, the essence of those experiences fit within the conceptual framework guiding this study.

Evidence of Quality

This study utilized semistructured interviews as the basis for data collection (see Appendix E). The findings in this study were supported and strengthened as a result of open-ended questioning (Creswell, 2007). Participants provided informed consent prior to participating in interviews, which lasted approximately 1 hour. The researcher collected and analyzed the data and utilized the proper method of coding and analyzing data. The small sampling of six principals and the use of NVivo software made the categorizing, coding and analysis of data manageable. NVivo reports the data volume and performs node coding. In order to ensure quality, researcher bias was clarified at the onset of the study. I set aside my own preconceived notions and experiences as an educator and a mother in order to allow for the participant's stories to be reflected in the study. The interview guide helped to ensure that the data that emerged was solely a result of participant responses. Rich, thick description was an additional tool used for achieving validity and ensuring quality. The experiences of participants were described in sufficient detail, and a thorough account of participants' reflections were presented. Following the data analysis, a member checking was conducted. Participants were provided with a written summary of the findings to ensure accuracy in the thematic analysis. Participants

were asked to review the written summary and provide feedback with regard to my interpretations of the data. Participants did not report any inaccuracies.

Summary

The findings of this study were based on the qualitative analysis of data resulting from semi structured, open-ended interviews. In addition to the synthesis of data and identification of themes and subthemes, I provided an overview of data analysis processes and evidence of quality in this chapter. This study represented a comprehensive exploration of working mothers' experiences as secondary school principals. This section of the study provided evidence that participants tend to neglect self-care as a response to role strain. Also discussed were the emotional challenges faced by participants. Chapter 5 will present an interpretation of the findings, implications for social change, and recommendations for further study.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

School leadership has been linked to student academic performance and overall effectiveness of the school program. There is a growing need for quality school leadership, at a time when the responsibilities of the position have increased significantly. With the role of the school principal being so salient to school success, it is critical that school leaders are able to manage their roles effectively. This study was conducted to explore the experiences of mothers currently serving in the role of school principal. Findings suggest that women face conflict in navigating the competing demands of motherhood and school leadership. This chapter includes interpretation of the findings of the study, recommendations for social change, and recommendations for further inquiry. The section concludes with a reflection on my experience as a researcher and a culminating statement.

To achieve the purpose of examining how female principals navigate the demands of motherhood and school leadership, interviews were conducted using the semistructured interview guide (see Appendix C). The semistructured interviews generated all data used to answer the research questions of how female principals accommodate their dual roles as principal and mother; what feelings are generated by the experience of managing dual roles as principal and mother; and how do female principals with children address or respond to the demands of their roles.

Interpretation of Findings

This section presents my interpretation of the findings within the context of previous research as presented in Section 2. In order to relate this study's synthesis to previous research, I will present the conclusions in relation to the topics established in section 2: role conflict, balancing work and family, women in the workplace, and principals. All discussion will relate back to the research questions guiding the study.

Role Conflict

Current literature demonstrates an abundance of research on role conflict and the impact of role conflict on working mothers. However, there is a lack of research on the experiences of working mothers who are employed as secondary school principals. A significant finding revealed in the analysis of this study is that working mothers who are school principals are part of a complex dynamic, which includes navigating roles that present conflicting demands both at home and in the workplace. This study found that mothers who are committed to raising their children are also equally as committed to providing quality leadership within their schools.

Commensurate with the review of existing literature, the findings of this study suggest that time related constraints and feelings of role overload impact the complexity of managing multiple roles (Winkel & Clayton, 2009; Giutain, 2009). Participants noted challenges inherent in either physically being at work during evenings and weekends, or mentally being focused on work demands. Participants described how their jobs affected their lives at home. Decreased engagement with family while at home was cited as a consequence of a heavy workload. Each of the participants described how their

professional responsibilities impacted the time and energy they had available for family. Working mothers have difficulty separating their roles. They think about work while at home, and think about home while at work. The roles of school principal and mother are not mutually exclusive – they are intertwined, and can manifest as conflicting and competing roles. Such tenets emerged from in-depth analysis of participants' responses.

