A Case Study of Women Educational Administrators and Their Perspectives on Work and Life Roles

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A Case Study of Women Educational Administrators
and Their Perspectives on Work and Life Roles

by

Krissy J. Perkins

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
College of Education
University of South Florida

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Keywords: Perspective, Gender, Female Administrators, Multiple Roles

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Dedication:

With appreciation
To all my friends, colleagues, and professors

With admiration
To my parents, in-laws, and grandmother

With adoration
To my partner in life and love, Brian

With anticipation
To my daughters, Kaylee June and Kara Elizabeth
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all of the members of the village that raised this doctoral student: my parents, in-laws, siblings, friends (those near and far), cohort colleagues, major professor, writing buddy, co-workers, and of course, the fabulous five women at the center of this study. Also, to Eleanor Roosevelt, who dared me with her quote, “You must do the thing you think you cannot do.” I never dreamed I could, but I did. There were so many doubts, tears, fears, and stress along the way and all of you were there to encourage, support, and inspire me to continue.

Brian, I am so grateful that you love and support me unconditionally. You and I sat down before this journey began and you told me that you would do whatever it took to help me along the way. You more than fulfilled your promise and I could not have succeeded without you. I love you. Kaylee and Kara, my beautiful girls, thank you for allowing me to miss out on so many precious moments in your lives to study and write.
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Abstract

Women are persistent in their pursuits to obtain advanced degrees in higher education, as evidenced by the growing percentage (53% in 2009 according to NCES, 2010). Their purposes for degree attainment are multiple and varied, as are their experiences in higher education. This case study investigated the perspectives of five females managing the roles of woman, mother, educational administrator, and doctoral student. Previous research has paid little attention to women who manage three roles, let alone four. Feminist Standpoint Theory undergirds this study and allows a conversation about power relations within the broader social order, allows the asking of questions and locating of absences, and illuminates the voices of women.

The semi-structured interviews of the five participants addressed the roles and lived experiences of each, seeking to understand the components of their perspectives and the variables that influenced those perspectives. The interviews, along with a researcher reflective journal and field notes, yielded data for a cross-case analysis with the themes of support, gender equality, personal fulfillment, tenacity, and time. As a result of the cross-case synthesis, implications for women seeking to fulfill the multiple roles discussed in this study are explicated in four major themes. “It Takes A Village” encompasses the various kinds of support surrounding doctoral student mothers who are educational administrators. “Running the Marathon” explores personal fulfillment and tenacity as they relate to the women’s doctoral endeavors. “Burning the Midnight Oil” refers to the efficient use of time and gender equality in their lives. Lastly, “The Quest for Quality”
discusses participants’ pursuits to use time effectively in their multiple roles. Implications for graduate programs and staff as well as for future researchers are described. This study is the first to examine this specific combination of roles for females: woman, mother, educational administrator, and doctoral student. It adds to the literature concerning women managing multiple roles and can serve as a starting point for discussion and further research of the experiences of this specific population.
Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction and Rationale

Women have made great strides toward equality in many aspects of American life, especially higher education. Higher education, meaning above a standard high school education, became a reality for women in the United States in 1833, when Oberlin College in Ohio was created. Founded by abolitionists and Protestant evangelists, Oberlin was unique in that it was the first college that accepted all qualified students regardless of their race or sex (Cott, 2000). Though changes have occurred in the education of women, significant changes have occurred in recent decades. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2009), women have earned the majority of associate, bachelor, and master’s degrees since the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. This is not the case with professional and doctor’s degrees, which have only recently reached parity. In fact, the higher the level of degree, the lower the percentage of those degrees earned by women as compared to men. The percentage of professional degrees earned by women in all fields grew from 42.1% to 50.0% between 1996-1997 and 2006-2007 and the percentage of doctoral degrees earned by women in all fields grew from 40.8% to 50.1% between 1996-1997 and 2006-2007 (NCES, 2009) and to 53% in 2009 (NCES, 2010). These statistics reveal that women are persistent in seeking and obtaining advanced degrees in higher education. Their purposes are assuredly varied and are concerned with reasons such as professional advancement and personal fulfillment, which mirror social
changes in America. These degree-seeking women undoubtedly face many challenges depending upon the multiple roles they serve in their respective lives that impact and shape their educational experiences.

Previous research focuses attention on women as graduate students (Bronstein, 2001, Jarnagin, 2005, Johnsrud, 1995, Maher, Ford, & Thompson, 2004, Wang, 2006, and Watford, 2007), mothers as graduate students (Evans & Grant, 2008, Kirby, Biever, Martinez, & Gomez, 2004, Price, 2008, Sears, 2001, Underwood, 2002, and Williams, 2007), women as employees (Barnett, 2004, Sandler, 2000, and Tiedje, 2004), and women as educational leaders (Adams & Hambright, 2004, Christman & McClellan, 2008, de Casal & Mulligan, 2004, Grady, Curley, & Lacost, 2008, Scheckelhoff, 2007, Searby & Tripses, 2006, Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Few studies have focused on the intersection of the specific roles of mother, graduate student, and educational administrator. Mothers of today seem to be taking on more roles at one time than ever before in an effort to support their families and fulfill their personal and professional goals. This research was born out of my own need to connect with other women juggling multiple roles and will illuminate the struggle women undergo before and during their journeys to achieve their personal, professional, and academic goals.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain women educational administrators’ perspectives on work and life. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011, p. 46, referencing Brown and Irby, 2005) share that “the more we know about women in leadership roles, how they obtain their positions, and how they have become successful, the greater the likelihood of increasing their numbers in the field.” As a result of
illuminating the perspectives of these women, it is my hope that a greater understanding of the experiences of these women will emerge.

**Exploratory Questions Which Guide The Study**

The statistics reveal that women have made great strides in the area of higher education. However, only recently have women earned the same percentage of professional and doctoral degrees as men. Why has it taken so long for women and men to reach parity? It is important to look in the rearview mirror, at the history of women in higher education. How and why women previously pursued and currently pursue higher education, namely in Educational Leadership, is of great interest in this study. Another aspect lies in the complexity of being a woman in academia. How is it different than a man’s experiences and how have those differences, namely motherhood, impacted the experiences of women? What special challenges are involved in the process of becoming doctor while simultaneously being woman, mother, and administrator? Therefore, the exploratory questions that guided my study were:

1. What variables influence women’s perspectives of their roles and lived experience as mothers, educational administrators, and doctoral students?
2. How do female educational administrators successfully negotiate the challenges of motherhood and doctoral study?

**Literature for this Study**

The literature review for this study contains four sections. These are: A Brief History of Women’s Education and Work, Multiple and Demanding Roles for Females, Women as Students in Academe, and Women in Educational Administration. Key words
were identified from the research questions and used as search terms within multiple databases using the Boolean method to conduct searches. This ensured that the bodies of literature related to the focus of this study were thoroughly explored. It also better defined the gaps in the literature that this study aimed to fill.

**Theoretical Frame**

Feminist Standpoint Theory undergirded this study. It identified the lens from which the researcher viewed the world and placed at the center of inquiry the social construction of gender, the asking of questions, the locating of absences, and the arguing of how gender shapes consciousnesses, skills, institutions, and distributions of power and privilege. Feminist Standpoint Theory *looks* from somewhere. This “somewhere” is a position that is social in nature as opposed to being neutral and objective. Since Feminist Standpoint Theory is social in nature, the nature of the social order must inevitably be explored. Power relations within the social order shape the perspectives of those within it.

In this study, I explored my participants’ perspectives of social order, their positions within it, and how their experiences were shaped and colored by those positions. This theory is explored further in Chapter Two.

**Methods**

Three techniques for gathering data were used in this study. Semi structured interviews were conducted with participants/conversational partners. A researcher reflective journal was kept throughout the inquiry. Also, relevant documents were collected. These techniques will be explained further in Chapter Three.

**Semi Structured Interviews.** I conducted two interviews each with five women who found themselves at the intersection of mother, doctoral student, and educational
administrator, for a total of ten interviews. These interviews were conducted in order to understand how and why women pursue higher education, how women’s experiences in higher education might differ from men’s, and what special challenges were involved in the process of becoming a successful doctoral student and graduate while simultaneously being woman, mother, student, and administrator. Once interviewed, I had the audio files transcribed by a professional transcription service. Then, I analyzed the interview transcripts in an effort to determine major and minor themes and presented the data in the form of individual cases. Informed consent was obtained, confidentiality was and will continue to be maintained, and ethical concerns were addressed during the research process.

**Researcher Reflective Journal.** A researcher reflective journal was kept throughout this process. Use of a reflective journal allows researchers to look within to reflect on their roles as researchers and as human beings. It is also used to look outside and learn more and gain insight into the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009). Janesick (2004) suggests these major ways that a researcher reflective journal assists a researcher: by focusing the study, setting the groundwork for analysis and interpretation, serving as a tool for revisiting notes and transcripts, awakening the imagination, and keeping the written record of thoughts, feelings, and facts. Since the journal contains that written record of thoughts, feelings, and facts, it can be utilized as a data set, used in the triangulation of data, and interwoven through chapters four and five to paint a detailed picture of my inquiry into the lives and perspectives of these women and their experiences.
**Relevant Documents.** A researcher must be open to the possibility of discovering documents that might prove useful in the research process. A researcher must also rely on skills and intuition in the finding and interpreting of relevant documents since s/he is the research instrument. I set out with the anticipation of collecting public records, personal documents, popular culture documents, and/or researcher-generated documents during my study (Merriam, 2009). I planned to request a resume from each conversational partner, which could reveal educational and career accomplishments. I collected the resumes of three of those partners. I also planned to collect documents they deemed important in understanding their particular experiences or perspectives, such as emails, pictures, or calendars. I collected one letter of importance. Once the study was underway, the need for certain documents, both personal and public, surfaced. Therefore, I collected those documents and journaled about their place and importance within the study.

**Usefulness of the Study**

This study provided insight and understanding regarding women who are students, mothers, and educational administrators. Participants’ experiences will hopefully aid in readers’ understandings and appreciation of the difficulty, yet feasibility, of serving in these multiple roles as women. The results of this inquiry have served as a window into which I viewed my own life experiences and deepened my understanding and perception of my own life roles and how they relate to one another, as I had hoped. This study also has implications for higher education student service practitioners and researchers investigating entrance and persistence issues among doctoral student mothers who hold leadership positions in K-12 education.
Limitations

Limitations occur in my study. One limitation is the selection of the participants in the study. All five are from universities centrally located in one southern state as opposed to a sampling from around the country. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain an in-depth understanding of women’s experiences. This was done by limiting the number of participants and interviewing them multiple times. Another limitation was that I was vulnerable to the information provided by these participants. I had to trust that the information they revealed was the truth, as they perceived it. Thirdly, I myself served as a limitation because I am the principal research instrument and as such, I had to monitor my biases in order to understand how they were shaping the study.

Definition of Terms

A few terms were used in ways that may be confusing to the reader. This section seeks to demystify and inform the reader as to how the researcher used specific terms.

Educational Administrator: An educational leader that is charged with the administration of schools; usually refers to the principal or assistant principal.

Higher Education: Refers to Master’s and Doctoral level education.

Life Roles: Refers to those roles in one’s life such as mother, student, or worker.

Summary

This initial chapter served as an overview of the study and included the questions to be explored, purpose and usefulness of the study, information regarding the research design, and potential limitations of the study. The second chapter provides a review of the relevant bodies of literature surrounding the focus of the study. Chapter three discloses the methodology of the study.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain women educational administrators’ perspectives on work and life. The exploratory questions addressed in this study were:

1. What variables influence women’s perspectives of their roles and lived experience as mothers, educational administrators, and doctoral students?
2. How do women educational administrators successfully negotiate the challenges of motherhood and doctoral study?

In developing an understanding of how women who are living at the intersection of the roles of mother, graduate student, and educational administrator negotiate those roles, this research used feminist standpoint theory as a frame of reference to guide the process and inform data analysis and interpretation. A review of the literature is presented below in order to provide a background for the reader and to reveal the theoretical framework that guides this study. It includes five sections: a brief history of foremothers who paved the way in women’s education and work, a revelation of the multiple and demanding roles for females, a current status of women as students in academe, an exploration of women in educational administration, and an overview of feminist standpoint theory. Figure 1 provides a visual map of the schema for this literature review.
Foremothers Who Paved the Way: Educating Women and Women’s Work

Two key texts, along with others, were used to begin the review of literature on the education of women in this section: *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Public Schools* by David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot and *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States* by Nancy F. Cott. These two books provide an extensive account of the history of women’s education in our nation.

Poorly educated women in the colonial period did not view their lack of schooling and education as an infringement against an inherent right or moral and civic entitlement, but regarded it as a source of shame or personal misfortune (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). The American Revolution changed the way women viewed schooling and education. The reformers of the time “made a strong case that girls had a moral, social, and civic right to thorough schooling, not simply the rudimentary or frivolous learning they were permitted to acquire during the colonial period” (p. 28). This begged the question: Why should girls be educated? Many argued for women to be educated not simply for show and selfish accomplishments, but for the purpose of becoming informed citizens. Others argued that women should be not simply be educated for the purpose of increasing their chances in the marriage market but for the purpose of preparing them for occupations which were deemed “useful” and could provide a decent salary should they remain single or become widowed. Yet others like Benjamin Rush viewed education as a prerequisite for a proper Republican mother. In 1787, Rush gave a talk on female education to visitors at the Young Ladies’ Academy in Philadelphia. Rush, a doctor and signer of the Declaration of
Figure 1. Visual Schema for the Literature Review
independence, desired to train women in practical subjects so that they would become good stewards of their husbands’ properties and good mothers who raised their children correctly. He helped create the Young Ladies’ Academy for just such a purpose. It is interesting to note here that there is not yet a mention of the idea of women’s education as originating with women. Education was something that the society of men at the time thought women should have, based on their purposes. Other justifications for the schooling of women at the time were concerned with religion, national and republican government, changing familial values, and the sexual division of the labor market.

Along came four powerful women, however, who helped to change the face of teaching and women’s education forever: Emma Willard, Mary Lyon, Lucy Stone, and Antoinette Brown. These women pushed for female seminaries to become permanent incorporated institutions with decent facilities, specialist teachers, careful standards, discipline, and pedagogy. Together they planted schools across the nation by placing their graduates into teaching positions and encouraging further growth. Willard’s Troy Seminary became a model for others around the country. By 1850, her seminary had graduated more than two hundred teachers (Cott, 2000). Willard’s school was created to serve well-to-do young women. Mary Lyon came along and was able to build on Willard’s idea, but with a major difference: she wanted to offer schooling to those girls who were not as privileged. Lyon could do so by keeping costs as low as possible and striving to have seminaries own their own land and be self-supporting. Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, which was a result of Lyon’s efforts, became the first endowed institution of higher education for females in 1837. Lucy Stone was a student of Lyon and graduated from Oberlin College in Ohio. She was a leading abolitionist and an advocate
for women’s rights. Stone was bold enough to wish to pursue a doctorate in divinity in 1847. She was denied the request until 1908, when she received an honorary doctorate. Stone and Antoinette Brown, her fellow academic, paved the way for American women writers and activists that emerged in the 1840s and later. The women who came after them were no longer considered insurgents because Stone and Brown took the bulk of the criticism for them. This is how women’s rights to education began. Women, against all personal, societal, and religious condemnation, have taken risks that propelled them into untouched and somewhat forbidden domains. Once a few have overcome and carved out a space in the metaphorical forest of male-dominated barriers, others have much more easily followed suit.

For some time following this implantation of schools and beginning of coeducation, the first half of the nineteenth century was fairly quiet and inconsequential. Tyack and Hansot (1992) proposed that this passage of time and silence about coeducation could have been the result of any number of reasons, including people taking coeducation for granted, its rationale being so obvious that it needed no explanation, speaking about it would arouse conflict and embarrassment, or the slow nature of its development. By 1850, the number of white girls and boys attending school in the north was fairly similar. In the north, many male teachers were replaced with females due to the fact that they could hire two female teachers for the price of one male teacher. Unfortunately, this was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it provided countless opportunities for women to work and earn wages. On the other, a woman who did want that opportunity was forced to accept wages that equaled approximately half of a man in the same position. This set the tone for monetary inequality for years to come.
In 1848, the first convention for women’s rights in America gathered in Seneca Falls, New York. At the forefront of this convention were Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Both women juggled the responsibilities of home and the pursuit of their professional and societal goals. The two women along with others organized the convention the best way they could, having had no model because they were pioneers. They were prepared for a small crowd of close friends, but ended up with over three hundred people in attendance to hear what they had to say. The modern women’s suffrage movement was born out of this convention. Though most of the newspapers slammed the convention and associated activities, the convention proved later to be an instrumental part of the liberation movement of women. Women’s voices were not simply heard. They were listened to.

The latter part of the nineteenth century saw arguments over the plausibility of coeducation. Eventually, in the early 1890’s, most public school personnel had internalized the idea that schooling should be coeducational and that the curriculum should be the same for both males and females, with 63% of the degree-granting colleges in the country open to women (Cott, 2000). The view of woman and a woman’s role in the family and in society was beginning to change in the minds of Americans. Women were now enjoying many more freedoms, having fewer children, and entering the paid work force if desired. Assumptions, preconceived notions, and tightly held views were cracking and being reshaped thanks to foremothers who paved the way.

Although views about women were changing and schools during the time appeared to be more egalitarian, feminists during the early to mid-1900’s would argue
otherwise. In 1920, Crystal Eastman defined the task of women’s liberation that lay ahead:

….how to arrange the world so that women can be human beings, with a chance to exercise their infinitely varied gifts in infinitely varied ways, instead of being destined by the accident of their sex to one field of activity- housework and child-raising (Tyack & Hansot, 1992, p. 243).

Feminists of the time believed that schools were a main cause of the subordination of women and that view continues to prevail. School has always been a place in which certain values, morals, and beliefs are transmitted to society’s youth. During the early twentieth century, traditional, conservative values still dominated the educational arena. Women were taught, if in a hidden, roundabout way, that they were not equal to men. Because those values persisted, women often felt subordinate and were viewed as subordinate. Well-publicized reports of the times revealed that female college graduates earned less than men who had only completed elementary school. Women were herded into low-paying jobs where the majority of workers was of their same sex. The Gallup Poll in 1962 even revealed that women who served as housewives wanted more for their daughters than the life they had led (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). Activists pushed to educate the public about gender discrimination, legal and policy remedies, and implementation. An abundance of cases of institutional sexism were uncovered by many groups of activists, including in textbooks, classroom interactions, sex-stereotyped ideas of courses and careers, sports funding, and in an imbalance of males as administrators (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). All of this contributed to the continued subordinate status of women in America.
Furthermore, even with the feminist movements of the 1960s and the passing of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, changes took place slowly. Although the current landscape of the education of women seems up to the standards of early feminists, many would argue that there still exist pervasive inequalities. These inequalities, at least for some women, are simply not as visible as they used to be and represent individual struggles more so than collective ones. Women of color and women of poverty continue to struggle. As Cott (2000) states, “It was hard to escape the conclusion that impoverished minority women’s experiences after 1960 had little in common with those of well-educated middle- and upper-class women; ethnicity and class remained powerful obstacles to women’s solidarity.” So, individuals struggling to succeed are still fighting battles for women’s rights all over the nation. Delving deeper into the experiences of individual women may reveal what battles they are facing in today’s America.

**Multiple and Demanding Roles for Females**

Although some cultures, religions, and groups in America still support and cling to the traditional role of woman as mother, that role has largely expired. For most in American Society, gone are the days of a woman who keeps the home and bares children while the man is employed outside the home. Today, the majority of American mothers work outside the home, which has caused gender imbalances. Tiedje (2004) examines the change processes of employed mothers in response to work and family incompatibilities and found seven major themes that emerged from the interviews of 158 women and their spouses. These included individual mutabilities, James Baldwin’s paradox, time enough, coping, incremental change, new occasions teach new duties, and strength from others (Tiedje, 2004). The theme of individual mutabilities was concerned with the fact that the
women in the study were able to grow and change beyond fixed limits, meaning that they changed their employment to reflect their priorities, which also changed over time. James Baldwin’s paradox is the holding of two ideas in the mind that are contradictory to one another, which are acceptance that life is what it is and the unacceptability of injustices. The women in the study revealed a dissatisfaction with the larger context, but a satisfaction with individual accomplishments, the view that they were very good parents, but still harboring regrets about time and attention spent regarding children, and the desire to be home, cooking dinner and the desire to work because the additional income was needed. The third theme, time enough, was concerned with not having the amount of time to spend with family that the respondents wanted to spend. Coping strategies that were found in the study fell into four main categories: superwoman strategy (working as hard and efficiently as possible in all roles), planning and time management, cognitive reinterpretation of one’s role demands, and divesting oneself of unimportant activities (Tiedje, 2004). Incremental change is about the women in the study demonstrating perseverance over time and learning that balancing multiple roles is a process. Theme six, new occasions teach new duties, recognizes that the women were involved in adaption and realignment of their own lives as well as the lives of those around them, such as adapting to having elderly parents in need of constant care or the death of someone close. Lastly, strength from others emerged as a theme. Not only does this include support from friends and family around the respondents, but from other respondents within the study. From each other, they gained a sense that the feelings and experiences they had were not isolated ones, but were shared by many.
Polasky and Holahan (1998) emphasize the fact that although work and family has been redefined, females have retained many of the duties and responsibilities that are considered traditionally females’ work. “Between 1977 and 2002, full-time employed men significantly increased their time in household and child care tasks, whereas women’s time in these tasks remained the same or decreased” (Barnett, 2004, p. 670). Barnett (2004) also suggests that attitudes are shifting in stating that men and women alike are endorsing women’s expanded social roles. In my own family, my husband and father take on more of the roles that are considered traditionally female, like washing clothes, washing dishes, and bathing children. It seems that no longer is the attitude one of “You need to take care of this”, but “This needs to be taken care of”, the importance of which is the absence of a particular person being biologically assigned to a task. The person who does the task is the person who is available to do the task. This represents a more balanced approach in attending to household responsibilities. There is still much work to be done in shifting the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of society to reflect, large-scale, the fact that women have taken on more roles; the responsibilities previously associated with females must be revisited and reassigned. If females’ roles continue to increase and intensify while the responsibilities traditionally assigned them persist, certain side effects may appear for a female. The side effects of being an overworked mother could be divorce or deterioration of mental, emotional, and/or physical health, among many other possibilities. Males or other partners, when they are present in the relationship, should take on more of those responsibilities in an effort to achieve balance and prevent those possible side effects.
Women as Students in Academe: Where Are We?

The number of doctorates awarded to women has risen substantially in the last decade and women have at last reached parity with men. However, the length of time it takes for women to obtain a doctorate has increased. Figure 2 shows the median years it takes for males and females to receive their Ph.D.s in all subjects/areas beginning in 1960-64 and ending in 1995-99 (registered time to doctorate). For women, it took longer than men to obtain a Ph.D. regardless of the year specified. Specifically in education, it took a median of 12.6 years from baccalaureate to doctoral award in 1975 and a median of 19.4 years from baccalaureate to doctoral award in 2000, when

Registered Time to Doctorate by Sex
1960-64 through 1995-99

considering total time to doctorate (Maher, Ford, & Thompson, 2004). This suggests that there may be factors impeding women from obtaining those degrees and perhaps some of those factors result from women experiencing multiple life roles. Furthermore, the attrition rate is roughly 60% in many doctoral programs around the country. Variations in the time it takes for women to complete their doctorates has been relatively unexplored in research (Maher et al., 2004). It is critical to understand why the variations occur. The time to completion of a doctorate may prove quite unattractive to women considering returning to school. If a woman decides to return to graduate school, she may not earn as much money as she would if she weren’t going to school due to the amount of time and energy it takes to pursue a degree. Furthermore, and in considering the larger context, the longer the time a woman is in graduate school, the less time the woman has to contribute to society in a professional role. For these compelling reasons, I hope that my interviews can help make clear how these and other variables help explain roles and values of women educational leaders seeking a doctoral degree. Table 1 provides another look at total time to degree and registered time to degree as well as the age of the doctoral degree recipients in education. It is interesting to note that although the registered time to degree decreases half a year between 1990 and 2003, the age of the recipient upon completion increases by two years. The age at doctorate increases stably between 1978 and 2003.

Maher et al. (2004) reports that the women they interviewed that were considered “early finishers” stressed that these factors constrained their degree progress: doubts about their ability to earn the degree, funding limitations from the university/personal resources, and the sense that they did not have the “right” mentor/advisor. Six themes
Table 1

Total Time to Degree and Age at Doctorate, by Academic Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Time to Degree (years)</th>
<th>Registered Time to Degree (years)</th>
<th>Age at Doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The criteria in Table 1 are adapted from NSF/NIH/USED/NEH/USDA/NASA, Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2003.

emerged from their study: commitment to timely degree completion, working relationships with faculty, funding opportunities, family issues, research experiences, and capability to make “the system” work for them (Maher et al., 2004). The women in the study, who finished early or on time had a strong goal to finish within a particular timeframe, were motivated, focused, and disciplined to do so. Those early finishers also noted that their relationships with faculty members were positive and established, especially with their major professors. The third theme, funding opportunities, is concerned with being able to afford the expenses schooling brings. Most of the early- and late-finishers stated that funding sources were a constant concern. Family issues for early-finishing respondents included the strength through support of various family members. Late-finishing respondents reported many obstacles in family life that made focusing on graduate studies difficult, including having children, experiencing a stressful or failing marriage, experiencing the death of someone close, and relocating due to the careers of spouses. Research experiences, the fifth theme, are concerned with how successful or unsuccessful respondents had been with the research process. Late-finishing respondents reported more anxiety and unpreparedness with the process of research. The
last theme, making the system work, includes how respondents were able to seek out mentors, advisors, and other persons on campus that could be of help to them along the way. These themes represent critical considerations for women returning to graduate school to obtain their doctorates.

In addition, Johnsrud (1995) discusses barriers that prolong or prevent women from pursuing advanced degrees by presenting institutional realities, disciplinary realities, programmatic realities, and personal realities that uncover the causes and consequences of the gender differences of those seeking advanced degrees. Institutional realities include lack of same-sex role models for women in some departments, financial support or lack thereof, and the ability to enroll on a full-time basis. Disciplinary realities include women seen as deviant in male-dominated professions, faculty support or lack thereof, cognitive styles and ways of knowing, and sex stereotyping. Programmatic realities include failure of women to be properly socialized into academia, feelings of isolation, sexual harassment, and lack of support and satisfaction. Personal realities consist of balancing the demands of family, work, and school, juggling conflicting roles, lack of time, leisure, and support, and feelings of inadequacy (Johnsrud, 1995). These multiple realities involved in women returning to school may also explain why it takes them longer, on average, to earn advanced degrees.

Analysis of research by Mansfield, Welton, Lee and Young (2010), specifically concerning women pursuing doctorates in educational leadership, reveals findings in five areas: constraints within the organizational structure of graduate school, personal and familial sacrifice, struggles with identity, questioning self, and experiences with mentoring. Constraints within the organizational structure referred mainly to the ability of
women versus men to develop professional networks and job opportunities as well as the ability to acquire stable funding. The care of children and aging parents, the strain on the family unit as a result of a stressful job and graduate school coursework, and relinquishing of many parental duties due to the existence of multiple roles together created personal and familial sacrifice. Interestingly, family relationships provided essential support for the women. The participants struggled with their identities. Their respective races, ethnicities, ages, social classes, languages, immigrant statuses, genders, and marital/familial status combined and added complexity to their doctoral experiences. They also questioned their experiences in light of their identities. Lastly, participants in this study by Mansfield, et al. (2010) report difficulty in establishing mentoring relationships with colleagues and professors in their educational leadership programs. Table 2 represents the county in which all of my research participants work and offers the percentages of school-based administrators (includes both principals and assistant principals) and district-based administrators holding doctoral degrees. This information was provided by the supervisor of human resources in the county, compiled on July 5, 2011. It appears that a higher percentage of women administrators have doctorates. There are approximately 190 female principals and 85 male principals in this county. Assuming for a moment that the administrators in Table 2 with doctorates are principals (not assistants), only 14% of female principals have doctorates versus 20% of male principals. A 6% discrepancy exists. It is my hope that the interviews I conduct will illuminate realities that exist for the female participants and how those realities affect the pursuit of their doctoral degrees.
Table 2

Percentages of Administrators Holding Doctoral Degrees in the Participants’ County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School-Level (633 Administrators)</th>
<th>District-Level (262 Administrators)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Support for Women Negotiating Multiple Roles.** If women are successful in negotiating their multiple roles during their graduate studies, they must also develop the habits of scholarship necessary to succeed as researchers. Engstrom (1999) interviewed eighteen female faculty members seeking to understand how they construed the role of their doctoral programs in promoting their scholarly writing. She finds that these women were actively engaged in research and scholarly writing throughout their doctoral programs because they served as research assistants to well-known scholars. Through their graduate assistantships, they learned the skills needed to conduct research and write for various audiences. Others in the study had no opportunities to work as an assistant or be trained in writing or publishing and yet still managed to obtain their degrees. Another finding included the socialization process within the world of academe. Some faculty members reported that they were socialized into the process and were able to work closely with scholars while others were not part of the socialization process at all- they merely completed assignments and moved through their programs. Many of the women in this study commented that white males were able to more easily socialize into the
academic world and conduct research because of that socialization. Considering the
difference in the demands of women and men returning to school, this is not surprising.
While women, especially those with careers and children, struggled to balance their roles
in life, men often did not have the same requirements, demands, and expectations placed
on them regarding family life. This may make returning to school much more
manageable for men. Those women in the study who had mentors identified four major
contributions of the mentors: they created opportunities for them to research, write, and
publish (usually through graduate assistantships), they taught them how to write in a
public forum, they validated the women’s potential and ability as scholars, and they
demonstrated the discipline, habits, and commitment needed to be prolific writers
(Engstrom, 1999). Furthermore, the participants promoted the role of peers as essential in
supporting the development of their habits of scholarship. This included motivation,
obtaining resources, and collaboration among cohorts and circles of students.

The development of habits of scholarship is critical to the doctoral process. Riehl,
Larson, Short, and Reitzug (2000) specifically address habits of scholarship in their own
doctoral programs. Students in their programs begin with an exploration of the term
scholar and together redefine the image of a scholar from one that is a role to be filled to
a way of being, knowing, and doing. This exploration can cause female students to propel
themselves into new ways to engage in scholarly practice. The authors recommend that
doctoral programs in educational administration aim to both lay a solid foundation for
creating a community of scholars through developmental work with students and in the
process, assist student in developing habits of scholarship that will “enhance their
abilities to use multiple ways of knowing to identify and address critical issues and
problems embedded in their practice as well as in the practice of schools” (Riehl, et al., 2000). Doctoral programs designed in the manner described by the authors can do much in the way of preparing student mothers, who are educational administrators, to conduct research.

