

2015-01-01

Work-Life Balance: A Phenomenological Study On How Female Principals Balance Their Professional And Personal Lives

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WORK-LIFE BALANCE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON HOW FEMALE
PRINCIPALS BALANCE THEIR PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIVES

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Dedication

I dedicate this academic accomplishment in the memory of the two most influential people in my life, my parents, Samuel and Consuelo Flores.

and to

My husband, David and my children Patrick and Regina
Si Se Puede!

WORK-LIFE BALANCE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON HOW FEMALE
PRINCIPALS BALANCE THEIR PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIVES

by

BLANCA ESTELA GARCIA, B.S., M.ED.

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2015

Acknowledgements

This doctoral journey was a long live dream that was supported by my lovely family every step of the way. Papa and Mama, thank you for stressing the value of a good education and for instilling in me that everything is possible with hard work and commitment. I also want to thank my husband, David, and my children, Patrick and Regina, for their encouragement and support. David, thank you, for taking on added responsibilities at home and for ensuring our home ran smoothly. Patrick and Regina, thank you for being my perfect little angels. The worry free world you gave me allowed me to fulfill this dream.

I would like to thank the principals involved in the study. I appreciate their willingness to take time away from their families and busy schedules to have conversations with me. I want them to know how much I learned from each of their experiences and how those experiences allowed me to reflect on my own experiences.

To my committee members Dr. Richard Sorenson, Dr. Angus Mungal and Dr. Elena Izquierdo thank you for your contributions to my effort. To my chair, Dr. Rincones, thank you for providing me with the guidance needed to complete each phase of the dissertation process.

Finally, I would like to thank my siblings, Yolanda, Eva Alicia and Jose, for their support during this phase of my life. Your warm wishes and thoughts is what kept me going. This doctorate is not just for me but for our parents who came to this country with the hopes of a better life. Through perseverance, “mama” and “papa” achieved their dream and set us in our path to success.

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore lived experiences of female principals and to examine how female principals balance professional and personal lives. A qualitative methodology provided a detailed and rich understanding of the experiences of women in the principalship from women's perspectives. Five female principals were the focus of the study.

The findings revealed that female principals experience work-life conflict because they are expected to fulfill family and work responsibilities. The research resulted in identifying the challenges, the support systems, and strategies utilized by female principals as a means of realizing work-life balance. A conclusion to be drawn from these findings is that female principals could not have managed the principalship if there were no support systems in place to balance their professional and personal lives. A lack of a formal or informal mentors resulted in female principals seeking out social support as a means of meeting the demands job of the principalship. Included in the findings were the resources and tools the female principals utilized in order to realize work-life balance.

Finally, this research demonstrates the need for District support for female principals in the areas of administrative training on the nature of the job and challenges the universities to provide an intensive internship course that allows perspective leaders the opportunity to experience the principalship first hand.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Work-Life balance has received growing attention professionally across a number of fields in the last decades. Researchers have spent a great deal of time studying what happens when people combine the responsibilities of their family with paid work (Reynolds, 2005). The interest in work-life balance has been generated by the changing nature of the workforce, which has seen an increase of women in the work place (Webber, Sarris & Bassell, 2010). As more women participate in the workforce and occupy both work and family roles, simultaneously, they tend to experience conflict between the two domains (Nabavi & Shahryari, 2012). Michel, Kotrbow, Michelson, Clark, and Baltes (2011), stated that family and work are the two most important domains for many adults. Women especially, female principals, who have entered the workforce, are more likely to seek balance in their professional and personal lives because they are expected to fulfill family and work responsibilities. Bell, Rajendran, and Theiler (2012), claimed that “in their struggle to balance both it is often the influence and interference of one on the other that leads to positive or negative ‘spillover’ “(p.25). When conflict between work and family occurs, there are opposing effects not only for organizations but for the individuals who are employed there and their families (Whitehead & Kotze, 2003). It has been demonstrated that work-family conflict negatively affects organizational and individual level outcomes (Baltes, Zhdanova, & Clark, 2011).

Greenhaus and Powell (2003) indicated that little research on work-life challenges has been produced. Interestingly, little is known about how female principals react to work-life conflict. Past studies, on work-life balance rarely included leaders with substantial family care responsibilities because there are very few women leaders to be studied (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Most of the research has focused on the construct of work-life conflict which arises from

the incompatibility of work and family domains (Greenhaus & Powell, 2003). Greenhaus and Powell (2003) as well as Ford, Heinen, and Langkamer (2007), go on to state that other research in the area of work-life conflict has provided insight into different forms of conflict as well as antecedents and consequences of the conflicts. Greenhaus and Powell (2003) claimed that recent research; on work-life conflict has only focused on the directionality of the conflict or interference between work and family roles. Based on this research, work-family conflicts occur when participation in a competing work responsibility interferes with a completing family responsibility. Difficulty in sustaining a work-life balance has led to some women to opt out of leadership positions (Loder, 2005; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). Additional research to understand the methods by which women achieve work-life balance is necessary to develop effective interventions and supports for women in leadership positions. Understanding the methods by which successful women leaders achieve their work-life balance may further lead to more in depth understanding of factors that contribute to the manifestation of work-life balance. Leaders in the field of education are one of the many fields where women leaders experience a significant degree of work-life conflict. Research exploring the work-life phenomenon can assist in creating consciousness with the educational system, which in turn, can support the women in their struggle to close the gap between the expectations placed on female leaders and the available resources.

Research Purpose

There is paucity in the research literature regarding, the challenges faced by female principals as they struggle to realize work-life balance. Historically, research writing on leadership has focused mostly on men (Bolman & Davis, 2008). The majority of the research, in the past, has been based on male perspectives, and interpretation (Shakeshaft, 1997). Until recently, women's

perspective, in leadership research, has been largely ignored in research (Sanchez-Hucles, & Davis, 2010). Currently, the literature on work-life balance for women and the principalship is scarce. Wrushen and Sherman (2008) stated that “a dearth of information exists on women who have taken on leadership roles and what supports their success” (p. 488). Most of the studies related to the work-life balance address issues such as dealing with specific hurdles, marital satisfaction, social support, workplace policies, and dual role responsibilities but they have not examined the perspective of female leaders. Moreover, existing research currently includes many work-life studies focusing on the experiences of individuals in the workplace yet a small body of literature has explored work-life balances for females in the field of education. The existing literature on women in educational administration has only sporadically addressed differences in the life-balancing strategies between women administrators with contracting family statuses and obligations (Loder, 2005). This paucity in research is even more pronounced in the identification of effective strategies utilized by female principals in their effort to realize the work-life balance. Knowledge of effective strategies can possibly assist current female principals and aspiring principals by increasing the likelihood of becoming effective school leaders through successful administration of personal resources to balance their professional and person life. These strategies can then be used by current female principals who are faced with the challenge of work/life balance or by aspiring principals who have set aside or changed professional goals when deciding to fulfill their responsibilities as mothers and wives.

This phenomenological study explored lived experiences of female principals and examined how female principals overcome work-life challenges. Examining how female principals balance their personal and professional lives is critical because research as has shown that

women administrators experience burnout and stress due to their tendencies to deny their own needs while seeking the satisfaction of others and their needs to cope with family conflict (Lawson, 2008). Jo (2008) alluded that research in this area of work-life balance is needed because women are more likely than men to switch jobs for reasons such as work-life conflict. The goal of the study was to describe and identify strategies, used by female principals, which could be used by current female principals who are faced with the challenge of work/life balance or by aspiring principals who have set aside or changed professional goals when deciding to fulfill their responsibilities as mothers and wives. Guiding questions for this study included the following:

1. What challenges do female principals face while balancing work and family life?
2. What types of support systems do female principals determine are helpful in realizing work-life balance?
3. What management strategies do female principals utilize to balance work and family life?

Theoretical Framework

Work-family border theory and feminist perspective are the driving force behind the conceptual framework for this study. According to Work-Family Border theory, each person's role takes place within a specific domain of life (Clark, 2000). These domains are then separated by borders that may be temporal, psychological, or physical (Clark, 2000; Nicholas & McDowall, 2010). Borders are lines that define the point at which domain relevant behaviors begin and end (Clark, 2000). Temporal borders divide when work is done from when family responsibilities can be taken care of while physical borders define where work and family responsibilities will take place (Clark, 2000). Clark (2000) describes psychological border as the

rules individuals create that dictate when certain emotions, behaviors, and thinking patterns are appropriate in either domain. Work-Family Border theory also addressed the issue of “border crossing” between the two domains of life, specifically work and family (Clark, 2000). Border-crossers are described as participants, in the home and work domain, which have internalized the language, culture, and values in each domain (Clark, 2000). Clark (2000) claimed that border-crossers are participants who are competent in one’s responsibilities, can identify personally with domain responsibilities, and are connected with other members in both domains. The conceptual framework points out that any given individual manages and negotiates the work and family domains as well as the borders between them in order to attain work-life balance (Nicholas & McDowall, 2010). According to the conceptual framework, individuals make daily transitions between work and family arenas resulting in a constant tailoring of their focus, their goals and their interpersonal style to fit the unique demands of each domain (Nicholas & McDowall, 2010). Work-Family Border theory proposes that individuals that strongly identify with work and family domains have better control over these arenas (Donald & Linington, 2007). Blackmore (2006) claimed that feminist accounts can be reconstructive, as they provide a voice for the less advantaged and offer alternative representations of leadership through narratives of marginalized leaders. Donald and Linington (2007), further claimed that individuals with strong identities are more likely to achieve work/life balance. Clark (2000) alluded to the fact that people tend to take charge of their actions rather than react to what is happening within their work and life domains.

Advancing Scientific Knowledge

This phenomenological study focused on female principals who have, not only succeeded in breaking the glass ceiling in order to acquire a principalship position, but who have also

managed to achieve personal satisfaction in their work-life balance. Currently, many women continue to opt out of the principalship because of the numerous demands placed on them by the educational system, which then takes their time away from their personal and family lives. This research study identified coping strategies for realizing work-life balance in women leaders. Heraty and Morley (2008) claimed that there is an absence of research on coping and work-family conflict. This research study also created opportunities for future research in the area of mentoring and organizational support. The current lack of organizational support and mentoring create a dilemma for female principals who attempt to balance both family and career responsibilities.

Significance of the Study

As more women participate in the workforce, and occupy both work and family roles simultaneously, women tend to experience conflict between in their work and family roles. O’Laughlin and Bischoff (2005) claimed “that women, in leadership positions, are more likely to pursue a change in career plans to positions which would allow them more time with family because working interferes with their family domain” (p. 98). Marshall (2009) stated that there is evidence that female administrators alter their career path when they become mothers; therefore, making it important for professional women to have the support systems in place to be able to balance their work and family environments and not feel the need to sacrifice one over the other. Marshall (2009) acknowledged the importance of having support systems in place and assumed that female administrators possess prior knowledge of the supports necessary to successfully realize a work-life balance. For example, a new mother working as a principal may not be fully cognizant of the demands that will be placed by a young child who is dependent on their care. At times, it is until the individual acquires personal knowledge of an experience

he/she can prepare for circumstances in which a similar situation is encountered. Guendouzi (2006) asserted that, “even though women today have access to a wider range of life opportunities, for many women that are mothers, balancing work and family responsibilities within the constraints of a specific cultural environment results in stress and feeling of guilt” (p. 901). Studies conducted in this area indicate that men are less likely to switch jobs for non-economic reasons such as the work-life conflict (Jo, 2008). More research is needed to understand what strategies women use to manage stressors that contribute to the physical and emotion demands on motherhood (Burns, 2009). This study suggests that women are facing additional stressors and experience this phenomenon in a disproportionate manner which further highlights the importance of this study. Examining how female principals balance their personal and professional lives is critical because research has shown that women administrators experience burnout and stress due to their tendency to deny their own needs while seeking the satisfaction of others and their needs to cope with family conflict (Lawson, 2008). While denying the personal needs of female administrators may help ensure their livelihood and that of their families, this type of coping mechanism is unlikely to satisfy the needs of the individual and increase the depletion rate of available resources. For example, an individual who chooses to skip meal in order to meet with the demands placed by the education system increases his/her risk for health problems to arise. Even in situations where physical ailments may not be a concern, diminished dedicated resources to relationships in one’s immediate family can lead to the development of interpersonal or familial problems which, in turn, creates additional problem areas for the individual to target. Given the deleterious effects of work-life conflicts, the need to identify effective methods for achieving a work-life balance is crucial for any individual, but it is exponentially important for women leaders since they are the recipients of stressors not

necessarily endured by their male counterparts. For this reason, this study will identify and describe the methods used by female leaders in the local community. The results of the study will also provide greater understanding of the challenges faced by female principals as well as an understanding of the implications of such experiences for the development of the adaptive-coping strategies and how they can impact a woman's life story.

Nature of Study

This study was designed to be qualitative with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research provides an understanding to those who are interested in the events of a particular time and setting. In the pursuit to identify effective methods to achieve work-life balance, this phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of female principals and the ways in which they realized a balance between work and family life. Penner and McClement (2008), stated that phenomenology can result in valuable knowledge about individual experiences. The study purport to identify how female principals manage work-life challenges and to establish a platform for dialogue, educating others, and contributing to the positive mental health of women who have opted out of the principalship or who are currently striving for balance. Knowledge of the characteristics of female principals may be of interest to researchers since work-life conflicts can, at times, pose an even more formidable barrier to women's access to the principalship than overt gender discrimination (Loder, 2005). This phenomenological study on female principals will contribute to the body of research in the field of educational leadership, particularly women in the principalship. Female principals endure demanding job responsibilities, especially when combined with family responsibilities. A phenomenological approach, utilizing an in-depth interviewing protocol,

presented a rich description of the female principals' lived experiences to accurately describe the phenomenon of work-life balance.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms will be defined as follows:

Coping- strategies that people use to deal with role overload (Higgins, Durbury, & Lyons, 2010).

Spillover- work-family conflict where work negatively affects the family life of an employee (van Veldhoven & Beijer, 2012).

Work-Life Balance-the optimal blend of work and responsibilities outside of the workplace that enables an individual to feel that he/she lead a satisfying manageable life (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Work/Family Conflict- the extent to which work-family related responsibilities interfere with each other (Sultana, 2012).

Location of the Study

Southwest Independent School District (SISD) is located in one of the largest urban border cities along the Texas-Mexico border. SISD has a long history, in education, encompassing more than 100 years of service to its community. In recent years, SISD has experienced a mass exit of experienced principals. Currently, 44% of school administrators have less than three years of experience. Fifty-one percent of the school administrators with less than 3 years of experience are women. Overall, the percent of women serving in the principalship is 56%.

My Interest in the Subject

My interest in the subject of female-principals and work-life balance as a research focus initiated when I entered the principalship. A number of factors contributed to my ultimate decision of examining how female principals managed to realize work-life balance while

managing the principalship. These factors include my experiences as a female principal, as a parent, and my desire as to give back to a rewarding profession that has been overshadowed by the complexity and challenges of the job.

Current Female Principal. A major contributing factor to my interest in this study was my own experience as a principal. Over the past decade, the role of the elementary principal has witness many challenges. As a female principal, I found the pace and demands of work and family to be overwhelming. Early in my career, I found that elementary principals navigate through their day, like a robot, programmed to work efficiently sometimes through turmoil and disarray. Principals start their day making dozens of decision even before the first student walks through the door. They go on through their day engaged in countless conversations with teachers, staff members, parents, and students. Added to this, are the interruptions that occur throughout the day. These interruptions are numerous and at times can cause the most planned day to become a total state of turmoil. From the disruptive student, to the irate parent who wants to see the Principal because she is upset at the teacher, to the roof leaks, and a cooling and heating system that is not working properly. Such stress inducing events are a part of every principal's daily work life. Planned or unplanned, each event keeps the principal navigating through their day in a state that should not reveal the emotional, mental toll and physical fatigue it is taking on them. Only stopping to answer phone calls or checking emails that only add to pending file that will probably accompany them home for the day. This means that principals will probably have to extend their work day in order to ensure the management aspect of their job is completed.