Balancing Work and Family

The examination of how working mothers managed school leadership and family demands revealed that family was considered in 2 realms – spouse, and children. Principal responses from this study echoed Firmin and Bailey's (2008) findings that working mothers experienced challenges in balancing work and home. Working mothers tend to prioritize the needs of work and their children. Nurturing spousal relationships, while stated as important, tends to receive less attention than other more immediate responsibilities and demands. Working mothers often cite a preferred balance when their children's needs and work related obligations are met. Often, this results in decreased time and availability for time and attention to spouses and relationship needs. Geraldine described the difficulty she experienced in finding time to nurture her relationship. She explained, "We weren't spending quality time together...Having a personal life was very difficult...It's just very stressful having to take care of everything." (personal communication, July 5, 2013).

The present findings suggest that working mothers who are school leaders share similar experiences in their attempts to navigate the demands of work and family. Shared stressors such as an overwhelming workload and an inability to meet all demands

contributed to perceptions of work-family conflict. Participants' responses pointed to long work hours as a major challenge to maintaining balance between work and family. Participants cited sacrificing sleep, exercise, family activities, and hobbies in an attempt to manage their multiple roles.

These findings add to McGoldrick's (2005) findings that working mothers are impacted by feelings of stress, tiredness, and depletion. In order to effectively address the needs of working mothers who are school principals, this dynamic must be addressed. This study's findings demonstrate the importance of the effect of work and family conflict on the health and wellbeing of the individual. The mental and physical health of the school leader will ultimately impact the school leader herself, her family, and the school community.

Women in the Workplace

In general, participants reported concrete benefits from their roles as school principals, including income and the positive transfer of values to their children. Not surprisingly, participants shared the experience of feeling stressed and overwhelmed. Borg & Riding (1993) supported many of the findings of this investigation. They identified workload, work conditions and responsibilities as some of the major sources of stress contributing to principal burnout. Stress was cited in terms of not performing well in either role. Participants strived to reach the high standards that they set for themselves. When the impact of role demands became too significant to be able to perform either role optimally, participants felt increasingly stressed, defeated, and guilty.

It appears that participants felt a responsibility to serve as a role model for their children. Participants with daughters expressed a desire to provide opportunities for their daughters to observe them prioritize their responsibilities, serve in leadership roles, act ethically, and demonstrate a strong work ethic. Many of the participants addressed this issue through their depiction of their work as meaningful, and discussion of the positive impact of their work on their children.

Principals

Participants struggled to meet the increasingly complex demands of the principal role without sacrificing their role as mothers. Sacrifice became an accepted, though not desirable, norm for participants. Feelings of isolation and stress permeated participants' experiences over time. The results of this research study are similar to the results of current research. For example, current literature has found that the demanding nature of the role of the principal makes it difficult for principals to balance their personal and professional lives (Read, 2000). The findings from this study complement the current literature on school principals and work-family balance. Loder (2005) acknowledged that some women have opted to postpone having children in order to avoid work-family conflict. The findings from this study suggest that women do in fact face a significant amount of work-family conflict, and that they struggle to find ways to mediate this conflict successfully.

Dissemination of Findings

The results of this study will be disseminated through the publication of this dissertation, as it will be made available electronically through the academic database. A

summary of the research highlighting key findings will be provided to local colleges, universities, women's groups, school officials, and community agencies. Additionally, a summary of the results will be distributed to all research participants. In an effort to reach a variety of audiences, I plan to publish journal articles and present at professional conferences. I intend to conduct workshops for local women's groups, college and university student groups, and community groups who express an interest in the findings.

Implications for Social Change

The study's results offer immediate implications for social change. The researcher offers a conceptual framework that considers the importance of fully capturing the influence of role conflict and role strain on working mothers who are school leaders and their families. This study offers valuable information to women who are considering entering into the role of secondary principal while raising children. For these women, this study provides insights and offers the opportunity for women to make informed decisions with regard the combining school leadership and motherhood. Women who are currently managing dual roles as mothers and school principals may also find the information provided in this study to be valuable. Current school leaders may learn from the advice and experienced provided by participants. Women who are experiencing these phenomena may be compelled to serve as mentors for women entering the profession, opening opportunities for increased support and dialogue among working mothers.