**Women in Educational Administration**

For years, women have held the majority of teaching positions in the country. Education is by and large considered a feminized profession. Men often moved out of positions in teaching because of the low pay and social stigma and into positions of administration, where the pay was better and they could keep close watch over female subordinates. Males, instead of females, have always been the majority in educational administration, with the exception of a period of time around World War II, when many males left to fight in the war. However, when the war was over and the men returned, they once again dominated the realm of educational administration (Mertz, 2009). Programs in colleges that targeted the preparation of educational administrators sprang up around the country. Often, the men in these programs had control over who was admitted into the college program as well as who was appointed to superintendent positions and administrative positions. Female participation in any of these arenas was limited. Promising data came in 1997 when a study was replicated. Researchers found that between 1972 and 1994, the percentage of female administrators had increased dramatically. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 targeted educational inequality. Its effects were not immediate, yet were far-reaching- even into the programs that prepared educational administrators. Shakeshaft (1989, p. 18) recalls Ella Flagg Young in 1909 when she predicted “in the near future we will have more women than
men in executive charge of the vast educational system.” College programs for educational administration were forced to open their doors to women after the passing of Title IX and by the early 1990s, more than 50% of students in those programs were women (Mertz, 2009). This is promising and advances the idea that the women could very well outnumber men in the education administration arena at some point in our future. In fact, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2004), female principals outnumbered men in 2003-2004, with a 58.7% majority in the elementary school level. This has since increased to 59% in 2007-2008. Table 3 shows the growth in percentage of female principals at all levels of K-12 education in the United States. Table 3 offers a comparison of female teachers and administrators in K-12 education, representing both the country and the state in which this study was conducted. This table was adapted from the [State of this study] Department of Education’s EIAS Data Report entitled *Staff in [this state’s] Public Schools, 2010-11* and EIAS Statistical Brief entitled *Staff in [this state’s] Public Schools, 2000-01* as well as from the *Digest of Education Statistics* (2010) from the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics. While the percentage of female teachers in the United States rose dramatically between 1971 and 1991, it has leveled off since then. The southern U.S. state has a higher percentage of female teachers than does the country. The same is true for the percentage of female administrators. The gap between the two groups of females is also slightly smaller in the state, with a 17.3% discrepancy as opposed to a 19.1% discrepancy. The discrepancy is vast in both instances. Interestingly, secondary female principals represented only 26% of principals in 2003-2004 and 29% in 2007-2008. Clearly, the
Table 3

Growth in Percentage of Female Principals in the U.S. from 1987 to 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of Female Principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987 – 1988</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993 – 1994</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 – 2000</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003 – 2004</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 – 2008</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The majority of female principals are employed at the elementary level. Table 4, adapted from the [state of this study] Department of Educations’ EIAS Data Report as well, provides a comparison of the percentages of teachers and principals at the elementary and secondary levels in the southern state of this study. It was difficult to provide a comparison for the same years because the data is not collected by gender yearly. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011, p. 39) realizes the same and says:

> Establishing the representation of women in school administration in the United States is not as easy as Googling the numbers. Documenting women’s representation in formal leadership positions in schools is difficult because of the absence of reliable and comparable data either nationally or within and across states. Because no federal or national organization, including the National Center for Education Statistics, collects or reports annual administrative data by gender--
Table 4

Comparison of Percentages of Female Teachers and Administrators in K-12 Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Southern U.S. State (in which study was conducted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of Female Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td>77.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>79.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of Female Administrators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
<td>49.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>51.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

let alone by gender and ethnicity combined-- there is no easy way to compare the representation of women in administration by position from year to year.

Shakeshaft (1989) believes that the discrepancy between these percentages lies in the different career paths of female and male administrators, with women holding staff positions or elementary school principalships and not moving into the line positions of secondary principal, assistant superintendent, or superintendent. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011, p. 41) say:
… although the representation of women in school leadership has increased, women still do not fill administrative positions in proportion to their numbers in teaching, or in proportion to those who are now trained and certified to become administrators. The latest comparable data across job types from the U.S. Department of Education were collected in the Schools and Staff Survey in 2007-2008 and show that despite gains, women are still not proportionately represented in elementary or secondary levels or in the superintendency…

Based on the data in Table 5, there is still a long way to go in order for the percentage of female administrators to mirror the percentage of female teachers at all levels of education.

In 1988, The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) commissioned a study to find out why there existed a shortage of administrators at all levels of schooling at that time (Adams & Hambright, 2004). The study concluded that there were three main reasons for the shortage: low pay in comparison to the responsibilities of the job, too much stress, and too much time required of the job. This still did not answer the question as to why men hold 60% of the administrative positions in a profession in which approximately 75% of teachers are women.

Factors that were encouraging to the polled teachers in their study were of no surprise, including the prospect of earning more money, knowledge that they could initiate change, and having a supportive staff. The inhibiting factors, however, revealed why some teachers would choose not to make the transition into an administrative
position. These factors included losing contact with children in a classroom setting, dealing with difficult parents, spending more time on the job, dealing with difficult and noncompliant teachers, students, and staff, and working within the political realm. One of the many suggestions the authors made to combat the low interest of women in regard to seeking administrative positions was to counter the beliefs and possible misconceptions that in-service teachers and new teachers hold about administrative positions. This idea really rang true with me because the perception of the role of an administrator is one that is all consuming and incredibly difficult. Personally, I’ve found quite the opposite to be true. It is less challenging for me to be a female administrator. I no longer have to bring work home to create or to grade, constantly manage discipline, or be perpetually “on stage” in front of students. Not all administrators feel this way, I am sure, but perhaps there is something to be said about the perception that current administrators are creating for others to adopt. I hoped to find out more about this perception during my inquiry.

**Mentoring Relationships.** Searby and Tripses (2006) suggest that another solution in combating male dominance within educational administration lies in

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**Table 5**

Comparison of Percentages of Female Teachers and Principals in the Southern U.S. State of this Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Elementary Level</th>
<th>Secondary Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mentoring relationships. They defined mentoring as “a personal learning partnership between a more experienced professional who acts as a guide, role model, coach, teacher, and/or sponsor and a less experienced professional” (2006, p. 182). As a result of the study, the authors discovered that although aspiring male administrators often have access to the “old boys’ network” that provides a type of support, often women do not have the same kind of system in place. They suggest that women be able to name the obstacles they face and become more deliberate about teaching other aspiring female administrators how to navigate into effective mentoring relationships in order to receive the support they need to be effective.

Scheckelhoff (2007, p. 142) offers this advice from women leaders to women leaders:

- Act authentically through working on one’s self-awareness, taking action to align one’s life with one’s values, believing in one’s self, and getting support when needed.
- Make connections by taking time for people and getting involved in groups, finding a mentor or being mentored, and networking.
- Achieve agency by setting realistic goals and a plan for achieving them, seeking and obtaining feedback from others, remaining open, and empowering one’s self.
- Achieve wholeness by establishing clear priorities, setting boundaries, scheduling, delegating, sharing responsibilities, saying no, and making time for spirituality.
• Seek self-clarity through examining one’s behaviors, seeking feedback, paying attention, and making self-learning a priority.

From the point of view of an educational administrator, this advice absolutely makes sense. Concerning the advice to act authentically, when I first entertained the idea of being an administrator and shared that idea with colleagues and friends, the one common piece of advice given me was to stay true to who I am no matter what role I may acquire. So far, it has served me well. Connections can also serve as a powerful motivator for change because that is when a leader can really tap into what students and teachers need and desire in order to be more effective at what they do. By staying connected, it is easier to lead. Achieving agency cannot happen without acting authentically, staying connected to those one leads, achieving wholeness, and seeking self-clarity. As an administrator, one must keep a pulse on curriculum, instruction, current educational trends, and the social atmosphere of the school, among many other things, in order to know how to navigate the school forward for the betterment of students’ education. That difficult job may become overwhelming if an administrator does not feel a sense of wholeness or self-clarity in a particular aspect of life.

**Feminist Standpoint Theory**

To do feminist research is to put at the center of one’s inquiry the social construction of gender, pose questions, locate absences, and argue the “centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness, skills and institutions as well as in the distribution of power and privilege” (Lather, 1991, p. 71). While the traditional positivist view of science professes to see everything from no place in particular, feminist standpoint theory purports to see, or *look*, from *somewhere*. In this view, science is part
of the social order because it is situated and constructed from the perspective of particular social positions— it is not value-neutral. Harding (1991) states:

The standpoint theorists have… criticized conventional sciences for their arrogance in assuming that they could tell one true story about a world that is out there, ready-made for their reporting, without listening to women’s accounts or being aware that accounts of nature and social relations have been constructed within men’s control of gender relations (p. 141).

Voices of marginalized groups cannot and should not be stifled.

Standpoint theory builds in an analysis of power relations that inevitably exist because of its part in the social order. Viewing the world through the lens of feminism, which sheds light on women from a variety of backgrounds as well as other groups who are excluded from the dominant social order, provides a more complete basis of knowledge. This basis of knowledge must start from the perspective of women’s lives and experiences and must aim to make them visible.

When discussing the experiences of women, it is critical to stress the plural of the word *women*. There is no universal “man” and therefore no universal “woman”. Masculine and feminine are categories that exist across races, cultures, and classes and the desires, interests, and experiences of men and women differ accordingly. Harding (1987) suggests that not only do they differ across races, cultures, and classes, but that desires, interests, and experiences often conflict in any one individual’s experience. My own roles of student, mother, and educational administrator are in daily conflict with one another.
Because desires, interests, and experiences differ within an individual, a feminist researcher must operate with a conscious subjectivity. There must be an examination of the dimensions of a researcher’s own historical, social, and cultural presuppositions at the onset of and throughout feminist research. I aim to document my presuppositions before and during this study via my researcher reflective journal.

**Summary and Gaps in the Literature**

Since the early 1800s, women have made significant progress in the attainment of college degrees. Only recently have women reached parity with men in the attainment of professional and doctoral degrees, and it has taken quite a lengthy amount of time to do so. However, women remain persistent in their educational pursuits for various reasons. Degree-seeking women face many challenges that their male counterparts do not necessarily face due to the multiple roles many play. The difficulties involved in those multiple roles impact and shape their educational experiences. While much attention in the research has focused on women as students, mothers as students, women as employees, and women as educational administrators, studies that focus on the intersection of multiple roles, such as that of woman, mother, graduate student, and educational administrator, is sparse. Mothers who aim to fulfill their personal and professional goals through their own educations and careers in education seem to be taking on more roles than ever before to achieve those goals.

Why girls needed an education was a prominent question during the colonial period in U.S. history. Reasons, largely produced by the male-dominated society at the time, varied and included the purposes of show, accomplishment, informed citizenship, marriage opportunities, occupational preparation, and proper motherhood or wifehood,
among many other reasons. Powerful women like Willard, Lyon, Stone, and Brown changed the landscape of women’s education, planted teaching schools and encouraged further education among women. Women’s rights advocates cropped up in the mid-1800s and women like Mott and Stanton paved the way for the future of women’s rights. Change since that time has come slowly and incrementally, even with the passing of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Inequalities regarding women are still pervasive in many aspects of society even though they may be more individualized than collective, although women of color and poverty remain in a collective struggle.

The current role of mother appears to be even more diverse and varied today than ever before as women strive to obtain their professional, educational, and personal goals. Women are adapting to the multiple roles and responsibilities in their lives, but not without consequence. Many barriers exist that make it more difficult for women to achieve their goals. This is not necessarily the case with men, although in some cases their roles and responsibilities are also morphing.

Although women have reached parity with men in the number of degrees earned, time to degree completion for women has increased over the years. This occurs for a variety of reasons, including family issues, the lack of a mentor, and lack of socialization and integration into the “system” of academia. Developing habits of scholarship during a doctoral program was also of concern when considering female students. Colleges and universities could remedy much in an effort to better meet the needs of female students.

Throughout formal education and even before, women have saturated the teaching profession. The education of the young is by and large considered “women’s work.” Men, in contrast, have saturated the administration of K-12 schools. Certainly the
percentage of women leading in schools and districts around the country should mirror the percentage of women teaching in those schools and districts. The field of elementary education is the closest to achieving that goal, with a 58.7% majority. This is not the case with secondary education and higher education. Low pay, stress overload, and amount of time required of the job are some factors that repel women from pursuing administrative and leadership positions. Mentoring and collegial relationships, achieving agency, and staying true to self may help women as they struggle to seek, obtain, and sustain successful and effective administrative and leadership positions.

Feminist Standpoint Theory was described to provide the frame for understanding how women negotiate the roles of woman, mother, student, and educational administrator. Feminist Standpoint Theory requires that the social construction of gender, the asking of questions, the locating of absences, and the arguing of how gender shapes consciousnesses, skills, institutions, and the distributions of power and privilege be put in the center of inquiry. Researchers look from somewhere, as opposed to claiming a positivist stance wherein researchers are objective and do not look from anywhere in particular. Science is social, and therefore not value-neutral. Because it is social, the analysis of power relations as well as a researcher’s self-examination must be built into the research process.

A visual map (Figure 1) of the contents of the literature review was included in this chapter to capture the four major areas that surround my study. Research has been conducted, as denoted at the beginning of Chapter One, on women as graduate students, mothers as graduate students, women as employees, and women as educational leaders. Most of the research conducted in this arena focused on women in one (i.e. female), two
(i.e. female and mother), or three (i.e. female, mother, and student) roles. There are few studies that expand to include a fourth life role and there is no research that specifically explores women as educational administrators, mothers, and doctoral students. I have contributed to the research because I gained the perspectives of women who are living these roles. In the next chapter, I will describe the methods used in this study in an effort to obtain their perspectives.
Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain women educational administrators’ perspectives on work and life. The exploratory questions that guided this study were:

1. What variables influence women’s perspectives of their roles and lived experience as mothers, educational administrators, and doctoral students?
2. How do women educational administrators successfully negotiate the challenges of motherhood and doctoral study?

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods I used to collect and analyze data pertaining to women living in these multiple roles. I will make explicit the basis for my choice of method, selection of participants, and design of the research, including data collection, storage, and analysis. My role as researcher will also be explored, as it will illuminate my biases, or subjectivities, in an effort to identify and monitor them for the sake of their role in shaping the collection and interpretation of data. Furthermore feminist standpoint theory is the theoretical frame of this study and will be discussed in an effort to expand the explanation of the study’s structure. Additionally, ethical issues surrounding the study will be described in this chapter.
Techniques Used in this Study

The interview was the primary method of data collection in this study. However, a researcher reflective journal and notes as well as relevant documents were used as forms of data collection in this study and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Interviewing is well suited to studying affective and emotional human experiences. In defining what an interview is, Janesick (2004) states that:

Interviewing is a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic (p. 72).

In understanding the purpose behind an interview, Patton (2002) states:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe… We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective (p. 340-341).

The interviews I conducted allowed for communication and the joint construction of meaning as a result of information and idea exchanges, carefully considered questions, and thoughtful responses. I was able to enter into my conversational partners’ perspectives on work and life as an educational administrator.
Selection of Participants (Conversational Partners). My topic and research questions were identified and I selected the “conversational partners” for this study. Rubin & Rubin (2005) uses this term because it has the “advantage of emphasizing the active role of the interviewee in shaping the discussion and in guiding what paths the research should take” (p. 14). The term “conversational partner” suggests cooperation and congeniality between interviewer and interviewee and the customization of questions for and uniqueness of conversations had with each interviewee. The selection of conversational partners was purposeful as opposed to probabilistic. Probability sampling allows the researcher to generalize results from a sample to the population from which the sample came. Contrary to that notion, purposeful sampling stems from the researcher’s desire to discover, understand, and gain insight. This enables the researcher to select a participant from which the most can be learned. In order to choose conversational partners in such a purposeful way, a researcher must have selection criteria. The selection criteria for this study include that participants must be:

- Women currently seeking their doctorates in Educational Leadership or recent graduates, in the past two years
- Mothers of at least one child under the age of fifteen
- Educational administrators within a K-12 system of education

I located key participants who referred me to others who met the criteria. This is called “network sampling” (Merriam, 2009) and can benefit the inquiry because the participants aided me in accumulating new information-rich cases. I reasoned to believe-- at this stage in the study and based on my review of the literature surrounding this study-- that the participants were unique in that they represented an atypical group of women. They were
women educational administrators who were mothers and who were pursuing their educational leadership doctoral degrees. There were a total of five conversational partners who I interviewed twice, for a total of ten interviews.

**Pilot Interview.** I initially selected one conversational partner with whom I piloted my fledgling questions. After analysis of both my interview methodology and pilot findings, I contacted the other four conversational partners and asked if they would allow me to interview them on two separate occasions for approximately 45-60 minutes each regarding their experiences as mothers, educational leadership doctoral students, and educational administrators. The second round of interviews was a continuation of the initial round of interviews and analyses. It allowed me to perform a member check within the interview process in an effort to bring credibility and validity to the study. It also allowed me to clarify any ambiguous points from the first round of interviews and probe deeper where needed (Janesick, 2004, Merriam, 2009).

**Semi Structured Interview Format.** As previously stated, the first interview I conducted served as the pilot interview. From the pilot interview, I approximated the amount of time the interviews would take and ascertained that the interview protocol was sufficient in yielding rich data. Once the pilot interview was completed, I conducted an analysis to determine if the initial interview questions (see Appendix A) or process needed to be refined. Gaining input from my pilot interview conversational partner regarding the initial questions, re-crafting original questions, and formulating new questions helped in the analysis. I then continued with the interviews.

A semi-structured interview was used with the five conversational partners. A semi-structured interview employs specific questions around a particular topic. But
unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews allow those questions to be more flexibly worded and ordered as needed throughout the interview. The exact wording and order is not predetermined. This flexibility allows the researcher the opportunity to be responsive to the situation, topic, and conversational partner. Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 145) refer to a “tree-and-branch structure” of questioning in which the researcher divides the research problem into parts, with each part being covered with a main question. This structure makes sense in this study because I sought to describe and explain the experiences of women engaging in the multiple roles of mother, educational administrator, and educational leadership doctoral student. The main questions mirrored the roles I was exploring, with at least one question per role. The authors also refer to a “river-and-channel model” of questioning that is used when the researcher wants to explore an idea, concept, or issue in great depth, following it wherever it goes. I believed that the tree-and-branch structure would be most effective for use in the initial round of interviewing whereas I thought I would employ the river-and-channel model for the second round of interviewing in order to obtain depth from the conversational partners. This belief proved helpful and accurate. This depth was necessary during follow-up interviews in order to pursue dominant themes that emerged from the initial interview. Whatever method of questioning deemed most effective in this process, Janesick (2004) suggests that researchers compose as many thoughtful questions as possible in order to be as prepared as possible.
1. Tell me about a typical day in your life. (This question opened the door for the revelation and discussion of the conversational partner’s life roles, such as that of mother and educational administrator.)

2. Talk about the educational journey that brought you to your current position as an educational administrator. (This question allowed me to become familiar with the conversational partner’s career path in order to reveal her motivation for pursuing goals and from where that motivation stems.)

3. Describe your experience as a working mother.
   a. Possible follow-up question (PFQ): What challenges have emerged?
   b. PFQ: What successes have emerged?

4. Describe your experience as an educational leadership doctoral student.
   a. PFQ: What led to your pursuit of a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership?
   b. PFQ: What do you hope to attain with this degree?

5. Tell me about your experience juggling all three of these roles (mother, doctoral student, and educational administrator).
   a. PFQ: What special challenges are involved?
   b. PFQ: Under what conditions do you think your experience is different from others’? From a man’s? From a father’s?

6. Describe your greatest achievement in education during this time of simultaneously being mom, administrator, and doctoral student.
   a. PFQ: How was your role of mother involved?
b. PFQ: How was your role as administrator involved?

c. PFQ: How was your role of doctoral student involved?

d. PFQ: What contributes to your success and resiliency in negotiating these roles?

7. Is there anything else you want to tell me at this time?

I followed up with probing questions, including the follow-up questions provided in the initial set of interview questions (Appendix A) and others that emerged during the interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I transcribed the interviews and conducted an analysis, which occurred in two phases. First, I prepared the transcripts, which included finding, refining, and elaborating themes, concepts, and events. Second, I coded the interviews in an effort to be able to easily retrieve what the conversational partners said about those themes, concepts, and events. The second interview was comprised of follow-up questions to probe deeper and clarify meaning.

**Analysis and Interpretation.** Analysis should be an ongoing process. I began with my own reflective experience of the phenomenon under study by recording that experience in my researcher reflective journal. This self-reflection encouraged my transparency as well as the opportunity to sensitize myself to my own biases in an effort to compensate for them. It also allowed for the minimalization of prejudgments and presuppositions in order to reach a transcendental state of openness and freshness from which to view the phenomena, as previously discussed. The analysis continued with the initial pilot interview data and eventually ended with a formal, written interpretation from the final analysis. “The goals of the analysis are to reflect the complexity of human interaction by portraying it in the words of the interviewees and through actual events and
to make that complexity understandable to others” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 202). In order to make this happen, I examined the content of each interview transcript once it was created (one to two weeks after the interview was conducted) and determined what I learned as well as what I still needed to uncover.

In regard to the specific method I used to analyze this data, I chose to follow the process outlined by Rubin and Rubin (2005). Table 6, in which I enumerated the steps based on my own summarization, clarifies the process I used in my study.

**Member-Check/Second Round of Interviews.** Once the initial round of interviews were transcribed, I sent those transcripts to the conversational partners and requested that they verify the accuracy of the information (Janesick, 2004). This is part of a process called a “member check” or “respondent validation” and involves soliciting feedback on the accuracy of the transcript. Member checking is a common strategy for ensuring internal validity.

I asked for a second interview with the conversational partners to ask follow-up and clarifying questions that arose from the first round of interviews. I also completed the process of member checking by soliciting their feedback on my emerging findings as a way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning exposed during the first round of interviews (Janesick, 2004, Merriam, 2009, and Moustakas, 1994). Encouraging the conversational partners to comment on these emerging findings provided the opportunity to add additional observations as a form of data gathering and triangulation. The second interview was transcribed and analyzed in the same manner as the first (refer to Table 6).
Table 6

Rubin & Rubin’s Steps of Interview Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Recognize</td>
<td>Find the concepts, themes, events, and topical markers in the interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Examine</td>
<td>Clarify what is meant by specific concepts and themes and synthesize different events in order to put together my understanding of the overall narrative. This leads to elaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Figure out a brief label to designate each concept/theme and mark the text where they are found. This allows for the easy retrieval and examination of the data units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sort</td>
<td>Group all of the data units with the same label together. Then, look for how the concept was seen overall and examine for nuances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Synthesize</td>
<td>Put the concepts and themes together and show how they answer my research questions and produce broader implications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Researcher Reflective Journal and Notes.** Janesick (2004, p. 95) states, “for the qualitative researcher, the meditative focus of journal writing can only help to refine the researcher as research instrument” which is essential because “the qualitative researcher is always dealing with lived experience and must be awake to that experience and for that experience.” I view my researcher reflective journal as a mirror of the inside and a window to the outside. As a human being, I was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and as such, interpretations of reality were accessed directly through my observations and interviews (Merriam, 2009). A journal can serve as a mirror of the inside of self, which is the instrument of research, and with it, I recorded my thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and observations at various times during the inquiry. It is a place
for researchers to practice reflexive strategies. Reflexivity involves a researcher’s reflection on his/her research process and findings, awareness of his/her social positionality, values, and perspectives, and critique of the effects of his/her words and actions on the individuals being studied (Young & Skrla, 2003). Reflexivity allowed me to bracket my own experiences throughout the inquiry. Bracketing was necessary so that my personal assumptions and prejudices could be set aside and when that occurred, the journal served as a kind of window through which I viewed conversational partners’ perspectives and experiences as women educational administrators.

Likewise, Piantanida and Garman (1999) propose three types of reflection that can play a prominent role for the researcher: reflection as recollection, reflection as introspection, and conceptual reflection. Recollection is concerned with the “situational aspects of encountered experience, recalling the specific details of what happened, when it occurred, and who was involved” (p. 142). This kind of reflection was helpful during the actual interviews with the conversational partners. Researcher notes provide this kind of reflection in that they allow the researcher to record actions or gestures that may influence the interpretation of what the conversational partner is saying, such as tears, laughter, long pauses, or shrugs. Researcher notes also allow the researcher to jot down thoughts on the interview as a whole after it has been conducted. These notes or jottings can reveal researcher bias or prompt further analysis. Van Maanen (1983, p. 21) warns that observers must not only be able to empathize, but:

…must also be able to record, categorize, and code what is being observed, that is, to take field notes. An empathetic fieldworker who does not know how to take field
notes or how to use other data collection techniques is likely to take in a lot and give little in return.

Another kind of reflection is that of introspection. Introspection is the process of looking within in order to examine one’s “own mental and emotional responses to encountered experience” (Piantanida & Garman, 1999, p. 142). This process can lead to new questions and insights within the study. A reflective journal, if used systematically, becomes a stable record of a researcher’s thought processes and can aid in the telling of the overall story of the inquiry. More importantly, the journal can reveal critical meaning for the researcher or for others. In this way, it serves as an account for what has happened.

Thirdly, “in conceptual reflection, interpretive researchers are resonating simultaneously with the specific context of the study and with existing discourses about the phenomenon under study” (Piantanida & Garman, 1999, p. 143). A researcher reflective journal can be a place for all three types of reflection and can help fine-tune one as the research instrument. My reflective journal entries and notes throughout this inquiry helped illuminate my researcher-self.

**Relevant Documents.** Merriam (2009) explores five different kinds of documents that may be used or collected during an inquiry: public records, personal documents, popular culture documents, and researcher-generated documents. Public records include documents such as handbooks and government documents that constitute official, ongoing records of a society’s activities whereas personal documents are those that record or represent an individual’s actions, experiences, or beliefs. Popular culture documents are materials generated to entertain, inform, or persuade the public such as
cartoons, soap operas, or YouTube. Lastly, researcher-generated documents are those that are created by the researcher or for the researcher by participants once the study is underway. For example, a researcher may request a diary or journal from the participants or the researcher may take photographs during the inquiry. Relevant documents were collected throughout the process as a third data collection technique. I expected to review the resumes of the conversational partners, various applicable memos and documents from their place of work, and demographic information and data from their social context. I was able to do so.

Assumptions and Role of the Researcher. In this section, I describe my roles, values, beliefs, and assumptions. In the summer of 2008, at the conclusion of my eighth year of teaching, I made the decision to return to school in hopes of obtaining a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. I thoroughly enjoyed the process of obtaining my Master’s degree and I have always had such a love of learning. Throughout my experiences training teachers in the county, I have promoted the importance of teachers’ continued professional growth. It is imperative that those teaching our most impressionable members of society strive for new and better ways to educate.

Upon applying for graduate school, I found out that my husband and I were due to have our second child. I struggled with the decision to continue with this goal of mine. I was not sure, if I continued, that I would have the motivation or devotion to complete the degree. After all, the pursuit of higher education is to a large degree a selfish endeavor. I was terrified that I would not afford this baby the attention it needed and deserved. After much self-reflection and a few long conversations with my husband, I decided that if anyone could handle the world of academia and the world of motherhood, it would be
me. I became a mother for the second time during the second semester of my doctoral coursework.

Furthermore, although I have served in many leadership capacities through my roles as teacher and reading coach, I officially became an administrator during my last semester of coursework for my Ed. D. I struggled with the decision to apply for the assistant principalship. The question that plagued my mind was: Should I focus solely on my education and maintain a manageable job or move into an administrative position so that I can apply what I’ve spent years studying? I decided to move forward because I felt that I needed to apply what I had been learning about leadership in K-12 education.

I now find myself living at the intersection of multiple roles-- that of woman, mother, graduate student, and educational leader. The intent for my dissertation is to study women who, like me, live at the intersection of these multiple roles. I am particularly interested in the way these women undergo a shift in thinking-- how women develop habits of scholarship in graduate school that can lead to an effective impact in education as an administrator. Before doing so, researchers must realize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretations. So, they position themselves in the inquiry in an effort to acknowledge how interpretation is shaped by their personal, cultural, and historical experiences. My first step in positioning myself was exploring my relationship to this inquiry, which I did in this section. A second step in positioning myself was a revelation of my own personal assumptions regarding living at the intersection of mother (seven years), doctoral student (three years), and educational administrator (10 months). These personal assumptions regarding women were as follows:
1. For the most part, it is possible for women to take on multiple life roles, but that possibility usually does not become a reality, or even a probability.

2. Women choose to take on multiple life roles. Most of the time it is not forced upon them, although sometimes it is.

3. Women usually have a support system of some kind when effectively taking on more than two life roles.

4. Women have a variety of reasons for taking on multiple life roles.

5. Experiencing doctoral studies as a mother of young children is a different experience than that of a man or even a father.

6. Women who are mothers and students can make a positive impact on K-12 education as an administrator.

Ethical Considerations. A qualitative researcher must develop a strong ethical sensibility. This ethical sensibility is critical largely because much qualitative research involves small or specific contexts in which the participants relay intimate knowledge about people and organizations that would not necessarily be revealed in more empirical studies (Piantanida & Garman, 1999). Stake (2005, p. 459, as cited in Merriam, 2009) eloquently states, “Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict.” Participants in qualitative studies may experience embarrassment, feel as if privacy has been invaded, reveal unintended intimate details about themselves, experience painful memories, or be faced with long-term effects from the interview. However, participants may leave an interview or completed study feeling empowered, self-confident, or have a new lease on life. Participants may also come to better understand the world and the way it is shaped in
order to transform it--they may better understand the story they are scripting and learn to restory. Table 7 is my personal synthesis of the ethical principles of research.

**Informed Consent and Confidentiality.** As stated in Table 7, participants must voluntarily consent to be involved in a particular study. I applied to the IRB for approval to conduct my research. In addition to participating in required research ethics training, I provided a letter of informed consent to each of my conversational partners. This letter of informed consent (see Appendix B) explained the overall purpose and design of my study. Each participant was asked to sign the letter of informed consent (see Appendix C). As mirrored in the table above, the names and institutions of the conversational partners are and will remain confidential and anonymous. Therefore, names were changed.

**Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of the research is directly correlated to the rigor employed by the researcher in carrying out the study. Table 8 is my attempt to capture various writers’ views on the trustworthiness of qualitative studies. The criteria in Table 8 were adapted from *The Qualitative Dissertation: A Guide For Students and Faculty*, by Piantanida and Garman (1999) and fit within the broader concern of validation. Triangulation, member checking, and thick, rich description were used in this study to establish trustworthiness.

**Triangulation, Member Checking, and Description.** In triangulation, researchers use multiple and different sources, methods, and theories to provide corroborated evidence (Janesick, 2004). I intended to use the transcripts from the interviews with conversational partners, my researcher reflective journal, my field notes, and possible relevant documents that I collected during the inquiry as data for
Table 7

Ethical Principles of Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Consent</td>
<td>The human “subject” (participant) must voluntarily consent, which implies that s/he has the legal capacity to do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Necessity &amp; “Good”</td>
<td>The study should produce results that are for the “good” of society and should not be random or unnecessary in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Transparency</td>
<td>The researcher should be as transparent as possible. Participants should be sufficiently knowledgeable about the nature, purpose, duration, risks, and possible effects of the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Freedom of Choice</td>
<td>Participants should be able to opt out of the study at any point during the study without the threat of restraint or coercion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Protection from Harm</td>
<td>Researchers should strive for the protection of participants’ physical or mental suffering or injury.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Degree of Risk</td>
<td>The degree of risk should not exceed that determined by the humanitarian importance of the topic of inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Confidentiality</td>
<td>Participants’ identity and the data gleaned from interviews with them must remain confidential throughout the inquiry and reporting process except with the consent of the participant.</td>
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</table>

triangulation, which I did. The data I mined from these four sources was analyzed, crosschecked, and compared with one another in an effort to extract themes and concepts for interpretation.
Another strategy I employed is member checking in which I solicited conversational partners’ views of the credibility of my findings once analysis was complete (Janesick, 2004, and Merriam, 2009). The rich, thick description I provided for my readers from my interviews, researcher reflective journal, site documents, and overall analysis painted a portrait of each of my conversational partners and the settings in which their interviews took place. The detailed description I furnished will enable readers to

Table 8
Criteria for Judging Qualitative Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Concepts Involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Structural soundness, Logicality, Proper voice of author and participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verité</td>
<td>Consistency with knowledge in the field, Appropriate fit in the literature, Intellectual honesty and authenticity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigor</td>
<td>Depth of intellect, Carefully crafted conclusions, Sufficiently rich data, Systematic reflection, Thorough analysis and interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>Professional relevancy, Usefulness, Contribution to the field, Recognizable audience, Educative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitality</td>
<td>Importance and meaningfulness, Vibrancy, Intensity, Powerful communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>Providing insight, Enrichment, Provocativeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Privacy, Dignity, Representativeness, Preconceptions, Biases, Assumptions, Nondiscrimination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
transfer the information to other settings and make decisions for themselves if they so choose.

**Equipment Used for Data Collection**

I utilized a Sony MP3 IC Digital Voice Recorder (DVR) to record the interviews I conducted with my conversational partners. I used this DVR previously in a Qualitative Research Methods course during my doctoral program when I conducted an interview and it proved effective. This exercise was a kind of practice in interviewing, transcribing the interview, analyzing the data, and reporting the findings within an inquiry. I found the DVR to be quite simple to use and the quality and ease of playback served my purposes well. This DVR had a maximum of 290 hours of recording time, high sound quality, and can store one GB of audio files. It was very small, thus falling into the category of “hand held”, and was easily plugged into my computer via a USB port on the bottom of the device. Once plugged into the computer, the sound files were easily downloaded and could be emailed to a transcription service. Of course I carried back-up batteries with me in the event the current batteries expired.