As a principal with a family, the above noted demands can place constraints on family. Children are carted to off to the grandparents, daily, for care. Children activities are limited to

weekends and late evenings. Between house work, children's activities, and school events any down time is frequently spent trying to catch up on things that have not previously been accomplished at work or home. It is through the mist of all this that I began to wonder if the principalship was worth the effort and the time it took away from my family. Furthermore as a principal, I witnessed firsthand the lack of support for female principals when it came to balancing work-life balance. Lawson (2008) stated that school systems have not addressed the challenge faced by women principals when it comes to balancing their career and family lives. As a mentor principal, I have seen firsthand how school districts have not put in support systems for female principals. Even though mentor programs are in place but I don't think they meet the needs of female principals. Added to this, with the ever changing demographics of the workforce that now includes more women in leadership positions, who have family with responsibilities; I have seen a decrease in mentor programs that would provide the support and the strategies needed to manage the principalship. The absence of mentors has a negative impact for women in leadership positions because as women move into higher positions within an organization, they will experience more obstacles (Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). Women are also more likely to abandon the principalship because there are not enough female mentors to advise them on how to implement strategies that can lead to a successful career (Scanlon, 1997). There are not enough mentors to guide and assist female principals on the aspect of managing the principalship in order to become effective leaders. The lack of support also goes beyond mentoring programs. Some workplaces, such as school districts, do not take into account the realities associated with work and family life.

Maintaining a balance between work and family life is challenging for many female principals. The biggest challenge is finding time to spend with family. As a female principal, I

spend countless hours at work. In 2005, high school principals worked 60 to 80 hours per week (Loder, 2005). According to a study, by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, elementary principals are putting in longer hours, lead larger school, and supervise more people than in the past (Loder, 2005). The increase in the number of hours principals work per week is due to the increased demands placed on principals. As a female principal I can attest to these findings. I currently supervise a staff of 70 and my school services over 800 students. Even though there has been an increase in student enrollment support from central office is non-existent. Yet, I am held to the same standards as a male principal in a smaller school.

My desire to give something back. Another factor for me conducting this research was based on my constant conversations and discussions with aspiring administrators and current female principals who questioned if the principalship was worth everything they thought they were giving up. A constant question asked by aspiring principals was “When is the right time to move into the principalship?” Many wondered if it was worth the stress and the time away from their family. As one aspiring principal stated “I would really love to be a principal but seeing that my young one is only seven, I feel it would have a negative effect on her because I know there is a lot of work involved”. Brunner and Grogan (2007) stated that the time demands in administrative roles, women may not aspire to top administrative positions because they do not desire to take on more responsibilities at work. Another aspiring principal, echoed the same concern; however, her situation was complicated more because her husband is a principal. According to her, her decision to opt out was because she the only full time parent her children had. Her husband spent too much time away from the family and being raised as a Hispanic female she felt it was her responsibility to take care of the children. As a principal, I also heard the same concerns from female principals who wondered if they had made the right decision.

Many of these conversations revolved around the lack of time they spent with their family; more specially, their children. Current female principals also wondered if the principalship was worth the stress and the time it takes away from the family. According to a study conducted by Whitaker (1996), male and female principals are rethinking the commitment to the principalship. Many of these principals believe that even though the principalship is very rewarding, many wonder if it is worth the sacrifice their family was making. Many commented on how they found themselves feeling guilty because they just can't enjoy family life. One principal commented on how she felt guilty at work because she wanted to be home with her family while at the same time she found herself feeling guilty at a family functions because she felt she should be working on paperwork or addressing school issues. This same principal stated that, even though she seemed overwhelmed, she would choose no other profession. Another principal, on the other hand, felt her time spent with her family kept her from being more efficient at work. She felt her effort in trying to spent time with her family took away from work. She felt as her family was keeping her from being more efficient at work. Bolman and Davis (2008) stated that 70% of women named personal and family responsibilities as the main barrier to career success. Many other principals echoed the same sentiment. Interestingly, these same principals acknowledged how rewarding the principalship was but that the challenges and complexity of the job produced were sometimes to overbearing and at times lead to hard decisions being made at home in order to meet the demands of the jobs. Many found themselves choosing work over their families. Some talked about having to miss family functions and personal children events in order to meet deadlines at work.

The conversations also included dialogue on the challenges of the principalship. The

challenges were those faced by me as a principal with a family. The discussions outlined how the demands of the job made it difficult to balance work and home responsibilities. Many echoed how juggling both roles created stress and tension at home. These principals also claimed they experienced many frustrations on the job. The frustrations were related to role overload, the inability to accomplish the many tasks and responsibilities of the principalship (Whitaker, 1996). It was these sentiments that lead me to explore how we could make the principalship more manageable so that female principals can realize work-life balance.

Conducting this study represents the first of what I hope will be numerous studies that explore the need for districts to provide some type of support system that will enable female principals to navigate through the principalship successfully while at the same time maintaining a healthy home life.

As a parent. As a mother of two children who never knew their mother in any capacity other than a school administrator, I was interested in identifying ways to be part of my children's life while at the same time continue with my professional life. The fact that the principalship took so much time away from my children resulted in a feeling of guilt. I remember feeling that my children at times resented me for not being around as often as I should have been. The principalship with all its intricacy consumed my life. I found myself working until all hours of the night. My children were being raised by my parents. I remember one time when I called to check up on my children and my son answered. After having a brief conversation with him I asked to speak to his grandma. To my surprise, my son called out to grandma and instead of telling her it was "mom" he referred to me by my name. He said, "Es Estela". I remember how I felt when my son called me by my name and not mom. To add salt to injury, I remember when I

went to parent/teacher conference one year and school officials referred to me as Mr. Flores's daughter even after I told them who I was. Apparently, my dad had become my children's responsible parent. It was at that point that I realized I had lost my identity as a parent. I knew at that very moment that I had to change how I did things at work and at home. I realized that I had to figure out how I could get my work done at school within a reasonable time so that I could get home to my children. The principalship, unknowingly, had consumed my life and had taken me away from my life's most valuable possession, my children. I had to figure out how to juggle my work and my family responsibilities without it affecting not only my physical and emotional well-being but my children's as well.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The reality of working life today is that employees are constantly struggling to balance their personal and professional lives. Craig and Sawrikai (2009) contended that the need to balance work and family occurs because committing time to work is incompatible with time that is required to perform home responsibilities and childcare. Shillingstad (2011) claimed that the challenge in balancing predominately comes down to the fact that work and family roles are competing for limited amount of energy and time from a single individual. This struggle has also been exacerbated by the changing nature of the workforce, an increase of women in the paid workforce (Webber, Sarris & Bessell, 2010). The vast number of women who have entered the workforce during the latter part of the 20th century has been a factor that has caused work-life balance an issue for most families (Matheson & Rosen, 2012). Women who have entered the workforce; especially, into school administrative positions have been traditionally unmarried, without children, or with grown children (Lawson, 2008). Loder (2005) alluded to the fact that very few women enter the principalship in their 20's and 30's. In more recent years, however, younger women have entered leadership positions making the issue of work-life balance a more salient concern (Lawson, 2008).

Women leaders in education have struggled to balance their professional and personal life. In a published study by Wrushen and Sherman (2008), female secondary principals questioned whether they were adept to the principalship while maintaining marriages. Wrushen and Sherman (2008) claimed that female secondary principals struggled with how they could manage children and work. Even though women have access to a wider range of life opportunities, for women who are mothers, balancing family and work responsibilities within the contextual

environment results in stress (Guendouzi, 2006). This is attributed to insufficient time availability for both work and family domains. According to a study by Barnett and Rivers, 75% of parent participants indicated increased stress levels when attempting to balance work and family roles (as cited by Tatman, Hovestadt, & Yelsma et al., 2006). Matheson and Rosen (2012) stated that stress is one of the many reasons why people fail to achieve work-life balance. Job stress negatively impact an employee's work and personal lives (Bell, Rajendran, & Theiler, 2012). Bell et al. (2012) claimed that job stress represents a larger emotional financial burden on organization performance. Kelly and Moen (2007) claimed that employee effectiveness and performance suffer due to work-life conflict. Michel et al. (2011) stated that work-life conflict also affects organizational outcomes which include absenteeism, affective organization commitment, and turnover intentions. Marshall (2009) pointed out those female administrators set aside or alter their career path when becoming mothers. Northouse (2013) stated that women are more likely to quit their jobs and self-select themselves out of the leadership pathway to enter the pathway of motherhood.

Guendouzi (2006) claimed that balancing work and family responsibilities also resulted in women feeling guilty. According to a study by Marshall (2009), female university principals regretted not spending enough time with their children. Marshall (2009) alluded to the fact that being both a professional and a mother resulted in not being fully committed the family. Other researchers have reported that women feel guilty for not spending enough time with their family and missing out on children's lives (Judge & Livingston, 2008). Judge and Livingston (2008) suggested that women also feel guilty when family responsibilities interfere with work responsibilities. The guilt feeling is augmented by the negative response they receive from significant others for not being committed to the home and family sphere (O'Laughin &

Bischoff, 2005). Guendouzi (2006) suggested that the guilt mothers experience is inherent in society.

The “hidden injuries” of those aforementioned, according to Elkhof et al. (2007), is what is brought home to the supper table and despicably the soul of society. The moodiness that accompanies these hidden injuries as a result of working long hours and the guilt that parents feel for not attending their children’s “significant events” at school leads to the creation of a “grumpy person” who is not suited for being a great mother (Elkhof et al., 2007). Society expects mothers should be with their children and that spending quality time is a prerequisite to good family dynamics (Guendouzi, 2006). Very few studies have examined academics’ ability to balance work and personal life (Bell et al, 2012). Past studies on work-life balance rarely included leaders with substantial family care responsibilities because there are very few women leaders to be studied (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). By investigating the challenges female principals, the strategies they implement, and the support systems they utilize, current female principals and aspiring principals can better understand how to realize work-life balance.

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter will provide a review of the literature as it pertains to work-life conflict and work-life interference. For the purpose of this study, work-life conflict and work-life interference will be used interchangeably. This chapter moves on to explain the historical context of work-life balance. The chapter then discusses the conceptual models purposed for the study of work-life balance. This chapter will also explain the implications of gender stereotypes and social expectations for women. Bosak and Sczesny (2008) claimed gender stereotypes form one barrier for women to pursue or access leadership positions. This chapter will further explain how gender has been associated with leadership. Since most of the research conducted in the area of leadership has focused on leadership characteristics of males, there is a lack of research

regarding how female principals, with family obligations, successfully manage to realize work-life balance. The chapter describes how society tends to perceive women as the nurturers and caregivers of their children which are not the traits and characteristics of the leadership role. This study is unique in that it is focused on female principals who have been faced with the challenge of balancing their personal and professional lives within the context of the principalship.

Work-Life Balance and the School Administrator

Many researchers have written about the complexity of the principalship. Over the past decade, the role of the elementary principal has witnessed many transformations. Perhaps the most dramatic change has been the increase of female principals. The principalship today is much more demanding job than it used to be (Loder, 2005; Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Two decades of study on beginning principals, in America, indicate that the principalship is complex, more difficult and poses pressures to solve educational, social, and personal problems (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). In the past, Fleck (2008), claimed that good management skills and an understanding of the school and community were what principals were expected to possess. Today, principals are expected to be experts in all aspects of administration, leadership, and education (Fleck, 2008). The workload increase has been attributed to mounting expectations for principals to complete paperwork, supervise afterschool activities, market the school, raise monies, and serve as the official liaison between the school and the public. High levels of role involvement lead to work-family conflict because considerable time and effort will be devoted to a single role, making it physically impossible, or at least difficult, to respond to the demand of other roles (Damiano-Teixeira, 2006). These expectations create tension and stress for school leaders with family responsibilities and children. Past studies have indicated that the demands of multiple tasks have an impact on an individual's quality of life by increasing stress and

compromising physical health (Damiano-Teixeria, 2006). Loder (2005) argued that the increased expectations have overloaded the role of the principal and compromised the ability of principals to balance their personal and professional lives. Whitaker (1996) claimed that balancing one's personal life, with the role of the principal, is difficult when the job becomes more challenging each year. Lawson (2008) suggested that the challenges that female principals face in balancing their professional and personal lives are not being addressed by school systems.

According to a study, elementary school principals today are putting in longer hours, lead larger schools, and supervise more people than in the past (Ferrandino, 2001). Further studies have focused on finding a link between work-life conflict and physical and psychological health (Oplatka, 2002). In a study conducted by Whitaker (1996) principals indicated that emotional exhaustion was a significant problem. The findings of the study were attributed to the daily work pressures or emotional overload of the principalship (Whitaker, 1996). Almost all the principals, in this study, indicated at least some negative consequences in their personal life and, both males and females, are rethinking their commitment to the principalship (Whitaker 1996). The workload increase has been attributed to mounting expectations for principals to complete paperwork, manage school budget, deal with personnel issues, and serve as the official liaison between the school and the community it serves (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Other frustrations include site-based decision making, declining resources, increased paperwork and greater expectations from the public and central administration for higher student standards (Whitaker, 1996). Even as principals rise to the many challenges, principals must work in an environment of intense pressure resulting from the need to meet state and federal standards. Principals are held accountable for meeting state and federal mandates while their job hands in the balance

(Ferrandino, 2001). Research studies indicate that emotional exhaustion creates a high level of burnout in women (Webber, Sarris, & Bissell, 2010).

Oplatka (2002) stated that the burnout was found to be related to women's lack of control over their work environment, their tendency to meet the needs of other, and their need to cope with work-family conflict. Oplatka (2002) surveyed six women principals on the issue of burnout. The study revealed women principals perceived themselves as burned out in mid-career. All participants in the study emphasized moderate levels of energy depletion and physical fatigue. Many of the principals in the study felt exhausted and overextended. Whitaker (1996) stated that principals experience burnout from the amount of time and effort expended on the job. Lawson (2008) claimed that research indicates that women administrators experience burnout and stress due to a women's tendency to deny their own needs while seeking the satisfaction of others' while denying their own needs. Grawitch, Barber, and Justice (2010) stated that the negative outcomes associated with stress can hinder a person's functioning, the quality of relationships, and overall life satisfaction. Many principals are experiencing many frustrations on the job. The frustrations are related to role overload, the inability to accomplish the many tasks and responsibilities assigned to the role of the principal (Whitaker, 1996). Given the time demands in administrative roles, women may not aspire to top administrative positions because they do not desire to take on more responsibilities at work (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Oplatka (2002) study summarized the complexity of the principalship through the perspective of a women principal as follows: "I want to quit because I think that the principaship is overwhelming, an increasing burden on the role of incumbent...more responsibility, more tasks to perform, it is not becoming easier from year to year another, it is becoming harder and

harder... “ (p. 218). Even aspirants are uncertain about the position and their ability to balance their professional and personal lives (Shoho & Barnett, 2010).