This study could aid school district policymakers in developing policies and practices that are sensitive to the factors which serve as detractors to the lived

experiences of women serving in leadership roles within the organization. This study calls attention to the need for consideration of the unique dynamics of school principals who also maintain responsibility for raising a family. There is a need for more policies and procedures that take into account the daily needs of working mothers as they attempt to balance school leadership and family. School districts may benefit from larger investments in the development of more flexible practices, and mentoring and support programs aimed at increasing and maintaining the well-being of school principals (Drago-Severson & Aravena, 2011; Fletcher, 2009). Family-friendly work variables such as flexible work schedules, childcare assistance, and flexible leave policies may benefit working mothers and enhance their satisfaction and productivity. This study contributes significantly to the existing knowledge base surrounding working mothers and female school leaders. Some of the gaps in existing work and family literature are addressed by highlighting working mothers and the intricacies of their roles as school leaders. Role conflict has been shown to increase absenteeism, create turnover in the workplace, and negatively impact the family (Guendouzi, 2006; Oates, 2007). The results from this study advance the understanding that it is advantageous for employers to demonstrate empathy toward working mothers and the stress that results from role overload and work family conflict.

Recommendations for Action

The results of this study may be of value to administrator preparation programs, women seeking to enter into the field of school administration, school district policy

makers, current female school principals and other stakeholders in education. Based on the findings and literature, I make the following recommendations:

1. School leadership preparation programs should design activities and curriculum to ensure awareness of the issue of role strain as it pertains to the role of women and school leadership, with a specific focus on coping strategies.
2. School districts should design effective forms of networking and mentor opportunities for women administrators. This study found that female school principals experience isolation within their roles. Opportunities for collegial support may have a positive impact on their school leadership roles.
3. Future research should be conducted on the physical and emotional implications of role strain on female school leaders. Principal burnout and stress may lead to working mothers not performing well in either role. The extent of such role strain should be explored in order to highlight targeted strategies for sustaining the well-being and effectiveness of school leaders.
4. Future research should be conducted on the influence of emotional stress on women principals and the overall school environment.
5. School districts should design effective systems that will reduce the workload required for the principal position.

Recommendations for Further Study

Data analysis provided the basis for recommendations to school officials and other stakeholders as well as recommendations for further study. With regard to the phenomenon of working mothers who are school principals, further research is needed to explore specific family variables such as the experiences of single mothers. This study did not explore the specific experiences of this demographic. Future research could explore the variability between work and family experiences of single mothers who are school principals.

Results of this research indicate that participants often neglect self-care when managing dual roles as principal and mother. Future research could help to explore the concept of self-sacrifice and uncover this dynamic which seems to permeate the experience of female school leaders. Future studies could also examine the ways in which working mothers who are school leaders may benefit from a workplace network such as collaborating with other female principals who are also navigating family and school leadership roles. Whether peer support has an impact on employee stress levels and serves as a catalyst for engaging in regular self-care activities, is worthy of further exploration. In fact, participation in a support network may serve as a self-care activity for many working mothers who are school principals.

Reflection on Researcher's Experience

I began this study with a commitment to exploring the reality of the experience of working mothers who are leading schools, through a phenomenological lens. Despite having my own perspectives based on my personal experiences as a mother and school

leader, I made a commitment to set aside those preconceptions in order to uncover the nature of the shared experiences of the participants. I used the open-ended, semi-structured interview guide as a tool to prevent leading the discussions based on my personal experience. I believe that my questions were critical to the information gathering process. Through the use of phenomenological interviewing techniques, I was able to capture the unique experiences of the participants, and gather personal perspectives that were critical to answering the research questions guiding this study. I selected the phenomenological research method because this method provided an opportunity to capture the lived experiences of participants in their own words.