**Estimated Dissertation Timeline, Expenses, and Funding**

I estimated a time of completion of my Educational Leadership doctoral degree. In order to accommodate for certain deadlines within the doctoral completion process and keep myself focused on the goal of graduation, I created a timeline (Table 9) for completion that was specific, attainable, and realistic. This served as my roadmap during my inquiry process. I estimated the expenses for this degree and created Table A1 in Appendix E. The approximate total, including materials, equipment, travel, fees, services, gifts, and copies, is $2,185.00. Most of the funding for these expenses came directly from
my bank account. Some came from the additional money my student loan provided once tuition was paid.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I described my method of data collection, including the selection of conversational partners, format of the interviews, analysis procedures, role of the researcher, and ethical considerations in the study. Next, I outlined the pragmatic considerations regarding the study including the equipment to be used, my estimated dissertation timeline, expenses, and funding. This study is proving to be a meaningful and positive contribution to the research literature in our field. In the next chapter, I will present data from the interviews, researcher reflective journal, and relevant documents.
Table 9
Perkins’ Dissertation Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment of the Inquiry Process</th>
<th>Time for Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Coursework</td>
<td>December 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Approval by Major Professor</td>
<td>December 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Qualifying Exam</td>
<td>April 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One Draft</td>
<td>June 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two Draft Revision</td>
<td>July 2010</td>
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<tr>
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Chapter Four

Presentation of the Data

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain women educational administrators’ perspectives on work and life. The exploratory questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the components of the perspectives of women educational administrators who are also mothers and doctoral students?

2. What variables influence women’s perspectives of their roles and lived experience as mothers, educational administrators, and doctoral students?

As discussed in chapter three, the techniques of data collection from the carefully selected women were semi-structured interviews (transcribed), my researcher reflective journal, and documents from the conversational partners. The majority of the interviews occurred at the offices of the participants, with a couple of exceptions. The setting of each interview will be disclosed in the narrative of each case. Prior to the interview process, each participant received an explanatory letter from the researcher describing the study and requesting participation. The letters were followed up with emails to each participant. In addition, informed consent was gained from each, which gave the researcher permission to record the interviews using a digital voice recorder and use any collected data for the purpose of the study. The interviews averaged thirty minutes in
length. Once completed, the audio files from the interviews were sent off to a transcription service to be transcribed verbatim. Each participant was provided an email copy of the transcriptions and asked to make corrections, additions, or deletions as appropriate.

Through regular emails, site visits, and phone conversations, a friendly rapport was established with each of the five participants. Pseudonyms have been selected for each participant based on her doctoral journey. Each pseudonym given will be explicated in the narrative of each case.

This chapter includes descriptions of the setting, of the five conversational partners, and of their lived experiences as mothers, educational administrators, and doctoral students. These descriptions will contain information that is relevant to this study, but will not reveal enough information so as to expose the identities of the conversational partners. There was some internal debate regarding how to present the data in this chapter. After much contemplation, the decision was made to avoid dividing this chapter by larger themes. To do so would be to segment participants’ experiences, failing to provide a comprehensive narrative and thus de-emphasizing the life story of each. Therefore, each participant’s story is told in a separate section within this chapter utilizing passages quoted from the interviews, information obtained from field notes, excerpts from relevant documents, and extracts from the researcher’s reflective journal. In each section, I begin with an introduction to the participant, provide excerpts from each participant’s interview transcripts so as to narrate her life’s experiences, proffer my reflections on the conversations, and end with a summary and visual representation of the participant’s lived experience and perspectives.
Setting

All five of the women who participated in this study are educational administrators in a large school district in the southern region of the United States. For confidentiality purposes, I provide only general information about this school district that is relevant to this study and refer to this district using the pseudonym “Possibility County School District (PCSD).” PCSD is made up of over two hundred schools, which consist of elementary, middle, high, charter, and career centers, among other educational configurations. More than 150,000 students attend school in PCSD and are taught and supported by over 20,000 faculty and staff members. The district falls within the twenty largest school districts in the nation. (These statistics were recorded from a brochure on the school district’s own website on June 3, 2011. This brochure will not be specifically referenced in order to maintain confidentiality.) Three of the five conversational partners in this study are school-based administrators wherein they work at a school as the principal or assistant principal. The remaining two are district-based, overseeing large departments within the district that are responsible for a division (i.e. curriculum, assessment, professional development) that affects all levels of schooling within the district (i.e. elementary, middle, and high).

Regarding their doctoral program pursuits, Charlotte, Samantha, and Miranda chose to attend a local university. This university was established in the early 1960s. It qualified as a Top Research University by The Carnegie Foundation. In this chapter and the next, I refer to this university as “Rigor University” due to its high level of classification and rigorous doctoral programs. Candace and Carrie chose a university predominantly attended through its distance-learning component. This university, which
henceforth will be referred to as “Distance University,” was established in the mid-1960s, providing off-campus courses beginning in the early seventies. Distance University is among the top ten largest, not-for-profit, independent universities in the United States.

**Interview Transcript Presentation Conventions**

Before delving into my conversations with the five women, I must be explicit regarding the conventions of the quotations from the transcript that appear in my presentation of the interview data. The following explanations should assist in the reading and understanding of the women’s perspectives and experiences. To begin with, both shorter and longer quotes appear in this manuscript. Shorter quotes will be contained in quotation marks while longer quotes will be in block format, indented from the left margin. Words that the participants emphasize when speaking will be italicized. Any body language, obvious emotion, gestures, pauses, or other key signals are contained in brackets such as [these]. Also contained in brackets are clarifying words or phrases that promote further understanding of a participant’s meaning in a given quote. For example, if “we” is used, brackets may contain to whom the “we” is referring. Furthermore, because the spoken word is not always expressed as intended, there will be some deletions of participants’ words. Deletions will include words such as *like, uh,* and *hmm* because words such as these may distract the reader from the main message of the quotation. Excessively repeated words and phrases and those that distract the reader from extracting the essential message of the quotation will be removed and replaced with ellipses (three for the deletion of a word/phrase within a sentence and four for the deletion of phrases between sentences). Save for the aforementioned exceptions, I have
strived to preserve the voices of the women as they divulge their perspectives and experiences.

**Meet the Women**

In order to introduce the participants, I begin with basic demographic data for each woman (summarized in Table 10), including her respective age, level of current administrative position (school-level or district-level), total years in administration, current stage of doctoral study, and age of children at the onset of doctoral study. These data were gathered during the interviews or through personal communications to me. Most of the participants downplayed the noteworthiness of their accomplishments to date. It is my hope that the following written narratives will serve as a mirror to each participant, reflecting her tenacity and resilience, highlighting her achievements in the midst of consistent deterrents, and further illuminate her network of support. Next, I present the individual cases of each participant in my study. Within each case I will provide a description of the participant as well as the data that describes each participant’s perspectives on her roles and lived experiences as mothers, educational administrators, and doctoral students. The majority of the data presented in each case comes directly from the transcribed interviews. Other data included are derived from my Researcher Reflective Journal (passages within), field notes (notes I took during an interview and included in my Reflective Journal), and relevant documents (such as résumés) and will be included as appropriate to illuminate such elements as body language, emotion, setting, etc. I observed that the body language for each participant was largely consistent with the spoken words and emotion that she was communicating at the time. This is a testament to the authenticity of each participant’s responses.
Table 10

Participant Demographic Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Gathered</th>
<th>Charlotte Steady</th>
<th>Samantha Setbacks</th>
<th>Miranda McHurdle</th>
<th>Carrie Completed</th>
<th>Candace Contrite</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>Early 40s</td>
<td>Mid 30s</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Coursework completed-stalled</td>
<td>Defended proposal-stalled</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
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<td>Age of children at beginning of doctoral program</td>
<td>10 yrs. old, 14 yrs. old</td>
<td>5 yrs. old, 8 yrs. old</td>
<td>Pregnant with twins</td>
<td>Pregnant, 5 years old</td>
<td>3 years old, 5 years old</td>
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Throughout the interview process with each participant, I consistently asked myself this question: “What is it like (or for one participant, “What was it like…”)? for this woman to negotiate the challenges of simultaneously being mother, educational administrator, and doctoral student?” I will begin each case with a section called “Meet [the participant]” in which I introduce her to the reader and divulge some of my pre-interview thoughts and reflections. Then I will explicate the components and variables that resulted from my data analysis, which cogently merged into the following areas: 1) A day in her life, 2) Her career journey, 3) On being a working mother, 4) On becoming doctor, 5) Managing multiple roles, and 6) Compunction and contentment.

Each case will end with a section entitled “Considering the Conversation,” in which I will
share my thoughts, reflections, and considerations about the interview (including information from my reflective journal) with the reader as well as a summarization of each participant’s perspectives and lived experiences.

In Chapter Five, I will present the results of my cross-case analysis of the experiences of the women, highlighting the considerable similarities of their experiences and noting the differences therein. I will also explore how this inquiry has served as a window into which I have viewed my own life roles and experiences. Further, I will discuss how the results of this study can inform women who seek to fulfill multiple roles such as those in this study as well as inform higher education student service practitioners and researchers investigating entrance and persistence issues among doctoral student mothers who hold administrative positions in K-12 education.

Case One: Charlotte Steady

Meet Charlotte Steady. Charlotte was my very first interview and one that significantly helped shape my study. I chose her case to present first for several reasons. First, I knew upon my initial contact with her that she would prove to be uninhibited in her responses during the interview. This was largely due to our existing relationship, which has been consistently positive and congenial. My intuition proved accurate. Secondly, her interview served as my pilot interview and based on her responses I was able to reconfigure my original questions so as to elicit more valuable responses in the interviews that followed. Lastly, her doctoral journey most closely mirrors my own, which can be described as steady progress toward degree attainment. This parallel of experiences produced a comfort level between the interviewer and interviewee that
extended (and by doing so strengthened) the trust from our existing congenial relationship to our new relationship as defined by this study.

Charlotte is a woman in her early forties. Her hair is blond, her build petite, and her smile warm. She was smartly dressed for both of our interviews, sporting clothes falling into the category of business-casual. She began her doctoral journey in the spring of 2007 at Rigor University. At the time of her entrance into doctoral studies, her children were ages ten and fourteen. She has five years total in educational administration and is currently a school-level administrator, serving in the position of assistant principal. In her doctoral journey, she has completed her data collection and analysis for her study and is currently drafting chapters four and five of her dissertation.

Charlotte replied in a timely manner to my correspondences with her, answering any questions and clarifying information I shared. She appeared relaxed, confident, and eager to be of help during our interviews. Our first interview took place on a late Wednesday afternoon at her school office, which was well decorated to produce a stylish and welcoming appearance. Few papers littered her desk, which gave the impression that she is organized and on top of her school’s activities. Most teachers and school staff had departed for the day and the campus was generally quiet. Consequently, late afternoon proved to be a suitable time for our conversation. The only interruption was a phone call and short conversation early on in the interview. Our second interview occurred on a Saturday morning, so we were unable to utilize her office. Instead, we met at the local public library in a small room reserved for the occasion. This also proved to be an ideal interviewing situation because there were no interruptions. [From my Reflective Journal and field notes, February 17, 2011 and May 22, 2011.]
A Day in Charlotte’s Life. When conversing with each of the five women about her “typical day,” the responses revealed the management of multiple roles beginning with the moment she awoke. Charlotte’s response to the question “What does a typical day in your life look like?” proved analogous. She replied:

Well, the mornings are usually typical because there aren't a lot of surprises in the morning. My kids are teenagers, so they are older. I get up before them… by 5:00. I try to run a couple miles because I have a better day if I get up and run… in the morning. So, I get up, I run. I eat breakfast. I shower. I get myself all together and then get my kids up-- they're pretty independent… then [I] try to head to work by about quarter to 7:00. Once I get to work there's no typical day in this role.

Her response illuminated her responsibilities in caring for herself and her children while maintaining a focus on her job. She also alluded to the varied aspects of her job. One technique Charlotte utilized as a way to organize her day and avoid becoming overwhelmed by the wealth of tasks commonly assigned to assistant principals is prioritizing her tasks before she left work the previous day. This kind of goal setting created flexibility so she could deal with other, more immediate demands on her time at work. Charlotte expressed these immediate demands in saying:

So, I try to schedule the things that I know are priorities and have to get done, but there's always some things that come up. You know, when I get here first thing in the morning, I usually have teachers waiting and they always have some issues or questions. Then I go to breakfast duty and I greet our kids when they come in. Oftentimes something's happened on the bus, or something's going on at home. So
we [referring to the administrative team] deal with kid issues after that. Once the
kids are all in class, then, you know, it kind of depends on anything the principal
needs me to do or observations we have scheduled, or you know, whatever's
happening in school that day. But, you know, never fails [that] an angry parent
calls or a child's upset and then you sort of deal with what comes up at the time.

Charlotte’s comments suggested that she must split her time between certain tasks she
herself has deemed important for the day, tasks her principal may require of her, and
tasks that do not become evident until the day begins and teachers, staff, students, and
parents arrive on campus.

Just as her workday must be divided, so must her afternoons and evenings.
Charlotte’s school day technically ended at approximately 3:30 in the afternoon because
she was only paid for eight hours. However, this departure time was unrealistic as
compared to the expectations of her job. The workday for Charlotte usually ended in the
early evening. When the workday ended, there was still more to do:

I usually work until 4:30 or 5:00, then head home and cook dinner. My daughter
is still young enough that she needs to be driven to all of her activities. So we go
to cheerleading and I check over her homework. By the time all that's done [we]
go home [and] get ready for the next day and start again.

Her statement here was brief, but her activities in late afternoons and evenings took a
considerable amount of time. She casually mentioned cooking dinner for her family and
providing transportation for her younger child. In addition to these responsibilities during
the workweek, Charlotte’s daughter had competitions and her son had golf tournaments
on the weekends. This “takes up a good bit of the weekend.” It is evident from her comments that she must dole out her time and attention from the moment she woke until she went to bed each night.

**Charlotte’s Career Journey.** Charlotte received her Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology with the intent of pursuing a career in the field. In spite of intentions, her career took a different path. The root of the change in field began when she worked at a preschool while she was pursuing an advanced degree in counseling psychology:

… I started in graduate school in counseling psychology. While I was going to school, I worked at a preschool at the [Cancer Research] Center. I wasn't crazy about my classes in counseling psych, but I loved teaching at the preschool. So, my mom, who was a teacher, said, "I really think you ought to change your program and take some education courses." So I changed from a master’s [degree] in counseling in psychology to an MAT in elementary [education].

Charlotte continued to enjoy teaching and taught children who were preschool-age and those in Kindergarten in private school. When her Master’s degree was completed, she began teaching in the public school system. She found a mentor in her principal at that time. He encouraged her to go back to graduate school and take the necessary courses for a certification in Educational Leadership. He was able to see the leader in Charlotte and gave her additional responsibilities at work to exercise the leadership ability he saw:

I had, at that time, a really good principal who mentored me, and he loved his job. The way he talked about his job was inspiring and encouraging. He sort of made you want to do it, too, and want to be as good as he was. He retired [and] I got a
new principal who was much less effective. I think there was some frustration in seeing some changes made in a school that were not positive and were not always appropriate. That motivates in a different way.

Charlotte alluded not only to the positive encouragement of her former principal-mentor, but also to a different kind of motivation. This kind of motivation influenced her to further her education even more in an effort to effect positive change in education. At this time in her career, Charlotte applied for and accepted the job of assistant principal at an elementary school. She completed three years at the school (from 2006 until 2009) before applying for another assistant principalship at a brand-new school. She felt it was her opportunity to effect positive change as a school leader and to open a brand-new school. She is currently serving in this position. Charlotte’s love of learning, especially in the field of educational leadership, as well as the encouragement from her former principal and negative example of the latter principal prompted Charlotte to apply to the Ed.D. program at the local state university.

Charlotte is presently undecided about the next step in her educational career. She would like to serve as the principal of an elementary school, but does not consider the principalship a long-term position. She expressed concern about this:

I think I would like to be a principal. I don't know that it's a job I could sustain for the next twenty years. I see a lot of principals who sort of burn out on that role because of all the demands that are placed right now on principals… You know… I don't necessarily have to continue on the ladder within a school district, from AP to principal to district office, because I'm not sure I want to be locked in that kind
of career ladder… I think I would like to teach in a teacher preparation program [at the college level] because I'm so passionate about good teaching… whether I do that part time while I'm still in the school system or whether I make that a primary career, I don't know. But I do think that's something that appeals to me.

Here, she expressed the different career paths that she is considering for her future. She also talked about a few of her friends that are principals. Charlotte acknowledged that the role of principal was beginning to take a toll on the health of her friends, which concerns her greatly.

**On Being a Working Mother.** Charlotte has been working in education for the past eighteen years. Presently, her older child is eighteen years old. Thus, she has been a working mother for all eighteen of her years in education. When asked about how she has managed working full time and being a mother, she immediately launched into a heartfelt explanation of how she can work and be a mom:

Well, you know, I have a great husband. We've been married over twenty years. He's a great partner, but he works really long hours, too. He's a director of finance at [large insurance corporation]. So, he's on the road, and he's working late hours. Because my hours have always been more congruent with the kids' hours, I've always been the one that did the sort of mothering, nurturing. You know, worried about fixing them dinner and their doctor's appointments, and getting them where they needed to go. So, I think, even as I've gotten busier and my day's gotten longer, and I've started graduate school, unless I tell him what I need him to do, it doesn't occur to him to pick up those things and do them. My
mom and dad live around the corner and are both retired. If we're in a situation where neither of us was available, they're always right there. But… it's a really hard balance. I try to say, no matter what, the kids come first if they're sick. But there are some things in this job… you [just] have to be there…. If [state testing] is going on at school, or there's some kind of urgent matter that you have to be there for, you have to have somebody else who loves them just as much, if not more sometimes, to step in and pick up so you don't have to feel guilty about that, because you know they're in good hands.

Charlotte’s passionate explanation of how she manages working and mothering revealed an underlying support system, hinted at her views of the role of the mother and that of the father, and further emphasized the demands of her role as assistant principal. Interestingly, she began her thought by praising her husband and noting what a great partner he is; notwithstanding, she does not continue her thought by describing why he is a great asset to the family but instead underlines the amount of time he spends commuting and traveling, the late hours he works, and the frustration she feels when she must tell him what she wants him to do in order to take some of the responsibility off of her. Charlotte felt burdened having to be the parent who is responsible for providing meals for her children, remembering their various appointments, and transporting them to their various activities. She indicated that her parents also come to her aid and assist with her children if she and her husband are unavailable to do so, which provided her with a level of comfort about being away from them. Furthermore, she highlighted anew the demands of her job. There are many events that occur during the year-- those that are planned, such as the weeks of state testing, and those that are unplanned-- that require the
presence or direction of the assistant principal of the school. During those times, Charlotte felt that her position sometimes directly conflicts with and often supersedes her role as mother. In those situations, when it became very difficult to maintain a balance of roles, she depended on her small support network for help.

Bringing work home with her was occasionally tempting, but Charlotte tried to leave work in her office at school. This is one way she maintained a balance of roles. From time to time, though, she did bring work home to complete but it was not work that demanded a lot of her attention and concentration, which she afforded her children instead. Of those times she said:

I try not to… [but] sometimes, if it's a mindless thing-- like it's just entering scores into the computer- I feel like I can do that and still be at home with them while they're doing homework. If it's something that takes a lot of thinking, you know, if I've got to ask myself a lot of critical questions and really work through a problem, I can't do that at home. There are days when I take [my daughter] to cheerleading, and I'll come back here in the evening and open up the office and do it here. But I won't try to do those things with them at home… And I try not to check email at home either. I used to do that. Then you get caught up in all of those things, and solving the problems. So I just don’t even check it at home.

Upon reflecting on her roles as mother and assistant principal and how they interact with one another, Charlotte felt that she was a positive role model for her children. She stated:
The work that we [educators] do-- it contributes to society and there’s a social justice piece to what we do. So, I feel like I’m a good model to them in doing something important with your life and feeling good about that.

Moreover, Charlotte believed that she would not be an example of a “good” woman, wife, or mother if her whole life were centered on just her two children in the absence of a career or positive contribution to society. She mentioned that she was able to stay home with each of her children after their births for approximately one year. Toward the end of both years, she did not feel happy, fulfilled, and well adjusted because she desired challenge and a sense of achievement outside of her family.

To conclude, Charlotte experienced a conflict of roles-- namely that of mother and worker- on a daily basis. Her support network, which consists of her husband and parents, allowed her to be committed to her job. She had difficulty maintaining a balance among her roles and tasks and did so in part by depending on that support system and by leaving work at work. Charlotte was fulfilled by her job and felt positive about the model she served for her children.

**On Becoming Doctor.** As previously mentioned, a principal-mentor’s encouragement, a love of learning, and a negative experience with a school leader together influenced Charlotte’s decision to seek an advanced degree in Educational Leadership at Rigor University. When I asked her about her motivation for pursuing her doctoral degree, she remarked:

I think, probably, it's a very selfish motivation because I'm not sure it's something I needed to do to be successful in my job. I've always wanted to work on a
doctorate, even back when I was a psychology student. My goal at that time was to get a doctorate in counseling psychology. Although my path changed, I think I always had that goal… it was something that I just really wanted to do for me. Not for job prospects… not for any kind of career advancement, but just because I enjoyed it… I like that it might give me some options [regarding her future career path].

Charlotte is not pursuing the doctoral degree for reasons of career advancement, but largely for the reason of personal goal fulfillment. She began her degree pursuit outside the fellowship of a cohort because when she began her program, doctoral cohorts did not exist. The first cohort in the department of Educational Leadership at Rigor University was formed just one semester after she began, allowing her to fold into the cohort quickly. Within the cohort, she enjoyed the camaraderie and sophistication that accompanies the pursuit of a doctoral degree:

I really like the kinds of conversations you have in an academic setting. So, when we did coursework within our [doctoral] cohort, I loved having people to have those conversations with. Even now, when I talk to other people who are doing dissertations, it's a different kind of conversation that you get to have with those people, because you’re part of that group…. You know, when I started my doctoral program I wasn't in a cohort. I took I think one or two semesters and a cohort was starting. So I asked to be folded into the cohort. For me that was much better. Now I have a writing buddy. Even when we don't get together and write, there's still a support that I know I can call and say, "Oh, my gosh! I'm freaking
out." There's somebody… who relates to that and supports that, and we work through it.

Charlotte mentioned the presence of a “writing buddy” and how the buddy, along with other cohort members, provided a network of support within her doctoral program. She differentiated within her graduate school support system, though:

I don't know that I would call my major professor or somebody on my committee just to say I'm frustrated or I'm struggling. I think that's more something I would do with my writing buddy or my cohort people. I know I call [my major professor] when I have technical questions or when I'm really stuck on something, and she's always available and will steer me the right way. Really anybody on my committee's done that for me. But as far as support just in dealing with being tired or frustrated or trying to get through, I don't think I would call on [my committee members] so much for that.

Charlotte is in a unique situation in her current position as assistant principal. Her principal, a woman in her mid-40s who has two children under the age of fourteen, is also pursuing her doctoral degree. She is a participant in this study as well and her case will be spotlighted in the next section. Charlotte thus has a colleague with whom she works very closely and shares similar experiences:

…She's a working mom and a doctorate student, too, which is really important because I think the other principals I've had have been encouraging and supportive but hadn't really walked in these shoes. She will say sometimes when it's starting to get late in the evening, "Put it away and go home" or "Take the day
off and do these interviews that I know you need to do." So beyond just being encouraging and supportive, I think she's more sensitive to all of the things that are going on because she's living it, too.

This kind of support is essential to Charlotte’s success as a student. Concerning the formal support of her committee members and more informal support of her cohort colleagues, Charlotte advised students like her to depend on these two support systems within the graduate school during doctoral coursework.

Managing Multiple Roles. So just how does Charlotte manage the multiple roles she has taken on? What barriers does she encounter? She attributed her success at managing them by making a distinction, “I think [there are] the outside things, like the outside structures… but I think there are some internal things that we share when we’re successful going through the process…” The outside structures Charlotte referred to include a support system (which has been previously clarified), a schedule, preparation, taking care of oneself, and the specific nature of her doctoral program. In reference to a schedule, she asserted that one must make time to create a study and writing schedule because,

…if you start to put things off, then it gets harder and harder to keep going… You have to stay on top of it and schedule time to write and schedule time to work on it even though there might be other things that are more appealing.

Charlotte found that the most difficult thing to do is to actually sit down and begin studying, writing, or working so as to avoid procrastination and stalling. Preparation is also essential. She saved time and energy by preparing her to-do list at work the prior
afternoon, gathering together items her family members need, and preparing meals or ideas for meals and shopping accordingly in order to make the next day flow smoothly. Charlotte took care of herself by exercising early in the mornings around 5:00 am. She also tried to eat healthy. These two factors contributed to the productiveness of her multiple roles. Lastly, she indicated the nature of her doctoral program as supportive of her many roles:

[My] professors who had been school administrators first …understood the role we were in because most of us are school administrators. Those who have families at home understand those pressures, too…. Our classes were scheduled on Saturdays or evenings, so that definitely schedule-wise was a friendly way to do it…

Many of Charlotte’s professors at Rigor University could relate to the majority of the cohort members who were completing their doctoral coursework while they were working full time because they had served as educational administrators. There were also a couple of professors that had small children and were able to relate to Charlotte on another level as well. In addition to a parallel of roles between the professors and cohort members, the scheduling of classes contributed to Charlotte’s successful management of her roles. Classes were scheduled mainly on Saturdays, when her husband was not at work, and occasionally on weeknights when either her husband or her parents could care for her children.

Charlotte referred to the inside structures, or internal characteristics, that contributed to her multi-role management. According to Charlotte, these included
perseverance, resilience, humor, and flexibility. She believes that her journey to obtain her doctoral degree is an “exercise in perseverance” and that one must not get “too hung up on the hoops that you have to jump through but just to stay calm and keep moving.” The hoops she referred to include not only those within the doctoral program, but those in her own family life and career as well. Charlotte’s resilience to barriers and challenges that have materialized along her doctoral journey contributed to her ability to persevere. She indicated two main areas of resiliency-- household tasks and gender role expectations, the latter of which will be expounded upon subsequently. When asked about the location and time she dedicates to studying and working, Charlotte said:

…my kids are older now. It's easier than it used to be. I just tell them all that I'm going to be upstairs in the office working… And I usually tell them a certain time, you know, “You can come and see me and ask me questions at five o’clock or whatever.” And they do, they let me work. They're pretty independent. [My son] can transport himself now, so that's easy. And he works. And [my daughter] does her own thing, so I can work at home now. When they were little, really little, I couldn't have done that without somebody there to watch them, or without taking them somewhere else. And at home sans kids, there's still a lot of distraction. You want to go and put a load of laundry in, or clean something up... [There are] a lot of things that can pull you away.

Even without her children demanding her time and attention, Charlotte still found studying and working in her home to be a distraction. She had to block out certain household task temptations when she had a deadline approaching or study outside of her home. Humor is another kind of internal characteristic to which Charlotte gave credence.
She used humor during her coursework as a technique for getting through difficult courses and assignments. Being a member of a cohort afforded a level of comfort for its members and in turn promoted a chummy rapport. She reported that laughter was a common ingredient in her classes and in conversations with her colleagues that many times relieved the academic, familial, and professional pressure that would build up.

Flexibility is yet another internal attribute Charlotte touched upon. She had to become more flexible during her management of multiple roles by giving up control in several aspects of her life. She snickered at herself as she confessed:

"As a mom, I think I've had to give up some control. I used to always feel like I was on top of every little aspect of their lives, and I've had to give some of that up. I'm not sure that was a detriment to them. Maybe not everything gets done as perfectly as I used to think it had to. They don't always get the lunch packed with the special seasonal napkin [laughter]."

She believed this loss of control was chiefly a benefit to her children. The additional demands on her time and attention propelled her children into taking on more responsibility for themselves. Charlotte’s family members also had to exercise flexibility during her doctoral journey. Her children, in addition to taking on more responsibilities for themselves, had to adjust to multiple caretakers. Her husband and parents allocated time in their schedules to transport the children places and care for them when needed.

When it was golf or cheerleading season, it was difficult for Charlotte to manage household tasks like laundry in addition to the practices and competitions. But in the off-season, tasks around the house were a little more manageable:
...it's usually Sunday afternoon [and] everybody has a task to do as far as the cleaning. For a while, we decided that the time was more valuable than the money, so we paid to have the house cleaned every other week. We don't do that anymore because our kids are not quite as busy with athletics right now, so everybody pitches in. My very sweet mom lives around the corner, and when she comes in the morning to check on [my daughter] she throws a load of laundry in. [My husband’s] good about pitching in; if there's dishes in the sink, he'll do them.

Charlotte, when explaining how she manages her roles as mother, assistant principal, and doctoral student, recurrently contrasted her role in the home with that of her husband’s. I detected a modicum of frustration underneath her words and in her body language. When she discussed household tasks, Charlotte said:

Sometimes [my husband] doesn't always notice what has to be done. Instead of getting frustrated, I have to tell him, “Please help me do this” or “If you could just do this, that would help.” I think instead of just hoping he would notice it and do it, I've had to be really explicit and tell him what to do.

And when she considered the difference between being a mother in graduate school versus a father in graduate school, Charlotte was thoughtful in her reply:

I don't know if it's something we put on ourselves as moms or if it's just… society [that says] we're all equal and we're all partners. I still think a lot of times it [the brunt of tasks related to children and household] falls on moms. You know, if [the kids] are sick… you make the doctor's appointment. Or if they have something-- a program at school-- you feel like you have to be there. I think
there's some mom guilt that's residual… that's different than what men experience as dads. At least that's true in my family.

Charlotte felt as if the majority of the responsibilities fell upon her; especially those that related to her children and household duties. She felt that this might be true of other workingwomen as well. Being specific with her husband about the tasks he can do to help around the house and with the children helped Charlotte to further manage that aspect of her life. Perseverance, resilience, humor, and flexibility also aided Charlotte along her path to becoming doctor and managing her other roles.

**Compunction and Contentment.** Although there have been both outside structures and internal characteristics that assisted Charlotte during her doctoral program, there are three facets of her life she had to suppress. She had to suppress them in order to dedicate more time and attention to her doctoral program and in doing so, felt the sharp jab of regret. As previously mentioned, she had to relinquish control over household tasks and her children’s caretaking. Time with her children is another area of suppression. She missed out on many events in her children’s lives, including sporting events and competitions. She felt guilty about the times when she had to withdraw her time and attention from them and spend it on graduate work. In spite of that, she did not view her absences as completely negative. Charlotte appreciated how her children have grown in their relationships with their father and grandparents and appreciated how much more responsible they have become both for their own persons and for their household.

A third area of suppression is her relationships with her personal friends. When asked about how she maintained those friendships, Charlotte replied:
Gosh, it's hard. And I don't see some of them as much as I'd like to, although we keep in touch frequently. I have a really good friend who's been my really good friend since we were twelve. She was a neighbor, and [we’re] still very close friends... Even when I moved away to [a nearby city] and came back, we stayed closed friends. She's like the mother of my kids. I don't always see her as much as I'd like, but we talk pretty frequently… I try to do that-- try to do the girls' night out-- when I can, although lately I've been busy, missing a lot of those.

Sometimes you just have to make yourself go. You know-- you feel too tired [and] you think, “I don't want to go.” But when you go and see everybody, it recharges you a little. I'm always glad I went and spent some time with the girls.

Charlotte kept in touch with her friends via email and phone conversations due to the limitations on her time. She did, however, occasionally make time for an evening out with her friends and as a result of doing so felt re-energized. Giving up some control, dividing her time to make room for school work, and keeping a rein on her extracurricular activities with her friends allowed Charlotte to pursue her doctoral degree steadily. The steady nature of her career, relationships, and doctoral study led to the creation of her pseudonym, Charlotte Steady. If her doctoral program continues at its current pace, she will graduate next semester. It will be her fourth year of the program, which is an average rate for students who work full time.

Despite the fact that Charlotte had regrets in her life due to her focus on doctoral study, she also had points of contentment. In describing her achievements thus far, she distinguished between the surface-level tributes and the deeper, more meaningful ones:
…I've been Teacher of the Year and National Board Certified. There's those nice little accolades that happen, but I think those are kind of surface-level things. I think it's little things that people say to you that make you know you made a difference. Like one of my little second graders who is getting ready to graduate from high school said, "You were the first teacher who made me feel smart." So I think it's those little moments that you have with kids or with coworkers… that really are the most meaningful—not the accolades. Those are nice, but it's just those little moments when you make a difference for somebody.