Work-life Balance and Historical Trends

Work-life balance has had much focus in recent years due to the increase of more people combining work and family roles (van Veldhoven & Beijer, 2012). Understanding how individuals and families balance work and family lives has been a topic of heightened interest in recent years, mainly because of the increasing number of female employees. Recent decades have also seen dramatic increases in the demands placed on employed individuals. Demands at home have also increased and these changes have contributed to role-overload as employees try to manage the demands of their personal and their professional lives (Higgins et al. 2010). Studies on life management have focused on predictors of household task allocations, earnings of husbands and wives, and cultural beliefs (Damiano-Teixeira, 2006). Damiano-Teixeira (2006) study on female participants indicated that the complexity of family and professional careers influence life in a positive and negative manner. Relevant studies have found that work-family interface or conflict is considered a role stressor which result in health consequences (Higgins et al., 2013). Van Veldhoven and Beijer (2012) stated that striving to satisfy work and family life leads to physical and psychological health concerns. Research in the area of work-life balance has also demonstrated that the work-life conflict has a harmful effect on individual outcomes such as hypertension, depression, and substance abuse (Michel et al., 2011). High levels of job stress have attributed to a decrease in work-life balance and an increase in work-life conflict (Bell et al., 2012). Bell et al. (2012) claimed that “work- life balance and job stress issues are particularly relevant for academics, as several different tasks, whether from the same or different roles create conflict” (p.28). Other researchers argued that work and life are not distinct domains that can be balanced by the individual, but rather consist of boundaries. Eikhof et al. (2007)

stated “that work and life are intertwined and; therefore, workers cannot distinguish and disentangle the two domains” (p. 326). Collective research on work-life balance has revealed that individuals experience work-life balance as separate domains or as domains that are intertwined (Eikhof et al., 2007). Supporting the aforementioned raises a series of interconnected questions that are interconnected: 1) How does work differ from life and how is work defined?; 2) Can work-life balance be realized?; 3) How can work be shaped to allow balance?; 4) Can employers fulfill their obligation to ensure how work can consider the notion of balance with life commitments (Fourche & Martindale, 2011). Fourche and Martindale (2011) stated that these are not simply questions but are philosophical issues that lie beyond discussions about how work-life balance can be realized.

Work-Life Balance: Conceptual Models

Various conceptual models of work-life balance, work-family conflict, and work-family enrichment have been proposed in an attempt to study work-life balance (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Frone et al., 1992; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Kelley and Moen, 2007).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) provided a model which outlined three major sources of work-family conflict. These sources included (a) time based conflict, (b) strain based conflict, and (3) behavior based conflict. The conceptual model proposed that family or work roles that affect a person’s time involvement, strain or behavior within a specific role can produce conflict between both roles. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) stated that time based conflict occurs when time demands make it difficult to participant in both domains. Strain based conflict is experience when stress from one role interferes with participation in another role. Behavior based conflict is when behaviors at home and work are incompatible. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) indicated that work domain pressures include hours worked, inflexible work-schedule, role ambiguity.

Family domain pressures include low spouse support, number of children, and spouse employment. The model also proposed that work-life conflict is intensified when work and family roles are central to the person's self-concept.

Frone et al. (1992) examined the antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict. Frone et al. (1992) developed a comprehensive model of work-family interface. The model specifies that work related variables negatively impact family satisfaction (Ford et al., 2007). Ford et al. (2007) claimed that family stressors impact job satisfaction. The results indicated a positive relationship between work-family conflict and family-work conflict. Frone, et al. alluded to the fact that family stressors and involvement related to the frequency of family-life conflict while family-work conflict was related to work distress.

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) proposed a model of work-family enrichment. Work-family enrichment was referenced as the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role. Under this model resources in one role can promote high performance and positive effect on another role. Workers who have control over the scheduling of their work activities, and whose workplaces provide them with opportunities for flextime, should be better able to realize work-life balance. Under this conceptual model individual have access to flexible scheduling. This model is ideal for a work place that does not require the presence of one sole individual at all times.

Kelley and Moen (2007) conceptual model on the impact of schedule control on work-life conflict describes specific ways to increase employee's schedule control. The model suggested that by changing one's behavior will reduce work-family conflict. The model proposed three moderators; such as gender, life stage and occupations. This conceptual model concluded that

schedule control can remediate time pressures and work-life conflict with healthy and productivity benefits.

These models have focused on work-family conflict, work-family interface, work-family enrichment, and schedule control. Many of these models were used to study work-family conflict and what organizations could do to facilitate the process of realizing work-life balance.

Relationship between Work-Family Conflict and Family-Work Conflict

Ford et al. (2007) stated that the demands of work and family life are incompatible and result in work-life conflict. Individuals who participate in both work and family roles are more likely to experience conflict between these two roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 1985). Sultana (2012) indicated that work-life conflict could arise from time demands, stress originated from spillover from one role to another which disrupt the quality of life and behaviors that were appropriate in one domain but not appropriate in the other. Webber et al. (2010) claimed that most research, on work-life balance, has concentrated on conflict from work to non-work activities or negative spillover. Studies have revealed a high level of “spillover” from work to non-work activities leading to less time being spent with family members and doing less things at home (Nabavi & Shahryari, 2012). Ford et al. (2007) suggested that demands from the family role are more likely to spill over into the work roles for women. Baltes et al. (2011) stated that work-family conflict (WFC) occurs when work and family demands; such as, time, role, and behavioral interfere with responsibilities in each of the work and family domains. Baltes et al. (2011) further claimed that work-family conflict is directional in the sense that work responsibilities interfere with family responsibilities and family responsibilities can also interfere with work responsibilities. Although these two forms of conflict are inter-correlated, individuals report more work interference with family (WIF) than family interference with work (FIW) (Pal,

2012). Heraty and Morley (2008) research found a positive and significant reciprocity effect between work-family conflicts (WFC) and family-work conflict (FWC). The results of the study indicated that WFC and FWC are not separate domains and that events that lead to an increase in FWC have twice the impact of events that increase WFC (Heraty & Morley, 2008). Pal (2012) further claimed that work and family are not static but socially constructed and vary by context and meaning. It is the meaning that is socially constructed that have consequences for individual and family functions (Pal, 2012). Work-life conflict has been associated with decreased job satisfaction, poor marital adjustments (Greenhuas & Beautell, 1985; Allen & Armstrong, 2006), decreased career and life satisfaction (Nicholas & McDowall, 2012).

Negative Impact of Work-Life Imbalance

Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) suggested that work-family balance is a lynchpin for a well-functioning and healthy society. The absence of balance has been linked to greater absences and turnover intention (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Common cited pressures facing working parents are often attributed to work and family obligations and the commitment trade off they produce. Work-life interference arises when work activities are incompatible with non-work activities. This incompatibility between work activities and non-work activities result in strain and conflict (McCrea, Boreham, & Ferguson, 2011). McCrea et al. (2011) cited work-hours and workload as key attributes that are related to work-life interference. When one examines research on work-life interface the focus has been on the relation of psychosocial work characteristics to work and family related outcomes (Pal, 2012). Pal (2012) indicated that the work characteristics have been a component of studies on stress, work-family conflict, and occupational health. Work-life conflict negatively impacts employee health (van Veldhoven & Beijer, 2011). It has been demonstrated that work-family conflict negatively affects

organizational and individual level outcomes (Baltes et al., 2011). Employee effectiveness and performance suffer due to work-life conflict and health consequences of these conflicts (Kelly & Moen, 2007). High work-life conflicts are lined to reduce job satisfaction, produce lower productivity and lower organizational commitment and success (Bell et al., 2012). Michel et al. (2011) further claimed that work-life conflict also affect organizational outcomes which include absenteeism, and affective organization commitment. A major contributor to work-family imbalance is that the entry of women into the paid workforce has not been accompanied by matching decrease in their household responsibilities (Craig & Sawrikari, 2009).

Work-Life Balance and Women

Moore (2007) contended that the issue of work-life balance can be summed up as “personal and work related problems arise when individuals fail to effectively fulfill life or family responsibilities” (p. 386). Studies in the area of work-life balance initially emerged in the 1970’s and it was seen as a women’s issue (Moore, 2007). Tatman et al. (2006) claimed that even though both women and men experience increased levels of stress and conflict as they juggle work and family responsibilities, it is women who experience a more significant level of conflict between work and family roles.

Sultana (2012) indicated that “work and family are the two most important aspects of a working mother’s life” (p. 1315). This is attributed to the fact that women continue to maintain the majority of the family and household responsibilities (Tatman et al., 2006). Craig and Sawrikai (2009) stated that women continue to perform twice as much of the housework as compared to men. The impact of multiple roles at work and family may contribute to work/life conflict. Currently, work-family conflict is a common problem faced by mothers (Sultana, 2012). Loder (2005), as cited by Lawson (2008), indicated that “the overwhelming

responsibilities for managing work-family conflicts falls largely on women administrators. Family obligations are assumed to reduce a women's commitment to the job and working obligations are assumed to reduce working parents' commitment to their families (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012). Van Veldhoven & Beijer (2012), claimed that a women's ability to balance these roles has a direct bearing on their physical and mental well-being. Different research studies have discussed how women opt out of their career path because of family obligations (Loder, 2005; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). There is evidence that family is more central to the identity of women while work is more central to a man's identity (Ford et al., 2000). Women have to structure their lives in ways that would allow them to fulfill multiple roles. Women typically find themselves juggling multiple roles while meeting the demands of their personal and professional lives. It is this feeling of being torn between the two domains, of family and work, which lead to work-life conflict. Societal expectations have forced women to figure out how to balance family responsibilities and to decide rather or not to pursue leadership positions (Sherman, 2009). Social norms have generally dictated that men are not the primary parent (Sallee, 2008). Social norms assume women are at home and not working because they prioritize family and children above earning an income and advancing in a career (Dillaway & Pare, 2008).

Societal Expectations of Women Leaders

Masculinization of Women Leaders

Despite decades of increasing responsibilities of women in the workplace, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions in the United States. Fine (2009), organization structures, policies, and practices marginalize women while featuring masculine modes. Research indicated that masculine modes of leadership are more valued in organizations. In the

United States, leaders are believed to have stereotypic masculine qualities (Fine, 2009). Bosak and Sczesny (2008) stated that portrayals of leaders are predominately masculine in nature. Although the masculine mode of leadership characteristics is a social construction, it has always been correlated with leadership. Leadership characteristics and traits emphasize an assertive, controlling, and confident tendency which is aligned more to male agentic qualities (Bosak & Sczesny 2008). Fine (2009) stated “that the preponderance of research studies, in the field of leadership, indicates that the work was based on men’s experiences rather than the experiences of women” (p. 182). Society conditions women and men to believe that women are less capable, than men, to hold leadership positions (Young & McLeod, 2001). Bosak and Sczesny (2008) suggested that women see themselves as more communal. These self-concept beliefs are learned very early through expectations, social training, and observation of gender-related social roles (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008). Sherman (2009), stated that women leaders are expected to adopt male leadership behaviors and to perform professional tasks at the same rate as men while maintaining their own family responsibilities; thus, resulting in delaying leadership aspiration until their children is grown. Traditional conceptions of gender roles suggest that women are expected to fulfill family responsibilities, and men are expected to fulfill the work role (Judge & Livingston, 2008).

Women Leaders in School Administration

Until recently, leaders have mirrored the dominant majorities of their society. In the United States, leaders have typically been white, heterosexual, creating an image of gender, racial and ethnic homogeneity that has been used to define elite groups (Hopkins, 2010). Although women have gained access to leadership roles in the last decades, women remain under-represented in leadership roles (Chin, 2010). Bosak and Sczesny (2011) indicated that gender stereotypes and

prejudice toward female leaders contribute to the under-representation of women in leadership positions.

Historically, women and men were assigned to labor task that were consistent with their physical attributes (Harrison & Lynch, 2005). Societal expectations that women are responsible for their home sphere have slowed down career advancement. Men are described in terms of their jobs, and women in terms of their families and their care giving nature (Dillaway & Pare, 2008). Experimental studies have shown that discrimination is particularly more prevalent against mothers (Eagly & Chin, 2010). Young and McLeod (2001) claimed that along with society conditions, there exist external barriers; such as, recruitment, selection, and evaluations and norms and expectations in most school districts that prevent women from serving in leadership positions. In addition to these society conditions, Bosak and Sczency (2008), indicated that these beliefs are also maintained and reinforced by schools, work-settings, and the media. Northouse (2013), claimed that one explanation for the leadership gap was that men take charge while women take care of the home. The traditional woman is satisfied with staying home and raising their children and taking care of their family.

Dillaway and Pare (2008) contended that popular culture characters from the “golden” era such as June Cleaver, from the television show *Leave It to Beaver*, cemented this social construction and has been woven into the ideology surrounding motherhood, family and the home. Men are expected to fulfill the masculine gendered role which includes the ability to be away from home while women are expected to fulfill feminine gender roles that are related to home and family (Harrison & Lynch, 2005). Some theorists have adopted a social structural perspective that focus on the different social roles that men and women are expected to play in society. Judge and Livingston (2008) asserted that women are expected to specialize in socially

facilitative behaviors where men are expected to specialize more in task-oriented behaviors. Earlier studies found that when female leaders adopt masculine characteristics this change in behavior does not favor women because leadership characteristics for men and women are not evaluated the same (Boulouta, 2013).

Stereotypic Traits and Characteristics

Throughout the literature gender has been referred to the social construction of differences between women and men (Marini, 1990). Gender is perceived as “a hierarchical structure of opportunity and oppression as well as an affective structure of identity and cohesion” (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p. 158). Ayman and Korabik (2010) claimed that gender is a term that involves biological and societal influences upon the sexes which are defined as feminine and masculine depending upon their nature. Ayman and Korabik (2010) further referred to gender as an ascribed characteristic. Studies on gender stereotypes have associated women with traits such as empathy and caring for others (Boulouta, 2013). Men have more access to power and resources than women; thus men are accorded further privileges (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). Gender behaviors have come to be associated as being solely male or female. Northouse (2013) stated “that men are stereotyped with agentic characteristics of confidence, assertiveness, independence, rationality, and decisiveness while women are stereotyped with communal characteristics that identify them as sensitive, warm, helpful and nurturing” (p. 358). Women are depicted as relationship-oriented with characteristics that are thought to be inconsistent with the attributes necessary for job success (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012). Female leaders are expected to approach leadership in the same manner as males (Eagly & Chin, 2010). Bosak and Szesmy (2008), stated that portrayals of leaders are predominately masculine in nature. Fine (2009) claimed “leaders are direct, assertive, commanding, and powerful” (p. 182). “In

leadership roles, gender stereotypes have major effects on women because agentic tendencies are often indispensable” (Northouse, 2013, p. 358). Further studies indicated that women are judged as less effective in masculine settings with male dominated roles (Eagly & Chin, 2010).

Researchers also suggested that masculine modes of leadership are more respected in organizations (Fine, 2009).

Negative Impact of Gender Stereotypes on Women Leaders

Bosak and Sczesny (2008) stated that gender stereotypes may impair a women’s belief to succeed in occupations that require the performance of masculine tasks which would lead to impairing their career aspiration and even their performance once in a leadership position. The belief of job ineffectiveness is particularly stark for working mothers. Working mothers are seen as ill-equipped to handle male organizational roles (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012). Mothers are perceived as more communal than women without children (Harrison & Lynch, 2005). Okimoto and Heilman (2012) stated that even when working mothers meet with success in male roles, the communal characteristics associated with women, imply that working mothers demonstrate a deficit in the attributes of being a good mother. Hopkins (2010) claimed that society beliefs that women leadership traits are not fulfilling the expectations of their female role. Research suggests that “motherhood prompts assumptions about their work ineffectiveness, but if those assumptions are proven wrong by evidence of job competence, they are assumed to be ineffective as parents” (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012, p. 705). Stereotypes that accompany school administration have existed over years and still shape the culture of administration (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). There is a belief that devalues a women’s leadership role as compared to men (Hopkins, 2010). Gender stereotypes are also barriers for women who aspire a leadership position because of the traditional cultural roles they are expected to fulfill.

Women have to deal with gender-based discriminatory practices along with the glass ceiling barrier (Davies-Netzley, 1998; Mansfield, et al., 2010). The glass ceiling metaphor has often been used to describe the invisible barriers through which, high ranking positions are not accessible to qualified individuals (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). Chin (2010) contended that the “glass ceiling” is still a barrier to jobs in upper management positions. Despite educational attainment, a glass ceiling still remains when it comes to careers and career advancement (Kbetts, 2001). Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010), alluded to the fact that the “glass ceiling” can be used to characterize the slow advancement of women leaders. Research revealed that the “glass ceiling” persists even when women argument their social capital within their leadership role (Hopkins, 2012).