My role in this study has offered an opportunity for growth and reflection. In recalling my own experiences as a mother and school leader, I was forced to uncover my own assumptions as I interviewed participants. I have come to realize that I held an inherent assumption that my experiences would parallel those of women facing the same role dualities. As I set aside those assumptions throughout the data collection process, I opened myself to the experience of seeing the roles of principal and mother as they existed through the eyes of other women. I have realized that each woman's experience of the same phenomenon, while similar, is also inherently unique. Engaging in the phenomenological interviewing process helped me to better understand the importance of asking open-ended questions and listening closely without interrupting. This study changed my behavior, in that I now implement these strategies in my daily personal and professional interactions. I now recognize that there is power in allowing a woman to express herself freely – without being led, judged, or interrupted. What was particularly

interesting was that the data analysis revealed a wide range of themes and sub-themes that served to connect participants and their experiences, despite the uniqueness of each of the women's experiences. It was interesting to uncover the nuances that drew these women together. It became apparent through this research that deeper understandings emerge from studying interview data. Tone of voice, gestures, and even periods of silence, can all contribute to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of a person's perspective. This study has strengthened my interest in the experiences of female school leaders who are raising children. I am encouraged by my research and the potential impact that it may have toward heightening awareness and understanding of the experiences of female school leaders. Schools will only improve when they are armed with capable and effective leaders. Practices for sustaining quality female school leaders should incorporate solutions for providing women with the support and skills they will need when they encounter an imbalance in their personal and professional lives.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of working mothers who are school leaders based on the experiences of women who are currently experiencing this phenomenon. Results from this study corroborated with results from previous research that evidences the existence of role conflict among working mothers (Harrison, 2008; Harris & Giuffe, 2010; Kahanov, Loeb sack, Masucci, & Roberts, 2010). This study provides personal and professional implications for women navigating the roles of school principal and mother. Specifically, it outlines how competing personal and

professional demands can influence the work-family experience. Schools will only improve when the school leader is adequately prepared to meet the demands of managing multiple roles.

The women in this study share the common challenge of uncovering an approach to school leadership that links professional responsibilities with personal obligations and self-care. The diverse experiences of mothers who are school principals have not been adequately explored. This study focuses on highlighting the skills and strategies used by current school leaders to improve their personal and professional effectiveness as they strive to meet the needs of teachers, parents, students, and their own families. The present study provides an analysis of the benefits and challenges faced by women navigating the roles of mother and school principal, and the factors that most impact their experiences. Failure to meet professional expectations is a shared concern of the principals in this study. Each of the participants care deeply about their schools, and share a strong commitment to serving as a resource and role model for students and teachers. They place significant time and energy on performing their professional roles with integrity and effectiveness. The level of conflict experienced due to competing work and family demands plays a key role in the extent to which self-care, professional obligations, and family are sacrificed.

The results of this study suggest that working mothers who are secondary principals are motivated by their strong commitment to their personal and professional roles. Overall, female principals who are raising children accommodate their multiple

roles by sacrificing self-care and utilizing strategies that will enable them to get as many tasks accomplished as possible.

The experience of managing dual roles as mother and school principal generates feelings of satisfaction, as well as feelings of being overwhelmed, frustrated and despondent. The combination of being a mother and school principal appears to generate a wide range of competing feelings, as women are faced with incompatible needs and responsibilities.

Analysis of the phenomenological interview data revealed that working mothers who are also school leaders respond to the demands of their roles by employing coping strategies to counteract the stress of the demands on their time and energy. The experiences of the women in this study reveal the significance of prioritizing the needs of their children and setting professional boundaries and limits. Female educational leaders who are mothers demonstrate perseverance as they continue to seek a balance between work and home. Further study of the experiences of mothers who are school leaders will help to identify the factors that make the role of school principal more sustainable as a professional role for future women who are interested in the principalship.

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Appendix A: Description of Study

Dear Principal:

I am a doctoral student at Walden University, and a school principal at the Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES. I am conducting a study to research working mothers who are school principals in upstate New York. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of women who are managing dual roles as mother and school leader. If you are rearing a child in addition to your role as a principal, I would love to speak with you about your experiences, as I feel that your perspectives would be invaluable. The data obtained from this study will provide useful information for women who are mothers and school leaders, or who aspire to these roles. Your participation will make a significant contribution to the success of the study, and to the knowledge base surrounding working mothers and educational leadership.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview that will last about an hour, and will be scheduled at a time and location that is convenient to you. Your participation will be confidential. Please contact me at (518) 210-2583, or via email at turina.parker@waldenu.edu if you would be willing to participate in this study, or if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Turina Parker