She is proud of leaving her previous assistant principalship and applying for her current one:

…there's a special kind of synergy that's pretty rare that we have here… that's really meaningful and important to me-- that the common vision is so strong. Going from room to room and having conversations with teachers, it's even hard to put into words. But there's like a synergy and a common purpose that I haven't felt in any other school that I've worked in.

Furthermore, Charlotte believed that her experience and work in graduate school positively impacted her in the role of school administrator:

…I think I have a broader perspective. I see outside our own little district and our own county to, I think, a bigger picture in education than I probably did before. So I think…I tend to question some things that I probably wouldn't have before, and I tend to think a little bigger-picture. I don't get so caught up in the procedures
and the minutia. I really look at the bigger, broader concepts. I think the social justice part of what we do I'm more aware of now.

Charlotte, although spending more time and attention on her doctoral program and having to re-purpose her time and relinquish some control, was glad that she made the decision to pursue her doctoral degree. She was able to reflect on the past few years and ruminate on the impact she made on the people and students with whom she worked. She was also able to recognize the positive impact she was making at her current school and enjoy a more enlightened perspective on education.

**Summary.** At the time of this interview, Charlotte Steady was successfully negotiating her roles as mother, educational administrator, and doctoral candidate. Her day began and ended with demands on her time and attention that stemmed from these different roles. Her career in education has been productive partially because of her former principal-mentor, who encouraged her to pursue advanced degrees in educational leadership.

Charlotte depended on certain external supports for her multi-role management that included her family members who take on household responsibilities and caretaking when she is unable, a schedule for studying and writing, preparation in her job and home, taking care of herself by exercising and eating healthy, and the nature of her doctoral program. She also depended on internal supports such as perseverance, resilience, humor, and flexibility.

There are certain aspects of serving multiple roles that Charlotte expressed regret about, which encompassed the relinquishing of control in parts of her life, missing out on
events in her children’s lives, and reducing her communication with friends to emails and phone calls. There are, conversely, aspects of her journey of which she was proud. These achievements, namely making an difference in someone’s life, making a positive impact at her school, and employing a broader perspective on education helped to counterbalance the negative consequences of serving in her roles. Figure 3 summarizes Charlotte’s successes, challenges, motivations, and supports along her road to becoming doctor.

**Figures 3. Charlotte Steady-- A Visual Summary**

**Successes**
- Steady progress to degree
- Positive role model
- Responsible children
- Opening a new school
- Impact of doctoral work on career
- Making a difference
- Strengthened relationships between children and other family members

**Challenges**
- Guilt
- Demands on her time
- Loss of control over aspects of her family life
- Demanding role as an A.P.
- Procrastination in writing
- Resisting household temptations
- Maintaining personal friendships
- Prevalence of gender roles

**Motivations**
- Encouragement from mentor
- Poor example of leadership
- Social justice
- Love of learning

**External Supports**
- Structure of doctoral program at Rigor University
- Scheduling
- Preparation
- Taking care of self
- Practical assistance from husband and parents
- Empathy of cohort members
- Understanding and encouragement of co-workers

**Internal Supports**
- Perseverance
- Resilience
- Humor
- Flexibility
**Considering the Conversation.** Charlotte and I had a pre-established congenial rapport, so I was not surprised that our conversation flowed smoothly. She proved to be an excellent pilot interview because of the rich answers she provided. I was slightly uneasy about Charlotte being included in the study because of our relationship, but I did not find it difficult in the slightest to bracket my existing relationship with her and enter into a different kind of relationship with her-- that of researcher and participant. She was excited to be a participant from the moment I spoke with her about it and as mentioned earlier, was very responsive to my inquiry into her life.

While this was only the first interview, and thus the first set of data in this study, I am encouraged yet unsurprised at the major themes that might emerge. I have my own experiences juggling the roles of mother, educational administrator, and doctoral student to consider. Those of Charlotte eerily mirror my own and I believe, at this point, the resulting cross-case analysis will illuminate those similarities across all participants.

[From my Reflective Journal and field notes, February 17, 2011 and May 22, 2011.]

**Case Two: Samantha Setbacks**

**Meet Samantha Setbacks.** Samantha was not my second interview, although her lived experience and role perspectives served as this second case. This placement is due to Samantha’s relationship to Charlotte Steady. Samantha currently serves as Charlotte’s supervisor-- her principal. Samantha and I also have an existing relationship, although it is not as casual as the one I have with Charlotte. A level of comfort was easily established during the interview as a result of our relationship. The practice of bracketing my relationship with Charlotte (by recording my thoughts and feelings and by recognizing
my relationship with her and how it might impact those thoughts and feelings) proved a sufficient precursor to bracketing my relationship with Samantha.

Samantha is a woman in her early forties. She is a slender, statuesque brunette who captivates those with whom she speaks with her witty, jovial personality and her animated gestures that reflect that personality. Samantha began her doctoral journey in the fall of 2007 at Rigor University. Samantha elected to begin her doctoral studies upon learning of the doctoral cohort being formed at the college. At the time of her entrance into this program, her children were ages five and nine. She has ten years total in educational administration and currently serves in the position of school principal. Samantha completed her coursework in the fall of 2009. It was at this point when her doctoral journey stalled.

Samantha was more difficult than Charlotte to arrange a meeting with even though only one wall separates the two women. This difficulty could be for multiple reasons, such as the nature of her position within the school or her reluctance to share her experiences with me. Despite multiple emails and mail correspondences, I did not receive a response from Samantha following the initial interview. I ended up emailing her a few questions in hopes that she would answer them and send them back. Just recently, as I write this section of my chapter on the interview data, Samantha contacted me via email. She apologized for being unavailable and answered my questions. Fortunately, our initial conversation yielded rich, detailed data for which I am grateful. The answers to the questions and a later face-to-face conversation with both Charlotte and Samantha provided a few missing pieces for my analysis.
Samantha’s school office served as the location of our interview and reflected the same chic style as that of her assistant principal’s. Her desk was orderly and uncluttered, giving the impression of controlled administration of her school. I met with her on a Monday afternoon, well-after student hours and just after teachers were dismissed for the day. Her children stopped by her office to check in with her. This was the only disruption during our productive exchange. [From my Reflective Journal and field notes, March 29, 2011 and May 28, 2011.]

**A Day in Samantha’s Life.** Samantha’s response to my inquiry regarding a typical day in her life largely paralleled that of Charlotte’s, with one main difference. Samantha and her husband are separated and no longer live together. This separation occurred part way through her doctoral program. Thus, Samantha is a single mother-- the only single mother in this study. Here is her review of a normal day:

Well, the alarm starts going off at 4:45. But I don't actually get up and get moving until usually after 5:30, almost 6:00… I get the kids up, and one at a time. And they go downstairs and make breakfast and we just start getting ready for the day… I bring both of my kids to school with me because [my older son] is at [a neighboring middle school] as a seventh grader. [My younger son] is a third grader here at [my school]. …Then we start the school day and then at that point anything can happen, and usually does. …Usually at 4:15 or so, [my older son] gets out of school and then he comes down from [the neighboring middle school] over to [this school] and we get his brother. But then we sometimes don't leave here until maybe 4:30, 4:45, or 5:00, depending. … Depending on our activities, we might be going to Scouts or YMCA or to the grocery store… And we try to
eat dinner, finish the day. [I] try to check some emails at night to make sure I am caught up… On a good day we get everything ready for the next day so that we can walk out the door again the next day.

Samantha’s sons were responsible for preparing their own breakfasts and for getting ready for the day. They rode together to school, which had not always been the case. She saw her boys off to their respective classrooms and began her workday. As she implied, her job as principal of a school was multifarious. Samantha could not always foresee what events and duties the day would bring.

Once the school day ended for all three of them, they reunited and Samantha completed her tasks and obligations for the day. The completion of the workday occurred at varying times and depended upon the kinds of tasks to be finished. Her day did not end there, though. Errands commenced at this point. The boys had extracurricular activities they are involved in and to which they must be driven. Time for the mundane chores, such as grocery shopping, must also be allocated.

Post-errands, dinner was consumed and they settled in for the evening at home. In an effort to stay on top of the happenings within her school, Samantha checked her emails at this time. She noted that a “good” night would include preparations for the next day so that it would run fluidly.

Samantha’s report of a typical day in her life underlines the responsibilities in each of her roles. As a now-single mother, she was responsible for ensuring that her sons took care of themselves, including attending to their daily chores. As the principal of a school, she was responsible for making sure that students were achieving and the school
was operating successfully. As a doctoral student, she made time within her everyday schedule to study for her courses.

**Samantha’s Career Journey.** Samantha received her Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership in 1998. Before receiving her degree, Samantha was an elementary school teacher:

I started teaching at [an elementary school in the district she currently principals in] in early 90s; I am trying to think when I went there. 1993, I think. I was the youngest teacher at [that school] for a short time. That was nice. And I [had] just finished my bachelor's degree at [a state university different from but close in proximity to Rigor University], so I moved from [a large, nearby city] back to [the county where I began and currently serve in]. Back then it was really difficult to get a job… So I took graduate courses so that I could get certified in Kindergarten just in case-- They only had kindergarten positions available. But I taught first grade and then my second year I started a continuous progress house with another teacher… we taught traditional first, second, and third grade-age kids.

From the beginning of her career, Samantha demonstrated her ability to adapt to different circumstances and her desire for advancement in the field of education. This is evidenced by her choice to return to school in order to obtain a more desirable job. She continued to teach students in a continuous progress model until 1998, when she gave birth to her older son. Samantha took a short leave of about nine weeks before returning to work as a
Reading Specialist at another elementary school in the district. Later in the same year she completed her Master’s degree in Educational Leadership.

She served as the Reading Specialist for two years. It was at that time she applied for and accepted an assistant principalship at a brand new neighboring school. She encountered a surprise at this point:

I was appointed as the assistant principal on Tuesday and found out I was pregnant on Friday. So it wasn't nerves. I thought it was nerves. But it was not. It was [my younger son]. So I actually opened the school as a brand new AP and was pregnant at the same time. So that was fun. [My younger son] was born right after the winter break. So I sat out for nine weeks and came back and finished the school year.

Four short years later, Samantha applied for and accepted the position of principal at another elementary school in the district. At this time, her sons were ages three and six. Samantha served as principal at this school for five years. Then, in the summer prior to the 2009-2010 school year, she transferred to another elementary school and opened its brand-new doors with Charlotte by her side.

Samantha became a principal at the age of 33, which is fairly young as compared to other principals in her school district. This fact, coupled with her change in marital status, contributed to my understanding of her response concerning the next step in her career:
I felt like I want to move fast, fast, fast. I became principal when I was 33 and so I was always... very focused and wanted to move... through quickly and do all of these things [meaning career goals]. But then in the last few years I have decided that I needed to slow down and enjoy the things I was doing while I have the chance to slow down and look at how much I enjoy being at this school, this time, with these people... So now I am not much in a hurry as I used to be. And I realized that I am in a really good place to be when you have kids and can enjoy those activities with them and [enjoy] the... I don't know... the *autonomy* maybe of being at your own school... the challenges of being at your own school.

Samantha is at a place in her life that is fulfilling to her. She has achieved much thus far in her short career-- more than she seemingly originally anticipated. She recently stopped to reflect on her accomplishments and realized it was time to take a breath, so to speak, and to enjoy those accomplishments as well as her current roles.

**On Being a Working Mother.** Currently, Samantha has been working in education for over fifteen years. Her older son is now thirteen years old. She has been a working mother since he was born, having taken off only nine weeks following the birth of each of her sons. Samantha’s job as a school principal comes with many responsibilities, which vary on any given day. She verbally listed some of those responsibilities, which include:

...Different meetings, ...[being] in teachers’ classrooms, observations, parent phone calls or parent issues, keeping track of emails, working with the students in our [classroom of children with disorders of neural development], checking in
[with] the lunchroom, making sure we are moving forward, [and] touching base with the middle school…

Busyness is the element that stood out most to her when she considered being a mother and working full time. When asked about being both principal and mother, Samantha replied:

I was very busy, so I definitely could relate to those mornings when you are trying to get a two year-- a toddler-- dressed and you are trying to get dressed and you are wearing your high heels and your pantyhose and your suits and someone is spitting up on you or crying! And then you have the kindergartener [and] at the same time [are] trying to get everybody where they need to go. So it was a very busy time having someone in daycare-- having the kind of daycare things… you know… if they get sick and they have to be picked up… trying to juggle being the one to go get them or seeing if someone can help you go get them and take them to the doctor.

Samantha struggled to manage her multiple roles, even when she was living with her sons’ father. Both Samantha and her husband worked in the school district as school administrators. She recalled:

He [her husband] was in a similar place in his career. He was an assistant principal and he became a principal after I did. The boys were still young when he became a principal. So it was really… almost like running a tight ship… because we were dealing with three different schools and one home daycare-- my elementary activities, [my husband’s] elementary school activities, [my older
son’s] school activities as a student at a school, and then [my younger son] being at a home daycare… so, three schools. We really did run a very… tight ship. Like everyone had to, everyone was going all the time.

Much of Samantha’s time was spent focused on her sons. That included making sure that they were transported to their respective schools and activities. Samantha felt that she was the parent who mainly dealt with this. She also felt that she was unable to commit her sole focus to her career because of it. When asked about how her experience in managing her multiple roles is similar or different than her husband’s, she stated:

I think that he had more of an opportunity to focus on just being a school administrator. I don't mean that negatively, I just mean that he was better able to say fully immerse himself into those roles. I was constantly thinking, "If I am in a meeting [downtown] and I don't get out at four [o’clock], then who is going to get [my younger son], who has to be picked up by 4:15. Because there were so many timelines… I don't think he had that worry, like, if this meeting goes late I am not going to be able to get one of the boys. Whereas for me, every meeting it is like, “What time is it? When is it time to go?” Every day it was making sure you are going to be in a place where you can get your kids in a right amount of time or you have someone there who can do that for you.

Her comments touch upon the disparate expectations of a father and a mother and in a sense, gender roles. Samantha was expected to make sure of the children’s whereabouts and that appointments were maintained. She did not blame her husband for the
expectation falling on her, however. Instead, she complimented her husband during her explanation:

…[My husband] was very good at always helping and getting [my sons] where they needed to be but I think that I am the one mostly that made sure that if I knew I was going to be somewhere when he was going to be somewhere, I would make the arrangements to make sure the kids were covered. Or I would tell him to but, I have to direct him to do that. You know, “I am going to be gone so if you are not going to be there, you need to make sure that the kids are covered.” But I do have to say that he [was] very good at getting people up and getting people moving…

Her casual attitude and remarks about being the parent most responsible for her children indicated that Samantha believes her role is consistent with that of other working mothers. This indication was confirmed when she said:

When I talk to other moms, I think they have similar experiences [in which] their primary concern is making sure that they’re doing what they need to do… It's constantly on your mind that you are getting everyone where they need to be-- in the right place at the right time. So I don't think it is specific just to [our family]. …When I talk to other moms and other principals/administrators/female principals, they seem to have the same [experiences]… Especially the principals that have young children because it's not... there are not many of us that have really young kids.
Samantha’s parents helped to alleviate some of her stress. When the boys were both infants, Samantha’s mother kept them until around the age of six months. They also picked up and transported her sons when she and her husband are unable to do so. Together with her husband, they provided a kind of support system that enabled Samantha to be as productive as she is.

Samantha experienced the management of being a mother and being a committed principal. This experience proved arduous, even with the help of her parents and her husband, from whom she has separated in the last couple of years. Yet overall, Samantha is fulfilled in her roles as mother and principal. This truth was verified when she stated, “I enjoy what I do. I enjoy working. I really like being a principal [but] it is not always easy… I really do think it's a great job.”

**On Becoming Doctor.** Pursuing a doctoral degree has always been a personal goal for Samantha. It was “nothing professional or anything I felt I needed.” It was just something she wanted to accomplish on her own. So, in the fall of 2007, Samantha began this pursuit.

Samantha became one of the members of the first cohort of doctoral students pursuing their degrees in Educational Leadership at Rigor University. She successfully completed her coursework in the fall of 2009 and at the time, her program paralleled that of her fellow cohort members. It was then that Samantha stalled in her degree progress. She experienced several major setbacks during this time that proved detrimental to her studies. The existence and uniqueness of her setbacks earned her the pseudonym “Samantha Setbacks”.
For her, coursework was the least challenging portion of her doctoral program. When asked about why that might be, Samantha replied:

I felt like when I was doing the coursework that was the best, easiest part…We were in organized coursework… every weekend, had deadlines and papers and professors and I really enjoyed those long days. I really liked being there listening to the research and learning more and kind of getting back into it after having not done it [taking courses at the university level] for 10 years…

She felt invigorated by conversations with her cohort members and by in-class discussions and said that she “…enjoyed it. It was… nice to be with other adults that were interested in learning the same things you were.” Samantha also enjoyed the structure of the doctoral program. The organization and schedule of the classes, which was the responsibility of the graduate school, and the deadlines for projects and papers, which were set by professors, aided Samantha in completing her coursework. When it came time for independent study that substructure no longer existed and she was on her own. Of experiencing this shift in support Samantha said:

I have not done anything in a year except for think about writing because I found it hard when you are not in a structured setting where you are meeting with someone every week in that formal way. Being on my own is the hardest part for me…

It wasn’t simply the shift in program support that contributed to her standstill. In fact, it accounted for only a small portion of the reason. Three major events in Samantha’s life together negatively impacted her degree progress. The first major event
occurred during the first couple of semesters of her coursework. Samantha dispiringly remembered this event:

I actually got sick in the middle of all of that [managing her multiple roles]. I have Polymyalgia Rheumatica. It makes me real tired, so I started taking steroids... I didn't get diagnosed until a little bit into our coursework… [It’s a] little bit like having arthritis, but like all over your body and your major muscle groups… It's a rheumatic disease. And so all of that was happening at the same time so stress plays into that too. So that was hard, I have to say that was hard. Because I was really tired and then still had to keep up with just me… [with] being at the school, with the kids-- trying not to miss out on things--… all when you are just really tired… making sure that their social lives are... [that] you are doing activities with them… [and] not just getting through each day… that you are living and not just being.

Once she was able to get her disease under control, Samantha experienced another setback approximately two years later. It came at the end of her first year as principal at her current school, in the spring of 2010. This was the time in her doctoral program when she was expected to be working on her qualifying exam following the completion of her coursework. It was also the time when she was planning the dedication of her school as well as moving out of her house (as a result of her separation from her husband). Of this profoundly burdensome part of her life, Samantha recollected:

So… we opened the school in August. We were going through our school year and having a school dedication is one of your major responsibilities as a principal
at a new school. Our dedication was scheduled for May--the very beginning of May… In March, I was meeting with a parent and I touched my neck and when I did I felt something in my neck that felt unusual. So I said to the secretaries in the office, "Do you see something?" And when I pushed my head back, an egg-sized tumor was in my neck. I went to the doctor and within two weeks I was having thyroid surgery. I had a very large benign thyroid tumor in my neck. On March 16th, I had surgery to remove the tumor. Like I said, it was benign, so everything was good. But then I had to be out of school for a week. I tried to come back sooner but the doctor wouldn't let me. [In a conspiratorial tone] He doesn't know that I actually did come back to school [laughs]. In hindsight, I think I probably should have just enjoyed that time off, but it was March and it's such a busy time of year and we had things to do like the dedication and all of that. So that's one of those unplanned life events that can throw you off. You know--you open a school, and then you get a tumor, and then you have a dedication, and then you move out of your house, [laughs] and then somewhere in there you decide to write a dissertation and take care of kids, and live a little in the in-between.

During our conversation, Samantha made light of her second setback and of the multiple other events that occurred at that time. Her humor about the situation was consistent with her jovial personality. However, her eyes betrayed her façade and the uneasiness in them revealed further scarring of her ability to manage her doctoral studies.

As if the previous two setbacks were not enough, a third was just around the corner. This blow proved to be the “nail in the coffin” of her doctoral studies thus far.
Approximately seven months after the discovery of Samantha’s tumor, her mother’s health demanded her time and attention:

My mom had major surgery in October of the school year. That was a little more extensive than what we thought... had a tumor in her spine and was losing her ability to feel anything from her breast down to her toes. And so, in her recovery, I ended up needing to be with her more often. She had to go back to the emergency room a few times and that was a difficult recovery, too. I think sometimes some of those things can just wear you out. You end up sitting on the couch watching “Hoarders” instead of writing [her qualifying exam]... [laughs] ... you know... [laughs]

It should be no longer a mystery as to why Samantha has stalled along her path to becoming doctor. She considered what she might do differently if she were to pick up her studies again presently:

I am going to have to start to look at my time [as] if I [actually had] a class. I am going to have to say… I am going to the library on these days. Or I am going to seclude myself on these days and read and write and make a schedule for myself where I can hopefully be accountable to myself. So things would change in the sense that it would be almost like going back like I did for those two years we were in coursework and developing that schedule and trying to stay on it. So it would [take away] less time [from] the kids...

Not once during our interview did Samantha blame her health issues or caring for her mother for interrupting her program. Instead, she offered a plan of action for her doctoral
program reinstatement that reflected only her study and writing habits. This fact confirmed Samantha’s knack for not making excuses and remaining tenacious. And it is this fact that compelled my belief that Samantha will finish her degree.

**Managing Multiple Roles.** The setbacks Samantha encountered over the last few years by themselves could inhibit any college student’s schooling, let alone a doctoral student who is trying to manage being a mother to two young sons, the principal of a new school, and a caretaker to an ill mother while handling her own health issues. Still, Samantha was able to complete her doctoral coursework. She did so with certain external supports in place. During this more successful portion of her studies, she depended on her husband, parents, and even a nearby friend to help with her sons. Samantha’s husband cared for their children when she was away attending class. Often, because of her harried schedule, Samantha stayed awake most or all of the night to complete a paper or readings for class:

[My husband] took those Saturdays [that she had class] and he was very supportive and good with me being gone. I *did* end up doing a lot of work like trying to get everybody in bed at night and working like all night long… [I would] write or read all night long before the next day… going the next day [to class]. But boy let me tell you, that seems a lot different in your late 30s than in your late 20s. Staying up all night was a lot harder than it used to be. *And* you have more responsibilities.

Another support for Samantha was her friend who works at the nearby middle school. She had a daughter who attended there along with Samantha’s older son. They often
made arrangements with one another wherein one could care for the children while the other attended a training or meeting. This relationship was helpful because, “Some days things happen and [I] don’t get to leave and [I] always have to think who I can call on if I need help.” A third support present during her coursework was her parents. Samantha [laughing] remembered a time when she experienced one of those days and had to call upon her father for help:

One time my dad took [my sons] to the doctor because I had a faculty meeting and I was so focused on getting them to the doctor that I didn't tell my dad what he was there for, so the doctor called me and said, “OK… So, your dad made it. We have your dad and we have [my younger son], but we don't know what he is here for.” And he was too little to tell him, so the doctor had to call. I have a great pediatrician so she will just call me herself whenever someone else would take them so I would know what was going on if I couldn't make it there.

This humorous anecdote illustrates Samantha’s harried life-- her busy daily schedule and the mandatory division of her attention among multiple roles. Samantha also mentioned the structure of her doctoral coursework, as maintained by the graduate school, as an external support for her. This included a schedule of classes mainly held in the evenings and on Saturdays, which allowed Samantha to utilize her parents and husband to care for her sons and more easily separate her tasks at work with her studies.

Samantha’s previous quote also exemplifies one of the internal supports that help her manage her multiple roles: humor. She expressed humor throughout our interview, with an uncanny ability to make light of somewhat-gloomy situations. As previously
mentioned, I had the opportunity to speak with both Charlotte and Samantha during the writing of this section. Samantha allowed Charlotte to be privy to our conversation, which proved beneficial. I was able to probe further to discover other internal supports (or talents, in this case) Samantha employed to manage her multiple roles. Once the question was asked, Samantha took a moment to think about those supports, or characteristics, within her. At first, she replied that she had none. Charlotte, upon hearing this response, responded with “interpersonal skills.” She elaborated, referencing Samantha’s ability to relate to every person on her staff. Charlotte commented that Samantha was an excellent communicator. Charlotte also mentioned “charisma” as an internal support. I fully agree with this descriptor as I experienced it firsthand during our initial interview and during various other times I have been in Samantha’s presence. In addition to being tall and quite attractive, she is charming and inspires others to succeed through encouragement. During our first interview and more than once thereafter, she expressed that she was proud of my diligence in my doctoral journey thus far. Lastly, Charlotte offered “tenacity” to the list of Samantha’s internal supports. This quality was clear to Charlotte, who worked with Samantha on a daily basis and witnessed her unwavering strength of purpose. It is also clear to me as I reflect on the trials she has experienced over the last several years. Again, it is the trait that urges me to believe she will complete her degree. Although Charlotte was the one to suggest these internal characteristics, Samantha did not ultimately dispute them. She did, however, downplay them. Her initial answer to the question regarding internal supports, or characteristics, and her downplaying of those that Charlotte offered prompts me to add a fifth support to the list: humility.
**Compunction and Contentment.** During Samantha’s multi-role management, there were two areas of regret that Samantha explicitly mentioned. First, she reported the events in her sons’ lives that she missed out on:

> I did miss out on some kid stuff-- some swim meets… definitely missed out on camping trips. They would start without me and I wouldn't get there until later on a Saturday evening. But once it was over, those couple of years, I couldn't believe how fast it went by.

Secondly, Samantha remembers regarding most events during those couple of years as untimely and says, “…I felt like… there is no good time to do things, you know? There is no good time to go to school. There is no good time for so many things…”

Certainly the major setbacks along her doctoral journey make up the majority of the compunction Samantha lives with regarding her stalled studies. An uncomfortable amount of time has passed since she completed her coursework. This amount of time will most likely prevent Samantha from continuing on to her dissertation without taking additional courses, should she choose to continue. In addition, her major professor has retired from the university. This adds further weight to her decision to return because it adds the responsibility of revisiting the makeup of her committee and selecting a new chair.

In spite of the heavy compunction Samantha feels, there are many facets of her experiences thus far that she highlighted during our conversation. One aspect she underscored is her current ability to incorporate her sons into her work at the elementary school. She brought them to school with her and they stayed with her after school. In
doing so, they became involved in the many activities that occurred on campus throughout the year. Likewise, she was able to play an active role in their education, although she quipped, “But then you know sometimes, I mean boy, it would be nice to drop them off and go to Pilates…” Furthermore, Samantha is proud of opening her elementary school as the principal. It is one of her favorite accomplishments because of the staff she was able to hire and because she is able to work with Charlotte Steady. She is also proud of her doctoral work thus far:

I feel like working on my doctorate really helped inform me as a leader. I think it forced me to read and to become more involved in research than I would have been, had I just been doing it on my own through professional journals or something. So I think… going to school was a great decision just even to inform my own practice… that was important.

Lastly, life is a little bit slower-paced for Samantha now. She stated:

We still have to run a tight ship and get everyone where they need to be. I try really hard not to always say, "Come on, come on, hurry up, let's go, let's go." I try really hard not to do that because I found I was doing that all the time…We [were] always in a hurry, "Go, go, go, go, go." …Now I try not to do that.

The awareness she gained concerning her propensity to goad herself and her family through life, the current discontinuation of her doctoral studies, and the fortune of having her sons on the same campus made it a “little calmer, nicer” for her family.
Summary. At the time of this interview, Samantha Setbacks was successfully negotiating her roles as a single mother and educational administrator, but reached an impasse in her pursuit of a doctoral degree. Her afternoons, evenings, and weekends were devoted to her sons and their activities and events. Samantha’s husband and parents continued to support her as she divided her time and attention between her sons and her career. Her weekdays were reserved for running her elementary school, of which she was extremely proud. She found her job as principal very fulfilling and thoroughly enjoyed working with Charlotte Steady.

Particular external supports during her multi-role management existed that contributed to Samantha’s completion of her doctoral coursework. These included the practical help from her husband, parents, and nearby friend, who were available for Samantha’s children when she was not, preparation in her nightly routine at home, the structure of her doctoral program, and the good fortune of being able to bring both of her sons to work with her. Likewise, the internal supports Samantha relied upon were humor, interpersonal skills, charisma, tenacity, and humility.

Samantha battled two significant health concerns in addition to caring for her ill mother. Since those major life events passed, she settled into her life as a single mother and tried to slow down and move at a pace less hurried than before. Samantha expressed a desire to return to her studies at Rigor University, yet was overwhelmed with the thought of doing so at this late stage.

Upon reflecting on her life roles and how they have interacted over the years, she conveyed both high points and low points in the journey. Missing out on events in her
children’s lives, never being able to find a “good time” for activities, and her health problems were among the low points. Contrastingly, the high points included enjoying having her sons on her campus, being proud of opening her school and working with Charlotte, feeling informed and empowered by her doctoral coursework, and establishing a slower pace in life as a result of her reflection on her management of multiple roles. Figure 4 encapsulates Samantha’s lived experiences as mother, educational leader, and doctoral student by highlighting her successes, challenges, motivations, and supports therein.

**Successes**
- Doctoral coursework
- The impact of doctoral coursework on her job
- Opening a new school
- Charlotte
- Slowing her life’s pace

**Challenges**
- Single motherhood
- Busyness
- Family attending three different schools
- Living vs. being
- Gender roles
- Independent study
- Sickness
- Mother’s surgery

**Motivations**
- Autonomy of the principalship

**External Supports**
- Bringing her sons with her to work
- Practical assistance from her husband, parents, friend
- Structure of graduate school
- Preparation

**Internal Supports**
- Humor
- Interpersonal skills
- Charisma
- Tenacity
- Humility

Figure 4. Samantha Setbacks-- A Visual Summary
**Considering the Conversation.** Upon reviewing her transcript, Samantha felt she talked “way too much.” I assured her that her “talking too much” translated into rich, detailed information about her perspective and experiences. The fact that she was so willing to divulge her thoughts and feelings is a testament to the affability of our relationship.

Samantha initially asked me to remove most of the information about her two health setbacks. I was disappointed because I felt that the sum of those details was central to understanding her doctoral journey thus far. During my conversation with Charlotte and Samantha, Samantha asked for Charlotte’s advice on the inclusion of these details. When prompted for a reason why she wanted the information excluded, Samantha responded that for her, it presented her as “weak”. Charlotte persuaded her to allow the inclusion of the details because it reflected the authenticity of her experiences. The reality of her health issues was beyond Samantha’s control and severely impacted her doctoral studies. She did not choose this reality and thus cannot, or should not, be perceived by the readers of this study as “weak.” In all likelihood, Samantha’s journey will emphasize her strength and tenacity.

Regarding Samantha’s unexpected contact with me during the writing of this chapter, I am not sure if she contacted me because we were to see each other later in the week or because she truly wanted to complete the interview process with me. It may be a combination of the two reasons. In any case, I am pleased that she reconnected with me because I was able to gain further insight into her life.
Now that two interviews have been conducted and the data analyzed, I can see several clear themes emerging. First, both Charlotte and Samantha expressed how incredibly busy they have been in their management of multiple roles. Secondly, both women, in their busyness, depended on internal and external supports in their lives. Furthermore, both women had points of pride along their journey and facets of their lives about which they expressed regret. I am anxious to see if my conversations with the remaining three participants yield data that is consistent with these themes. [From my Reflective Journal and field notes, March 29, 2011, May 28, 2011, and July 11, 2011.]

**Case Three: Miranda McHurdle**

**Meet Miranda McHurdle.** Miranda is a woman in her mid-thirties. She is tall, blonde, and maintains a reserved, unassuming expression. Walking into Miranda’s office at school on a Wednesday afternoon once the teachers and students were gone for the day, I noticed several different piles of papers. It was evident from the piles that she was juggling many projects and tasks at her school. Since it was the end of March, testing for the county was just around the corner. In her position as assistant principal, Miranda is responsible for testing every child at her school utilizing various assessments.

Miranda began her doctoral journey in 2003. She attended Rigor University, just as Charlotte and Samantha did. Approximately three years into her program, she became pregnant with twin girls. They were five years old at the time of this interview. Miranda has served as an elementary assistant principal for the last five years. Regarding her doctoral program, she completed her coursework and defended her research proposal.
Miranda experienced a major hurdle since the approval of her proposal that had an adverse effect on the progress of her study.

Miranda’s doctoral journey encountered an unexpected barrier that triggered a recent halt in her degree pursuit. Her case was presented in this third section in order to more easily compare and contrast her perspective and lived experiences with that of Samantha’s, who also stalled. Unlike my respective relationships with Samantha and Charlotte, I did not know Miranda personally prior to the first interview. The only previous contact I had with Miranda was limited to a short conversation about my proposed study at an administrative training and a couple of emails about the details of the study. [From my Reflective Journal and field notes, March 17, 2011.]