Although the leadership literature has begun to include studies on women and leadership, the preponderance of research has not looked to the experiences of women in framing the research (Fine, 2009). In a case study, Fine (2009) explored fifteen women leaders’ discourse representation of leadership through narrative surveys. Among her findings, women’s voices and experiences were absent from the academic discourse on leadership (Fine, 2009). The absence of academic discourse on leadership has profoundly affected the theorizing about leadership (Fine, 2009). Theories on educational leadership have been based on studies of men. Women leaders have been expected to interpret the world and respond to educational leadership according to male perspectives (Oplatka, 2002). Leadership research has shown that employees are often reluctant to have female supervisors which results in the lack of a support system for female leaders (Lyness & Thompson, 1997). Lyness and Thompson (1997) went on to state that male dominance in leadership positions indicates that women are less likely to be chosen for traditionally male positions. Research studies on gender bias indicate that male candidates are

preferred over female candidates for leadership roles characterized as masculine gendered-type roles (Bosak & Sczesny, 2011). Although women occupy more leadership position than they did a decade ago, women are underrepresented in building principalships (Young & McLeod, 2001; Bosak & Sczesny, 2011). The underrepresentation of women in administration has been reduced to role attrition and stereotyping for genders (Aslanargun, 2012). Bolman and Davis (2008) stated “that a study indicated that 70% of women named personal and family responsibilities as the main barrier to career success” (p. 353). Young and McLeod (2001) stated “that research studies on gender and school administration indicates that the reason for this is that women do not have the same opportunities as men” (p. 463). Added to this, is the fact that school systems have not addressed the challenge faced by women principals when it comes to balancing their career and family lives (Lawson, 2008). This is attributed to stereotypes attached to leadership positions and women (Young & McLeod, 2001; Bosak & Sczesny, 2011).

The social constructs of gender have implications for women managers because these social constructs is what keeps women leaders with the specialized female roles (Davies-Netzley, 1998). Bolman and Davis (2008) claimed that stereotypes associate leadership with maleness. Northouse (2013) stated “that gender stereotypes are well documented, impervious, and pervasive to change because they describe stereotyped beliefs about the attributes of men and women and how both men and women ought to be” (p. 358). Dulin (2007) claimed that society has developed shared expectations about women and men that form masculine and feminine roles. Women and men tend to link leadership characteristics to men more than women (Bolman & Davis, 2008). Researchers suggested that masculine modes of leadership are more valued and rewarded in organizations (Fine, 2009). Gender stereotypes may have a negative impact for women because they are embedded into societal ideologies. Research indicated that men tend to

view female leaders more negatively than their male counterparts. Bosak and Sezesny (2011) indicated that female leaders are ascribed with negative attributes. Women are seen as less ambition or competent (Bosak & Sezesny, 2011). Women, especially women with children, are rated less competent and earn less than men in general (Cheung & Hopkins, 2010).

Chapter Summary

This chapter drew on existing literature on work-life balance. The literature identified gaps in the literature related to work-life balance. The chapter discusses work-family interface with working women. The chapter also examines the challenges posed on female leaders. Further, the chapter explains how gender has been associated with leadership. Research studies have not focused on women's leadership styles because leadership skills and traits have been primarily associated with white males in the literature. Even though the number of women in leadership position has increased, little is known about leadership characteristics of women. Current research focuses on the skills and traits they bring to the profession. Past research lacks a focus on leadership and gender because women are perceived as caregivers and nurturer, who are not, valued in organization leaders.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

The number of female principals has increased over the last year. However, women are still opting out of the principalship because of the multiple demands placed on them as mothers, wives, and school leaders. Thus, it is important to understand how current female principals balance their professional and personal lives to demonstrate to aspiring principals that it is possible to fulfill both personal and professional lives. The purpose of this research study was to examine how female principals balance work and family life. First the study addressed the challenges female principals encounter while balancing work and family life. Second, the study identified support systems that assist female principals in order to find balance between their personal and professional life. Third, the study identified management strategies that female principals utilized in their endeavor to balance work and family life.

Research Design

The phenomenological, qualitative, and feminist approach genre was used to frame this study. The overarching phenomenology is to gain a deeper understanding of the essence of our experiences. Phenomenology examined how people make meaning of their lived experiences. Qualitative research is a process of understanding based on methodological traditions of inquiry (Creswell, 2007). The lack of women's voice in the literature on educational administration and work-life balance is what drove me to collect personal narratives of lived experiences. The design of this study was selected specifically to reveal the meanings and understandings of the phenomenon of women in high-level leadership positions from the perceptions and lived experiences of successful women leaders (Penner & McClement, 2008).

Qualitative Genre

This research study utilized qualitative methodology to explore the professional and personal lives of female principals to understand how to fulfill their multiple roles while achieving work-life balance. “Qualitative is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals ascribe to social and human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 232). Female principals endure demanding schedules between the principaship and home responsibilities. A qualitative approach to this study presented a rich description of the female principals’ live experiences to accurately describe the phenomena of work-life balance in a particular time and setting. Through the use of qualitative research, in-depth interviews facilitated learning about female principals’ experiences, on work-life balance, that are not able to be captured through the use of quantitative surveys. Creswell (2007) stated that it is through the analysis of these reported detailed views that researchers can build a holistic picture of a phenomenon in a natural setting. Morrow, Rakhsha & Castaneda (2001) claimed that qualitative research is a tool that provides an array of reasons to understanding the participants’ meaning of life experiences. Such reasons are as follows (p. 582-583):

1. It includes context as an essential component of the study.
2. It addresses the researcher’s process of self-awareness and self-reflection.
3. It captures the meanings of the lived experiences as shared by the participants.
4. It expands methodological possibilities to address questions that cannot be answered by traditional methods.
5. It provides the opportunity for voices that were previously silenced to be heard.

Stone and Hernandez (2013) claimed that qualitative research has been frequently used in research on women’s work and family life. Aslanargun (2012) stated that “qualitative research methodology is utilized to collect, analyze meanings and interpretations of gendered perspectives

of female principals” (p. 256). Through qualitative feminist approach, the researcher analyzes works from detailed views reported by the female principals. Creswell (2007) stated that it is through the analysis of these detailed views that the researcher can build a holistic picture of a phenomenon in a natural setting. In this study, the feminist perspective will generate the context needed to analyze and understand work-life balance. The qualitative research methodology that I used in this study focused more on investigating female principals’ lived experiences, personal perspectives, and reasons for their actions.

Phenomenological Approach

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Phenomenology is the methodology that was used to describe the phenomena of work-life balance as ascribed by female principals. The purpose of phenomenology is to describe a particular phenomenon as lived experiences (Penner & McClement, 2008). Female principals, through the nature of their occupation, are challenged with numerous situational experiences in their daily professional and personal lives. Phenomenology seeks to gain the truth of these experiences by analyzing a conscious phenomena (Giorgi, 2009). Phenomenological researchers want to systematically understand how things come to be. Creswell (2009) further stated that phenomenological research is a method in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by the participants. Phenomenology is not explaining the experience (Mathenson & Rosen, 2012). Finlay (2009), stated that “phenomenological research is phenomenological when it involves both rich description of the lived experience, and where the research has adopted a special, open phenomenological attitude which refrains from importing external frameworks and sets aside judgments about the realness

of the phenomena” (p. 8). Phenomenology was chosen as the methodology of the study because it acknowledged and included the lived experiences of women, meaning making and knowledge construction within the research process (Pascal et al. 2010). This phenomenological inquiry approach is particularly appropriate to address meanings and perspectives of research participants. The phenomenological framework was also selected because the researcher has a personal experience with and an intense interest in the phenomena of work-life balance and the principalship.

Population and Sample Selection

Southwest Independent School District (SISD) has seen an influx of female principals and therefore, purposeful sampling was used for the recruitment of participants for this study. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research. Groenewald (2004) stated that the phenomena dictate the method, not vice-versa, including the type of participants. Purposive sampling was utilized to identify the primary participants because of the purpose of the research, looking for female principals that have had experiences relating to the phenomenon of work-life balance. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research. It involves selecting research participants according to the needs of the study (Morse, 1991). The selection criteria for inclusion were professionals who were leaders in their respective fields and who could articulate their experiences as it relates to the phenomena being investigated work-life balance. Participants were recruited because the most valuable sampling units to qualitative interviews are people who have experience that is important to the project (Baumgartner & Schneider (2010).

For the purpose of this study, five female principal, within the greater SISD, were recruited to participate in the study. The inclusion criteria used to select the participants was as follows:

- ❖ Participants were female principals
- ❖ Participants had at least 3 years' experience as a school principal
- ❖ Participants were mothers
- ❖ Participants were married

Since the nature of the study called upon participants to make meaning of their experiences as principals, wives and mothers, it was important to select participants who match the above profile in order to understand how female principals balance their personal and professional lives. The participants in this study were married, had children, and were principals.

Participant Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study explored lived experiences of female principals and examined how female principals balance work and family life by analyzing the following:

- The challenges they face as female principals, wives, and mothers
- The support system they utilize to fulfill the demands of the principalship and home life
- The strategies they employ in their personal and professional lives to realize work and life balance

The participants were chosen because of their unique status, experience, and knowledge of their respective field. The career experiences of all the participants clearly demonstrated that they were devoted to the education of students and were passionate about education. All the participants, with the exception of one, were born in the area. All were raised in the local community. The demographics of these female principals showed numerous commonalities. The participants are married and have children. Prior to becoming principals, they were teachers and assistant principals within the same district. In addition to being teachers, assistant principals, and principals two of the participants were site-specialists. The following information describes their individual demographic characteristics both personally and professionally, their

educational experience and their current family status. To protect the participants' anonymity, the participants were assigned pseudonyms.

Linda

Linda, the third child of a traditional Mexican family, grew up very close to her family and four siblings. She was raised in the poorest zip code in the United States and attended the neighborhood school. Upon graduation, Linda attended the local university and earned her bachelor's degree in Bilingual Education and then a master's degree in Educational Administration. Linda divorced her first husband whom she had a son with. She is currently married and has two daughters. Her son is currently attending college and her daughters are in elementary and middle school.

Linda has been in education for 23 years, including four as a principal. She worked in her neighborhood school as a teacher, and then climbed the ladder to Assistant Principal at her alma mater high school. After serving as Assistant Principal for two years, she became principal at her current school, where she typically works approximately 60 hours per week.

Sarah

Sarah was raised in the borderland and also attended the local university. As a member of a traditional Hispanic family, Sarah, the eldest of three sisters, was the one responsible for her siblings. She is married and has a son and a daughter. Both are now married and; therefore, Sarah now spends her time traveling between both children in order to provide extended support to her children.

Sarah has more than 30 years in educational experience. Prior to becoming a principal, Sarah was a teacher for 15 years and an assistant principal for five years. She has been an elementary principal for over six years. Sarah gained classroom experience because she believed that her

teaching experience would give her the credibility and confidence to be a supportive principal. While a teacher, she obtained a master's in Curriculum and Instruction. Once her children had grown up, she decided to pursue a degree in Mid-Management. Her decision to pursue a degree in Educational Administration was based on the support and positive experiences she received from her principals as an assistant principal. Sarah claimed that the principals she had as an assistant principal mentored her and involved her in all aspects of the principalship. She stated that the principals would delegate tasks to her and would take the time to meet with her to review policies and procedures. According to Sarah, it was those opportunities that allow her to develop skills that allowed her to meet with success as a principal. Sarah claimed she typically works 60 hours a week this included time worked at home. She indicated that her Sunday nights were spent reviewing lesson plans for the following week.

Marie

Marie, who was raised in the borderland, was of Caucasian background. Marie is the oldest of four. Marie attended borderland schools until she graduated from high school. After graduation, Marie left home to attend her dream school in another part of the state of Texas. Marie was a teacher for over five years, and an assistant principal for six years. She has been a principal for six years. Even though Marie has 20 years of experience in education she still remembers how she had to prove herself when she became an administrator. A lot of this had to do with the fact that she was younger than some of her teachers. Marie holds a master's degree in Educational Administration and works approximately 55 hours per week. Marie indicated that there were times when she would tend to work at home. Some of the work activities completed at home included reading and responding to emails or responding to text. Marie is married and has three children, ages 7, 10, and 12.

Maggie

As an experienced educator, Maggie has worked in education for 20 years, four of which includes administration experience. Maggie was raised in a predominately Spanish speaking environment. She learned English at school. Since her parents were first generation Americans and had to work hard to make ends meet. Her parents valued education and instilled those values in their children. Her parents reminded her, every day, that education was the key to a better life.

Maggie is currently the principal of an elementary school. She holds a master's degree in Educational Administration. Together with her husband, she is raising three boys, ages 22, 5, and 3. One of the boys has just graduated from college. As principal, Maggie is involved in her community working collaboratively with neighborhood businesses. Currently, she works more than 60 hours a week. Interestingly, Maggie indicated that when she was at home, she never brought work home. She stated that there were times that when she was on vacation she would turn off her cell phone and would not take her lap top. She indicated that if she took her lap top, she would have the urge to check her emails.

Sally

Sally was born outside the city where she was raised. She is Caucasian and has two brothers. Since she came to the borderland at a young age, Sally attended a private school and then her neighborhood schools. Upon completing high school she married and had two children. It was until her children were old enough that she decided to return to school. She attended the local university where she obtained a bachelor's degree in education. She later went back to obtain a master's in Educational Administration. Sally has been in education for 25 years, including 5 in

administration. Sally is the principal of an elementary school where she works 50 hours per week as a principal. Sally did not reference taking work home. Her time at home was spent with her husband and children. The following Table 1 is an overview of the participants who were interviewed for this study. After determining the participants for the study, an informational meeting was scheduled to provide an overview of the study to the participants.

Table 1.1

Participant Demographics

Name of Participant	Married	# of children	Ethnic Group	# of years as Principal	Previous Positions Held	Overall Educational Experience
Linda	Yes	3	Hispanic	4	Teacher, Site Specialist, Assistant Principal, Principal	23
Sarah	Yes	2	Hispanic	10	Teacher, Assistant Principal, Student Activities Manager, Principal	35
Marie	Yes	3	White	5	Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal	17
Maggie	Yes	3	Hispanic	4	Teacher, Site Specialist, Assistant Principal, Principal	20
Sally	Yes	2	White	4	Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal	25

During the informational meeting, I explained the purpose of the study and shared the research questions with the participants. I answered any questions the participants had about the study. After the informational meeting, each participant was given a Research Study Summary Sheet outlining the study (see Appendix A) for their records. The Research Study Summary Sheet stated the purpose of the study, described the research questions, and outlined the time commitment for the study. The form also thanked the participants for their willingness to participate in the study. During the initial interview, using the University of Texas at El Paso's Internal Review Board protocol as a guide, I reviewed the consent form (see Appendix B), which explained participants' rights to (a) anonymity; (b) preview information related to their specific interviews; and to (c) terminate their participation in the study. The Consent Form introduced myself, stated the purpose of the study, described the research, and clarified the procedures, confidentiality, and risk. Any risk was minimal since the participants were told to disclose personal information only if they chose to do so. Participants were also informed of the fact that they could withdraw from the study at any time and have their data destroyed. Participants were informed that all information collected for this study was to be kept confidential at all times. Participants were informed, of the fact, that in addition to the researcher, the researcher's doctoral committee could have access to the collected data, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the researcher's university could view the study's collected data for auditing purposes. Following this explanation, each participant was asked to sign the consent form acknowledging their full understanding of the study.