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring the experiences of working mothers who are negotiating multiple roles as mother and school principal. You were chosen for the study because you are female school principal in the Capital Region who is raising at least one child who is under the age of 18. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Turina Parker, who is a doctoral student at Walden University and a Principal at the Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of working mothers who are school principals, in order to understand how they view these roles and the strategies they use to manage the demands of the roles of motherhood and school leadership.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an interview of approximately 1 hour in length.
- Allow the interview to be audio-taped
- Review the findings of the study for accuracy. Explain how this will happen—in a second interview? Will you send something in the mail, etc. How long will it take?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There is minimal risk to participating in the study. Possible risk includes the possibility of the nature of some questions exceeding your level of comfort. You may refuse to answer any question that you are uncomfortable with answering, and may decline to participate in the study at any time. All information that could be used to identify you will be removed. A pseudonym will be assigned for the duration of the study. No reference to any identifying information will be made in the study. The benefits associated with this study include that the professional and personal experiences of female principals who are raising children, will be added to the existing literature on working mothers and female school leaders. Additionally, the data obtained from this study will provide useful strategies for women who are mothers and school leaders.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation for participation in the study.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions, you may contact the researcher via phone at (518) 210-2583, or email at turina.parker@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **04-09-13-0071612** and it expires on **4/8/2014**.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature

Researcher's Written or Electronic* Signature

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an “electronic signature” can be the person’s typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview Questions:

1. Please describe your daily routine, from awaking in the morning until bedtime.
2. Tell me about the rewards of being a mother
3. Tell me about the rewards of being a principal
4. Tell me about the challenges of managing personal responsibilities.
5. Tell me about the challenges of managing professional responsibilities
6. Tell me about some of the sacrifices you have made at home, in order to meet professional demands.
7. Tell me about some of the sacrifices you have made in your professional life in order to meet home demands.
8. Tell me about some of the coping strategies you have used to respond to stress related to work and family
9. Tell me about the strategies that you use to meet the demands of your personal and professional responsibilities
10. Tell me about your support system
11. Do you have any regrets with regard to your career choices?
12. What advice would you give to young women who are facing career decisions and raising a family?
13. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix D: Participant Responses

Participant ID #	Question #	Response	Code

Appendix E: Sample Interview Transcript

I: Please describe your daily routine, from awaking in the morning until bedtime.

P: Well I wake up at about 4:45 and I get showered and then I actually go and wake up my daughter, then I get dressed, and then I wake up my son, and then I finish getting dressed, and then I wake up my son again, and again (laughter), and I usually wait until I get my son in the shower, and then I'm out of the house by 5:15. It usually takes me 45 minutes to get here and so y day starts around 7:15, and I'm usually here until around 4:40, 5:00.

I: And do you mind me asking how old your kids are?

P: I have a 16 year old and a 14 year old. And then I go home again and we do dinner and then I usually help them with their schoolwork or I sit down and do my work. Additional work.

I: Okay. And about what time does your evening wrap up?

P: Hmm, somewhere between 10 and 11. I usually have no problems sleeping.

I: Do you mind me asking how long you've been a principal?

P: This is my third official year. Umm I started my administrative internship, then I was interim Assistant Principal, Interim Principal, then I became principal officially. So this is my third official year.

I: Can you tell me a little bit about the rewards of being a mother

P: (chuckles). Well there are a lot of rewards. Well you know my kids have turned out really well, they're really kind and caring kids, I love being with them as

much as I possibly can. And they still like being with me, so that's one of the biggest rewards, whatever I've done they still like to be around me, and they still like to be affectionate publicly, and just sharing in all their accomplishments and watching them grow and learn is a lot of fun for me. They're really good kids. They only drive me crazy, but they're normal kids (laughs).

I: Can you tell me about the rewards of being a principal?

P: That's a little more difficult (laughs). No, one of the biggest rewards is being able to help the students and teachers in a way I never could in my old position. I can help set policy, I can help hire, I can help block, if you will, things from upper administration if I need to. I just feel I can be a lot more effective and help teachers and students in ways I never could before.

I: Can you tell me about the challenges of managing your personal responsibilities.