A Day in Miranda’s Life. Miranda’s daily schedule was similar to that of Charlotte and Samantha. She hit the ground running in the morning and experienced multiple demands on her time and attention throughout the day:

A typical day would involve getting up usually around 5:15, getting myself ready and then getting the girls [ready]-- my kids are woken up right around 6:15. My husband works either late afternoon or evening or overnight shifts so depending on, you know... Sometimes he comes home from work. I have to wait for him to get home before I can leave. Otherwise, you know, I pretty much get them up and they get themselves dressed and I head out to work. And I usually don't get home until 5:00, 5:30. And then, I have about two hours with them, my kids, until they go to bed. And at that point, I eat dinner or finish up whatever work I have to complete and I'm dead tired. So I usually go to bed 11:30-ish.
Miranda’s husband was not fortunate enough to work consistent hours, which made it difficult on her as she tried to organize her evenings and upcoming events. In a sense, Miranda often acted as a single mother as a result of her husband’s unexpected work hours. She had to wait for him to get off of work in the mornings in order to leave for work herself. This situation occurred frequently before her daughters started attending Kindergarten this past year.

Interestingly, Miranda did not include the events that occur during the workday in her description of a typical day in her life. This may be because she placed more importance on her role as mother. Once her day at work is completed, which is typically after five o’clock, Miranda allocated time with her daughters. She was careful to give the girls her attention during this time, which amounts to roughly two hours. She fed them dinner, helped them with any schoolwork they may have, and allowed them to dictate the evening’s activities. It is then that her twins went to bed. Once her daughters were in bed, Miranda prepared dinner for herself and ate. She also completed any work she brought home. At this point, it was around eleven o’clock and she was extremely tired, so she headed to bed. The following morning, she woke up and began her routine again.

The description Miranda offered of her day focused solely on her role as mother and neglected her multifaceted role as assistant principal (save the fact that she included residual work in her daily schedule) and stagnant role as doctoral candidate. This was partially indicative of her current situation in life. At this point in time, Miranda was focused on her daughters, who are experiencing some health issues. It was also summer break, which equated to a reduced amount of work on her part. Furthermore, she had momentarily discontinued her graduate studies. This will be discussed shortly.
Miranda’s Career Journey. Miranda obtained two undergraduate degrees from Rigor University: one in music performance and one in music education. At that point in her career, Miranda fully intended on a career teaching music. She spent her first three years doing so before electing to obtain a teaching position in order to acquire “regular classroom experience.” So, she served as a fourth grade teacher. As a result of her love of reading and reading instruction, Miranda interviewed for and accepted a position as a reading coach. In this position, she was able to further develop her knowledge of reading and transform the skills and strategies of teachers and by doing so, impacted the achievement of students within her school.

During her first few years as a music teacher and subsequently a reading coach, Miranda was in graduate school to earn a master’s degree in educational leadership. Obtaining a master’s degree was a goal of Miranda’s from early on in her life. A colleague and friend of hers prompted the evolution of the degree from a long-term goal to a real, short-term objective. Of her decision to return to the university in pursuit of this degree, Miranda recalled:

Well, actually I knew I wanted to get my master's. That was just a goal that I had from the beginning. I wasn't sure what it would be in, but as I started teaching, I had a friend… [who] was at the same school. We were both first year teachers, also very ambitious, and we pretty much clicked and both of us-- she was a second grade classroom teacher at that time-- we, just in talking, decided, "Hey, we both want to get our master's. What's interesting to us?" So we went the Ed Leadership route.
Just like that, Miranda was on her way to earning a master’s degree in educational leadership. She did so and graduated just a couple of years later.

Miranda did not take a break from graduate-level education at this point. She obtained her two undergraduate degrees, sought and obtained her master’s degree, then began her pursuit of the doctorate. Of her continuous schooling Miranda remarked, “I may have taken one semester off but that’s it. I’ve been pretty much in school all along.” Schooling is therefore a continuous journey for Miranda.

Miranda interviewed for and accepted a position as an elementary school assistant principal in 2006, in the middle of her doctoral program. It was also at this time that she got pregnant with twin daughters. Miranda prematurely gave birth to her two daughters. Their premature birth, along with Miranda’s promising career in the school district and her ongoing doctoral studies, motivated her husband to change careers in order to care for the couple’s daughters. This change of circumstances, which will be expounded upon shortly, allowed Miranda to continue on her career and education path.

Her current job as assistant principal had become increasingly difficult over the last five years. This was largely due to the increased demands upon those in her role. Miranda was ambivalent about her educational career in the future. She would like to stay in educational administration for now. She talked about her future as if it were to continue on one of two paths:

…Down the road, like years from now, I would love to teach at the university level… once the economy straightens out and things are a little more stabilized…
Long term, if I ever didn't get the degree, I would love to move to another state such as [a neighboring state] where they pay a little better.

Either Miranda will continue in her degree pursuit, graduate, and become a professor at a university in her own state, or she will discontinue her studies and move to a nearby state where the pay is better and serve as a school leader there.

**On Being a Working Mother.** Miranda worked since she graduated with her undergraduate degrees in music over ten years ago. She began her doctoral studies in 2003 at Rigor University and gave birth to her daughters a little over five years ago, in 2006. From that point on, Miranda has managed the roles of mother, educational administrator, and doctoral student.

When asked about the aspects of her life that contributed to her success in managing her roles as mother and educational administrator, Miranda replied, “I have an incredibly supportive husband who was willing to change jobs so that he could work overnight and watch the girls so that I could be successful at my own job.” Her husband previously worked a job with standard weekly hours. His change in career was precipitated by Miranda’s pregnancy. The decision for her husband’s career change did not come lightly. The couple discussed the positive and negative aspects of a career change. They determined that Miranda’s career was currently the one with the most opportunity for advancement, and thus financial promise. The potential perks of this transition outweighed the negative aspects. Regarding this decision, Miranda stated:

When we found out that we were having twins, he completely changed his job career so that he could be home. At that time, I knew that I was going into
leadership in the school district. I just pretty much knew that. So we decided it would be best for him to make the career change so that he could be home with them-- work overnight-- and we didn't have to pay for childcare. And they were premature, so we've had a lot of medical issues.

She was appreciative of her husband’s support of her career and commitment to their family. This appreciation grew deeper with every year she remained an assistant principal.

Her job as an assistant principal then was not as demanding a role as it currently is. She declared:

I've been an AP for four and a half years, and it is nothing now what it used to be even four and a half years ago. There's so much more on our plate that we're expected to do which makes me feel... That takes more of my time.

Miranda believed that over time, more and more responsibilities were placed on elementary school assistant principals. She viewed that overabundance of responsibilities as a hindrance in her doctoral degree pursuit. She compared herself with other doctoral students and said:

Well, I do know some people that are also working on their dissertations who are not elementary assistant principals. I don't think that they have the amount of pressure and job duties, so to speak. I think it's very different when you work even at the high school level because you know, at elementary we're testing chairs. We're responsible for all curriculum and discipline, and you know a whole
long list of things, whereas, at upper levels, they don't have that. They spread the wealth, so to speak. So I think that's a big difference. And again… I'm not in a position where I can take off for two months to do this. If I could, I would.

In her explanation, Miranda contrasted the responsibilities and roles of the assistant principal at the elementary school level with that of the assistant principal at higher levels of schooling. She viewed her job as critical to the success of her school and did not feel that she could take a leave of absence to complete her degree. She indicated that the inflexible nature of her position was a main difference negatively affecting her degree progress, but I suspected that taking time off of work would also result in a financial burden Miranda could not afford to bear.

Miranda also believes that as her daughters get older, the division of her time and attention is more challenging. She said, “I feel that now that the girls are five, they're demanding more and more of my attention and it's more difficult for me to take time away from them to do my own work…” Miranda had additional pressure on her that is more unique because of her daughters’ premature birth:

You know, especially when I have one daughter that struggles with writing and that struggles with gross motor skills, fine motor skills. I believe that, being in education, I'm probably the best person for her-- to work with her, to get her to practice, so to speak. She goes to therapy every week. You know, that is just taking so much of my time and is a struggle.
Dividing one’s attention and time is difficult for parents of children without developmental delays, let alone those of children who struggle with fine and gross motor skills, as does one of Miranda’s daughters.

In summary, Miranda’s husband, who changed careers just over five years ago, has been exceedingly supportive. He took on the bulk of the responsibility in raising the couple’s daughters from birth. Now the twins were in Kindergarten and the responsibilities each parent took on are more proportionate. Miranda experienced a job that was progressively more taxing. Additionally, her daughters were demanding more of her time and attention as one of them continued to struggle with her motor skills and as both of them got older.

**On Becoming Doctor.** Miranda did not make the decision to continue her studies past the level of master’s work until she attended the commencement for her master’s degree:

I don't think I really decided to do that [pursue a doctorate] until I got my master's. It wasn't until I graduated and then again that same friend was like, "Hey, let's go ahead and get our doctorate, you know, one step up." It sounded exciting. My mom herself had pursued a doctorate and didn't quite finish because she ended up having me and then that was the end of her pursuit. She didn't get quite as far. She was still taking courses so, I thought, "You know what, why not?"

As with her master’s degree, Miranda made a seemingly capricious decision to obtain her doctoral degree.
Since it has been many years since the pursuit of this degree began, I asked Miranda about the progress of her friend who had originally prompted it. She said:

She actually now, crazy enough [slight eye roll], her husband, with a Criminology degree, got promoted as manager at Target and now makes over $150,000. He's a regional whatever. And so, she doesn't have to work and she didn't finish. They moved.

This was the first comment during our conversation that elicited noticeable emotion from Miranda. I immediately detected this emotion and prompted her to talk about how her friend’s departure impacted her doctoral journey. She replied:

Greatly, because I feel like I'm floundering and I'm by myself. And where I am in the program, there really isn't any support. All the staff [in the] Ed Leadership department, they're all pretty much new and the people on my committee are retiring.

She was visibly frustrated at this point in our conversation. Treading carefully, I then asked her to describe the current state of her study. Miranda expressed:

The course work was the easiest thing. That for me was the biggest success--getting through the coursework. The bad part is I feel like this has been so long and drawn out. I started the program in 2003 and I finished the coursework right around 2006 or so… Since then, I've been working on this dissertation, which I feel like I'm never going to finish.
Miranda defended her research proposal nearly one year ago and sent a research request to her own school district, as she intended to interview eight school district administrators. The request was denied. This proved shocking to Miranda, as she had spoken with each of the administrators before submitting the request. Each potential participant was agreeable to participating in the study. However, the office of the school district that dealt with matters concerning assessment and accountability said, “After consultation with other members of the district staff, it was determined that principals’ schedules are too full to be able to assist you with your endeavor.” She furnished me with a copy of the district’s letter that documented this reasoning.

The denial of Miranda’s research request by the school district proved, at this point, too large a hurdle to clear in her degree pursuit. She thus earned the pseudonym “Miranda McHurdle” in this study. Prior to the appearance of the hurdle, her pursuit was progressing at a somewhat-consistent pace. Miranda confessed, “…Since then, I really haven't done much of anything.” She was able to spend more time with her daughters in the interim, which caused the delay to persist. About the persistence of the delay, Miranda said, “…I think my dissertation completion has been put at a standstill for the last year because I feel that I need to spend what little time I have with my own children.” This is a testament to the difficulty of managing her multiple roles.

To add insult to injury, financial pressure is plaguing Miranda. She still pays tuition for each semester she is enrolled in graduate school and does so out-of-pocket. She expressed, “…I mean financially, it's expensive because I keep having to pay for two credit hours every semester and I'm never finishing. I feel like I'm never finishing…” In summation, Miranda began the pursuit of her doctoral degree partially because it felt like
a natural next step and partially because she sought to surpass her mother, who was unable to finish due to Miranda’s birth. Along her doctoral journey, Miranda’s friend and motivator abandoned her degree pursuit and moved out of state. Miranda ended up spending longer than expected in her coursework and although she successfully defended her proposal, ran into a large hurdle: the denial of her research request by the district. Even with the existence of financial pressure to complete her degree, Miranda has stalled.

Managing Multiple Roles. Miranda did not arrive at the current stage of her doctoral program without support. As with Charlotte and Samantha, Miranda had certain external and internal supports in place that aided her in managing her multiple roles. Her husband served as a dominant external and internal support in her life. Practically, her husband assumed the role of principal caretaker from the time their twins were born. He changed his career in order to do so. Miranda said, “…He… goes above and beyond with, you know, helping out with them [the twins] and allowing me time to go to the library or to work on writing or whatever.”

Miranda also mentioned her mother as a supportive individual. She shared that her mother watched her daughters almost daily so she could maintain a focus on her career. Miranda’s mother lived a little less than an hour away and her commute was not an effortless one. She voiced, “I think that family support helps; not just [my husband] but also my parents. They helped tremendously.” She made the distinction between her own plight as a mother of young children and the plight of others who do not have children or whose children are older when she said, “Other people have children that are older, that can drive themselves to different functions... I think that's a big factor-- having young children and the fact that it is demanding to begin with.”
Furthermore, Miranda spoke of her friend who began the doctoral program with her. She said:

…Early on in the program when I had a friend who was doing the program with me, that kept me on track and she's the one that I got through the master's degree with and we started the doctoral degree and you know, early on, that was great.

For a short time, this friend was crucial to her degree progress. They provided each other a supportive friendship and over time, experienced a unique camaraderie. Unfortunately, this relationship came to an end.

Miranda did not consider her dissertation committee a support. I feel it important to note here because both Charlotte and Samantha included their committees as a kind of support. Miranda stated, “They're supportive, but they're very hands off and I don't get very much communication. It's been challenging being on my own with this because I wasn't part of a cohort.” Obviously, Miranda heard about the benefits of being part of a cohort as she used this reason to account for a small part of the discontinuation of her study. She may have also suggested with this statement that committee members were for whatever reason more vested in seeing students in cohorts through to degree completion.

Miranda highlighted two main internal supports that aided her in managing her roles: devotion and persistence. She expressed, “I do everything whole-heartedly. Regardless of how long it takes, I put my best effort into everything I do.” It was this devotion that influenced Miranda to leave her daughters at home or with her parents and study elsewhere. She explained why she had to do so:
Yeah, like I would take a Saturday and go to the library at [Rigor University] and work because I can't work from home. I've tried. I've tried writing at home and I am incredibly distracted by either the kids or something that needs done in the house. So for me, I have to physically drive myself to the library to work.

Miranda was also devoted to her job, but in that devotion, felt that she spent too much time on work. She attempted an explanation when she said:

…Personally, I think I spent too much time on my work because I want to get it done and I want to make sure that everybody's on the same page and I'm not one that takes shortcuts. So because of that... I mean I do that to myself. But then, I feel successful about what I do because I don't want [it to be] mediocre. You know what I'm saying?

Her devotion to her job was clear, as is her devotion to her daughters. After all, she was not able to continue with her study after the hurdle she experienced last fall because she so enjoyed dedicating that time and attention to her daughters.

The second internal support Miranda mentioned was persistence. For the most part, she was persistent in setting and achieving the goals she created for herself. She successfully graduated with two bachelor’s degrees and one master’s degree and up until this past fall, was largely successful in the pursuit of her doctoral degree. She was also been persistent in seeking and obtaining various positions in elementary education. Ultimately, Miranda was effective at ensuring her daughters were cared for as she managed her roles as assistant principal and doctoral student.
Compunction and Contentment. There are twice as many facets of Miranda’s compunction than facets of contentment in managing her multiple roles. The aspect of compunction most often mentioned by Miranda during my conversation with her was “guilt.” In fact, the word was mentioned eleven times throughout the interview and subsequent email correspondences. One particular quote summarized her guilt about being away from her family:

The older [my daughters] get, the more difficult it is, and I feel very guilty. I feel guilty about being at work so late. I feel guilty about not having time with them. I feel guilty when I ask my parents to keep them, which they do. They're grateful and I'm very grateful for that but I mean, I just feel that I can't give them a hundred percent, as I would like to.

Miranda also felt guilty about leaving her daughters at home so she could study, uninterrupted. She said, “…I feel so guilty about it, so I think I’m a horrible mom for that.” Her statement here expressed the brutal truth, according to Miranda.

Although guilt was the more prevalent factor in our conversation, I, as the researcher, surmised as much from how many times it was mentioned. Miranda cited a second area of compunction and ranked it number one: lack of time. She experienced a general lack of time during her multi-role management and said, “I don’t have enough time to do all three [roles].” Miranda thought she spent too much time on her work, as mentioned before. She tried to be involved in their schooling, but because she worked the same hours as her daughters were in school, it was almost impossible for her to do so. She worked with her girls at home but expressed, “I know they crave that time with me.”
She also felt that studying took up too much time that could have otherwise been spent with her family. Miranda set aside a specific time for such a purpose:

Last year, I [studied] on Monday nights. So I would leave work-- go on Monday nights. The kids would... either my husband [would have them] or most often they go to my parents' house and I'd stay at the library until like 12:00, 1:00 in the morning; [I was] dead tired the whole rest of the week and that... was difficult.

Truly, guilt and the lack of time overlap. Miranda never had time to devote to her daughters, which resulted in guilt.

A third aspect of compunction Miranda mentioned was the bureaucracy of obtaining research participants in order to gather data for her study. She ranked this as the second most frustrating aspect of her journey so far:

Number two, I would have to say, my frustration with the whole bureaucracy of going through this because I have had issues with, you know, approval from the district… and now I'm waiting on IRB. And it's just a whole big bunch of hoops, I guess, that we have to jump through.

Miranda felt that too much “red tape” existed and its presence has strained the continuation of her program. Committee support is a fourth area of compunction that accompanied the bureaucracy of the process. Again, Miranda conveyed the supportive nature of her committee, but also articulated their lack of communication and “hands-off” approach. She yearned for a committee that took a more active role in her pursuit.
The last two areas of compunction are concerned with how Miranda cared for herself. First, she admitted that she largely neglected her health due to her multiple roles. Miranda lamented:

This is tough! I often neglect myself in order to take care of my children and handle the everyday demands of being an assistant principal in a large school. I feel very guilty when I miss out on time with my daughters after school. I usually don’t leave work until 5:30 pm (or later), which gives me very little time with my own children before they go to bed. I typically don’t eat lunch until 2:30, and then find myself snacking on junk food late at night as I’m trying to stay awake, working from home. Working Saturdays during the school year was also less time spent with my family or doing things I need to do (i.e. writing my dissertation!). This is one area [health] where I need to somehow find more balance. This summer, I am trying to make a conscious effort to eat better and make time to jog two to three times per week… now that the regular school year is over. The cycle of feeling guilty being away from my daughters, working from home at night, and always being tired has really taken a toll on my health and accomplishments. This past school year, I was more sick than ever—yet still went to work—and felt more burned out than ever. Consequently, I accomplished nothing with my dissertation writing.

Eating late lunches, snacking on junk food, staying up late most evenings, working an additional day each week, foregoing exercise, and experiencing the stress of constant guilt negatively impacted Miranda’s body, causing her to physically be the sickest she had been in a long time. Not only did she not devote time to herself, but Miranda also
failed to devote much time for her adult friendships: “I keep in touch with friends through text messages and email. During holiday breaks, we sometimes get together for dinner or get the kids together to play. It is not enough, though!” So, both her health and her friendships suffered as she strove to manage the roles of mother, educational administrator, and doctoral student.

Three areas of contentment existed for Miranda. First, she enjoyed her job— even with its increasingly challenging nature. She felt successful about her role as assistant principal because she refused to take “shortcuts” and instead spent a lot of time on her work, got it done and ensured that everyone was “on the same page.” Interestingly, this area was also one of compunction for Miranda. Secondly, she was proud of her ability to build and sustain relationships at her school. In her words, Miranda stated, “…My success is in building relationships with the people that I work with and seeing them make progress.” Her last area of contentment was reluctantly tacked onto one of her expressions of guilt. Miranda said:

I know in the big picture, one day, I think [my daughters] might be proud, you know, if I have the degree and say, "Hey, I actually did this and it took me forever, but I did it." I think they would be proud about that, but right now, it just doesn't seem that way.

If she does succeed in her doctoral degree pursuit, Miranda thought that once older, her daughters would be proud of their mother’s accomplishment.

Summary. At the time of this interview, Miranda had not continued on her journey to obtain her doctoral degree in educational leadership. She was still fully
committed to her roles as educational administrator and mother. Her husband and mother
continued to provide support when Miranda needed it in order to be successful as an
assistant principal.

External supports along Miranda’s journey included the caretaking and intense
dedication from her husband, the willingness of her mother to constantly commute to
help out with the girls, and a friend’s companionship. Internal supports consisted of both
devotion and persistence. Focusing on maintaining her health and friendships was
something about which Miranda expressed desire. She planned to begin eating healthier
and exercising. Miranda also strived to spend quality time with her family, especially
with her daughters. The twins were getting older and increasingly demand more of her
time and attention. She continued to be plagued by the discontinuation of her doctoral
studies. She was in limbo, so to speak, and needed to make a decision about moving
forward or ceasing the effort. Until she makes her decision, she will continue to pay
tuition each semester and feel guilty about how her time and attention is divided. Figure 5
summarizes Miranda’s lived experiences as mother, educational leader, and doctoral
student. I whole-heartedly want to believe that her devotion and persistence will get her
over her hurdle and carry her to degree completion.

Considering the Conversation. Unlike Charlotte and Samantha, Miranda’s body
language was difficult to read. Her responses to my questions were also more constricted
than those of the previous two participants. That could be because she was unsure about
the questions I might ask or was uneasy with our relationship. It may be a combination of
the two reasons. Working in the same school district as the interviewer, serving in the
same position in her job as the interviewer, and knowing that the interviewer has information about her life and roles might have led to apprehension on Miranda’s part.

My hypothesis about her body language and overall interaction with me was substantiated when she failed to return some of my emails or schedule a second interview with me. Like I did with Samantha, I emailed Miranda a few essential, lingering questions I had after our first interview and my analysis thereof. I chose only a few

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**Successes**
- Job as assistant principal
- Building relationships in her school
- Doctoral work thus far through Rigor University

**Challenges**
- Guilt
- Lack of time
- Bureaucracy involved in research approval
- Committee support
- Neglecting self; Health
- Maintaining adult relationships
- Financial pressure

**Motivations**
- Mother's inability to complete doctoral program
- Encouragement of colleagues
- Driven nature

**External Supports**
- Husband’s career change
- Mother’s assistance with twins
- Friend’s companionship in degree pursuit

**Internal Supports**
- Husband’s unwavering support and encouragement
- Devotion
- Persistence

Figure 5. Miranda McHurdle-- A Visual Summary
questions to ask so as not to overwhelm her and precipitate yet another unanswered email. Thankfully, after some time had gone by, she responded to those questions. I believe that seeing her at a district meeting prompted her response. Whatever the reason, I was appreciative of her answers and the insight into her experiences they afforded me.

Upon reflecting on our conversation, I was struck by how negative it was. It was quite difficult for Miranda to identify inner strengths and to answer questions about what has contributed to the successful management of her roles thus far. It was also difficult for her to identify areas of contentment in her life, while it was much easier for her to offer areas of compunction. I speculate that being a participant in my study released certain negative emotions—namely guilt—that perhaps Miranda had kept bottled up for some time. Unless someone has walked in your shoes, it is difficult to express your true feelings to her. I am in a similar place in my doctoral journey and maybe it was easier for her to speak honestly about where she is in her program. Unfortunately, however, Miranda fails to realize just what an amazing woman she is. It is my hope that when she reads this study, she will extract a new interpretation of self—one that is ambitious, devoted, and persistent in her roles. It is my hope that she will find a renewed respect for her husband, mother, and others who have supported her along the way. Lastly, it is my hope that her daughters will read this someday, appreciate it, and seek to emulate the aforementioned characteristics of their mother, who in turn seeks to prove that motherhood alone does not define her.

Considering Miranda’s case in light of the previous two, there are several similarities that persist: the busyness each participant experiences, the dependence of all three upon both external and internal supports, and the fact that all three experience
aspects of compunction and contentment among their roles. New to the analysis is the overall feeling, or emotion, of participants’ doctoral journey. While Charlotte and Samantha were generally positive about their experiences thus far, Miranda’s outlook proved to be quite grim. It is interesting to note that Samantha’s stall lasted longer than that of Miranda’s, but Samantha remained positive about her experiences. This could simply be a difference in personality between the two, but I cannot make that determination because I do not know them well enough to do so.

Furthermore, both Charlotte and Samantha shared instances in which gender roles were predominant in their relationships with their spouses. In Miranda’s case, however, gender roles did not seem to take precedence in her relationship with her husband. In fact, he put her career first and took on a night shift in order to care for their twin daughters during the day. Certainly this decision, which has spanned five years, defies traditional gender roles. [From my Reflective Journal and field notes, March 17, 2011, May 28, 2011, and June 23, 2011.]

Case Four: Carrie Completed

Meet Carrie Completed. I chose to present Carrie’s case next, in an effort to keep the reader engaged and provide a perspective and experiences that are decidedly more positive than the previous case. It is not to diminish the importance of the former, however, as the reader should understand that the experiences of the women in this study are real and varied. This case, though, simply has a more uplifting feel to it.

Carrie Completed is a woman in her mid-thirties with dirty-blonde hair and a consistently earnest countenance. She is one of only two participants in this study who
hold an administrative position at the district-level in her county. The former three participants were administrators at the school level. I note this for one main reason-- to propose that their responsibilities span all schools within the county, which amounts to more than 200. It may be that the demands of jobs such as these are greater given the amount of influence they have, although I am just speculating.

Carrie began her doctoral program in 2005 and completed it in 2009. She has an Ed.D in Educational Leadership with an emphasis in Curriculum Development. Carrie obtained this degree, along with her master’s degree, from Distance University. Carrie’s doctoral program required 66 credit hours for her Ed.D degree, which is similar to the 69 required by Rigor University.

Carrie currently has four years in educational administration, with all four of those years at the district level, in the department that deals with issues of assessment and accountability. At the time of Carrie’s entrance into her program, she had a five year old and was pregnant with her second child. Carrie gave birth to her second child immediately following the defense of her dissertation. Since that time, she and her husband have added one more child to the family, for a total of three children.

I was more than excited about my interviews with Carrie. This was mainly due to the fact that she successfully completed her doctoral program. She did so in an impressive amount of time while succeeding in her educational career and raising three children, who are all under the age of twelve. I wanted to find out if what contributed to her success differed from or resembled those supports I found when I analyzed the interview data from the other participants.
Not unlike my relationship with Miranda, my association with Carrie was limited to the few times she would attend and present at a district training I attended. I certainly knew who she was, but did not have knowledge of her career path, doctoral degree procurement, or of her family life. Others in the district, who learned of my study proposal, provided her name to me. I contacted her via email and she agreed to become a participant for this study.

For both interviews, I met Carrie in her office in the downtown building. Most of the school district staff works at this particular building. I traveled up the elevators and wound my way through halls and past cubicles, finally finding her quaint office in the very back. I made the assumption before visiting her that of all of my participant’s offices, hers would be the most cluttered simply because of the nature of her job, which involves managing all of the standardized and formative testing in the district. I was pleasantly surprised, however, to find that I was wrong. Although there were certainly multiple piles of papers around her office, it was generally neat. Her desk was quite full, but again, orderly. Two computer screens took up almost a quarter of her desktop. This setup presumably allowed Carrie to be as efficient as possible. I found that to be true, because her responses to my emails were always prompt. I often hesitated to email her, not wanting to divert her attention from her job. Her easygoing responses, which encouraged me to let her know if I needed something, prompted me to ask questions and solicit clarification when necessary without hesitation. I very much appreciated that. Naturally, there were a few interruptions during our interviews. We had to move from a conference room into her office during the first ten minutes of the initial interview. A few people would randomly stop by Carrie’s office, poke their heads in, and ask a question or
make a comment without regard to our conversation. In defense of the interrupters, Carrie did not close her door for either interview. I surmised from this inaction that the current tasks in her department superseded any others. This makes sense given that my interviews with Carrie took place just before and just after the district’s testing season for all grade levels. I was, and am, thankful that Carrie agreed to meet with me given the demands on her time. [From my Reflective Journal and field notes, March 15, 2011.]

**A Day in Carrie’s Life.** Carrie’s typical day was comparable to the typical days of the previous four participants. Reflecting on her current days, she recounted:

…I get up at probably around six o'clock in the morning and I get ready for work. My husband is obviously getting ready for work at the same time. He's a principal, so he's off before I am… I wake up my oldest daughter, who is nine, at 6:45 and… my mother shows up usually at my house and she will then get her ready for school. I leave about 7:00-7:15 and then… my mom will take the kids at that point… She'll take my nine-year-old to school and [get] my baby, who is 17 months, and my three-year-old up and ready for their day. And she'll keep the three-year-old and the one-year-old at her house all day while the other one's at school. And then I leave at 7:15-- [at] the latest-- and I… come to the [the school district] building… I begin answering the 500 emails I get a day and the phone [rings] off the hook from, typically, the time I get here until the time I leave. And it's random. Today, for example, I have meetings scheduled all day but usually it's I'm here… answering emails and phone calls and putting out fires [to do with] testing.
It is already obvious that Carrie's mother is a key part of her life. She came to her house daily and assisted in getting Carrie’s three children dressed and ready to leave the house. Her mother also served as caretaker to her two younger children. Also apparent in her description was her multifaceted job in the department of assessment. Carrie asserted that the tasks in her position take on a different configuration from day to day. She also included traveling as an aspect of her job, which was always been the case:

…Since we've become a [district of interest regarding a national assessment], I've been having to travel more often than in the past. For example… Tuesday through Wednesday, I'm going to be in D.C. for [a national assessment meeting] so it's-- I'm all over the place; meetings, going places, schools, things like that. Oh, and then I go home.

Carrie’s afterthought about going home at the end of her day was somewhat comical, but revealed the ubiquitous nature of her current job. She continued:

I forgot about the getting home part. I get home at usually-- they say we work 'til 4:45, but I have never left here until-- between 5:00 and 5:30… ever… I arrive in [a neighboring] county by 6:30 and I have about an hour with my youngest, my 17-month-old, because I put him to bed at 7:30. And then, my three-year-old will stay up until usually around 8:30-9:00, and then my nine-year-old will go to bed around 8:30-9:00 as well. And then, I follow right behind them.

Carrie put in long hours in her current position, not leaving until well past the official time to end the day. At around an entire hour, her commute home took a considerable amount of time. Her three children received much of her attention when she arrived
Carrie staggered their bedtimes not only because of their ages, but perhaps so that she could dedicate a small portion of her time to each child, individually.

The report Carrie provided of a typical day in her life emphasized her roles as mother and educational leader. As a mother, she helped get her children ready in the morning, visited with each of them in the evening-- during the limited time frame she was afforded because of her long commute-- and ensured they got to bed in the evenings. As district-level administrator, Carrie prepared for days that were unlike one another, travelled when necessary, and put in more time than was required. This was a snapshot of her life at present. Her days managing the two roles in addition to a third role, that of doctoral student, were more harried. Carrie reflected on this time in her life and offered her perspective and lived experiences in the following sections.

Carrie’s Career Journey. Carrie received her undergraduate degree in psychology in 1996 from Rigor University. After graduating, though, she did not pursue a job in the field of psychology. In fact, she was a bartender during this stage of her life. Carrie felt that she could have advanced faster in her career had she been more academically challenged during high school. Reflecting on the lack of challenge, Carrie shared:

I graduated not high on the list by any means of rank order because I really was never pushed in high school as students are pushed now. I think that if more emphasis was placed on academics when I was in high school… I might have gotten to the position I’m in quicker… I have the drive within me… - I didn't want to wait and I started college immediately after graduating from high school. But I
was so tired because I was doing a lot of travelling outside of the country 'cause I had a friend that lived in Europe. So, I was going over there [Europe] a lot… I wanted to be done with school. I wanted to be done with… *everyday* going to school, waking up, and expectations, so I graduated in three years with my bachelor’s [degree]. And then, I did absolutely *nothing* with it for several years because it was a psychology and a technical writing degree. And then, I decided that I really needed to do something with my education because at that time I was a bartender… I joined the [program that provides an alternate route into teaching] and I became a teacher.

Although Carrie went straight into college after graduating from high school, she took a break from her schooling once she earned her bachelor’s degree. During her years as a bartender, at some point she realized that finding a job in the field of psychology was either unappealing or unrealistic. So, Carrie made the decision to become a teacher and take specific courses to become certified in education.