Data Collection Procedures

In-depth, face to face, interviews were conducted with each of the participants. An interview in which the participants were free to express their subjective meaning on work-life balance

based on the world of women. Mischler, as cited by Wimpenny and Gass (2000), argued that meaning must be viewed within the context of which it occurs. Wimpenny and Gass (2000) claimed that “the meaning must be the result of co-creation between the researcher and the researched and not just the interpretation of the researcher, who may have different contextual factors or agendas influencing the descriptions” (p. 1487). Seidman (2013) stated that the use of a phenomenological approach in interviewing is to understand the participant’s experience from their subjective point of view. Smith et al. (2009), stated that the aim of the interviews is to allow the participants to recount their life experience and for the researchers to enter the participants world. “Researchers in phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning ascribed to a phenomenon based on a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasize the importance of personal perspective and interpretation” (Lester, 1999, p. 1). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a series of questions in the general form of an interview protocol; however, the questions were varied (Appendix C). The initial interview protocol for this study was developed in a graduate course on qualitative interviewing at the University of Texas at El Paso. The interview questions were then examined during the proposal phase by the researcher and Dissertation Chair. The interview protocol was revised to ensure the questions would provide insight into the research questions. A review of the interview protocol, by a current female principal, who was not part of the study, was also conducted. This phase provided the researcher the opportunity to resolve any difficulties with the wording of the questions and structure. The questions were also sequenced in a manner that allowed the participants to discuss issues related to the challenges they face, the support systems they access, and the strategies they implement to achieve work-life balance in their personal and professional lives.

Before the interview began, the participants were asked to select their own pseudonym. Only one participant offered a pseudonym, the other participants asked me to select the name. During the interview, the interviewer's task was to put the participants experience in context by asking the participant to share as much about themselves as it relates to work-life balance. This phase allowed the participants' to reconstruct the details of their experience in the context which it occurred (Seidman, 2013). During the second interview participants were asked to validate previously collected data or to clarify previously identified themes. The interviews, lasted between 50 to 60 minutes, four of the interviews were conducted in the principals' offices in their schools. One interview was conducted in an office at the school district's Central Office. It was interesting to note that even though four the interviews were held on campus, and I had anticipated disruptions, the principals made every point to avoid disruptions during the interview process. The principals seemed very comfortable and actually looking forward to the study's results. One participant actually stated that she was looking forward to reading my dissertation. She was curious to see what other participants had done to balance work and family life. I informed all participants that I would share the results with them. The questionnaire included open-ended questions to gain the respondents' subjective conceptualization of work-life balance. Each participant was asked the same questions by the researcher to ensure that similar questions were addressed in each interview. All interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. The interviews were carried out in conversational style. The interviewer also had some freedom to probe and explore additional questions in response to what was perceived as significant replies. Research records were kept in a locked file and all electronic information was coded and secured using a password protected file.

Topics covered during the interviews focused on three specific areas. The first area was work history. This area covered current employment status, reasons for the employment history, specific barriers encountered, challenges, and reasons for career choice. This area also covered support systems utilized by the principal in their pursuit of work-life balance. The second area which focused on domestic life included: 1) marital status, 2) immediate family support, and influence, 3) child care, 4) management of family responsibilities, and 5) effect of personal and family life on career. The third area covered strategies used by the participants as a means of balancing work and family life. A follow up semi-structure interview was conducted, with four of the five participants to clarify data collected during the first interview. It should be noted that at this time one of the participants had resigned from the District and no forwarding information was available to follow up with this individual.

Data Transcriptions, Coding and Analysis

All participants' interviews were transcribed by the researcher rather than contract out this service the transcription phase represented the second time I had heard the participants describe their thoughts and experiences. The NVivo software was used to classify, sort and arrange the data obtained from the interviews to explore common themes that might add insight and new knowledge about the experiences of female principals and work-life balance.

In an attempt to gain access to and make sense of the lived experience of education leaders I used the phenomenological method articulated by Giorgi (2009) to analyze the data. First, data was transcribed and written transcripts were read to obtain overall feeling of the data. Second, the research data was approached with openness to whatever meaning emerged. During this phase, the researcher "brackets" his or her everyday knowledge to take a fresh look at the data. This meant the bracketing of my meaning and interpretations of the data. Third, I listened

to the interview for a sense of the whole experience. I listened to the non-verbal cues of communication and the pauses that occurred during the interview. I conducted a critical reflection about the participants' experiences in order to describe how it was phenomenally experienced. Fourth, data was then delineated for units of general meaning and units of meaning relevant to the research questions (Giorgi, 2009). This involved identifying significant phrases or sentences that pertained directly to the experience of work-life balance. This phase also involved formulating meanings and clustering them into themes common to all the participants' transcripts. Fifth, data was summarized incorporating the themes that had been elicited. Common themes were then identified and clustered if there were one or more central themes which expressed the essence of these clusters and their meanings. A second interview was then conducted to validate previously collected data or to clarify previously identified themes.

Validity and Truthfulness

Questions of validity have been raised in regards to qualitative research methods. However, it is possible to carefully and objectively study phenomena. Since interviewing is considered the main method of data collection in phenomenological research, "the use of reflection, clarification, requests for examples and description and the conveyance of interest through listening techniques are skills that prevent the "contamination of data" on the part of the researcher" (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000, p. 1486-1487). Seidman (2013) stressed "that in-depth interviewing incorporate feature that enhances the validity, of the study, by placing the participants' comments in context in which they are experienced" (p. 26). Seidman (2013) stated that the interview process encourages participants to check for internal consistency of what they say. Furthermore, by interviewing a number of participants, the researcher can connect their experiences and check their experiences and check comments against those of others.

Ultimately, the goal of in-depth interviewing was to examine how the participants understood and made meaning of their experiences, by allowing the participants to make sense to themselves, as well as the interviewer, than they are validating the data (Seidman, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher must anticipate any ethical issues that may arise during the qualitative research process (Creswell, 2009). Researchers need to protect the participants by developing trust with them. Researchers must also promote the integrity of the research, guarding against misconduct and any impropriety that might reflect on their organization, and cope with new challenging problems (Creswell, 2009). First and foremost, the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants. Phenomenology research solicits answers to questions extracting meaning from statements and opinions.

The following safeguards were used to protect the participants' rights:

- 1) Participants were advised, in writing, of the voluntary nature of their participation and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.
- 2) The research objectives were clearly delineated in writing and articulated to the participants during the informational meeting and at the time of the interview.
- 3) A written consent was obtained from each participant.
- 4) The participants were informed , in writing, of all data collection methods and activities.
- 5) Provisions were made for monitoring data collected to ensure the safety of the participants.
- 6) The risk of the participants is considered minimal because all precautions were taken to ensure confidentiality of all data collected.

The researcher provided all of the necessary information, prviously described above, on the appropriate forms to the researcher's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon acceptance and

approval by the IRB, the researcher met with each participant to acquire consent. A copy of the consent form was given to the participant upon acceptance.

Limitations of the Study

Creswell (2007) argued that the opportunity for researcher biases serves as a limitation to a qualitative study. Creswell (2007) claimed that there can be many ethical dilemmas when conducting research of the qualitative nature. In order to control for some of the ethical dilemmas that might arise, the researcher fully disclose the research procedures and purpose of the study to the participants. Since all the participants were principals in the Southwest Independent School District, they may have known each other personally and professionally. However, I am also a principal in the Southwest Independent School District and had worked with two of the participants in the course of my career. This relationship made it important for me to try to protect their anonymity. Pseudonyms were used throughout this research in an attempt to protect the anonymity of participants and their district. It is likely that some participants' anecdotes could be recognized by other administrators. For this reason, administrators may not have been willing to voluntarily share personal information for fear that someone might identify them through their experiences. The focus of this research was limited to the perspective of elementary female principals. As is the nature of all qualitative inquiry, findings are not representative of all female principals. However, the use of semistructured interviews proved very useful in gaining meaningful data from the participants. The information obtained is useful to gaining a more complete understanding of female principal's lived experiences, on work-life balance, through truths that were constructed from their own personal views.

Bias

Personal bias is inherent in qualitative research. As an elementary school female principal

it is inevitable that one's life experience play a major role in determining how data are interpreted and how meaning is derived from the participants interview. In the case of this study, it should be noted that the personal bias may provide a level of understanding that might not be present in its absence.

I have included a biography as an elementary school principal on page 96 which highlights the major events that have shaped my views on work-life balance and how one can realize balance between work and family. My experience as an elementary school principal make me the ideal person to conduct this study. As an elementary school principal, I have struggled with realizing work-life balance and have managed to navigate through the domains of work and family for 22 years. The nature of my being and how I perceive the principalship and how I respond to work-life conflict have obligated me to undertake this study. It is my desire that through this self-disclosure the reader will see that my biases do not shroud my analysis of the data.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the research methodology for this study. A qualitative-phenomenological approach was used to explore the lived experiences of five female principals and to examine how female principals are balancing their professional and personal lives. Following is a discussion of the findings with specifics that support and explain each finding.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Interpretations

Introduction

The ability of employees to balance their work and family lives depends on the characteristics of their jobs and workplaces, as well as their family situations (Berg, Kallenberg, & Appelbaum, 2003). This phenomenological study presents the lived experiences of female principals and how they realize work-life balance. Phenomenology provides an opportunity to acknowledge and include the lived experiences of women, meaning making and knowledge construction as well as representation of these with the research process (Pascal et al., 2010). A variety of experiences is provided to help the reader understand the research participants. Quotations allow the participants to speak for themselves, providing for the various perspectives. After interviewing these female principals and analyzing the data, major themes emerged that expand and enrich the understanding of how female principals realize work-life balance based on the research questions outlined in Chapter 1.

This chapter presents the key finding obtained from five in-depth interviews and four follow up interviews. The results of this study informed understanding on how female principals balance work-life balance by identifying how female principals deal with work and family challenges, how they utilize support systems to manage the demands of their professional and personal lives, and what strategies they use to realize work-life balance. The major findings will be discussed and analyzed in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a summary.

The Female Principals' Views

During the interviews, the female principals who participated in the study talked about themselves, their families and children, and the expectations which had accompanied them into their careers. The participants shared the challenges they had encountered and the compromises

required of them to meet those challenges. In order to manage the challenges, the participants were forced to make compromises in their jobs, at home, in their social lives and with their family members. The participants also shared how they managed to establish support systems and develop strategies that allowed them to fulfill their responsibilities as a principal, parent, and wife.

Challenges

Ever since mothers entered the workforce there has been concern about the challenges they face trying to balance their responsibilities at work and home (Lin & Hynes, 2012). The principalship poses many challenges for female principals because of the multiple duties and responsibilities they have as principals, wives, and mothers. How female principals overcome the challenges of the principalship and the challenges posed by family demands is of interest to current female principals and perspective leaders. From reviewing the data, four themes highlighted the challenges the participants have encountered in balancing their professional and personal lives: (a) time constraints, (b) feeling of guilt, (c) marital strain, and (d) professional backgrounds and early influences.

Time Constraints

One of the major causes of work-family stressors is not having enough time to dedicate to both work and family (Nobavi & Shahryari, 2012). When organizations require employees to work longer hours, married employees with children will experience conflict with family related expectations (Ford et al., 2007). When speaking with the female principals about their current family and work situations, I repeatedly heard stories about the struggle to balance family and work due to time constraints. Lin and Hynes (2012) claimed work and family are “greedy institutions that require substantial time and energy. Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) stated

that women leaders make many sacrifices to get to leadership positions including family time.

Maggie explained how sometimes wished she “had two brains or two heads” in order to balance work and family life.

I just always wished I had two brains. I had two heads. One that you could leave at work and one that you could leave at home because it always overlap. You know when I am at home I’m sometimes thinking about work and when I am at work, I am thinking about home (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014).

To fulfill her obligations, Maggie made personal sacrifices such as forgoing social interaction with friends to ensure she fulfilled her role as a principal, mother, and wife because there was not enough time to fit everything in. Maggie claimed the following:

“I had to let go of social interactions outside work. They are kind of non-existent. I even have gone as far as telling them “Don’t give up on me”. “Keep inviting me eventually we will show up” (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014).

Maggie goes on to claim that she knows that they understand. “They know we are still friends and they know I am always there for them but I just don’t have the time to spend quality time with them” (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014). Sarah described how sometimes she had to opt out of a family event in order to meet the demands of the principalship.

...there was a time when my husband and my kids went to on a weekend with the in-laws and I couldn’t go because I had to stay because of work...(S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Sarah reminisce on how there were also times when she had to just walk away from work in order to fulfill her role as a parent. She shared how she took time off to be a mom.

She referenced the time when she took her children to college. She also stated that she left work to see her children graduate from college. In her words “you have to pick your battles” (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

...you say well this is pretty important... You say this is going to cost me more than it is worth... So I’m going to take some time off... I’m going to be a mom... I’m taking my daughter to college (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Linda claimed that there was a time when she felt she needed to get away from work and family responsibilities just to have “alone time”. She decided to take two hours from work, in the morning, because she knew her family would be out of the house. To her surprise, on that day, instead of her family allowing her to stay in bed and rest, they kept calling on her.

Linda explained:

“I wanted to take two hours one day so there I am. I wake up everyone. Then they started asking me. Where is this? Where is that? So Mommy where did you leave this? I didn’t take the two hours for me. So, I just got up and went to work because it wasn’t my time (L. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Relevant studies found that the combination of paid work and women with young children are most likely to complain that they simply do not have time for themselves (Roberts, 2007). Linda went on to state that being a principal has been a challenge because she also does not have time to fulfill family responsibilities. As a parent, she recalled how left out she felt, at the dinner table, when her daughters were talking about an awards assembly that she missed.

“My husband and my girls feel it more...I think they told me. I missed one of their awards ceremony and they don’t forget...When we are at the dinner table they will be laughing and they make a point of saying. “You should have been there” (L. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

All the principals experienced time constraints and indicated that they had difficulty in managing the many activities required of them. The principals shared stories on how they did not have time for themselves. Many principals acknowledged little or no time for themselves due to overload schedules. Shortage of time leads to women sacrificing personal care activities such as rest and sleep (Quinn & Allen, 1989). Sally stated that she had to give up her exercise class because there was no time for it. Linda alluded to the fact that any down time she spends it with her children and family. Sarah shared this same sentiment. Her alone time was also spent with her children and family. Roberts (2007) indicated that there has been a

decline in “free time” for employed individuals. The decline is attributed to the increase in time spent doing unpaid work such as housework and child care. All the participants shared how difficult it was for them to make time for work duties and family responsibilities even finding time for them was a challenge. A research study conducted by Quinn and Allen (1989) indicated that time was a genuine challenge for women. Ford et al. (2007) stated that household responsibilities; such as housework and childcare are factors that create time-based pressures from the family sphere. All participants also described a culture that reflected a strong investment in the family, particularly parenthood. Participants perceived their children to be at the top of the list. Many of the participants shared how they provided opportunities for their children to participate in even though scheduling arrangements posed many challenges. Marie stated that her daily rituals with her husband to ensure their children’s activities are covered.

I have to review the plan everyday with my husband who’s taking who so and so to this (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

All the principals talked about the importance of being involved in their child’s life. The principals shared how they tried to support their children by trying to attend as many activities and events. Some principals also continued to value their interaction with their children even when their children were grown. These efforts were a constant challenge for the principals. However, the participants found ways to structure their daily schedule. In the process, they need to be flexible and make adjustments as needed in to make time for the demands of work and family. Sometimes this means walking away from their responsibilities as a principal and as a parent.

Feeling of Guilt

Research studies have found that women leaders regret not spending time with

their children because of work demands (Judge & Livingston, 2008). Guendorizi (2006) claimed that for mothers balancing work and family life, within a cultural environment, results in feeling of guilt. Further, Guendorizi (2006) indicated spending time with children and family is a prerequisite to a good family dynamics and is something that is expected in society. The participants in this study were no different. The data revealed that the participants all felt guilty for not being there for their children. Marie shared an event that occurred, with her daughter, the very morning of the interview.

“There are sometimes when it is not as easy to give my kids what they need. Like today my daughter comes here to my school where I am... she fell in the mud outside in PE and needed a change of clothes. Well it’s not that easy for me to stop what I am doing and go home and get her a change of clothes...I wished I could have dropped everything to go get her what she needed”. “So sometimes I feel a little guilty” (M. Participant, personal communication, 6.2.2014).