P: It's definitely a challenge. One of the challenges is the location of the school, because I'm 45 minutes away from home. Today was a good example because our daughter had to stay after school today and my husband called me and we kind of went back and forth over the past two hours over who would pick her up, or who could pick her up, you know that kind of thing. So one of the biggest challenge is that kind of thing. And there's just some nights where I need to do some things and just balancing like his job and my job is can be challenging because we both have positions where we have to do things at night sometimes, so we have to trade off. And we started trading off doing appointments where I used to do all of the

appointments, where he's had to pick up some because I just can't always do it.

And in this position here I don't have an assistant, I'm the only administrator here.

I: How many students do you have?

P: Over the course of a day I have about 210. And I do have someone who can cover for me, but it's just difficult to last minute, say I'm not gonna be here or whatever.

I: Can you tell me about the challenges of managing your professional responsibilities

P: Yeah that's always a big challenge especially this year with all the new things that have come down from the state. So being the only administrator here, much of my day I have to, as sure as you know, the face time that you have to put out with the students and the teachers, so I don't get a lot done during the day because I'm the only administrator here. So trying to get things done, I mean, hardly ever get done during the day, which is why I end up doing them at night. I have to respond to emails, review lesson plans, get paperwork done, things like that. But sometimes I have to do things with my children, so I can't really work, so sometimes a couple days go by without any work getting done, because my kids need me. Both my kids struggle in school so sometimes I have to go back to my old role of being a special ed teacher and help them with their work at home. So it can be a challenge. I don't have anybody really that I can delegate to, so its really me or someone that I can convince to help me out with different things.

I: Thank you. Can you tell me about some of the sacrifices you have made at home, in order to meet your professional demands.

P: One of the sacrifices I have made, my son complains about this all the time, is definitely I used to be home for all the vacations and summers, and I know my kids really miss that. I know when I first started my son always would ask me, ok so who's gonna take me fishing everyday during the summer, or you know 5 days, or 4 days, or 3 days, or however many days I want? Who's gonna do that? And who's gonna take us to the park, and, so that was one of the biggest sacrifices I've made was the summertime with them. I miss them terribly in the summer.

I: Can you tell me about the reverse, some of the sacrifices you have made in your professional life in order to meet home demands.

P: Well like again at night, when my kids need me to help them with their schoolwork, sometimes I just have to put my work aside to let my kids have their time and help them, because I feel it's kind of unfair to just say I can't help you because I've got work stuff to do. I feel like they're struggling and they need help so. There are times when things don't get done here because I need to and want to help them.

I: Thank you. Can you tell me about some of the coping strategies that you have used in order to respond to stress related to work and family?

P: (laughs). Umm...I'm just giggling because sometimes I get really frustrated and you're just like Ahh! It's crazy! The demands of running a school and a household are extremely demanding. There's little room for error with being a

principal, or a mom. You don't want to fail – they are important responsibilities, so you want to get it right. It helps when I exercise. So when I'm really stressed I'll go for a long walk, I should do it more often – I wish I could, but it's one of those things that just doesn't make the top of the priority list. There just aren't enough hours in the day. One thing that I do is my daughter likes to work out with me, and so if I find time to do that which isn't always easy, a lot of times it falls on the weekend, but sometimes during the week if I don't have too much to do we try and get out and do something together. Umm, what else do I do? I do lean on a couple of people, I call them my cabinet here, people who help me with different decisions or whatever, that's definitely a coping mechanism that I use. And sometimes I just say you know what? I've just gotta take some time and do no housework, no schoolwork, and either just hang out with my kids and husband or just do nothing, you know just relax.

I: Can you tell me about the strategies that you have used to meet the demands of your personal and professional responsibilities

P: Hmm. You know I think a lot of times when I've gotten to that point I know that I've spoken to my supervisor, my supervisor is extremely supportive and has helped me with a lot of things, and I have had to call on [my supervisor] when I've double booked, or when I'm super stressed and need to say how do I handle this or whatever, umm but again I do resort to like the exercise and talking to my cabinet and just saying I have to shut down and just regroup.

I: Can you tell me about your support system...so you talked a little bit about the group of people at work...do you have a support system?

P: Yep, of course my husband is one, and then some friends and family, extended family, who sometimes get to hear everything, yeah so that's my support network.

I: Do you have any regrets with regard to the choices that you have made with regard to your career as a principal?