Carrie was notably shocked by the lack of support she received as a new teacher sans the coursework and experiences afforded to education majors. She remembered, “They gave me a set of keys and said, ‘This is the map. These are your keys. Go find your room.’” Fortunately, Carrie was a substitute for a short amount of time, so stepping into an unknown classroom in an unknown school was not a novel experience. She spent a short time at her first middle school due to its location, which was a far drive for Carrie. Therefore, she transferred to a middle school in the district that was closer to her home, which was in a neighboring county. Changing middle schools was pivotal to the future of
Carrie’s career. It was at her second middle school that others became aware of her leadership qualities:

…After one year of teaching… [the school administration] made me a team leader, and then my administrator at the time started pushing me into becoming a school leader... And so, I was a team leader for - actually, it was - the first year I was there, in the middle of the year, she made me the team leader and then the entire second year I was a team leader. And then, I realized that I was fine, and I would have been fine and I could have stayed there forever, but… I didn't feel that I was fulfilling a need within me to be the best I could I be.

Simply being “fine” was not enough for Carrie, who expressed a lack of fulfillment in her position at the time. She knew that there was more energy within her and more opportunities in her future to help develop her leadership skills and character.

Consequently, Carrie transferred schools once more. She chose to apply to her first school in order to obtain a teaching job. She moved to her second school because it was closer to her home. This third middle school was selected because of the student population it served, which appealed to Carrie. In her words, she reasoned, “…I could do more good for students at a high-needs school. So, I went to the most urban school in our school district and I worked there for five years.” Carrie’s five-year stint at her third school indicates that she found a level of fulfillment that was formerly lacking. At this middle school, Carrie earned the job of “subject area leader/department head.” It was also during this time that she completed the internship portion of her educational leadership program in order to obtain her master’s degree. Carrie’s internship caused her to realize that becoming a school administrator was not a desirable outcome for her. Unfortunately,
her realization came toward the end of her program. She felt that she should just finish
the coursework at that point. She obtained the master’s degree in educational leadership
in 2005 from Distance University.

Carrie rolled right into her doctoral program at Distance University once her
master’s program was completed. At this time in her career, she felt her calling was
outside the four walls of the classroom. She applied for and accepted a job as a
coordinator in her current department. Just a few short years later, in 2009, Carrie was
promoted within the department to manager. Shortly thereafter, she completed her
doctoral degree and graduated. Concurrently, her husband applied for and became a
principal.

Throughout our conversations, Carrie did not discuss the future career goals she
has for herself. She has achieved much in the eleven years she has served in the school
district. Carrie completed her undergraduate degree in psychology in 1996 and obtained a
teaching job in 2000. Since then, she has been promoted several times. She was a teacher,
then became the subject area leader/department head, later took on the job of district
department coordinator, and most recently, accepted the position of manager in a district
department. In the course of this quick rise in rank, Carrie gave birth to three children.
Her oldest was born in 2002, during her first couple of years teaching. Her middle child
was born in the middle of her doctoral program. Carrie’s now-17th month old, the
youngest child, was born just one week after she defended her dissertation in 2009. In the
next section, Carrie described her experiences as a working mother.
On Being a Working Mother. As mentioned, Carrie has been a working mother since her oldest was born nine years ago. All nine of those years have been in education. Her older two children were female, whereas her youngest child was male. When asked about how she managed raising three children and working, Carrie thought instantly of her parents and said:

Thankfully, my parents are fantastic… After I had [my oldest child], my mom worked [the] evening shift and my dad worked during the day… My mom went to work at like four-thirty or something, and I know my dad worked until three, so my mom would have the children. And there was like a thirty-minute window from when I came home and my dad had them. So, it was definitely a village raising a child with her. And that went on until she went to school.

When her older daughter entered school at the age of five, Carrie got pregnant with her younger daughter. It was at this point when her mother made the decision to retire and take care of Carrie’s second child. She stated:

…When I got pregnant with [my younger daughter], my mom - she's a first generation American so she didn't go to college… [and has] always had like minimum wage… positions- decided that… she would retire and take care of [my younger daughter].

Carrie’s mother made this decision because she thought it would be a better situation than placing her at a daycare all day, everyday. Carrie recognized her mother’s compassion and in appreciation of the gesture, decided to pay her mother the same amount she was prepared to pay the daycare for the care of her middle daughter. When Carrie’s son was
born just a year and a half later, her mother cared for both children. In order to make the situation even more optimal, Carrie and her husband bought a house close to her mother’s. She explained:

…When [my son] came around, it just was [natural] that she would take both of them and [I] paid her more, you know? I don't worry about the kids. I can travel, because I know my mom has the kids. And when we bought our home… 'cause it was that [much closer] to my parents - 'cause we only live six doors down from them… It's a walking distance kind of a thing, so if anything happens… she's right there… I would never have been able to be as successful as I am in my job now if it wasn't for my parents.

Her appreciation for her parents was evident, as was her determination to ensure that her parents’ needs were met so they could continue to help her.

The time in her life when it was most challenging to manage being a mother to three children and an educational administrator was when her third child was a baby. Carrie remembered:

When I got pregnant with [my son], who's now 17 months old, the job of manager or supervisor for assessment was coming open. So, I had to prove myself, while with a three-year-old – well... at that time she wasn't [yet] three… I had to prove… that like I was worthy and I could do this. And being pregnant and being a mom and all of this, the juggling act, it was okay. It was “going to work”.

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Simply reading the words Carrie spoke does not fully express how she felt about this time in her life. She saw that the position she coveted in her department was going to be available. It was a big promotion for her and she had a lot going on in her life. She was pregnant with her third child, caring for her two older children, and working to finish her dissertation. I interpreted her statement about proving her worth to mean she had to prove to her superiors and others in the department that she could take on this more difficult job and be successful at it while she was experiencing her other demanding roles as mother and student. Carrie did, in fact, prove that she could succeed in her job and was promoted in 2009. Looking back on that time, she recalled that it was so busy she was merely “okay”. I deciphered the “okay” and the “going to work” comment to mean that Carrie was struggling to manage her multiple roles and was simply going through the motions to get from one point to another.

Since this time nearly two years ago, life as a working mother has settled down for Carrie. After being promoted to her current position, Carrie completed her doctoral degree and gave birth to her third child. Her husband completed his doctoral degree at the same time and then accepted a principalship. Their life together took on a very different feel in the absence of graduate school. Her parents continued to be a major part of Carrie’s family mainly by providing daily care for her two younger children. This kind of support enabled Carrie and her husband to be fully committed to their careers.

**On Becoming Doctor.** Carrie is the only participant in this study who has, to date, completed her doctoral degree. Upon reflecting on her doctoral journey, she felt ready for the process and focused on each task along the way:
I have always been the type of person that I have to feel ready to do something. And if I'm not ready, it's just not gonna happen... So with my doctorate, the classes were easy for me… I would just get [the coursework] done. And not that I would procrastinate, but I would just - when I felt ready to write the paper, then I would go write a paper. And [waiting to feel ready to study/write] was never an issue.

Carrie was clear that one of her study habits was waiting until the moment when she was ready to study for a class, complete a project, or write a paper. For Carrie, being “ready” to complete a task meant having the time and being prepared mentally and physically. Making the time to work on assignments included an examination of the week’s schedule and a decision about where study sessions would fit. Mental preparation meant being able to fully focus on the task. Physical preparation entailed having the materials and resources necessary to complete the particular task. Carrie admitted during our conversation that she probably could not have completed her Ed.D had she started it after all of her kids were born:

When I was doing papers, honestly, I would just sit on the couch, put my laptop on my lap and just go and I would just get into the zone and just write. My oldest daughter was always very good at… she could go off on her own and just play. She's not a very needy kid. Now, I don't think that I would have been able to do all that I did with my [younger daughter] or my son… They're always hanging on me…
Carrie appreciated her daughter’s ability to entertain herself, as it was a necessity when she was ready to work on her assignments.

Once her coursework was complete, however, it was a bit more difficult for Carrie to manage it all. She had a major professor who did not interact as much as she would have liked. Another individual-- a colleague in her school district department-- fulfilled that role and became her target audience and editor. Carrie stated:

She [Carrie’s major professor] wasn't overly worried about me ’cause she knew that I was fine. I wasn't sure of my coursework or anything like that. So I was kind of… on my own and I kinda had to figure it out on my own. So once I would get the steps done, my reader was very detail-oriented… and I was writing for him [colleague] more so than I was writing for her…

She considered her colleague an integral part of the success of her degree pursuit. Carrie was on track to graduating in a timely manner, then found out she was pregnant with her youngest child. It was at this point when she experienced major pressure to complete her degree. She continued:

…When I was pregnant, it was just a goal… I cannot have [my son] and still be writing this paper. It has to be done. And the concept paper was approved. That was great and then it was just a matter of, “Okay, months are going by and I can't take… time off…” It was just a matter of school loans. We were gonna be coming due here and I need to get this done… this has to be done. “The more I wait this out, the more school loans I get.” It was just - everything was kinda snowballing and so when I was pregnant… knowing that that date was coming, it was like
okay, either I'm gonna get pummeled by the avalanche or I'm gonna finish before October. I think we [Carrie and her husband] finished October 6th, and he was born on the 17th. So, it was just a matter of getting done by October. We had to be done by October… that was the goal and it just kinda all fell into place that way.

Carrie’s quickly-approaching due date as well as her ongoing accumulation of school loans served as substantial motivators for her degree completion.

She viewed her experiences as a doctoral student as different from those of other students. Carrie suggested that many other students are able to concentrate solely on their courses without the added responsibility of a full-time job or a child. Divergently, she felt that perhaps she would not have been as successful in her program had she not gained valuable experiences during her career. Taking a moment to compare the two situations, Carrie verbalized:

…I think that my paper was better for me to write because I had the experiences that I had [as a result of my career], so it's a kind of a give-and-take… [There are] things that would be [advantageous to being a full-time student without children], like the time, and being able to not have to worry about rushing from here to there and everywhere else… and having a calendar, almost, when you can schedule… "Okay, I need to write today.” You would need that - but again, I would be quicker at finishing it because I would have all the experiences, if I were working. And so … I mean, it was almost easier because I could foresee certain parts of my dissertation [because of those work-related experiences].
Carrie initially thought that graduate school would be easier without additional roles and the responsibilities that accompanied them. However, after her brief verbal debate, she came to the conclusion that her work experiences and their positive impact on her dissertation amounted to better conditions for graduate study.

When considering the impact of her Ed.D on her career, Carrie said:

...In this office, if you don't have a doctorate degree, people are looking at you [wondering why you don’t have it] - it's just a different ... Because more than half of the people have them up here [in the school district building] or they're working on it. So it's not ... it's just, "Okay... you got it." It's not as big of a deal as if I was at [the school level], I think. Because as soon as [my husband] got his, it was, "Oh my God! It's Dr. ______." It's completely different.

I sensed frustration in Carrie’s words and in her facial expression. She and her husband went through the same process of obtaining their doctoral degrees, yet because he was at the school level, the degree was seemingly more noteworthy. At the school district office, the doctoral degree was commonplace for those in higher-level positions such as Carrie’s. She viewed this disparity as somewhat discriminatory.

Carrie was a life-long learner, so her education, both formal and informal, did not end with the completion of her program. She shared:

...I've always said that I'll just ... I would never pay my school loans up. They would always be in deferment until I would reach retirement age, 'cause I would just get every degree out there. Just start with the AA catalog and just go...
Despite her humor about it, Carrie loves to learn and sees more learning in her future. At this point, she is unsure about what she will pursue next.

**Managing Multiple Roles.** Although Carrie was successful in completing her doctoral degree in a timely manner, it was challenging for her to manage her roles as mother, district administrator, and doctoral student and caused some strain on her family life. In addition, Carrie’s husband was also working full time and pursuing his doctoral degree. There were three main external supports that allowed Carrie to successfully manage her multiple roles during that time: the disposition of her oldest child, the practical relief provided by her parents, and the serenity of her own home.

Carrie’s oldest child, a daughter, had an easy-going nature and, when her parents asked her to, would play independently. This proved quite beneficial when either Carrie or her husband, or both, needed time to work on their assignments. She recalled:

I remember one morning my oldest was little and she would be running around the house and I'd be like, "______, I need to be quiet. I'm trying to finish this paper." I just remember those conversations. And she'd be like "Okay," and then she [would] just run off and go play in her room… She really experienced the brunt of everything because she was two when I started my Master's, so she was there for… my Master's and a Doctorate… She grew up with, "Okay. It's quiet time- mommy's sitting on the couch and she's got her stuff out." It was okay- she just understood it… it's just [that] they know when I'm working and I devote so much time to *them* on the weekends that when they knew I had to do something, they pretty much left me alone to do it and it helped that my oldest daughter
was...six, maybe? When I was finishing up and doing the real brunt of everything, she was old enough for me to say, "Okay. Go down to [my mom's] house..."
because my parents live six doors down from me.

As Carrie mentioned earlier, she felt that she would not be able to be as successful and as timely with her degree progress had her children been born earlier. The temperament of her older daughter proved to be a kind of external support for her.

She also felt that she would not have been successful without the practical assistance her parents provided her over the last four years, which was and continues to be invaluable to Carrie. Moving closer to her parents-- six doors down to be exact-- only made that assistance more readily available. Of her parents’ contribution, she said, “My parents… were willing to change their whole lives to help me and watch the kids.” Carrie was at peace with the care her children were receiving and even paid her mother to take care of them as a show of appreciation of her love, help, and decision to retire.

Thirdly, the serenity of Carrie’s home contributed to her success. She shared with me that she does not bring work home with her. This she does in an effort to concentrate on her three children and ensure that their time as a family is of quality. During her graduate work, Carrie did not leave her home to study or write. As she mentioned, she would sit on the couch with her laptop and complete her assignments. Furthermore, when I asked Carrie about how she and her husband find time together and what she enjoys doing in order to relax, she said, “My husband and I will have a drink or something. We’re really homebodies. We don't venture out too far.” Clearly, Carrie enjoys the
sanctity of her home. Even when spending time with friends and their families, get-
togethers usually happen at one of their homes.

Unlike the previous participants, Carrie’s internal supports far outweighed her
external supports. In addition to her tireless energy, strong will, and patience during her
multi-role management, there was a circle of people who motivated, supported, and
encouraged Carrie from even before the beginning of her doctoral journey. She really
opened up about the motivation and encouragement she gleaned from her grandfather and
mother.

She mentioned her grandfather during the first interview, when I asked her about
what contributed to her resiliency during her program. She answered simply, “My
grandfather, because this was mostly for him.” This brief statement was the only time
during the first interview she mentioned him. So, during the second interview, I asked her
what she meant by expressing that this achievement was “mostly for him.” Carrie shared:

He [her grandfather] was very much into education because he didn't have one to
speak of. He was born in France in Alsace-Lorraine and when he was little, he
had to drop out of school. When he was fourteen, he had to take care of his
brothers and sisters because his parents were very ill. I think his father might have
passed away and then his mother was very ill and he pretty much had to take over
[the] parenting of his siblings. But he was probably the smartest person I ever
met. He could paint anything. He could make anything out of any sort of
material… he was just amazing. He worked as a medic because back in the '50s
you didn't really need formal training to go into war and take care of people with
all sorts of weird things. So he did that and then he learned how to fix airplanes, so he then worked for the Air National Guard.

He just learned things. They built their own house… it's just unbelievable the stuff that they did, but he was always that way and he always, always pushed me to learn new things. We would always do crossword puzzles together from when I was probably in first and second grade. That was the big thing that we did and [we would] mail them back and forth. It was fun. [laughs]

As evidenced by this description of her grandfather and his life and talents, Carrie was quite fond of him. He played an instrumental role in her success to date. The premature end of his educational career encouraged Carrie to see hers through to completion. His incredible drive and ability to create and to adapt to various careers during his life motivated Carrie to be flexible in her jobs and to create her future and shape it the way she desired. Moreover, her grandfather encouraged her because he took the time to connect with her and share his stories with her. He and Carrie would even send crosswords to complete back and forth to one another.

Carrie’s mother serves as another vital source of motivation, encouragement, and support for her. She candidly shared her mother’s story of immigration with me:

…She was from Germany and she's almost completely deaf and so in German education, when anything is wrong with you, you would be considered less of a citizen. So she grew up in [the] 1940s and '50s in Germany and when she met my dad, he was an American soldier. It was, "Either you leave Germany and come with me when you turn 18 or it's over," so she came here… She had to learn the
language, couldn't really hear all that well… They're still married, so she persevered and she's a fighter and she always showed me if I wanted something I just had to do it and get it, and that's pretty much what she instilled in me.

Her mother was excluded in her own country due to her deafness, so when she saw the opportunity to marry an American soldier who she loved, she took it. Once she arrived in the country, she was faced with the challenge of learning a whole different way of life and a different language. There was a note of pride in Carrie’s voice when she spoke of her mother’s perseverance and fight to transform her life. Her mother’s life served as a model of tenacity and resilience for Carrie.

Her siblings were yet another source of encouragement for Carrie. She had two brothers who are both approximately ten years older. Because they were older, she felt she largely experienced life as an only child. Carrie spoke about the pride they feel about her and her success in life and attempted to describe her relationship with them. She said:

They're very proud and I was always the kid sister and that kind of thing and one of them, he's just a mess, but he's just got so much love in his heart and he's just very, not smitten, but he just feels so much love [for me] and he's just so proud. My other brother, he's the same way, but he's more... They're just my brothers and I'm just the kid sister to them because they're… ten and eleven years older than me, so we really didn't grow up together because by the time I was in elementary school, they were gone. They were graduated from high school and [went into] the military, so I was an only child more so than raised with my brothers.
She also expressed that her brothers’ experiences were vastly different from her own. Carrie attributed this dissimilarity to their respective ages. Their mother gave birth to her sons within a couple of years after arriving in America. Her parents did not decide to have Carrie until her mother had acquired English and was more settled in America. This resulted in childhood experiences that were altogether disparate. In spite of this, her brothers continued to support and encourage Carrie.

Carrie’s husband was another valued source of encouragement and support. Certainly the parallel of their experiences provided Carrie and her husband with a unique connection. Each had a trusted colleague with whom they lived and to whom they could turn for answers to questions, needed suggestions, and general support and encouragement when it was needed. She stated, “My husband, who is the principal of _______ Middle School, he would always be pushing me and telling me how smart I [was] and just making sure that I knew, as well… He… encouraged me that way.”

Lastly, Carrie found academic support in a work colleague, who served as her husband’s second dissertation committee chair after his first one did not work out. She pushed her husband to continue and complete his dissertation, which in turn motivated Carrie to persevere. “So she would make sure that I was on task by making sure he’s on task and she’s wonderful- she was amazing,” Carrie expressed. Unquestionably, Carrie appreciated that her colleague took on the role of dissertation chair for her husband and serendipitously aided her in her own study.

Carrie offered three internal characteristics as supports in addition to the people in her strong circle of support. She proffered, “I would say that I’m strong-willed, and I’m
patient, and [it’s] just that I'm a teacher at heart and it's just knowing what I need to do
and doing it.” Handling two children and being pregnant with a third in addition to
obtaining her doctoral degree and a coveted position in her department, and doing so
successfully, is certainly a manifestation of her strong will. Carrie’s patience during this
process was also evident in the way she waited until she was ready to pursue a different
position, seek a promotion, and work toward a degree.

In addition to her strong will and patience, Carrie was tirelessly energetic. I asked
her how she tackled the added responsibility of household chores. Her response lent
credence to her level of energy:

It was pretty much multi-tasking… [laughs] When [a task] was going on, [like] if
dinner was cooking, then I was doing laundry at the same time. It's just everything
that I could do at once, I did at once. It just seemed to work. It just was never not
working. I think that for me it's like [the testing season]. It's if everything is
working fine, then I'm just going to keep going. But if something starts to fall, it
almost seems like everything was going to start dropping.

She used momentum to “keep the plates spinning”, so to speak. What worried Carrie
most was that one task or one undertaking—whether it was a household chore, child’s
event, work-related assignment, or doctoral program project—may be forgotten or
ignored. She was afraid that if one element “dropped”, it would precipitate chaos. Carrie
relied on order and consistency in her life.

Carrie, like Charlotte, Samantha, and Miranda, relied upon certain supports during
the difficult times managing multiple roles. The temperament of her oldest child, the
practical aid of her parents, and the peaceful environment of her home constituted the external supports Carrie on which depended. These supports were superseded by the internal supports in Carrie’s life. A strong network of people collectively motivated, encouraged, and supported her through her doctoral program. This network consisted of Carrie’s husband, mother, grandfather, brothers, and colleague. In addition, relentless energy, strong will, and patience revealed a powerful internal structure on which Carrie relied.

**Compunction and Contentment.** The areas of compunction and contentment Carrie shared were similar to those shared by other participants. She mentioned just two aspects of her journey about which she was uneasy. She felt conscience-stricken about spending time working on her coursework and dissertation instead of dedicating that time to her daughters. Carrie expressed:

…I think there was a lot of missed time with them growing up, but I think in the long-run… well not [my son], 'cause he's a baby and he didn't know any better. But for the two girls, I think they saw how important education is. And I think that they understand it. Doing only fifty percent of their ability is not gonna cut it, so in the long-run it [will] be good for them.

She hoped that the influence of her degree attainment and work ethic on her daughters would outweigh the time spent away from them along the way. Carrie’s son was born just after she defended her dissertation, so he has not known his mother as a student. As a mother, she would not accept less than 100 percent effort from her children.
The other area of compunction for Carrie was the immense pressure she felt during her multi-role management as a mother, district administrator, and doctoral student. She explained:

…The biggest [challenge was] the pressure of making sure that every ball stayed in the air at the same time. Because work was getting more and more busy with changes in testing and things not going right. And so work always had to stay in the forefront. And I remember it was just - just the pressure of getting it done and wanting to make sure that it got done. And ... always sending the paper [dissertation] back and forth with all the corrections and it just ... the struggle of just making sure that it was right… It really was the pressure of just everything.

Again, Carrie referred to the feeling of juggling multiple tasks and responsibilities and felt the incredible pressure of ensuring that those tasks were completed and responsibilities fulfilled. Work, for her, commanded a leading role in her priorities, which made it difficult to maintain focus on her other roles.

Obtaining her degree, being promoted, and life after dissertation promote contentment in Carrie. In our first conversation, she talked about the pride she had within herself because she accomplished a lifelong goal. Carrie said:

…[Obtaining the degree] made me proud… I was accomplishing a goal that I had from when I was younger – [because] when I was little [I knew] that I was gonna be a doctor… Granted that I wasn't ... it didn't start off the same vein [meaning medical doctor as opposed to doctor of education] but it did finally happen, so ...it put me at peace the whole process.
Here, Carrie shared her contentment that stemmed from achieving a long-term goal. She experienced a sense of peace upon the completion of the degree.

Being promoted several times and obtaining the position she was now in was another area of contentment for Carrie. She had achieved much in her short stint in education. Carrie explained:

Getting promoted to this position [was a great achievement] and everything, 'cause once I was - everything moved so fast in such short period of time. 'Cause I was here for a year and a half and I got the promotion to supervisor or manager - whatever… The whole department head thing happened pretty quick too because I was a teacher and all of a sudden, "Okay. Now you're gonna be the department head" and then I was… for a year. And then I came here to be a coordinator and then I was here for a year and then I - now [I’m] the supervisor. So it's like it's just been very fast - everything is moving pretty quick.

Carrie enjoyed the quick journey from the classroom to the district office. She was content with her position as manager and undecided about her future career path.

Once Carrie had completed her degree, she was more content than ever. She referenced both the increase in the amount of time she had and the decrease in her hurriedness. When I asked about life after degree completion, Carrie vibrantly said, “Oh my goodness! Now it’s… now there’s time… Before, everything was, you know, go-go-go! ‘I don’t have time to do anything and you have to leave me alone, ‘cause I need a couple hours of peace’…” She spends more time with her family now and can better focus on her job.
Summary. At the time of this interview, Carrie had been done with her doctoral program for two years. She was enjoying the successful management of her role as mother and district administrator. Her days ran a little smoother, but were still challenging because Carrie and her husband now had three children.

To get through her earlier days managing multiple roles, Carrie depended on both external and internal supports. The flexibility and disposition of her oldest child, practical and invaluable help from her parents, and a relaxing home environment were the three main external supports on which Carrie depended. Her internal supports along the way included the motivation, support, and encouragement from her husband, mother, grandfather, brothers, and colleague. Energy, a strong will, and patience were additional characteristics on which Carrie relied.

Carrie’s two areas of compunction included the tremendous pressure she felt toward the end of her program and the quality time with her children she missed. Conversely, she mentioned three areas of contentment. Carrie was proud that she was able to persevere and accomplish a lifelong goal. She was delighted with her successful and fruitful career in education, specifically with her current position. Furthermore, Carrie was fully enjoying life after doctoral study. Figure 6 recapitulates Carrie’s perspectives and lived experiences as mother, district administrator, and doctoral student.

I was altogether encouraged by Carrie’s disclosure of her perspectives and experiences. She successfully completed her doctoral program while managing her roles as mother and district administrator, and their respective responsibilities.
Figure 6. Carrie Completed-- A Visual Summary

**Considering the Conversation.** I thoroughly enjoyed interviewing and conversing with Carrie. As I reflected on our conversations, I felt a renewed sense of hope in my own doctoral study. Carrie successfully managed her roles as mother, administrator, and student. Of course, as she admitted, this management was made possible by multiple sources of support in her life.
Throughout the interviews, I was struck by how serious and focused Carrie appeared to be. After reflecting on where her motivation in life comes from--the lives of her mother and grandfather--as well as on her self-identified characteristics of unflagging energy, strong will, and patience, her earnest demeanor was not surprising. She thoughtfully considered the questions I posed. For our second interview, I emailed her some of the follow-up questions I intended to ask in order to gain more information or clarification. When I arrived for the interview, she had printed my questions and pre-recorded some thoughts on each. This demonstrated her genuine desire to relate her experiences to me and is an example of her attentiveness and focus.

Situating Carrie’s perspectives and experiences among those of the previous three participants, busyness persists as a theme. Carrie spoke of a momentum that carried her through her doctoral journey, specifically mentioning her household tasks. She maintained a certain level of energy during this time because she was afraid that if one task failed to be completed, many more might follow suit. Like the others, Carrie depended upon particular external and internal supports. She also had areas of her journey about which she was proud and areas about which she expressed compunction. The overall feeling of Carrie’s interview process was positive. Although I have not yet experienced it for myself, I liken the experience of completing a doctoral program with that of giving birth. Once the baby arrives, most of the pain of pregnancy and childbirth is forgotten, or suppressed, because there is a new life to divert one’s focus. Perhaps post-commencement, there is a renewed focus on one’s other roles and responsibilities in life and relief that the difficult journey is complete. I speculate that part of Carrie’s positive outlook on her journey results from the completion of her degree. Like Miranda, the
presence of gender roles was absent during our interviews, with a couple of exceptions. Carrie discussed multi-tasking and said, “…if dinner was cooking then I was doing laundry at the same time…” She also mentioned getting her children up and dressed in the mornings. These instances might point to the existence of gender roles in her home, but there is simply not enough evidence to make that declaration. Her words indicated that her life was so busy that everyone in her family, even her mother, helped out with tasks that would traditionally be assigned to the mother. [From my Reflective Journal and field notes, March 15, 2011, May 18, 2011, and May 28, 2011.]

**Case Five: Candace Contrite**

**Meet Candace Contrite.** Poised and elegant, Candace Contrite served as my final case. A colleague who expressed interest in my study gave me Candace’s name as a possible participant. I contacted Candace and she agreed to be a part of my study. I had knowledge of Candace because of her accomplishments within the school district and because of her position in the department of professional development. I have attended trainings Candace has created or given. Our first conversation took place during my first interview with her.

Candace is a petite woman in her mid-forties with an easy, sincere smile and affable nature. She currently works at the district level and has approximately thirteen years of experience in educational administration, having served at the school level and district level. Candace has not completed her degree to date, although she began her pursuit of the degree in 2000 at Distance University. She has two daughters, who were approximately ages two and four when she began her doctoral studies. Candace had
chosen a topic for and written the beginning pages of her dissertation when she became a principal. It was at this point in her life that her studies came to a halt.

I met with Candace at two different locations for our interviews. The first interview took place at her office, in one of the buildings owned by the school district and used for the purpose of training. Her office was in a new, medium-sized cubicle—one of many—on the second floor of the building. There was a makeshift lobby just outside, across from the desk of the secretary for the floor. I waited in the lobby for about twenty minutes for the interview. At that time, Candace’s secretary, whose cubicle is just across from hers, approached me and asked if I was waiting for Candace. I confirmed that I was and she asked me to accompany her to where Candace was. We found her downstairs in a small-group principal meeting, discussing aspects of leadership. She said that she would be right up.

Once she arrived and we settled into her office, she apologized for running late. Her office was clean and tidy. Pictures of her family were arranged around her room. I could tell from Candace’s body language and facial expression that she was eager to share her experiences and perspectives with me. I also believed that she was eager to help me with my study, partially because she is a sweet, giving person and partially because she was not successful in her degree pursuit and wanted very much to help me in my pursuit.

I met with Candace at an elementary school in the district for our second interview. She relocated for the day in order to serve as a site administrator. The two administrators who work there were attending a training together. So, I conducted my
interview with Candace in the office of the assistant principal. She was just as cordial in this environment. [From my Reflective Journal and field notes, March 10, 2011, and May 11, 2011.]

A Day in Candace’s Life. Candace’s day began very early in the morning and consisted of a variety of responsibilities related to her roles as mother, educational administrator, and several years ago, doctoral student. She related:

…I get up at four a.m. and the reason I get up so early is because I don't just get up and get dressed and leave. I basically get up and I shower and I get ready. And then I... might pull out a couple loads of laundry and do them... because that is pretty much when I have time. I might get on email because I like to be responsive in my email and so I [do so] for a little bit of time. I have to get my daughter- my younger daughter- ready and then get my older daughter up because I take my younger daughter to my parents, who then take her to school. So basically, you know, I leave the house at about 6:30. So between four and 6:30, I am taking care of all of that [and in addition, I] get ready, get [the girls’] lunches ready. And then [I] take [my older daughter]... and then I come straight home... So... I have a good family support system in place. I get here [work] by about 7:30 [a.m.].

Candace mentioned beginning her day early- at around 4:00 a.m. Her reason for doing so is so that she could take care of some household tasks before her day officially began. She also checked her email so that she was not bombarded once she got to her office. Then, she took care of getting her daughters ready and, eventually, herself. Candace
mentioned that she had a “good family support system in place,” which is evident even at the onset of her day with her mother watching her younger daughter and taking her to school. Once all of those tasks are completed—doing laundry, checking email, getting daughters ready, packing lunches, and getting herself ready—Candace heads to work, arriving around 7:30 a.m.

Once she arrives at work, Candace instantly launched into her duties for the day, which vary. Candace explained:

I am either here or out at school sites. I am constantly training, developing training materials and [in] meetings—more meetings than I like to be in but I mean, some of them are… very important. So, it is just from the time I get here to the time I am done, I hit the ground running… I rarely even leave my desk for lunch. Every now and then, I will leave my desk for lunch but usually I will just eat while I am still working. I try to leave on time just because of my girls and after-school kinds of activities.

Her day consisted of a variety of tasks, which included meetings, trainings, and training development. Candace shared that, on most days, she ate at her desk while she worked. Once her workday was complete, she made a concerted effort to leave at or before 4:45 pm. Most of the time she was able to do this other than the nights she had evening trainings scheduled. Candace continued:

So I try to leave before 4:45, which is our end time… unless I have an evening training. If I have an evening training then I could be here until eight o'clock. But, you know, I set my own schedule… so [normally] I get home probably around,
about 5:15, 5:30. Then from there, [I] get [my older daughter], you know, done with her homework. My husband comes home too, about the same time. We do homework, dinner, spend some time together. Maybe watch some TV, you know, as a family. [My younger daughter] has dance, three nights a week, [so I] take her to dance, pick her up, and then go to bed probably around 10 o'clock. So that is the day.

Candace was fortunately able to set her own schedule; so if she had to conduct training in the evening, she went into work later than usual. It allowed her more flexibility in her role, which could positively impact her other roles and responsibilities. Once home, she assisted her older daughter with homework and took her younger daughter to dance class. Candace made an effort to bring her family together in the evenings, even if it is just to eat dinner together and watch a bit of television. She headed to bed at ten o’clock, which could be considered a modest bedtime, because she would be up again at four o’clock the next morning.