Feelings of guilt were also evident in the information provided by Sally. There were times when she felt her work came first before her family. She stated that there were times when her children had events, such as games, and there were times when she could not make it. Missing these events made her feel guilty.

I felt guilty, I felt guilty. I felt like this may be the game that he would do the best... or the game that he lost...that made him feel bad. I felt guilty but I had to do it because it was part of my professional life (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/13/2014).

After missing the first day of school for her children Sarah shared how she felt she had to compensate by promising that she would be at the first parent night.

I’m not going to be able to take you to the first day of school but your grandmother is going to take you or your dad is going to take you but I will make sure the first parent night I am there (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Sarah further claimed that “if you do not learn to make it up somewhere down the road the guilt is going to get you” (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014). Similarly,

Marie described how she has not had an opportunity to attend events at her daughter's middle school because she is tied up at work. These feelings of regret were evident in many of the responses. The participants alluded to the fact that they don't have enough time to dedicate to their family; more specifically, their children. Eikhof et al. (2007) claimed that working excessively lead to feeling guilty for not attending "significant events" in children's lives. Quinn and Allen (1989) stated that women feel guilty about any time they spend away from children. Many have made personal sacrifices to facilitate their success as a principal. Sarah shared how there were times when her "mom time" was going to be spent as a principal. She stated that these were the tough decisions she needed to make because her job had to come first sometimes. Even though she perceived family as a priority, work controlled the amount of time she spent with family. Sarah and Marie commented on how technology allowed her to spend more time with her children because she could tend to her family while at the same time tend to work demands. Sarah shared how she could check lesson plans at home instead of at work and Marie talked about how she could prepare a family meal while responding to her emails all while her children were in the room helping.

Marital Strain

Women leaders have reported marital strain due to the interference between work and family lives. The participants claimed that maintaining their marriages was a challenge because their career and marriage were incompatible. Some participants discussed some of the challenges of being married and having a professional life. Linda described her divorce as a very difficult time in her life because of her upbringing. She felt she had failed her parents.

They influenced me in the importance of keeping my family together. I still recall the the day my mom told me to, "Think about what you are going to do". It is important to

keep my family together. I think it was the hardest situation. I felt that I had failed my parents (L. Participants, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Linda goes on to share how her role as a principal has affected her relationship with her current husband.

My husband just told me recently. Work live. Works don't work to work. You have to work so that we can live but don't live to work. So you know that he is feeling it (L. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

In the same way, Marie shared how she almost got divorce, during her first year as a principal, because she spent so much time at work that she neglected her family's needs.

...my first year as a principal, I focused way too much time and energy on my school and my family suffered...I almost got divorced...I didn't pay too much attention to my husband because I was trying...you know to keep up and learn this new role and live this new role (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Marie goes on to describe how frustrated she felt when her husband kept pressuring her to have someone else step in to do her job.

Well sometimes my husband will say "Why do you have to do that? Why don't you send your Assistant Principal? He is always asking a question but I don't appreciate it because I feel that puts added pressure on me...get over it I want to tell him. There are times he does that and it is frustrating (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014).

Maggie goes on to share how her husband became upset when she wore her principal hat at home.

"I find myself being bossy at home too. Hey you are not at work right now" (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014).

Wrushen and Sherman (2008) claimed that women leaders have reported marital strain because work duties interfere with family responsibilities. Based on this data, the principals in this study acknowledged that marital strain was related to being inundated with the amount of work responsibilities. The demands of the principalship took time away from their husbands and

families, causing them to spend more time at work. The amount of time spent at work placed a strain on their marriages sometimes leading to the possibility of divorce. These situations were very frustrating to the principals because of their sense of responsibility for their job.

Personal backgrounds and early influences

Most of the female principals interviewed shared early experiences that influenced their career path and contributed too many of the challenges they encountered. Many of the participants talked about family expectations and how these expectations lead to their decisions to pursue the principalship; although in different ways. For instance, Marie talked about her desire to always be a teacher and how she changed career paths in high school and in college. She spoke openly about how she decided on majoring in accounting and how she eventually went back to majoring in education.

I grew up wanting to be a teacher but I moved away from that thought in high School and in college...My first major was accounting and in my second year of college...I had a change of of heart...I went back to what I originally...when I was a little girl (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Marie explained what contributed to her desire to be a teacher and how her desire was based on the fact that as a teacher she would have enough time to spend time with her family like her mother did.

...part of the reason I wanted to change my major and be a teacher....was knowing that I had a mother who was a teacher, who was there for me, who was able to raise me and be there for me and spend summers with me (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Linda described how the responsibility of family that came to her early on as one of five children and what it was like to come from a culture that valued hard work in order to provide for their family.

I was brought up in a culture where they instill working and making sure that you always have to work...to pay bills and food on the table...rather my partner does

it or not I am assuring myself my kids have a roof on their heads...I feel it is my responsibility...(L. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Linda went on to explain how the context, in which she found herself as an Assistant Principal, led her to the principalship without considering the nature of the job.

...I felt the district left me no choice. I was going to lose over \$10,000.00 and I could not afford that...I had to become a principal right away (L. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Maggie explained how being first generation Americans influenced her parents to instill in their children that education was key and that it was the only way to make a better life. She further explained how she wanted to be a teacher since the fourth grade and how she eventually found administration.

I always wanted to be a teacher since fourth grade...the teachers really impacted the way I saw the world...I knew I was going to college...I didn't know how but because parents valued education...one thing led to another and here I am in administration. I wanted to impact at a greater scale (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014).

Sally talked about how she became a teacher because she enjoyed children and how ultimately she aspired to the principalship because of what she saw principals do as a teacher.

...I chose teaching because I like being with children...I enjoyed children...As a teacher I saw a lot of things that principals...Principals united teachers and brought everything together in instruction and they wanted the teachers to make a successful school and I felt I could do that (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/13/2014).

Sarah indicated that the decision to become a principal came later in her teaching career. Sarah also stated that the desire to become a principal came when other principals saw how she conducted herself outside the classroom. She claimed that her principals saw behaviors in her that would make her a good administrator.

....I had several administrators tell me...that the way I handled myself...outside

of teaching they thought...I would be a good administrator and that is when I went back...for my mid-management certification (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Based on the analysis of the data it is evident that work-life conflict is part of the participants daily lives. Maintaining a sense of responsibility for their families and work is what drove the participants to overcome challenges in their professional and personal lives. Many participants through their stories shared on these challenges lead to personal sacrifices and compromises with their families and work staff. According to Quinn and Allen (1989), many women are forced to compromise in their jobs, at home, in their social lives, and with their children. Many of the challenges are internal and external leading to the feeling of guilt and at times marital strain. These feelings of guilt result in “hidden injuries” that the participants choose not to share with their loved ones. For example, Linda shares how she suffered in silence because she did not want to let her daughters know how she felt.

It hurts...It is something that you hold and you don't tell anyone you know when they let you know that you were not there; you did not see that you lose that chance that opportunity to see the happiness that they were feeling or the sadness...(L. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Personal and work-related problems arise when individuals fail to effectively fulfil work and family responsibilities (Moore, 2007). At the end of the day, the participants managed to overcome these challenges by staying true to the principalship and their family lives. The participants stated that they were managing the challenges in at least a marginally successful manner by making tough decisions when it came to family and work.

Common Thread: Support Systems

Support Systems

Support is the most common resource when it comes to work-life balance (Grawitch et al., (2010). According to an exploratory study, principals yearn for support, such as informal and formal networking, to help manage conflict and pressures (Whitaker, 1996). Higgins et al. (2010) state women are more likely to seek the support of others. The female principals in this study were no different. They indicated that they relied on support systems to find balance in their professional and personal lives. All the participants described how they depended on support systems to balance work and family life. Research studies have found that women leaders are able to fulfill multiple roles because of the support systems they have in place in their professional and personal lives (Davies-Netzley, 1998; Loder, 2005). The support systems included: (a) husbands, (b) extended family members, and, (c) formal and informal networks.

Husbands

All the participants shared countless stories about their husbands and the support they provided which allowed them to meet work and family demands. Marie stated that even though her husband does not get an A+ he has gotten better over the years when it came to helping out at home. Marie said: “He knows when there are times when he’ll step up a notch when I need him to” (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014). Marie pointed out that her husband’s job allows him to assume more responsibilities during the day. She stated that with three young children, days are sometimes very busy; especially, when her children have activities in the evening. She notes that her husband shares the responsibility of taking their children to their

activities. She also shared how on these nights, there are times when she doesn't have time to cook so sandwiches or eating out is fine with everyone. This takes a burden away from her.

Linda, who is married to a teacher, stated that her husband was also very supportive; especially when she has to work late. Linda stated that her husband picks up the girls from daycare, goes home, and completes her chores. According to Linda, her husband completes her "mommy chores". She further shared that he has assumed the majority of the responsibility for attending events with their daughters when she cannot make it. Sarah, who is also married to a teacher, explained how her husband also helped with their children.

My husband is a wonderful support system because I would have to leave earlier than the rest. So he made sure that he would be the one that would drive the kids to school...(S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Sarah went on to claim that her husband would also help the kids with their homework when she had meetings at night, Sarah stated that her husband would take care of the kids and would even order pizza to "lighten the burden a little as far as the cooking".

"Sometimes we would order pizza so that I wouldn't have to cook" (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014). Sally also described her husband as very supportive. She claimed that her family didn't "falter" because her husband would "step it up a lot".

All participants indicated that their husband made it easier to find balance in their professional and personal lives. According to Cheung and Halpern (2010) supportive husbands took on a substantial share of housework. Further, studies on women leaders indicated that women appreciated the support their husband's provided (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). They also made it known that they could not be in the position they were in without their husbands support. It has also been noted that without this spousal support marriages would not last (Cheung & Halpern, 2010).

Extended Family Members

Hill et al. (2007) claimed supportive family relationships have been identified as benefiting work life. The majority of the participants mentioned that grandparents had provided the biggest support when it came to balancing work and family lives. Marie talked about how, *Papi*, her father-in-law saved her life.

He's taken care of my kids as infants and taken care of them during the day. He'll pick them up after school so that I can stay here and work a couple of hours and he takes them home, gives them a snack and gets them started on whatever they need to do. So if I didn't have him I don't know if I would have become a principal...he helps us out a lot and he is wonderful with the kids and they love their *Papi* (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/ 2014)

Linda stated her parents being there and taking care of her children was her support system. Linda further claimed:

It is very important that you have a support system at home...how could I complete my job responsibilities as a principal if I didn't have support systems. It would be very, very hard. Just like right now...how can I say no to something they are asking me to do...I can do it and call my mom, "mom you know what? Tomorrow I'm flying, the girls need to stay with you. You trust who you are leaving your daughters with...You know that they are going to be fine...Just relieves the stress in you (L. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Sarah describe how there were times when her husband could not pick up the kids and her parents would step in to help.

...when my husband would do things and then my mother would find a way to say "oh" let me go...pick up the kids and we are going to take them to dinner or look I made dinner (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

All participants credit the grandparents for success both at home and at work. Maggie credited her sister for providing the support that she needed to meet work and family demands. Participants trusted that their children were safe and happy. Being able to rely on family to assist with family obligations has reduced stress for the participants. Most importantly, it provided peace of mind for the participants because they know their children were cared for.

Formal/Informal Mentors

As mentioned in the previous section, female principals rely on family support to fulfill family responsibilities. In order to fulfill work responsibilities, the participants in this study talked about other principals who have helped them meet the challenges and demands of the principalship. Some participants referred to this type of support system as mentors.

Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) states that mentoring programs are strongly recommended for women's advancement. Sarah stated:

...when I became a Principal, they paired us up with a Principal as a mentor. I was blessed that the person I was placed with was the principal I had worked with...I took advantage of the fact that I needed a mentor my first year. I depended on her a lot because when you are the Principal all of a sudden it's like "Oh my, now what do I do? And so it is nice to have someone that is experienced...that kind of helps you along the way. There are lots of things that are going to come up that you are not prepared for (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Similarly, Linda recalled how she was also assigned a mentor but contrary to the benefits Sarah shared, Linda stated that it was very difficult to utilize her mentor in a manner that would help her deal with work responsibilities.

I had a mentor at the beginning...but it was very hard to have that mentor. I felt like She was busy...and it was hard for her to return my calls. To say I utilized wisely I'm not sure (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Linda further described how she compensated by networking with other colleagues and other new principals.

I just couldn't depend on the mentor. I had to find other colleagues to call. If you don't call one you call the other... till someone is able to help you or is in the same situation that you are in then you solve it together (L. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Maggie goes on to explain that you cannot wait on the District to provide support.

I think a lot of it is you taking upon yourself to seek out that help and to create your own team of support (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014).

Marie shared the same sentiment, “I can’t do everything. I’m certainly not able to run the school by myself so developing a good support system because I don’t think it magically appears either. My assistant principal and counselor we got each other’s back. When a parent comes in and I am not available they step in” (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

In seeking out support systems, the female principals relied mostly on family members as support systems. Mentoring remained an informal activity that if offered did not provide the support needed to meet the demands of the principalship. The participants noted that they relied more heavily on their parents, grandparents, and husband to assist with the home and family responsibilities. In a study conducted by Higgins et al. (2010), restricting family roles; more specifically, covering family responsibilities for each other, is a form of managing work and life domains. This mode of support included taking the children to school and picking them up after. It also included taking the children to extracurricular events and school functions. The female principals also listed non-family members as part of their support system. These non-family members were described more as professional support. The female principals tended to be drawn to building informal networks with other principals who had similar experiences. The principals indicated that they tended to depend on them when they needed career advice. These individuals included other principals who could relate to the challenges of the principalship. All the female principals indicated that without this type of support system, they would not be able to balance their professional and personal lives; most importantly, serving in the capacity of principal. Mansfield, Welton, Lee and Young (2010) claimed that the lack of mentoring not only make it difficult for women to

navigate organizational culture and climate but also make it difficult for women to balance work and family roles. Jo (2008) claimed that a supportive environment is critical for retaining women. Cheung and Halpern (2010) stated that support from family and work domains was related to satisfaction in both domains. Nobavi and Shahryari (2012) suggested that support received in one domain may enhance the well-being within other domains.

Strategies

“Bag of Tricks”

Female principals used problem-focused strategies to complete their work and family responsibilities. Sarah referred to this skill as developing a “bag of Tricks”. Research studies indicate that women leaders implement strategies to manage work and home duties (Fleck, 2008). Strategies that the female principals discussed to balance work and family responsibilities include: (a) role sharing, (b) prioritizing, and (c) extended work day(s), and (d) communication.

Role Sharing

Role sharing strategies involved delegating the obligations of specific roles to other parties which would allow the female principals to actively participate in both work and family domains. For instance, Marie spoke openly about how the job of the principal is so inflexible that she has to depend on her husband to run family errands.

His job is more flexible then mine...the ability to get an errand done or do a task...he is the one that takes care of that stuff because his job is more flexible (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Linda shared how her husband took on her home duties so that she could complete school work.

Sometimes my husband would take care of my duties so that I could start my work at school. He would tell me “Don’t worry go ahead go to bed, go do your work. He would take care of things that I usually take care of...that would give me an opportunity to meet with colleagues. My husband... completing my chores that I would have to as mom (L. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Sally shared how her husband decided to do home chores in order spend time with her.

He said, “Ok, whoever cooks then the other one cleans up after them”. I do the dusting, polishing the furniture that I can reach and he’d have to do the high stuff because I am short. He vacuums, I mop...I did the laundry, he irons (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/13/2014).

Sally also explained how she would delegate work responsibilities to her assistant principals. She stated that were times when he would cover evening events so that she could spend time with her family. Female principals indicated that participative practices are driven by the need to manage work-family responsibilities. According to Shelton (2006), women who delegate are able to handle family without disrupting business operations.