P: Sometimes I do, sometimes I think when umm, I'm trying to figure out how to best phrase this I do sometimes, like during the summer, you know when it's really nice and my kids are home and they're not doing anything, I'm like, What am I doing? I'm just crazy to do this, I could be home. Or sometimes during vacation I think this is crazy, why did I do this? Or even on days like you know everyday, when I used to be able to leave at 2:30, and I didn't get back until 8:30, I do. I think I'm crazy, why am I doing this, is there still time to go back? But I can't. I can't go back now.

I: What advice would you give to young women who are facing career decisions and raising a family or heading in that direction?

P: What advice would I give? Uh definitely try and find the right balance between work and home and to not allow your work to overtake all the family, to make sure you make time for that. I waited until my kids were, I'm trying to remember how old they were. So my daughter was about 8. Like real little ones I don't know how you do that, they're real time consuming. I would tell somebody maybe wait until they're at least like in elementary school. Cuz it's just so hard. But then

again the teenage years are pretty time consuming too. I never realized how much they needed me at this age. It seemed like they needed me so much more when they were little, but sometimes I think emotionally and socially they need a lot of support. Yeah, even the supervision piece. Now the trouble they can get into is so much different than it was when they were little. Now I have to worry about like my son always wants to have a friend over, and he wants to have them over when we're not home, and it's like yeah, well, it kinda depends on who you're having over, how long you're gonna be there alone, and you know, it's like you worry about the drugs, the alcohol, you worry about all those things and, you're like what else are you doing when I'm not there? You just don't know. So we really are pretty tight about that with both our kids. And definitely no friends of the opposite sex when they're home alone. (laughs). We don't want to become grandparents too early (laughs).

I: Is there anything else that you think would be helpful to add or that you would like to add?

P: You know I was just thinking about there's a principal I work with who, actually I think she got into it before her kids were even born. Maybe that might be even a better way to do it because her kids have grown up used to her whereas my kids grew up used to me being home and it was a very difficult transition for my entire family including my husband, who was used to me being home and doing so much to going to working so much and not being able to do as much as I used to. So I don't know, maybe it's better if they do start before they have kids,

or when their kids are really little and don't even know any better. I don't really know, that's hard to say. But I would definitely say um, (sighs), I don't know. I'd say it was definitely very hard on my family during that transition. Yeah, you know, so it just like, good communication with your family about what your intent is, and my family had to grow up as in like mature and do a lot more things for themselves than they ever did before, which is probably a good thing for them. But definitely it was a huge transition for my family. It still is. We'll get there.

I: Well, I don't have any other questions. Do you have any questions for me?

P: No, but I'd love to see the results of your study.

I: Absolutely!

Curriculum Vitae

Turina Parker**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE****WSWHE BOCES****2008 – Present****Principal for Special Programs**

Responsible for overall management of Alternative High School and Special Education programs; manage school budget, conduct performance reviews; facilitate curriculum development and implementation.

St. Catherine's Center for Children**2001 - 2008****Director of Day Treatment**

Responsible for overall management of K-6 Day Treatment Program; provide supervision to educational and clinical staff; plan, manage and direct the overall educational activities; hire, supervise and evaluate teachers, administrative and support staff; guide teachers to implement effective teaching strategies; coordinate training and professional development activities; supervise student discipline; maintain a working financial budget

Principal

Responsible for supervision of teachers and support staff; provide guidance and training to teachers and classroom support staff; manage student disciplinary procedures; curriculum development; establish and promote standards and expectations for excellence; ensure compliance with NYSED policies and regulations; evaluate lesson plans

Coordinator of Curriculum and IEP's

Responsible for student discipline; assist the Principal in communicating goals and expectations of the academic and behavioral program; provide instructional leadership, as directed by the Principal; monitor and assess student achievement and outcomes.

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE**New York State Education Department****Graduate Intern****New York State Assembly****Legislative Intern****EDUCATION**

M.S. in Curriculum Development and Instructional Technology, SUNY Albany, 2006

M.S. in Educational Administration, SUNY Albany, 2002

B.A., SUNY Albany, May 2001

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

**NYS Association for Comprehensive Education (NYSACE) – Vice-President,
Capital Region (2004 – 2007)**

Phi Delta Kappa, Inc. – Member

ACSD – Member