As a mother, Candace ensured that her daughters were ready for school in the mornings, taken care of by her family members before school begins, received help with their homework, got to dance class, ate dinner, and spent time with the family at home in the evenings. As an educational administrator, she travelled around the county when needed, created and delivered trainings, and participated in and held meetings regarding professional development. Candace did not include doctoral study in the description of her day because she ceased her studies several years ago. Nevertheless, it is clear that Candace allocated time throughout the day for the responsibilities of her various roles.
Candace’s Career Journey. Candace received her bachelor’s degree and began her teaching career in 1990. For as long as she can remember, she wanted to become not only a teacher, but also the leader of a school. Candace explained:

Well, I became a teacher, I don't even know when I wanted be a teacher but I decided at some point in my life… Then I became a teacher in 1990. I knew… and I am not sure why… it wasn't that there was somebody that impacted me when I was in school… but I knew that I just, I wanted to lead a school. I didn't just want to teach at school and I kind of knew that going in. So I went back [to college] immediately… nowadays… it is less common because I think they have restrictions on when you can go back. But I went back my first year of teaching as a non-degree seeking student in Ed Leadership. So I took as many classes as I could until I got to that three-year [mark when I] could actually be admitted into the program… Now, supposedly, you cannot even be admitted at all or [take] any classes until you are three years as a teacher, which I agree. I think you need to get your feet wet in one thing before you jump to another. But I was glad I got to do that because it just, you know, and I wasn't in a rush to move on. I loved teaching. I loved every part of what I have done.

Candace knew early on in her career that she wanted to eventually serve as the principal of a school. She was not sure from where the motivation for that goal came though. She knew that she had to obtain her master’s degree in educational leadership because it was a prerequisite for a position in administration. So, she was proactive in seeking out classes she was permitted to take at the time. Candace was thankful for the experiences she had during her brief teaching career. She continued:
I was very ambitious at that time when I was young and starting out and I just set my sights and moved forward. So as I was teaching my first year, [I] went back for my master’s… It took me three years… By 1993… I graduated [with] my master’s and then from there, I became an [administrative assistant role]… So I ended up teaching all together five years, became an [administrative assistant role] for two years, and then became an assistant principal. I was assistant principal for five years before becoming a principal…

Candace said that she “was really in learning mode” once she obtained the role of assistant to her administration. Her ambition, though, did not outweigh her desire be effective and make an impact at the school level. Candace said:

I worked for [a] principal and AP [assistant principal] that taught me a lot and I was in such a good learning mode when I became an AP. I knew when it was time for me to apply for [a] principalship. Like I could, but I wanted to accomplish certain things before I applied. You would think with my history that I would have been like, “Three years, oh, I want to apply!” No. I just felt like, there were changes that I wanted to make in the school as AP and I was fortunate enough to work with a principal who allowed me to do that. She let me lead the teachers in that school and she just, she let me do it and it was the best thing that could have happened. She wasn't controlling at all.

This explanation revealed how appreciative Candace was of the principal she served under as assistant principal. Her principal granted her the flexibility to effect change in her school. She did so with a big initiative-- having teachers collaborate with one another
about student assessment data. It was an initiative that was discussed in one of her
doctoral courses and one that she initiated in her school. Because of her influence, it
spread throughout the district. Candace spent five years at her school as an assistant
principal before pursuing a principalship. She recounted:

So basically after five years, I… felt like I was able to accomplish a lot in
changing the culture of that school and being given a lot of encouragement by my
principal to do that and that was when I moved to [the first school of her
principalship]. I was principal there for two years and then I was called to go to [a
struggling elementary school] for four years.

Candace had her work cut out for her at her second school, though. The second school
had a history of struggling students and a largely ineffective teaching staff. It was a
school with students of low socio-economic status, who were considered “high-needs”.
For this reason, I refer to the school as “Low-High Elementary.” She was called there to
effect positive change for students and staff members. She was successful at her
endeavors. Candace reflected:

I loved being a principal and being at Low-High Elementary… [it] was extremely
rewarding. I mean, I felt that by my fourth year, the climate there with the
teachers was so positive. I mean, we were truly a learning community and it was
like, just a team. The teachers had taken such ownership of everything we were
doing that no longer was I the one having to take initiative on everything. It was
them. It was just wonderful.
Candace spoke highly of her four-year stint at Low-High throughout our conversations. In fact, she would have stayed there as principal for longer.

Administrators at the district level had their eyes on Candace, however. They wanted her to work downtown in the office of professional development. Surprisingly, she was not ready to change positions because she had only spent three years at the struggling school and felt she needed longer with them. So, she stayed on one more year before accepting the position downtown. Candace stated:

I would have stayed there at Low-High, but Mr. ______ [former administrator in professional development] was retiring from this position. They had left it vacant for a year and they knew that the year it was vacant, I was not ready to leave my school yet. I had only been there three years. So they left it vacant. As soon as I had finished my fourth year, I got the call for this position. I was glad it didn't happen the year prior because… I still wasn't ready, like I was so apprehensive, like, “I should stay. I want to get to school to…” So you know, in hindsight, I would have loved a couple more years. I even told Mr. _______, “Please, just don't leave...”

The former manager of professional development did leave, however, and Candace left Low-High and accepted her new position.

Once in her new position, she was excited to make positive changes to the department. The two years Candace had been in the position were busy and productive. She explained:
…My first year in this position, [my goal] was really to add more courses. Because we had had *nothing* new offered in a long time until last year. My life was *crazy*. I developed about twelve new courses and taught them all myself initially. Training other principals, it was a crazy year last year. I mean just absolutely crazy. I mean it was probably two nights a week and Saturdays… it was very hard. But I got a lot of other principals trained to help give the trainings, and so it was building capacity of the principals. This year, I was pretty absorbed with [a new initiative in teacher evaluation], so this year's been busy.

Candace had many more changes and initiatives planned for the future. She was very excited about the possibilities for the school district over the next few years. She enthusiastically relayed:

…As we move forward and I am very excited because we are about to create more systemic induction programs for APs and principals in their first two years and we are going to start a principal *coaching* program where we actually have full time coaches for principals soon, which is our mentoring program. We are just about to add new initiatives and we are calling it the “pipeline to the principalship.” From teacher recruitment and developing teachers for administrative roles all the way up to the pipeline to the principalship and managing the principal coach. So you will be hearing stuff about that. So that is where we are...
Candace spoke of her position in the county and of the future of professional
development with such fervor. She was certainly passionate about her career. Candace
was satisfied with her present roles and responsibilities in life.

**On Being a Working Mother.** Candace has been working in the field of
education for 21 years. Her oldest daughter is fifteen years old, which is the length of
time she has been a working mother. The beginning years of motherhood for Candace
were difficult for several reasons. She explained:

My husband was in the military and we moved to Hawaii. And so, that year… I
took a leave of absence from the district and [my older daughter], we had her
while we were in Hawaii during that year. So basically, when I got back to school,
when I got back to the district I had taken a leave from the [administrative
assistant] position. When I got back- we came back sooner then we thought… like
mid-year- [my] position was filled. And so, I took a teaching position, like to
finish off that year. And that was my transition back into the profession with a
newborn. I actually went back to work when [my older daughter] was five weeks
old and financially, we really needed to… [My husband] was coming back home
too. He was injured and not injured [terribly], just injured enough that he was
separated from the military with the medical discharge. So we needed an income.
So I went back quickly because of that… My grandmother watched my daughter
everyday. But I remember that first year that I was back working, after she was
born, I was leaving on time.
I could tell by her facial expression that “leaving on time” was not something of which she was proud. Candace, in her ambition and desire to be effective, went above and beyond the call of duty in almost every aspect of her job. Admitting that she had a year in which she performed at the minimum level of proficiency in teaching was not easy for her.

Soon thereafter, she obtained the job of assistant principal. Candace was proud of being there for her children throughout her career. She said:

I always say that my kids have kept me balanced because I love to work and I feel like work is never done and so I have always said my kids have kept me balanced. Because, you know, I have never missed any other functions… In my second year as an AP, I got pregnant with [my younger daughter]. Actually it was at the end of the first year… Now I had two, and [my younger daughter] had special needs.

It was admirable that Candace, in the busyness of her roles as administrator and doctoral student, was able to attend all of her daughters’ events. This is one area in which Candace differed from the other participants, who maintained guilt about missing out on events in their children’s lives.

Candace’s younger daughter, born just two years later than her first, had special needs. She explained:

[My younger daughter] was born with Down syndrome so right away, she needed heart surgery. And so that, luckily at the time that all that was happening, I was laterally transferred from one school where my leader was not supportive at all to
the school where I told you I was able to do the [staff development] work, where that leader was completely supportive. Because I was there for literally five weeks and I had to take, two weeks with [my daughter], with her heart surgery, you know, and in getting her back home and transitioning. Once again though, I have tons of family support… People have always asked me along my career, “How do you do it as a working mom?”… I have always said, I mean my dad picked up my girls today… My parents and my brother and sisters have been critical. If I was not with them, I don't know how I would have done that.

Having young children and trying to fulfill multiple roles is difficult. Candace had the added challenge of a child with special needs. Fortunately, she worked under a principal who was empathetic. She also had the support of her extended family.

Gender roles prevailed in Candace’s household. She shared:

I think for women it's because, even when you have a husband, a lot still falls on the mother. I mean, I just thought of [my children]. I mean, you are the mother and there is just so much and so I just think the hard part is making sure that you are able to get your work done and make sure its quality and not to take away from the time with the kids.

A lot of the responsibilities traditionally placed on women in the home were placed on Candace. She expressed here that it was a struggle for her to manage her roles as administrator and student and still be able to devote quality time to her daughters. When I asked her about the challenges women face in opposition to those men might face in balancing several roles, Candace replied:
I don't mean any like disrespect or any... devaluing of a dad's role. I just feel like women take on more responsibility when it comes to parenting. Like in my household, my father was a PE, like a football coach. And so... it did fall on my mom to do the after-school picking up, taking us to dance and all that. He was... a football coach for high school, head coach, and so he worked for late hours and my mom would have dinner ready and we would eat at eight o'clock when he got home. I just think its part of the course. Now, are our husbands helpful? Yes. My sister... is a career woman. She has to go out of town on business a lot and her husband picks up the slack and takes care of the kids and all of that. I just think...like if the kids are sick, I will call the doctor to make the appointment. I keep track of when their next dentist appointment is. Now sometimes, [my husband] might have to take them for me, but I am the one that keeps track of that. He takes care of the bills, but anything with the kids, like dance, I am the one that knows when her dance auditions are coming up and I am the one that takes her to the dance competitions. We have two girls and that might be part of it too... I just, I don't know. I think the role is different... Men can very easily say, “Okay, I am out. I am going to class or I am going to do my work.” And the mom would take up the slack.

Candace was quite reflective and honest in her description of roles. She had several women around her who served as examples of working mothers. Her mother fulfilled the traditional role of mother, taking care of her eight children, driving them to events, cooking dinner, etc. Her sister travelled a lot for work and when she did, her husband fulfilled many of the responsibilities that come with raising children. Candace was the
parent in the house that kept up with the family schedule, ensuring that the girls got to events and appointments on time. She was conflicted as to why she was mainly responsible for these things and suggests that perhaps it is because they had daughters and not sons or a combination. She went on to try to explain why she might have taken on the majority of responsibilities of parenting:

I think it is just that nurturing role we [as women] have that we are the ones that feel like we have to do everything whereas the men can separate and go… I don't know, it could just be my, I don't know... that it’s factual. I am not basing that on research. I am basing [that] on how I, on how I feel, on how I have seen my friends and how I have seen my own personal… situation… I think that it’s just a challenge.

Candace pointed to something inside of her that drives her to take on the role of nurturer in the family. She also pointed to the women around her and in her life who also fulfilled the traditional gender role. She added, “I think that it’s just a challenge,” which was interesting. Perhaps she felt that fulfilling that role was unjust in its difficulty.

With the help of her husband and large, extended family, Candace was able to manage being a mother and educational administrator at the district level and earlier in her career, a doctoral student. She was, at this time, in a job that allowed her the flexibility to attend to her daughters’ needs and schedules. Candace loved working and was fulfilled. She also loved her family and made time for them often.

**On Becoming Doctor.** Her ever-present streak of ambition led Candace to pursue her doctoral degree. Some of her friends approached her about starting in the program at
Distance University and because getting her doctorate had been a personal goal of hers, Candace made the decision to return to graduate school. Remembering the beginning, she explained:

…I have always had that *ambitious* streak… Some friends were going into the program, to a doctoral program, and asked me. Had they not asked me, I probably would have not done it at that time. I always have wanted to get my doctorate. It has just been a personal goal. I didn't want it for any career reasons… I just wanted it because it is just a goal that I have had. So when this group of colleagues who were other APs said, “Hey… come with us to [the] program,” I decided to do it. Things were going well; we met mostly on Saturdays for the program. So I gave up time to do that. I was an assistant principal at that time and the coursework; I was able to get it done. I remember staying up like *all* night sometimes to get the coursework done because I never took *one* day off when I did the doctorate, never, not one day.

A little bit of peer pressure encouraged Candace to begin her program, but as she stated, she did not necessarily feel that it was the right time in her life for this large of a commitment. She pursued it anyway. For a while, her studies were going well and she was able to complete the coursework. It was not without difficulty, however, as she recounted that there were many nights that she would stay awake all night to complete a paper or a project. Candace mentioned the fact that she did not take even one day off from work to complete her coursework because it was a point of pride for her. She continued:
I wouldn’t take a half-day to go work on a paper… where others of my colleagues would do that. They would stay home to do it. I just couldn’t because I, it is just not in me to do it.

This comment is of particular interest. Later in the interview, she mentioned that all of her friends who were in the doctoral program with her completed the program at Distance University. Perhaps this was because they were willing to take off of work to complete papers or projects. Candace mentioned two other reasons why they might have finished. She told me that most were mothers, “…with older children, not smaller children and they did not become principals at the beginning of their programs.” So, instead of taking off from work to study, Candace stayed up all night to do so. She said, “I would stay up all night-- it meant my Friday night-- I would be finishing papers then I wouldn’t even go to sleep then I go straight to class all day Saturday.” That was how Candace was able to complete much of her coursework.

She expressed how she now feels about staying awake all night:

So, it was terrible. It was terrible. But then what happened… I finished all the coursework and [it] came time for dissertation. This was a program [at Distance University]. [I wish we] would have had what they have now because I would have gone to [Rigor University]. They did not have this type of program at that time- the Ed.D or the cohort program… So, I went to the program that was available and I learned a lot. The coursework was excellent. I mean, I learned… it was a great program.
Candace, had she known then what she knows now, would have waited to start her program until Rigor University began using the structure of cohort education. She continued by expressing the difficulty of her program once coursework ended:

But when it came time for this dissertation, all of my people that were reading, that were the readers, that were the editors and all that, were out of state. And for me, at the same time of my dissertation I… became the principal at [the first elementary school]. So now, I was supposed to be communicating everything via email. I was learning a new role as principal. I was totally focused on my school and making the change, implementing change there that it just, I stopped focusing on the dissertation. There was a couple of times I tried getting back again, like emailing my person, my editor and saying, “Okay, where [are we]?”... Because I had written the whole paper! And over time, I stopped. I got further and further away from communicating with my editor, not sending her what she asked for, not doing that and years started going by. [It] became two years… three years… just forget it. I just never touched it again and that was four years there. So that was six years and it was too late at that point to go back to the same. They just, the program would not allow me to come back and use that same doctorate to finish. So now I am in limbo… That is where I am with my dissertation journey… I enjoyed the coursework… learned a lot. But just when it came time for that independent work of the dissertation and not having people here that I could go to and having to constantly communicate to people that… I couldn't see face to face…
Candace’s roles as administrator and doctoral student were directly competing with one another. She cited the lack of a local committee as one reason she was unable to finish, but it wasn’t the main reason. Her job as a new principal demanded most of her attention and focus, leaving very little left to dedicate to her dissertation. After a while, her dissertation became less and less important. Before she realized it, years had passed. Candace tried to pick it back up again, but by that time, her study was not as relevant as it previously was. At this point, she considered herself “in limbo.” This was an indication that she believed her doctoral journey was not yet over. In fact, when I asked her if she saw herself completing the degree, Candace shared:

I really want to. But I mean, at this point, I cannot afford it. Right now, I am paying on a degree that I never got. So to pay that and to now find a way to pay for [a second attempt]? I am sure my grandmother will do it. They [my family members] are all mad at me for not finishing. It is like a constant burden on my shoulder that I didn't finish it. It feels like a... What do you call it? A failure. You know what I mean?

The desire to complete the degree was still alive for Candace, but unfortunately, she viewed the situation as unrealistic. She was burdened not only by the fact that she did not complete the degree, but also because she had school loans from her unfinished degree to pay off, which served as a constant reminder of her “failure.” For these reasons, her pseudonym was “Candace Contrite.”

**Managing Multiple Roles.** Candace successfully completed her doctoral coursework at Distance University. Part of the reason she was able to do so was because
she sincerely believed she that she could. Two role models in her life, her mother and grandmother, had been successful juggling multiple roles. Candace shared this about her grandmother:

   My grandmother still works today and she’s almost ninety- goes to work every day… My grandmother has always been very driven. She owns her own business and has since she was very young. I think it’s their compassion and generosity in dealing with other people [that I admire most].

In addition to the lives of her mother and grandmother as motivation and encouragement, Candace relied on external and internal supports to manage her responsibilities as mother and as administrator. People made up Candace’s list of external supports: her husband, extended family, and former colleagues.

   Candace’s husband was one of the main external supports in her life. He encouraged her to pursue an advanced degree and helped out when Candace was unavailable. Regarding her husband, she said:

   …My husband, he took up the slack when I was in classes on Saturday. Where the most conflict would have come in was on Saturday because my program was an every Saturday kind of thing... My husband really was helpful during that time, you know, because he supported me going back and furthering my education.

When asked whether her husband was supportive, Candace replied, “…he is supportive and… we share the load pretty much… at this point in our lives he is good…” He was at

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the time of the interview an assistant principal in the district in which Candace worked. She made a statement during our first interview that gave me pause. She said:

He [her husband] just became an assistant principal. So all of a sudden we have done a complete 360 to where he is now leaving at the crack of dawn. But the last two years when I moved into this role… he comes home and he is supportive, but he is tired. He knows what it is like now.

The statement, “He knows what it is like now” led me to believe that Candace may have felt burdened by her extended days and evening events as a school administrator. Perhaps her husband, in his former role as teacher, did not fully understand the demands on Candace’s time until he experienced it for himself. The previous statement “at this point in our lives he is good,” considered in this context, could indicate two different situations. Either her husband was not as helpful as he could have been during her multi-role management, or he was doing as well as he could at this point in his life due to his new role as assistant principal. It was difficult to interpret Candace’s words here. In any case, she did list her husband as an external support.

Another support was her extended family. Her parents, as well as her seven brothers and sisters and their families, have been a huge support system in Candace’s life. She remarked:

I have this huge support system and I don't think I could have done it without my family. I mean, I have seven brothers and sisters. I'm one of eight. They all live near and if my kids are not with me, they are with family always.
It is because of this large system of support that Candace never had to rely on someone outside the family, like a friend or neighbor, for help with her daughters. She continued:

…[My daughters] were used to being with my sisters... [and] my parents. I mean, my grandmother took care of [my older daughter] when I went back to work. So I've just always had a huge support system. It's never been an issue who I'm going to call. I'm going to be very honest with you, and other people ask me how I do it: with my family. [My husband] has been great… but he also has had things he's had to do. So if I had to go, "Oh my God who am I going to call to baby-sit while I go to class, who am I going to call-- because I have this night function-- for my kids to go home with?" like I've heard other mothers have to do. I couldn't have done it. I mean, my sister's taking my kids home from school today. I have had help every day. Like I said, I don't know how people could do it without that kind of support system.

Candace’s family system of support was always invaluable to her. She was able to complete the coursework for her doctoral program and be effective in her positions in the school district as a result of that system of support.

Furthermore, Candace included the three mentors she encountered throughout her career in her school district. These mentors provided support and encouragement, as well as opportunities for her to develop her leadership skills. Candace shared:

When I was a teacher… [my principal]… was a huge supporter. She gave me opportunities that helped put me in the right situation [which] gave me the right experiences. All along I've had [another colleague] who was a principal and then
also at the district level [who] was very supportive. She not only helped me when I was an assistant principal by putting me on different committees and things like that and giving me some good exposure. She also was a mentor for me when I became principal and even when she retired she came back and helped… [A third colleague] was a huge supporter and huge mentor for me. Probably the position I'm in now is because of him. He got me very involved in training others and doing the classroom walkthrough training and just, once again, giving me opportunities and he was pushing for me to take this position when he retired from it.

The three mentors she described were all well respected in her school district. In addition to serving as mentors to Candace, their respective positions and influence helped her during her career. I asked Candace about her mentors’ motivations in helping her--whether she requested their assistance or whether they saw leadership potential in her. She replied:

I did not ask them. I think it was [that] they knew that I wanted to be a principal. Like Dr. ______, my first principal, knew that that was my goal. So it was her that then reached out to me to give me opportunities I did not ask. Same with [the second mentor mentioned], same with [the third mentor mentioned]. I mean, our relationship started years back when I was at something where he [the third mentor] was speaking and based on my questions and stuff we kind of connected at that time then he called on me when he was in the role which I'm in now… when I was principal. He wanted to host some things at my school and then he started asking what are some of the things I was doing [a recent initiative
regarding teacher collaboration] so we just formed relationships that way. I did not ask any of them for, "Could you put me on things, I need help." It was more of… they knew my aspirations but then they took the lead in helping me. I have a hard time approaching people… I just have a hard time asking for things.

From Candace’s perspective, the three mentors who impacted her career provided her with experiences and opportunities that helped her develop her leadership skills and eventually obtain a principalship. She was appreciative of their collective help along the way.

The caretaking of her daughters by her husband and extended family and the experiences, opportunities, and overall mentorship given to Candace served as the external supports she needed to be successful in her roles. She also relied on certain internal supports. These included genuine care for and belief in others, and a positive outlook on life.

Candace expressed that she really cares for others. She explained:

I really care about people. That's number one. I care about helping people. That's my main goal. Even when I was doing my doctorate program, I never once [was] like other people that talked about, "Oh this will further my career opportunities." Never once did I do it because of that. Ever. In my role now, I'm getting ready to be moved to working right under [an assistant superintendent] because we need to be better aligned with principal development- when he's selecting principals and I'm developing them and we're not aligned at all. So someone told me yesterday, "Oh that's going to be great for your career." I'm like, “I could care less.” So I'm
not concerned about the next step of my career. I'm concerned about leaving a legacy, I guess, and actually doing good for the kids. So I think that's first and foremost… I want to just do a good job.

In her explanation, Candace was emphatic about the fact that she did not go back to graduate school in an effort to further her career. She wanted to learn and become a lifelong learner like she urged her own staff to do when she was a principal. Candace just wanted to do a great job in her position, which to her meant doing what is right for children in the district. If she made a positive impact on school leaders in her department of professional development, then perhaps those leaders would make a positive impact on teachers, who in turn could positively impact student achievement. This was what drove her.

Another internal support for Candace was her belief in others. She truly believed that teachers could be successful in increasing student achievement no matter what a child’s socio-economic status might be. Likewise, she believed that every student had the potential to learn. Candace professed:

…Not only do I care about people, but I believe in others… When you really do believe deep down in your heart that people are good and people have good intentions and people can really succeed… then your actions follow suit.

She was convinced that if one believed that others could succeed, one’s actions would reflect that belief. If one’s actions reflected the belief, then perhaps one would truly be successful. Candace linked this strongly held belief in education to her own daughter. She shared:
I worked at Low-High because I feel that we shouldn't place any limits on kids. So the work that I do with those kids, I feel like I do the same with my own kids. I don't want to place any limits on them. So [my younger daughter] being special needs, I want her to learn how to read. I don't place limits on them. So I think the work I have done in education has helped me to be a better mom and helped me fight for what is right for my kids when necessary.

Candace believed in every child at Low-High Elementary, which she led for four years. She believed that every one of those students deserved a great education and could succeed. Likewise, she believed that both of her daughters could achieve great things, no matter what kinds of limits they may have had or developed. She offered a positive outlook as a third internal support, which can be combined with belief in others. Candace said:

…With the kids that I've worked with in my schools, I knew they could do well. With the adults, I knew that I could develop people and make them better. Because of that, I think [my] actions [went] in that direction. Like you show positive expectations versus someone that has more of a negative [outlook]. I think all that boils into a positive outlook.

She believed that a positive outlook on education had the power to transform others, as did believing in them and caring for them.

**Compunction and Contentment.** Candace’s biggest point of compunction, as might be expected, was the non-completion of her doctoral program at Distance University. Although she was successful in completing her coursework, she struggled
working independently. Candace initially mentioned the remoteness of her committee during this critical part of her program and stated:

I think had [my committee] been local, I would have [my dissertation] done, but my reader and my editor and all of that were out of the state and that was very difficult for me because everything was by email and back and forth via email all the time. As a principal, I was so busy that it would have been nice to say, "Look, can I do a face to face meeting with you… Can we meet every other week?... Can we just have a quick one hour meeting?" That kind of thing is the kind of support I could have used and I think I would have been done by now. But [emailing] long distance, back and forth, and just reading everything and trying to make the changes… I need face-to-face contact with people. That's just the way I learn best and I wasn't getting that...

Candace regrets the fact that her committee was not local, and perhaps regrets pursuing her degree at Distance University because of it. She stated that she is the type of learner who needs to interact with professors in a classroom environment, and she did not receive the kind of structure she needed.

Although Candace voiced her frustration about her committee, she was quick to place the blame upon herself. She confessed:

…When you get to that independent part of your program, it is really up to you…because, I mean, my editor and my person emailed me several times. I mean they tried. They did their part… At the time, I think they did their part since I am an adult and in a doctoral program, I need to keep up with all my deadlines. I
needed to do all the things I needed to do. So now, I think that I need to take responsibility for why I didn't finish… I can't do anything halfway. Like I put this dissertation on the back burner versus my schools that I was appointed to… [My schools] became the priority to me.

She stated that she was the one who caused the decline of her doctoral studies. Her comment about not being able to do things halfway proved true because she ended up dedicating all of her time and attention to her family and the schools she served, allowing the dissertation to go by the wayside.

Another source of compunction for Candace was constantly trying to balance her roles as mother, administrator, and doctoral student. She contrasted her life before children with her life after:

…When I was a young gung-ho teacher, without kids, I would go to everything. I would go to every night function, everything I mean, *everything* you can imagine. I was just… that was very ambitious. Even when I became an AP, without kids, I would do a lot of extra stuff… I started picking and choosing the things I wanted to go to because I know that I need to get home to them now. Do I still have night functions? Yes. I said that last year I had to do a lot of training but that is not a regular year. I have to be selective now. Like tonight there is a bunch of meetings I don't like to go [to] and I don't think I *am* going to go there… I have to pick and choose. Yes, I want to be supportive, but I need to get home to my kids. When I became a principal though, my first two years at [my first school], it was close to home and so I still felt like I was doing a great job balancing. I will say the time I
feel the most regret with balance was my four years at Low-High. And it was just because it was such a high needs school and I gave my heart and soul to it… I just feel like there were times… maybe I should have not have spent as many hours there as I did.

The addition of children in Candace’s life caused her to reconsider her priorities. She tried to come home most nights instead of attending events that were not necessary for her to attend. She felt most regretful about her four years at Low-High because it was so incredibly challenging and demanded so much of her time and attention. Fortunately, Candace’s current position allowed her more flexibility and she was able to be there for her kids when needed.

Taking care of herself during her multi-role management also proved difficult for Candace. As previously mentioned, there were many Friday nights when she would stay awake all night in order to finish a paper or project. In response to the question of how she juggled her multiple roles, Candace stated:

Not well obviously, because I wasn't sleeping any nights. Because when you are with family, I think you should be with family. I [brought] home work, but I always did it once the kids were sleeping. So… at nights, I would try to get a second wind… and when I could, about 10 o'clock when the kids were both in bed or nine o'clock when they were little… I would then start working. I would work maybe till midnight and then turn around and get up at four a.m. So I did it--the burning the candle at both ends-- because I didn't want to take away my time
with the kids… It probably wasn't the best thing because I… wasn't taking care of myself. I just did not get [enough] sleep.

Although she was often sleep-deprived, Candace made time to unwind and watch her favorite television show, enjoy yearly beach trips with her family, and read for pleasure. She said:

You're going to laugh [smiling]. Taking care of me consists of every now and then I get to watch “Law and Order: Special Victims Unit.” Every July, I actually go to the beach for fourth of July and chill out for… like three or four days. That's my vacation for the year. I'll get pedicures like once every six weeks and that's pretty much the gist of it, you know what I mean? Right now I just don't take time. Like I don't ever say, "Oh I need to get away for a weekend just for me." I think that I'm here to serve others and that it would be a weakness if someone asked, "Do you take care of yourself." …I don't go get massages and do things like that. Honestly, it's only during Christmas or Thanksgiving that I'll read something that's not educational...

Candace firmly believed that her mission in life was to serve others and if in doing so she was able to take a little bit of time for herself, she would take it.

A last area of compunction was her struggle returning to a university to continue her doctoral studies. Candace wanted to return to graduate school and would have loved to pick up right where she left off, but did not see a way to do so. She said:
…I really need to do it. I just need to find a way that the coursework I took will count. I am not going back to take a bunch of more courses. I will start the dissertation… from scratch [if needed] and do something… like, more recent. Especially now that I work with principals and we are about to start that pipeline, I mean, I have some topics that would be really good. But it is just, I can't afford it… I am not going to pile on even more money on top of what I owe for that.

She shared that she wanted to find a college or university that would accept her coursework and allow her to begin her dissertation again. Unfortunately, she had not and she was burdened with debt from the degree she never earned.

Candace also shared areas of contentment during her years managing multiple roles. She previously mentioned that she learned a lot during the coursework portion of her program at Distance University. She was proud of the completion of her doctoral coursework. Candace was also proud of the culture that she created at Low-High Elementary and of keeping family first. She commented:

[My greatest achievement was] the culture that I created [at Low-High] and the team, I mean… right over there- that picture that they gave me when I left. That is what it was all about. I think it was just making a difference there, for the kids there… We like tripled our achievement in three years and it was just an amazing journey where… we were all just so committed to the school and to each other…

Candace was so glad that she had the experience as principal at Low-High. She did note, however, that this time in her life was a time of both compunction and contentment and
said, “…It is so funny because if you looked back at what I have said, that is the time that I felt… I took the most time away [from] my children.”

Lastly, Candace was proud that she was able to keep her family in focus. She mentioned before that she never missed one of her daughters’ events. She kept her family as a main priority because she did not want to look back on her career with regret. Candace stated:

…I never wanted my kids to say when they got older, “You know, Mommy was never here. Our mom was always working. Mom is always on the computer. Mom is…” And there were times when I was at Low-High [that my older daughter] one time finally said, "Would you ever get off your cell phone?" …Now I just, I rarely after work talk to people on the cell phone, I mean, this job has been really good for me in the balance area…

As she stated previously, her daughters served as a good measure of balance for her along the way.

Summary. At the time of this interview, Candace was successfully managing her roles as mother and educational administrator, but had long-since stalled in her pursuit of a doctorate. She was fully invested in her family life and in her position in the professional development department of her school district. Candace continued to be motivated by her mother and grandmother and continued to rely on the external and internal supports in her life. The external supports in her life included the practical assistance of her husband and extended family members and her colleague-mentors
Throughout her career. Care and concern for others, genuine belief in others, and a positive outlook on life were the internal supports that contributed to Candace’s success.