Prioritizing

Principals often expressed that work would sometimes spill over into the home; however, principals mentioned that with experience they learned how to balance work and family lives. Some of the participants stated that one must decide what is really important and focus your time and energies there. Maggie put it this way, “So it is hard to find balance but you get better I think with time and with experience you get better at it” (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014). Many shared stories about their early years in administration when they struggled with leaving work at work and home responsibilities at home. The female principals believed that in order to complete work and home duties, they had to prioritize. Maggie pointed out that when she is at work, she focuses on work,

and when she is at home she focuses on home. Maggie explained it this way:

“You know when I am at home. I’m sometimes thinking about work and when I am at work, I am thinking about home”. By saying this, it is important. I have to be present right now. When I am with my kids, forget about work and just focus on this and vis-versa when you are at work I got to be focus on work um leave your home life there (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014).

Maggie makes her decisions based on family. She stated that even on vacations he turns off her cell phone and does not even take her laptop. Her time with her family is her time. In her words,

“On certain days, your family takes precedence over your work” (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014).

Marie spoke about the importance of prioritizing to balance work and family duties.

...you know I think my desk is a mess which it is now...I don’t have to have everything complete. I have to prioritize...I know what has to be done in the day versus what could maybe wait...there is no way to finish everything I needed to finish...That just never happens so prioritizing is something I’ve gotten pretty good at doing (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Marie goes on to explain how she also prioritizes things at home. She stated the following:

“Even with my family and their activities, I have to prioritize things (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

The principals also talked about the countless hours they spent at work at the expense of their family. It was not until later on in their career that they learned to walk away from their work responsibilities. Sarah reflected back on how there were times when she closed her office door rather she was done with work and never thought twice about it.

“Ok. I’ve done this close your office door. Leave and don’t think back because once you walk through that door now you’re mom. You are no longer Mrs. Principal. You’re mom and you’re wife and you’re daughter-in-law and you are daughter, you’re sister and that is a full-time responsibility (S. Participant,

personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Sarah goes on to claim how this is your time to relax and not worry about what is going on at school. Higgins et al. (2010) study indicated that “scaling back” is a main coping strategy. To maintain work-life balance, the female principals prioritized responsibilities in their professional and personal lives.

Extended Work Day(s)

Higgins et al. (2010) alluded to the fact that modifying ones work schedule was a coping strategy that facilitated the process of meeting work and family demands. Extending the workday permitted the female principals to meet the multiple demands placed on them as principals, wives, and mothers. Interestingly, as mention previously, the participants claimed working longer hours was a challenge. Yet some participants claimed it was that extended time that allowed them the time to spend with family. The participants shared that they would work late even work on Saturdays in order to find balance between their school activities and family events . The participants set work hour schedules outside the normal work day to accomplish everything that needed to be done at work. Sarah stated the following:

You have to find a happy median and that is what I’ve tried to do. I always tried to finish my work at school so that I would not have to take my work home...I preferred stay at work till five o’clock so I would not have to take work home (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

She went on to state that being organized helped her manage her time more.

I’m blessed with being a very organized person so I always found a way to make sure I allocate my time to do my work as a teachers, as an administrator so that when I went home it was just family (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Maggie shared how she works until 6 pm to get her work done and even comes in on

Saturdays to work half day in order to catch up.

...I have to pick up my son at the babysitter no later than 6 pm. I have to leave campus rather my work is done or not...Saturday is a catch up day (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014).

Maggie also claimed that were times when she would say “enough is enough”.

“I’m done rather it’s finish or not” (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014).

“I have to leave the campus that is just it. Rather is it done or not” (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/16/2014). The participants in this study claimed that staying late at work or setting end times, along with prioritizing their time allowed them to manage both home and work responsibilities.

Communication

Establishing a network of communication was central to being able to balance professional and personal lives. Many of the participants shared how they sat with family members to explain and to make decisions on work and family responsibilities. Sarah mentioned how she would sit down with her children to explain why she could not make family functions.

My kids and husband knew that there were times when mom time was going to be spent at school. They understood (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Sally shared that her husband and her had conversations to figure out how to get things done and still have time to spend together. She described her conversation as follows:

How can we do this together so that you can still have time for yourself...
So I’d do one thing and he would do the other (S. Participant, personal communication, 6/13/2014).

Marie talked about reviewing her weekly agenda with her husband to make sure everything that needed to be done was covered.

My husband always says, “What is on the agenda”? and there is always something. I was reviewing with him last night what is coming up the next two weeks. Something almost every night (M. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Communication in this study allowed the female principals to manage their work and family lives. Communication established the ground rules for the family. Children knew that were times when mom could not be mom and when husbands assumed additional duties in order to balance work and family responsibilities. A strategy, even though it was not a common theme among the other principals, was integration. Integration allowed Marie to find the overlaps in their lives to maximize what she could achieve considering the time constraints of her job. Marie brought her children with her to her school. This made it easier to spend time with them and allowed for family time.

The ability to bring my children with me here so that helps me because we drive together. They know I am here. I know they are here. We don't see each other during the day but that feeling of knowing we are in the same building together is nice...this helps me as a principal too because the parents see that oh she has her kids here...she is going through what we're going through. She's a mom right now and she gets me because she is also living the life we are living. So I think it's helped more than hurt (M. Participant, personal communication, 5/2/2014).

Another strategy that was not a common theme among all the female principals was setting an end time to the work day. Linda stated that there were times when she had to stop working at a certain time in order to make her daughter's event. She explained those decisions like this:

...you have to make those decisions. I have to stop at 5:30 because I am going to miss something (L. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Linda went on to say that this decision was also as a result of a comment her husband made to her when she was working long hours. Linda claimed that her husband told her to “work to live and not live to work” (L. Participant, personal communication, 6/2/2014).

Mathenson and Rosen (2012) stated that those who treat work as their life do not experience a positive work and personal balance.

Developing strategies such as role sharing, prioritizing, extending the work day, and communicating with support systems allows female principals to fulfill the duties required of both roles. Moreover the female principals were able to find balance because they are able to control every aspect of these decisions. The female principals established their work hours, realized that they could not do the job by themselves, established a network of communication that kept them abased about what was going on at work and at home allowed them to spend time with family.

Chapter Summary

This chapter depicted the lived experiences of a sample of five female elementary principals who managed to realize work-life balance. Higgins et al. (2012) claimed that people who employ coping strategies experience less stress while experiencing role overload.

Further, the discussion revealed that female principals face many challenges in the principalship. These challenges are the result of frequent stressors due to the amount of tasks to complete in their daily routine as principals, mothers, and wives. Included in these discussion is that fact that female principal are able to manage the principalship by establishing support systems at work and at home that allow them to navigate between work and family domains. One of these support systems, husbands, is the main reason given for being able to manage their professional and personal lives. The ability to be able to delegate tasks, at home and work, is a strategy used to reduce the inevitable flood of tasks that consume the lives of principals; thus, resulting in the ability to realize work-life balance. Role sharing allowed them time to spend time with love ones while delegating work responsibilities to team members at

work. Although a variety of support systems and strategies were implemented to realize work-life balance the female principals acknowledged that work and family are two domains that can be managed with the right support systems in place and; most importantly, with coping strategies that can reduce work and family demands. Grogan (2005) stated that educational leaders manage human and material resources so that their families are successful. Educational leaders navigate while constantly changing circumstances while dealing with external forces that they have little control over (Grogan, 2005). Therefore, based on this study, work-life balance means having sufficient time to perform work and family obligations. Fouche and Maltindale (2011) claimed that work-life balance does not mean an equal balance between life and work but a balance between these two important domains.

Chapter Five: Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Balancing work and family life has been a struggle for female principals because they are expected to maintain traditional family responsibilities when they acquire a professional career. Women, who find they maintain the traditional family responsibilities, while acquiring a professional role, result them juggling two full time jobs. The conclusions are organized by three major findings: (a) participants expressed many challenges in balancing work and family live; (b) participants developed varies support systems in order to complete work and family tasks; and (c) participants employed a variety of strategies to realize work-life balance.

This phenomenological study was designed to investigate the lived experiences of female principals in elementary schools. The study was qualitative in an effort to understand the meaning individuals ascribe to a social and human problem (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative methodology that I used in this study focuses more on investigating female principals' lived experiences, personal perspectives, and reasons for their actions. I used phenomenological inquiry through personal interviews to understand the lived experiences of five female participants. Through the use of qualitative methodology and Work-Family Border Theory I found meaning in the interviewees' narratives that provided understanding of the principals' lived experiences.

Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis presented in this phenomenological study indicated that appropriate work-family management strategies help female principals realize work-life balance. It is argued that work-family management strategies are a significant determinant of achieving work-life balance and that role-sharing strategies are preferred by most female principals because these

options permit them to enjoy the enhancement of both work and family roles while reducing the level of work-life conflict. Delegating the venture role through participative human resources practices is vital for female principal who are highly committed to the family role. Women who build management and work teams are able to handle family situations without disrupting the operation of the school. By reducing the level of involvement at work, the level of involvement at home will increase. As a result, it is proposed that team-building, and management practices, such as delegating, are driven by the need for female principals to manage work-family conflict and therefore, the ability to realize work-life balance.

This phenomenological study makes a unique contribution to the literature on work-life balance in three ways. First, it uses qualitative methodology which allows this study included participants from a diverse group of ethnic groups, different educational experiences. This allows interpreting findings from a female principal's perspective. Second, the literature on work-life balance has focused on corporate America organizations, while this dissertation study includes female principals from a school district. Third, although mentoring was not explored in this study, all participants referenced mentoring, or some type of informal or formal networking, as a need to successfully manage the principalship. Although issues regarding work-life balance have been widely studied, few studies have investigated how female principals realize work-life balance. Finally, this dissertation is expected to provide a new perspective to the how female principals can realize work-life balance while navigating the challenges of the principalship.

The findings of this study revealed that without a support system; which included support from family members and colleagues, the participants in this study would not be able to serve in the principalship nor would they be able to find balance in their professional and personal lives. All participants pointed out that even though their husbands were a great support system because

they shared the responsibility of taking care of the children along with taking on added responsibilities such as running errands or doing house work. Additionally, grandparents were also a support system because they assumed daycare responsibilities when husbands could not. The participants found comfort knowing that their children were looked after by loved ones. All participants also noted that their social network facilitated the decision making process at work. When they did not know something they would call on these individuals for advice and guidance. This released the stress level at work and allowed for a smoother transition to home.

The findings also indicates that female principals were able to maintain balance at work and home by identifying resource tools that helped them accomplish the multitudes of tasks placed on them daily as working mothers. Amidst of this disarray the participants made it clear that there were times when their families came first and at times work took precedence. Nonetheless, they prioritized their work and home responsibilities in order to meet the demands of the principalship and family life. Furthermore, the female principals learned how to communicate with work and family members in order to maintain balance and compromise when tough decisions had to be made.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been developed from the data collects as part of this research. Recommendations are being made in four categories:

1. females principals,
2. district level administrators, and
3. universities
4. further research

Recommendations for female principals

Female principals should consider:

1. Networking, with other female principals, in order to seek an understanding of the balance between work and home.
2. Actively seek current female principals who have realized work and family balance to include establishing formal and informal networking systems with other female principals.
3. Female principals should reflect on their own values and establish realistic expectations about the amount of time available for work and family.

Recommendations for District Level Administrators

District level administrators should consider:

1. Determining a reasonable number of tasks to complete within a given period of time.
2. Establish a mentor program that allows opportunities for female principals to network on weekly or monthly basis. As Linda, proposed mentors and mentees should be provided with the time to meet monthly.
3. Provide a work schedule that provides principals with non-duty days throughout the year allowing them to balance work and family. Most specifically, non-duty days that can be used as needed, by female principals, to meet the demands of family life.
4. Cross-training Assistant Principals on the responsibilities of the Principal.
5. Provide trainings on the management aspect of the principalship. Administrative trainings should also expose principals to the multiple and complex nature of the principalship; especially during their first year. Training should include recognizing the challenges of the role of the principal and on how to deal with these challenges.

6. Provide workshops on work/family policies to show support for struggling female principals.
7. Districts should provide training on organizational skills and learning to prioritize and manage time. Marie clearly stated that organizing and prioritizing time is crucial because “that is the one thing you have no control over the number of minutes in the day”. By training female principals how to use their time more effectively both in their personal and professional lives they can attain balance.

Recommendations for Universities

Universities should consider:

1. Universities should provide courses to perspectives leaders that highlight the realities of the job. Perspective leaders should be exposed to case studies on the principalship and how principals deal with the demands and complexity of the job.
2. Universities should also increase the internship phase to include release days for perspective leaders in order to experience the reality of the principalship. Currently, perspective leaders are interned before or after school when the real drama seizes to exist. Perspective leaders need to experience every aspect of the job so that they are better prepared to confront the challenges of the job.

Recommendations for future research

A major limitation of prior research on work-family conflict has focused exclusively on the experiences of individuals employed in large business organization (Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001). Balance is not an issue of time but of choice. It is about living your values by aligning your behavior with what you believe are important. Additional research is recommended to expand the scope of the study. Female principals need strategies to manage their professional

and personal lives. I recommend the following research topics to further develop and verify the findings of this research study:

1. Replicate study to include single female principals with children to see how those challenges compare to married female principals; and more specially, how they manage to realize work-life balance.
2. The female principals in this study lead urban schools. Future studies may focus specifically on female principals in rural schools or urban and suburban schools in other parts of the country.
3. This study took place during the summer and fall. It is recommended to conduct a study in the spring to capture the perspective of the principals at the end of the year.
4. Mentors have been found to provide assistance to school administrators (Whitaker, 1996). Future research studies should be conducted to see if mentors face the same challenges and to explore what management strategies they utilize to realize work-life balance.
5. Further research can also be conducted to include principals at the secondary level to see how they balance work and family lives.
6. Future research studies can also be conducted to include married or single men. Work-Life balance does not necessarily have to be women's issue.

Chapter Summary

The findings of this research study are useful for female principals who are seeking to balance their professional and personal lives. It is important for female principals to find balance and successfully manage their work and family duties. This study provided female principals with the strategies they need to realize work-life balance. Furthermore, this study provided assurance

to current female principals and aspiring principals that work-life balance is possible even while serving in the principalship. Additionally, this study will bring awareness to the challenges faced by female principals as they navigate through the principalship. By exposing perspective leaders on the daily challenges of the principalship they will be better equipped to handle these challenges.

Concluding Thoughts

In reflecting on this study, it is clear that female principals face many challenges in their effort to balance their professional and personal lives. Added to this, it should be noted that the principalship responsibilities are going to continue to be demanding and challenging for female principals. Nevertheless, in the middle of all this chaos, guilt feelings, and frustrations, Marie's comment, "I don't think my children are suffering because I have a full-time job that is you know a demanding position," was deeply embedded in the conversations with the female principals. It is evident that principals must separate their work and family lives. Through their continued efforts, female principals can learn to balance their personal and professional lives; thus, leading to a successful career and healthier home life. In closing, female principals should not have to do it alone. They should be provided with a support system at work and the necessary tools to manage the principalship. This in turn will allow female principals to focus on what they value most, their family. As Linda stated in her interview "My husband is always telling me to work to live not live to work". Female principals should work to live and not live to work.

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Appendix A: Research Study Summary Sheet

Dear _____

You have been selected to participate in this study due to your professional leadership as an elementary school principal and the perception of having achieved work-life balance. As a participant in this study, your contribution will assist other women interested in effectively managing work and family responsibilities.

The purpose of this study is to determine how women principals balance work and family roles and responsibilities. Societal expectations of women as primary caregivers result in working women attempting to navigate multiple personal and professional roles. Those who have attained a high level position, such as the principalship, are tasked with being effective leaders in their workplace while at the same time successfully maintaining their family life.

While there is no one “right way” to negotiate work-life balance, the goal of this study is to determine strategies that women principals employ to be effective in managing the domains of work and family. These strategies should prove instructive for women aspiring to become administrators and to current women principal who struggle to navigate work and family roles.

To that end, the following questions are posed to determine how women principals achieve and maintain work-life balance:

- 1) What challenges do female principals face in balancing work and family life?
- 2) What types of support systems do female principals determine are helpful in realizing work-life balance?
- 3) What management strategies do female principals utilize to balance work and family life?

Your participation in this study should take 2 to 4 hours of your time over a period of 8 weeks and will consist of at least two interviews.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my request to participate. Your involvement is critical to the success of this study.

Appendix B: Consent Form

I, _____, agree to complete a minimum of one interview under the direction of researcher Blanca E. Garcia to be conducted at my current school assignment. I understand that the interviews will be limited to 90 minutes.

I understand that the purpose of the study is to understand how women principals balance work and family roles and responsibilities.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may end my participation at any time with no consequences. I understand that there are no known risks involved in my participation of this study. I have been given the opportunity to ask question concerning the procedure and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that the interviews will be recorded and that the recordings will be transcribed to text and analyzed.

I understand that every effort will be made to keep my data confidential. My responses will be identified by a pseudonym and never by name.

This project, IRM #605731-1, was reviewed by the University of Texas El Paso. If I need to talk to someone about my experience at the University of Texas at El Paso or I have any questions regarding the conduct of this research or my rights as a research participant I may call Dr. Rodolfo Rincones at 747-7614. I understand, that if I desire, I may contact the researcher, Blanca E. Garcia, at (915) 383-5316.

.....
.....

I understand that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand the content of this consent and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Signature

Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the participant has agreed to participate and have given her a copy of this informed consent form.

Researcher's Signature

Date

.....
.....

I agree to be audio taped for this interview:

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

I agree to be interviewed, but I do not want the interview to be taped:

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your upbringing to include family influence on your career choices.
2. Tell me about your career choices and have they changed over time
 - ❖ What motivated you to become a principal?
 - ❖ What barriers did you encounter throughout your personal and professional life?
 - ❖ What strategies did you employ to overcome these barriers?
3. Describe your personal and professional lives.
 - ❖ Tell me about your responsibilities at home and work.
 - ❖ How do you spend your free time?
4. What is your definition of work-life balance?
 - ❖ To what extent do you think you are realizing work-life balance?
 - ❖ How do you develop the management skills to realize work-life balance?
 - ❖ How does your family role affect your ability to realize work-life balance?
 - ❖ How does your work role affect your ability to realize work-life balance?
 - ❖ Did you find yourself giving up or letting go of something in order to balance work and family life?
 - ❖ How did making this decision make you feel?
 - ❖ What challenges did you face in your struggle to realize work-life balance?
5. What support systems did you utilize to help you realize work-life balance?
 - ❖ How did you access that support?
 - ❖ What resources, at home, or work policies did you utilize to access support?
 - ❖ What factors, at home and work helped you realize work-life balance?
 - ❖ Tell me about the significant individuals who influenced you personally and professionally? How did they contribute to your success?
 - ❖ What strategies/skills have contributed to your success as a school leader and to your success at home?
6. Would you change anything in your personal and professional life?
7. What advice do you have for women that have opted out of the principalship or who have changed career paths?
8. Is there anything you would like to add to the interview?

Researcher's Positioning

Family background

Ever since I could remember, I knew my parents expected great things from me. Born to an immigrant father and a mother who was born in America, but raised in Mexico, life was filled with stories from our ancestors who worked hard in Mexico to make a better life through different means. My dad's family members were pioneers who helped establish towns in Mexico. My mother's side of the family spent their time taking from the rich to give to the poor so that poor had a chance at life. My mother's aunt "la famosa Valentina" was a "generale" under Pancho Villa. It was interesting how our family backgrounds help mold my parents into the individuals they were and eventually helped mold my siblings and me into the individuals we are today.

I remember my father telling us about an event in his life that changed him forever. He recalled an event that occurred to a priest in his neighborhood church. He shared how the priest talked about his capture by Pancho Villa and how his life was spared. The Priest reminded my dad that every day he walked this earth was a blessing and he should take life by the horns and live it to its fullest potential. Up until his death, my dad reminded us that every day was a new opportunity and that we needed to make the best of it. He reminded us that we could overcome anything with hard work and perseverance. In his words, "Si se Puede". It was by this motto that we lived our lives. It was also those values that he instilled in us as we grew up. My mother's stories, though different scenarios, also displayed values and beliefs through which we were raised.

My mother's stories were more personal in nature. Being raised with a "macho" father posed many challenges for my mother. To begin with, she was not allowed to go to school because she

had to help with the family store. She recalled how there were times when her day revolved around cleaning the house and tending to the store without stopping to meet friends at the movies or local café. Added to this, my mother's home life was not a pleasant one. My mother grew up in an abusive home. My grandfather was physical with my grandmother. My mom shared with us how one of the beatings was so severe that my grandmother almost died. It was at this point that my mom knew she had to take action. She had to get her mother and sister away from this terrible home life and just like that, in the dark of the night, she, her mother, and sister left Mexico and never turned back.

Upon their return to the United States, my mother got a job at a local factory. With the help of her sister, they managed to build their own home which up to today still stands and is a constant reminder of my mother's struggle for a better life for her and her family. Again, up until her death my mother reminded us that life will pose many challenges. She reminded us that there was nothing sure in life but death itself. It was up to us to face all of our challenges head on and not to be afraid. Life was a journey traveled by many; however, how we got to our destination was going to be up to us and no one else.

Early Influences

Going up in a home with a hard working father and a caring mother the expectations were clear. My parents expected my siblings and me to be successful in life. I remember how involved my dad was with our homework after a long day at work. Due to my dad not speaking or reading English, my dad could not help us with our homework; however, he would sit with us at the kitchen table and read the bible or one of his psychology books. My dad was always curious about human behavior. I guess it was a way of showing us how important education was and frankly it worked. My brother became a psychologist. The rest of us got our degrees in

education. What was more amazing was that we were the first in our extended family to get a college education.

Even though we were all managed to get our degrees being a female Hispanic posed many challenges for me. I always did well in high school, and I had high hopes for my future. Unfortunately, my high school Counselor thought otherwise. I remember the day when he called me to his office to tell me I was being dropped from band and placed in a vocational class. He actually had the gull to tell me that there was no way I would go to college. I almost fell off my chair. I remember how upset I was. Through my anger, I told him I was going to college and that I would continue in band rather he liked it or not. I knew I had potential I had good grades and I knew that I would get into college. He was not a happy camper. Neither was my mother when I told her. I recall how she made me take her to school the next day. We marched into the Counselor's office and she gave him a piece of her mind. The Counselor did not even know what hit him. As the translator, I made sure he understood every word. I knew at that point I had become my mother's daughter and my father's daughter. I vowed to face every challenge head on and to work hard and persevere no matter the situation I found myself in.

Professional life

Customary to Hispanic women, I dreamed of getting married and having children. However, I also wanted a professional career. Teaching was something I always wanted to do. Even as child I remember playing school with the neighborhood kids. I knew teaching would not only give me the satisfaction of living my dream as a professional women but it would also allow me time to be with my family. That changed once I began writing curriculum for the Bilingual Education Department in my district. I remember working closely with the Area Superintendent and the Bilingual Education Facilitator. To my surprise, the Area Superintendent began visiting

my classroom soon after. I remember wondering why she was always there. The mystery was solved when she called me into the office to inform me of the fact that she wanted me as an administrator in the district. She went as far as to tell me to apply for a vacancy in a neighboring school. I told her I did not have my mid-management certification. It did not matter. Being naïve, I just ignored her directive and went along my path of being a teacher and hopefully someday a wife and mother. It was not until I got a call from her facilitator that I realized she was serious. I remember the facilitator telling me why I was not on the list of applicants for the Assistant Principal position at a neighboring school. I told her I did not meet the qualifications. She told me it did not matter; the Area Superintendent wanted me on the list. I told her it was too late for this vacancy and I was told to make sure I applied for future positions. Realizing that I probably had a choice but being taught not to bite the hand that fed you I decided to apply for the next Assistant Principal position. Sadly, by that time I was engaged and planning on having my dream family. I remember having the conversation with my future husband, who being a Hispanic, had expectations for me as a wife. I knew it was important for me to be at home with him and; most importantly, he wanted me to be available for the children. He eventually gave into the idea and I was assigned to the next administrative position two months after we were married. Since I was not certified, I was placed on an emergency certificate and given one year to get my mid-management certification. This posed another challenge for me because now I had to go to school in the evening. Telling my husband was the hard part because that meant he would spend two nights a week alone at home. Great! Well my husband had his “manly” moment but eventually came to terms with the idea.

As a couple we decided to hold off having kids during my first year as an assistant principal. However, by the second year we were ready to become parents. I was not worried because at

that time assistant principals had the summer off. I knew that my parents were going to help care for my children during the year and I would take care of my kids during the summer. My son was born at the end of my second year as assistant principal. To our surprise, my “bambina” came twelve months later. This posed a big challenge for us because now I had two babies, a husband, and a full-time job. Thankfully, my parents stepped in again to provide child care for my children. You would think this was the end of my challenges. Unfortunately, God had other plans for me. Upon my return from maternity leave, my principal was removed and I was named interim principal. I still remember getting “the call” like it was yesterday. I was feeding my baby when the phone rang. I picked up the phone to find my immediate supervisor on the other end. He informed me of the decision to remove the principal and he shared with me how he recommended me for the interim position. I still remember sitting with my baby in my arms thinking what I was going to do. By then, I had experienced the politics of administration. I knew I could not burn any bridges. I reluctantly accepted. I knew that this decision would change my family dynamics. My husband was a very supportive man but I knew he still expected me to be a wife and a mother before anything else. I knew my husband would not take this decision sitting down; especially, since I had not consulted with him. What’s funny about the whole thing is that instead of going to find my husband to tell him what had just happened. I called my mother. I wanted to make my children were going to be taken care off. Of course, my mother welcomed the additional duties like any other grandmother who lived for her family. My husband was another story. He was not happy. Yet, he knew the decision was already made and he had no choice but to accept it. I thought this decision was going to end my marriage because I had deviated from our arrangement. However, as unhappy as he was made the best of the rest of

the evening. He helped bathe the babies and get them ready for bed. I knew at that point that through his anger he was telling me that he was there for me.

As I left for work the next morning, I kept thinking what was in store for me. Since I had been on maternity leave, I was not prevalent to much more then what I was told by my immediate supervisor the previous night. As I entered my office, I quickly noticed that my personal items had already been moved to the principal's office. The Counselor had taken it upon herself to move me into the principal's office. I remember feeling so uncomfortable not to mention wondering how she knew. By that time my supervisor had arrived to meet with me. At the meeting, he informed me of the fact that the Superintendent wanted me to end the year with minimal disruption on the instructional process. He also instructed to do damage control. According to him, the community was not happy with the district's decision to remove the principal and therefore, I would have to host a meeting to bring everyone to together in the hopes of appeasing everyone. Added to this, I was handed a stack of grievances that I had to respond to. The next three months proved to be the most challenging of my career. Thankfully, the district stood behind me and provided me with the support I needed to bring my school and community together again.

I remember how the Directors for Public Relations and Employee Relations worked side by side with me to resolve all the issues. Even at the parent meeting, as a novice administrator, I remember standing before a room of upset parents yelling at the Superintendent. Throughout it all, Central Office staff was standing behind me guiding throughout the process. It was not until the crowd became violent that I was instructed to vacate the room. I could not believe the crowd refused to disburse. I remember being told to turn off the lights in hope of getting the people to leave. Well that was not a smart idea; the crowd began to move towards the Superintendent. I

remember the Public Relations Director grabbing the Superintendent and began running out of the building. I specifically remember seeing a parent run after the Superintendent chasing him through the parking lot. All I could do was chase after him in hopes of catching up with him before he caught up to the Superintendent. Well since I had just given birth six weeks before that was easier said than done. The parents rushed the car hitting the hood and demanding the Superintendent come out and fight “like a man”. Well, that was not going to happen I just remember trying to pull off this 300 pound man off a Volkswagen rabbit. It was at that point that I was thinking if it was worth it. I was not only putting my health at risk but also missing out on my family. I had spent countless hours at work trying to meet deadlines and planning for the end of the year. In the mist of these thoughts I knew I had to get home and hear it from my husband and my parents since the media made sure to cover every aspect of the chase.

Sure enough driving up to my house my husband was waiting at the front door. As emotionally and physically exhausted as I felt, I knew I had to deal with my husband and eventually with my parents. There was no way out of it. My husband, to his credit, allowed me to relax a bit before he started in on his discussion. I remember how angry he was at the whole situation and he couldn’t believe what he had seen on TV. He was more upset at the risk I put myself in. I knew my husband was right so I just sat there and listened. Thankfully, the phone rang and it was my dad. As upset as I knew my dad would be, my dad had a soothing way of dealing with things. He was calm and understanding. He knew how to put things in perspective. It was what I needed to help me see things more clearly. My mom was more concern with my physical well-being. She wanted to make sure I was okay. Thank God for that because I do not think I could have handled any more drama that evening. I remember spending that night tossing and turning trying to get some rest because I knew the next day was going to be filled with

questions about the previous night events. Frankly, I did not think I was going to be allowed to finish the year as interim since; technically, I had not been able to “control” my parents the night before. One thing a principal must be able to do is to control their community members no matter the context. The life of a principal is based on how well you could control your stakeholders. Interestingly, I was not removed as Interim Principal. I reported to work as usual and tended to pending litigation.

Since the District had filed for termination, I was now part of the termination hearings. Through it all I managed to get through the grievances and hearing only to be blackballed by a Board member whose wife was on my staff and whose grievance had been denied. Because my parents had raised me to face challenges head on and not walk away from my responsibilities. I hung in there and managed to end the year and begin a new year without any problems. However, I knew that I could not stay at this school much longer the Board member was out to for revenge and I had worked too hard to let him destroy my career. I decided to apply for a position outside this Board members area. Fortunately, I got that position and history was written. I have completed my 22 year as a principal. I realized that as demanding and challenging as the principalship could be I knew I could do the job and still manage to keep my family together. It was not easy, my husband and parents were key players in this political game. Without the support of my lovely family I do not think I could have survived as a principal. As challenging and demanding as the principalship was, if I had to do it again, I would. The principalship has been a very rewarding profession for me and my family. Life as a principal has not been easy but it has provided me with countless opportunities to contribute to the education of thousands of children. It has been a blessing to see the benefits of my efforts on my family and the families of my students.

Curriculum Vita

Blanca Estela Garcia received her Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Texas in El Paso in 1983. In 1987 she received a Master's in Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Texas at El Paso. As a result of her academic achievements, Dr. Garcia was recognized as Who's Who among American Women, was inducted to Mortar Board and recognized by Phi Delta Kappa for her contribution to education and has been the recipient of the Texas Successful School Awards for high achieving schools. After raising her children, Dr. Garcia returned to the University of Texas at El Paso to pursue her Doctorate in Educational Administration.

Dr. Garcia is currently employed as an Early College High School principal for the El Paso Independent School District. Professionally, Dr. Garcia is the Master Principal in her district. She has been a member of various educational committees in her district and has served as an officer of the Executive Boards for the El Paso Administrator's Association and the Southwest Association for Bilingual Education. Dr. Garcia is also a faculty member at the University of Texas at El Paso for the Education Leadership and Foundation graduate program. During the course of her educational career, Dr. Garcia has served on the Phelps Dodge Advisory Board, has served in the capacity a mentor school principal for the state of Texas, and is a life member for the Parent-Teacher Association.

Dr. Garcia attended the Texas Elementary Principal and Supervisor Association (TEPSA) Education and Training Academy IX and the Southwest Independent School District Administrator's Academy. She was also a member of the Texas School Improvement Initiative

¹ For information on the Southwest Independent School District contact the researcher.

which evaluated low performing schools under the Texas Education Agency.

Dr. Garcia's dissertation, "Work-life Balance: A phenomenological study on how female principals balance their professional and personal lives was by supervised by Dr. Rodolfo Rincones.