Considering her journey so far, Candace identified aspects of which she felt proud and conversely, aspects about which she felt uneasy or guilty. She was proud of successfully completing her doctoral coursework, of creating her desired culture at Low-High Elementary, and of keeping family her main priority. Candace was regretful that she was unable to complete her degree, did not take care of herself as she should have, had such difficulty balancing her roles when she served as principal at Low-High, and was struggling to find a way to complete her degree. Even though Candace expressed contrition about not completing her degree, she was happy. She became visibly emotional when she said, “But I'm very happy, so I don't know if all that makes sense. I'm happy. I have great kids, I love my husband, [and] I have a great family. That's all I need.” Figure 7 provides a summarization of Candace’s successes, challenges, motivations, and supports during the management of her multiple roles.
Considering the Conversation. At the end of our conversation, Candace mentioned that she was very interested in what the other participants had to say regarding how they were able to manage their multiple roles. Her body language mirrored her interest in the study as well as her genuine care and concern for me, as a researcher collecting data. I could sense that she wanted only prosperity for me, both in my doctoral success and personal well-being.
program and in my life in general. For that reason, she was an excellent participant who openly shared her experiences and perspectives with me. I appreciate the time that she was able to allocate for the interviews, as she was quite a busy lady within the school district. Candace mentioned at one point in our conversation off record that she had a hard time turning people down when they came to her for help or with a request. This made me feel a little guilty. I got over the guilt fairly easily because I am glad to have her perspectives on the topic included in this study.

Considering Candace’s case in conjunction with the previous four, there are several themes that have been strengthened. These include busyness in the management of multiple roles, the existence of external and internal supports, and points of regret and pride along the way. The overall feeling of Candace’s experience is positive, as she is content in her life right now. As is present in the lives of a few of the other women in this study, gender roles persist in Candace’s life. [From my Reflective Journal and field notes, March 10, 2011, May 11, 2011, and May 28, 2011.]

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I described the setting of the five participants, Possibility County School District, and differentiated between the participants’ level of educational administration within the district. I clarified the interview transcript presentation conventions used. Then, I provided basic demographic information about the group of participants before presenting each woman’s case. The detailed accounts within each case included the data I collected from the two interviews with each participant and were organized by areas, which resulted from my data analysis. I summarized the components
of each participant’s perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, I revealed my own thoughts, feelings, and considerations so as to bracket them and discussed the themes that emerged throughout the interview process as was documented in my Reflective Journal.

The five female participants in this study provided accounts of their lives and experiences. The accounts, along with my Researcher Reflective Journal and relevant participant-provided documents, gave voice to often-marginalized members of our society—mothers of young children who work and attend graduate school. The Researcher Reflective Journal I kept throughout the research process served as a conduit for ideas and themes to flow and was a way for my own historical, social, and cultural presuppositions to be documented.

Because of the focus of this study— the lives and experiences of women who managed multiple roles—questions were asked of the women that would not necessarily have been asked otherwise. One research question in particular generated important information about the prevalence of gender roles within families—“Under what conditions do you think your experience is different from others’? From a man’s? From a father’s?” Gender roles within families and relationships persist. The understanding of this persistence, as described in this chapter and discussed in Chapter Five, can flow into social and political discourses and perhaps influence policy reform and social change. It may also prompt more researchers to study full-time working mothers’ experiences in higher education as in contrast to other kinds of students (i.e. full-time working fathers’ experiences). The realities of the participants’ lives are a rich source of inquiry that led to knowledge that is more complete, less partial, and more objective because the
participants themselves have provided it. This is Feminist Standpoint Theory and it has allowed me to look from the outside in and from the inside out.

In the next chapter, I will present a cross-case analysis and synthesis of the participants’ data, which will include common themes across the data, themes that were common to most, but not all, and notable exceptions. I will also provide a link to the current literature, consider the implications this study has for readers who wish to become or are doctoral students and manage multiple roles such as the ones described in this study, and consider the implications this study has for graduate programs and staff serving women like those in this study. Then, I present my own experience managing multiple roles and discuss how they relate to the major themes. Lastly, I will consider the implications this study has for researchers investigating entrance and persistence issues of this specific group of doctoral students.
Chapter Five

Analysis, Synthesis, and Implications

Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the results of my cross-case analysis and synthesis of the experiences of the women, highlighting the considerable similarities of their experiences and noting the differences therein. I will discuss how the results of this study can inform women who seek to fulfill or who are fulfilling multiple roles such as those in this study and inform graduate schools and staff, such as professors, advisors, and mentors. I will also explore how this inquiry has served as a window into which I have viewed my own life roles and experiences. Lastly, I will offer recommendations for future research.

This study described and explained women educational administrators’ perspectives on work and life. The exploratory questions that guided the study were:

1. What are the components of the perspectives of women educational administrators who are also mothers and doctoral students?

2. What variables influence women’s perspectives of their roles and lived experience as mothers, educational administrators, and doctoral students.

Before presenting a cross-case analysis and synthesis of the findings, I present a brief review of the gaps in the literature on multiple roles of women administrators, the
analysis conducted in preparation for this chapter, and a discussion of feminist standpoint theory and how it relates to the findings and analysis and synthesis.

**Gaps in the Literature.** There is no argument about the fact that women, since the early 1800s, have made significant headway in the attainment of college degrees. Roughly 200 years later, women finally reached parity with men in the percentage of doctoral and professional degrees earned. Women have accomplished this task in spite of the multiple roles many of them have taken and manage on a daily basis. Degree-seeking males typically do not experience these multiple roles.

Chapter two offered research categorized into four areas of female experiences: the history of women’s education and women’s work, the multiple and demanding roles of females, women as students in academe, and women in educational administration. As evidenced in chapter two, there is an overabundance of research in each of these areas and across these areas, focusing on women with multiple roles including women as graduate students.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) discuss the underrepresentation of women in the body of research on educational administration. The authors mention that in a 2007 study of the contents of the popular journal *Education Administration Quarterly*, only five percent of the articles mentioned either gender or race (2011). They continue, stating that the majority of the empirical research concerning women in educational administration can be found in dissertation research. Brown and Irby (2005, as cited in Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011) find that only nine percent of the dissertations in educational leadership are studies focused on women. Nine percent is a discouraging statistic. Even more discouraging is the fact that the majority of dissertations are not published, further
decreasing the chances that important studies can make a positive impact on the field. Certainly a case has been made for this study, which focuses on women in educational administration who are mothers and doctoral students and highlights each of their voices as they disclose their perspectives and lived experiences in those roles.

**Analysis and Synthesis.** As mentioned, the organization of Chapter Four enabled me to compare participants’ experiences and determine which were prevalent and which were isolated. After multiple readings of the transcripts and adhering to the steps of interview data analysis as identified by Rubin and Rubin (2005), I was able to analyze the data. From this analysis and synthesis that followed, four major themes emerged. They are entitled ‘It Takes A Village,’ ‘Running the Marathon,’ ‘Burning the Midnight Oil,’ and ‘The Quest for Quality.’ These four themes include discussions of support, personal fulfillment, tenacity, gender equality, and time. Each of the four subsequent sections includes a discussion of the theme, a link to the existing literature, and implications for women seeking to fulfill multiple roles as identified in this study and for doctoral programs and staff. Then, my own experiences and their relationship to the themes are provided and entitled, “My Village,” “My Marathon,” “Can I Borrow A Match?,” and “My Quality Quandary.” Figure 8 is a visual representation of the four major themes and supporting ideas generated as a result of interviews conducted with my five participants. The chapter concludes with suggestions for researchers.

**Feminist Standpoint Theory.** This study grew out of my own need to identify with and understand other women managing motherhood in addition to doctoral study and a career as educational administrator. I was able to operate with what Klein (1983, as cited in Henwood and Pidgeon, 1995) calls *conscious subjectivity*. This stance allowed...
me to compare my own experiences and subjectivities with those of my participants. I began by unpacking my own presuppositions about my experiences and those others may have by identifying those assumptions. My researcher reflective journal certainly helped accomplish that task. Once I was aware of my assumptions, I was better able to bracket them in order to begin my inquiry into women who manage multiple roles. I began with the perspectives of five women, all of whom manage motherhood, studenthood, and administration. Listening to their experiences, challenges, successes, etc. gave me the opportunity to look at the world from their perspectives. Because of several factors, women who are mothers of young children and who are employed full time often become marginalized and may believe that they cannot pursue the highest level of education—the doctorate. Many times, gender roles perpetuated by society and within families prevent women from setting, keeping, and/or completing their educational goals. By conducting interviews with five women who were or are enrolled in doctoral programs and who are managing motherhood and career, I was able to capture their special insights about their roles and responsibilities. Harding (1991) calls this process of seeing what is invisible from within that order “outsiders within.” I was able to unearth much of my participants’ personal and social influences that play a significant role in shaping their knowledge and experiences. Because I was able to do this, I believe that my account of their experiences is satisfactory. Through this study, I gave voice to my participants’ experiences and perspectives on work and life roles and I hope that it advances better understanding of women managing multiple roles, including their needs, challenges, and successes.
Cross-Case Analysis and Synthesis

It Takes A Village: Support For Women Managing Multiple Roles. The proverb “It takes a village to raise a child” is often attributed to Toni Morrison in 1981, while most believe it is an African proverb. The meaning of the proverb, however, is
clear. It suggests that the community around a child should partner with the parents to see to it that the child is raised well and afforded equitable opportunities in life. I suggest that certain aspects of the environment and community around the doctoral student, who is managing the roles of woman, mother, and educational leader, come together to provide support to help ensure the success of her degree pursuit. With the doctoral program attrition rate being roughly 60% and the total time it takes for a woman to complete a doctoral degree being longer than that of a man’s and growing by the year (Maher, Ford, & Thompson, 2004), women need all the support they can get during the process. Support was consistent among the participants in this study, as was their active pursuit of that support.

During our conversation, Charlotte Steady used the term “outside structures” to describe those practical structures that were in place to enable her to manage her multiple roles. All participants relied upon members of their immediate and extended families for practical assistance during their multi-role management and even before taking on a doctoral program. Charlotte’s parents lived right around the corner from her and could pick her children up from or drop them off at school, home, or wherever their extracurricular activities may take them. Likewise, Samantha’s parents were available to her children should they need transportation. They even helped out when her boys were infants by looking after them until they were at least six months old. Miranda’s mother played an important role in the lives of her twin girls. Her mother still watches them almost daily even though her commute to and from Miranda’s home can be arduous. Carrie moved closer to her parents-- six doors down to be exact-- in order to make it more convenient for her parents to help care for her three children. Furthermore, like the
others, Candace depended on her extended family members for practical assistance. In fact, her family is much larger than the other four women. Candace relied on her seven brothers and sisters as well as her parents for help.

Each participant also mentioned the supporting role their significant others played throughout their journeys. For all of the women, their husbands not only provided practical support with transportation issues, but provided emotional support and encouragement as well. The husbands of Charlotte, Samantha, Carrie, and Candace served as a source of encouragement and motivation to them while Miranda’s husband took encouragement to an entirely deeper level by changing his career to allow her the opportunity to pursue her goals.

All of the women mentioned a friend, colleague, or coworker along the way who served as sources of inspiration and encouragement to them. Charlotte and Samantha had one another as coworkers and colleagues in their doctoral program. They connected on multiple levels and their relationship was almost doubly effective along the way. Miranda and Candace both had friends with whom they entered their doctoral programs. Their friends were certainly sources of motivation. Carrie and her husband went through their doctoral programs at the same time, providing each other with spousal support as well as collegial support.

Charlotte and Samantha, who attended Rigor University, identified the structure of their doctoral program as supportive. Their cohort met mainly on Saturdays and they enjoyed face-to-face instruction from their professors. Candace and Carrie did not specifically mention the structure of their coursework as particularly supportive. Distance University offers some face-to-face courses although most are on-line. One could infer
that Candace and Carrie’s program was manageable because both completed the coursework. Interestingly, both Miranda and Candace, who attended different universities, struggled once they moved into the candidacy portion of their programs. Several of Miranda’s committee members were retiring and Candace’s committee members were out of state. Both situations proved detrimental to their degree progress. Carrie, although she completed her degree, mentioned that her major professor through Distance University did not provide enough support for her. In fact, she relied on colleagues in her school district that served as informal committee members for her.

The experiences of attending Rigor University and Distance University are quite different. The main difference may be the delivery of instruction. While both universities offer an Ed.D in Educational Leadership, many would say that the rigor of the two programs is vastly different, favoring Rigor University. The difference in rigor is most likely related to the experiences and qualifications of professors employed, the qualification of Rigor University as a Top Research University (by The Carnegie Foundation), and the level of difficulty and complexity of coursework, among other factors.

Although the experiences between the programs at the two universities are different, only one of the two participants who attended Distance University graduated and only one of three participants who attended Rigor University will graduate in the foreseeable future. So, the nature of the programs at the two universities may not be as important a factor as other external and internal factors mentioned in this analysis. More data about women fulfilling multiple roles like the participants in this study should be gathered so as to address the question of whether face-to-face instruction at a top research
university versus online instruction at a distant university provides more support. Also, more data is needed to determine differences (or the lack thereof) between women (who manage multiple roles) who graduate with a degree from Rigor University and those that obtain a degree from Distance University regarding positions obtained by the graduates. Do the graduates from Rigor University attain “better” positions in school districts? Do they obtain professorships at more prestigious colleges?

All participants cited one or more supports that directly related to their home environments. During their descriptions of their typical days, all alluded to a set schedule for the time they spent at home, including getting ready in the mornings and their evening routines once they arrived home. All prioritized their children and husbands when they were not at work or in class.

In addition to outside structures, there were many internal supports that allowed the women to be as successful as they are now. While each participant cited internal supports of some kind, those supports varied with the exception of one: tenacity. All five women were tenacious in life. This shared internal support will be explained in one of the subsequent sections. Charlotte and Samantha included humor as a major support. Both women used humor and laughter as channels to relieve the stress and pressure of their demanding roles. Samantha used laughter throughout our interviews as a means to lighten the mood when relaying her difficult setbacks over the last few years. Four of the participants-- Charlotte, Miranda, Carrie, and Candace-- mentioned individuals in their lives who made a lasting impression on their own journeys. Miranda’s mother sought her degree but abandoned the pursuit because of her pregnancy. This circumstance is part of what fueled Miranda’s degree pursuit. Carrie shared the stories of her mother’s
immigration to America and her grandfather’s vast experience, knowledge, and talents and how they impacted her life and roles. Women, like her grandmother, mother and sisters, who manage multiple roles successfully, surrounded and served as role models to Candace.

The five participants relied upon various other internal supports. Charlotte depended on her ability to be flexible and was able to give up control in certain aspects of her life in order to manage additional roles, while Samantha relied upon her interpersonal skills, humility, and charisma and utilized them in her job. Carrie held the pride of her brothers close to her. Candace made the most of her ability to genuinely care for and believe in others and projected her own positive outlook on life.

_Literature Link._ These findings are consistent with existing literature. Kirby et al. (2004), in their article regarding the impact on family and work when adults choose to return to graduate school, discuss the importance of support from the families of those students. Respondents in their study cited family support as important as it reduced the amount of stress they felt during the process. Likewise, the participants in Jarnagin’s (2005) study advised prospective female doctoral students to create and prepare a positive support network before re-entering graduate school. They believed that much of their success stemmed from their support networks, which included family and friends. Echoing this need for a support network is Leisure (2007). She found that graduate students who work full time and are trying to complete their doctoral programs undergo a lot of stress, especially for female learners trying to manage multiple roles. She cited Hirt and Muffo (1998) when discussing that these kinds of students require extensive support from their “villages.”
Kirby et. al (2004) also make mention of the importance of support from friends, colleagues, and coworkers and how those relationships, if supportive, contribute to reduced stress levels of female doctoral students managing multiple roles. Tiedje (2004) reported that strength from others-- and even strength that participants in her study provided to one another throughout the study-- was beneficial throughout their programs. Furthermore, Williams (2007) included “Support from Family and Friends” as one of her major themes, stating that her participants sought help from their support networks in order to help better manage their multiple roles.

Regarding support from graduate programs and universities, Kirby et. al (2004) concluded from his respondents that weekend classes were favored over weekdays and weeknights. It was easier for the family members of students to help on weekends and devote their time to childcare and other responsibilities so that the students could attend class and not worry about those issues. Williams (2007) concluded from her study that a separate orientation to graduate school for student mothers in order to address issues specifically related to them would be appropriate. She also stated the importance of having advisors within the college that understand, or even currently live, the demands of family and career. Furthermore, Johnsrud (1995) proposed that cohort models of education could be beneficial to women due to their collegial nature.

**Implications for Prospective Doctoral Students.** Table 11 was created based on the thoughts and feelings of my participants, the research reviewed, and my own experiences (discussed later in this chapter). It offers a list of suggested supports. Of course not every woman managing multiple roles such as those discussed in this study will have all of the suggested supports in place, but nonetheless, these supports are ideal.
Likewise, having all of these supports in place does not guarantee success. The journey to doctor is much more complicated than any checklist. Table 11 breaks support down into four main areas (family, friends and coworkers, graduate school, and self) and provides ways to support participants like the five in this study both internally and externally. For example, it is advisable for a student to sit down with her spouse, children, and local family members and discuss the doctoral program under consideration. This discussion should include all anticipated demands on the student and should result in a tentative plan for such issues as the caretaking of children on a daily basis, study time for the student, etc.

**Implications for Graduate Programs and Staff.** As mentioned in Table 11, graduate advisors, professors, and mentors can help female doctoral students who manage multiple roles largely by showing empathy and involving themselves consistently in their lives in order to provide motivation to continue. An accommodating schedule produced by the graduate school is also very beneficial. For example, the participants in this study work full time and have families to tend to in the evenings. Thus, weekday and weeknight classes are not ideal. Weekend classes, scheduled in advance and in large blocks of time, offer the flexibility needed to arrange childcare and transportation of children so that mothers can study and appropriately focus on her courses. The large time blocks help decrease the amount of travel time to and from courses, thus maximizing time spent in other life roles. Furthermore, since women typically learn better when strong relationships are formed (Hayes, 2001), a cohort structure including other women managing multiple roles may serve as the optimal environment to succeed. Charlotte and Samantha are part of a doctoral cohort, along with ten others. Research suggests that
there are many benefits for members of a cohort, including a higher graduation rate (Lei, Gorelick, Short, Smallwood, & Wright-Porter, 2011; Unzueta, Moores-Abdool, & Donet, 2010). Three cohort members already graduated, five will graduate this semester, two stated they would be graduating next semester, one has stalled at the qualifying exam, and one has abandoned her program altogether. If all graduate as stated, then the graduation rate for the cohort will be approximately 83% -- an extremely high rate and double the current statistic. So, the cohort model is successful and should be employed as often as possible. I thoroughly enjoyed the cohort experience and even though we disbanded once the coursework was completed, I keep in touch with most members--especially my writing buddy, with whom I talk at least once per week. I cannot imagine going through the program without all of them.

Several studies (including Johnsrud, 1995, and Maher, et al., 2004) suggest that women in higher education need the right kind of mentor, who can better support their degree progress. I suggest that it would be helpful to have professors in the program who have experienced the management of multiple roles, including that of mother, and have those individuals to share their particular experiences with female students in similar situations, perhaps in a small group setting. Never have I adopted the belief that outside individuals can forge mentoring relationships. I believe that the mentee must seek out a mentor whose particular experiences and/or personality are appealing. Likewise, a mentor might seek out a willing mentee for similar reasons. If there were more women who do manage or have managed multiple roles serving as instructors/professors within doctoral programs, more mentoring relationships may be formed, thus further supporting degree pursuit.
Running the Marathon: Personal Fulfillment and Tenacity of Women

Managing Multiple Roles. More than once during my own doctoral journey, my professors made the comment that obtaining a doctorate is not a sprint-- it is indeed a marathon, long-distance running event. In Greek mythology, Pheidippides, a messenger, was sent from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens to announce a victory in war. It is said that Pheidippides ran the entire distance without stopping. At this point in my doctoral program, this comparison makes perfect sense. I did not truly comprehend the meaning behind the comment until this, my last year in the program. My goal in the beginning of my program was to mimic Pheidippides run and to charge forward without stopping. However, I did experience a two-month hiatus from writing once my proposal was approved and then incremental breaks in order to re-charge my writing battery. I consider those breaks healthy, because after all, it is said that once Pheidippides reached Athens and shouted, “We have won!” he dropped dead. I would advise other women managing similar roles to take small breaks every now and then to refresh and recharge in order to continue. The danger in that advice, of course, is the temptation to allow those small breaks to morph into longer ones. Too many doctoral students fall into this trap and wind up ABD (All But Dissertation). Based on the thoughts and feelings of the participants in this study, there are two main themes that are evident when preparing for, experiencing, and succeeding in running the marathon that is a doctoral program: personal fulfillment and tenacity.
Table 11

Suggested Supports for a Doctoral Student Managing Motherhood and a Career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of “The Village”</th>
<th>Specific Ways to Provide the Student with Internal Support</th>
<th>Specific Ways to Provide the Student with External Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Spouse/ Significant Other/ Immediate Family | * Agreement before degree pursuit  
* Understanding  
* Encouragement  
* Responsibility  
* Initiative (taken by family members) | * Stable home environment  
* Assistance with transportation  
* Reduction/ Elimination of Gender Roles (assistance with household and child care tasks) |
| Friends/ Co-workers | * Understanding  
* Encouragement | * Low-maintenance friendships (limited calls, emails, visits) |
| Graduate School | * Empathy of and consistent involvement by committee members | * Accommodating schedule  
* Active mentor(s)/ Major professor  
* Trusted colleague(s)/ Cohort structure |
| Self | * Humor  
* Tenacity (resilience, devotion, energy, strong will, patience, strong work ethic)  
* Balance  
* Focus | * Healthy lifestyle  
* Preparation  
* Schedule-setting  
* Time with friends and/or to self |

**Personal Fulfillment.** All participants in this study emphasized a personal need to be fulfilled beyond their roles as women, mothers, and educational leaders. The attraction of a doctoral degree seemed somewhat elusive because the participants expressed a reason for pursuit that was ambiguous-- the main reason mentioned by the participants was that a doctoral degree was a “personal goal.” Digging deeper, there were three major factors that encouraged the women to pursue their degrees. Reasons included a love of learning, encouragement and influence from family, friends, or colleagues, and ambition.
Not one participant mentioned how the degree would help earn a promotion or more money, although that happened for Carrie. There were many and varied aspects of fulfillment throughout the process mentioned by each participant.

Charlotte shared that she has always had a love of learning and promotes that love in her job as assistant principal. She also felt that her attainment of this degree was a part of the reason why she was a positive role model for her children. Her career, centered on making a positive impact in the lives of children, was a bigger piece of the reason. Overall, her graduate studies had a positive impact on her career and family life and at this point in her life, she felt fulfilled. Samantha also felt fulfilled in her role as principal. She enjoyed the autonomy of her role, especially since she had the opportunity to open a new school with Charlotte. Samantha, too, emphasized how her coursework, and the scholarly conversations with her colleagues, made a positive impact on her job. Miranda felt the same way about the impact of her degree program, adding how much she enjoyed her job as assistant principal even though it had become much more demanding over the years. Particularly, she enjoyed the relationships she was able to build within her school. Furthermore, Candace’s fulfillment mirrored that of the previous three participants in that her coursework proved beneficial to her job. She added, though, that she was most fulfilled by the culture she was able to create as principal of Low-High Elementary. Carrie, because she finished her doctoral program, reflected on her experience and was fulfilled because she was able to attain a goal she had set for herself early on in life. She was also fulfilled because she earned a promotion upon the completion of her degree and enjoyed a less-harried life since that time. As evident in these various areas of contentment and personal fulfillment, all five participants found success in at least one
role in their lives. So, the answer to the initial exploratory question “How do female educational administrators successfully negotiate the challenges of motherhood and doctoral study?” may be that these five women, regardless of whether or not they stalled in their doctoral programs, find success in at least one of their roles.

**Tenacity.** Although each of the five women made reference to her ambitious, driven nature as a strong, internal support, I waited to discuss it here because of its prevalence and importance among the participants. The term “tenacity” seems to capture that ambitious, driven nature that the participants shared and adds the aspect of persistence and strength of purpose that I believe they also shared. Six major facets of tenacity existed among the women. First, resilience implies how the women continued in their multiple roles no matter what life events and circumstances occurred. Even after all of her setbacks, Samantha just recently turned in six pages of her qualifying exam to her major professor. Devotion is another aspect of tenacity. Miranda was fully devoted to her family and her career. This devotion temporarily caused her doctoral studies to stall; however, I believe that this same devotion will cause her to pick her studies back up and again acquire the goal of degree completion. A third facet of tenacity is energy. It seemed as though these five women had inexhaustible amounts of energy to accomplish what they must do in their multiple roles. Carrie spoke of the momentum she used to keep her multiple tasks going and of the serenity of her home she used in order to recharge. Strong will and patience are also factors in that tenacity requires one to have a strong urge to complete what has been started and to accept what delays may arise along the way. Charlotte continued to plod along her degree path at a steady pace, knowing that she chose the kind of research that is more time-consuming when her colleagues chose
research methods that were less time-consuming and have thus finished. Lastly, a strong work ethic is an important facet of tenacity. Candace demonstrated this daily in her various jobs and as the manager of professional development. It is my belief that without tenacity, these women would not hold their current positions in the district and would never have begun the pursuit of their degrees.

**Literature Link.** Concerning personal fulfillment, Younes and Asay (1998) found that their eight participants, who were female graduate students, sought their advanced degrees for several reasons. One reason was the desire to be a “first,” which meant that they sought to be the first in a position in their field or area to hold an advanced degree. Another reason was self-improvement, or to be the “best.” Yet another was to be a role model for others. Like my participants, a fourth reason was to learn for the sake of learning; to be personally enriched through the experience. Morris (2007) found that her participants were motivated to pursue a degree and see it through to completion for various reasons: completing a task because of the commitment made, family and friends consistently asking about the anticipated graduation date, financial pressure to finish, and understanding that education was the key to a more stable financial future.

The experiences of my participants also mirror the current research because, for the most part, they are tenacious in their pursuits and persevere. For example, research suggests that women undergo change throughout their graduate programs and adapt to the challenges they encounter. Tiedje’s (2004) fifth major theme, “incremental change”, evolved because of the negotiations women make during the their multi-role management. Eventually, through those negotiations, they simply adapt. Johnsrud (1995) finds that there are personal realities, specifically balancing the demands of family, work,
and school, juggling conflicting roles, lack of time, leisure, and support, and feelings of inadequacy, that prevent or prolong women’s pursuits of advanced degrees. Commitment to timely degree completion must be present-- it is a major theme identified by Maher, et. al (2004). The women in those studies, who finished early or on time, had strong goals to finish within a particular amount of time and were motivated, focused, and disciplined to do so. Perseverance emerged in Jarnagin’s (2005) study as well. All ten of her participants demonstrated perseverance. She mentioned literature by Sandra Monteath (1994), in which she shared her 17-year doctoral journey and explained that unless a student can completely shut the world out, life is going to interfere. For my participants, life most definitely interfered, and in the lives of some more than others.

Implications for Prospective Doctoral Students. I did a little research on marathon preparation before writing this chapter, just to see how closely it parallels completing a doctoral program. My father has and continues to participate in triathlons, but I had no previous knowledge of what it takes to prepare for and run a marathon. After reading, it is clear why my professors made the comment differentiating sprints from marathons. In fact, had I researched marathon training before my doctoral journey, I may have been a little better prepared for the difficult task that lay ahead. Before delving deeper into the similarities between running a marathon and completing a doctoral program (specifically the dissertation), I present Tables 12, 13, and 14 as summaries of the comparisons between running a marathon and completing a doctoral program, organized in stages. These tables were developed from my schema, which stems from my own experience in a doctoral program as well as from my participants’ experiences, and from a webpage dedicated to marathon preparation through The Cleveland Clinic.
### Table 12

Running a Marathon vs. Completing a Doctoral Program: Before

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Marathon</th>
<th>Dissertation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weeks before embarking on the journey</td>
<td>Complete interval training: Last long run should occur three weeks before race- no later because muscles need to heal.</td>
<td>Complete doctoral coursework: Last writing assignment (perhaps qualifying exam) should occur several weeks before dissertation writing begins in order to recharge your mind. Your writing muscles have torn and grown stronger throughout your coursework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doubts begin to arise: “Did I train enough?”</td>
<td>Doubts begin to arise: “Did I write enough? Am I prepared to do this?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be sure to get extra sleep, stay well hydrated, and eat a diet rich in complex carbs the week before.</td>
<td>Be sure to get extra sleep, spend time with your family, and eat healthy/exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Try out your electrolyte drink.</td>
<td>Try out potential places to write/study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review the map of the course and visualize yourself completing the race.</td>
<td>Review your route to completing your study and visualize yourself going through each chapter and walking across the stage during commencement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right before embarking on the journey</td>
<td>Get your outfit and shoes ready. Be sure neither are new- you do not want to encounter chafing or blisters.</td>
<td>Know your place to study and materials you will use. Be sure neither are new- you do not want to encounter unfamiliarity that may divert your focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be prepared for anything- fill your gym bag with items you may need along your run (lip balm, extra shoelaces, safety pins, etc.).</td>
<td>Be prepared for anything- fill your bag with items you may need when studying/writing/interviewing (extra batteries, pens, paper, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make sure you have picked up your race number- you don’t want to be on your feet longer than necessary.</td>
<td>Be sure you have chosen your topic- you want to maximize your dissertation hours.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13

Running a Marathon vs. Completing a Doctoral Program: During

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Marathon</th>
<th>Dissertation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During the journey</td>
<td>Drink water at every station. Do not wait until you are thirsty- that is too late.</td>
<td>Keep in close contact with your major professor. Do not wait until s/he emails you or you have encountered a problem- that is too late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Start slowly. A fast start usually spells disaster. You can run faster later in the race.</td>
<td>Start slowly. Be sure that you are thorough and send sections of writing to your major professor. A fast start and sending sections too large can spell disaster- for you may be on the wrong track. Be sure you are on the right track. With a clear and approved focus, you’ll be able to write faster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stick to your planned path as closely as you can- it is imperative not to allow race-time decisions to counteract the hard work and planning you have done.</td>
<td>Stick to your planned schedule and timeline as closely as you can- it is imperative not to allow in-the-moment decisions to counteract the hard work and planning you have done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anticipate barriers along the way, such as a line at the portable bathrooms, heat, and potential pollutants in the air.</td>
<td>Anticipate barriers along the way, such as unexpected events that prevent adhering to your study/writing schedule.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14

Running a Marathon vs. Completing a Doctoral Program: After

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Marathon</th>
<th>Dissertation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After the journey</td>
<td>No matter what the results are, be proud of yourself.</td>
<td>No matter what your findings are, be proud of yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keep moving. This will help you overcome post-race stiffness.</td>
<td>Keep writing/studying/learning. This will help you overcome the post-dissertation void in your life that might appear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Put ice on anything that is sore.</td>
<td>Begin to rebuild. Rebuild yourself if you have neglected your health. Rebuild relationships/friendships that you have neglected along the way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allow your body to recover. An extreme athletic event can be very stressful on the human body.</td>
<td>Allow yourself to recover. An extreme academic program can be very stressful on a human life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Foundation (2009). Comparing the completion of a doctoral program with a marathon makes sense considering the research.

**Implications for Graduate Programs and Staff.** Doctoral programs, advisors, professors, and mentors should seek to be involved in all aspects of the doctoral journey, or marathon, of women managing multiple roles. These women are constantly faced with demands on their time—especially from their immediate families. A dedicated, persistent advisor or major professor can mean the world to a doctoral student mother working full time. This kind of advisor can help to refocus a student when she loses her way and succumbs to the mounting pressure and responsibilities from other life roles. Talking with a student about her life roles and co-creating a study/writing schedule may help relieve some anxiety of the part of the student and help her compartmentalize the roles and responsibilities in her life, which could lead to a better ability to focus. Lastly,
doctoral program staff can help a student by understanding her job as educational administrator and the demands of that role. For example, the beginning of the school year, spring testing season, and the end of the school year tend to be the most stressful times around campus. Knowing these stressful times during the school year allows a professor to more carefully plan when critical assignments are due.

**Burning the Midnight Oil: Gender Equality and the Efficient Use of Time.**

As the phrases suggests, burning the midnight oil refers to working late into the night, by the light of candle in the days of old. This theme includes two main elements: gender equality evident in the homes and relationships of the participants and the efficiency that each participant strove for on a daily, sometimes hourly, basis. Adams and Hambright (2004) discuss a study commissioned by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals to uncover why there was a shortage of women leaders at various levels of educational administration. The study found three main reasons for the shortage: low pay in comparison to the responsibilities of the job, too much stress, and too much time required of the job. If a woman’s major role is simply her job in educational administration, the results of this study seem daunting. Add to this role the roles of mother (especially of younger children) and doctoral student and there is no mystery as to why “Burning the Midnight Oil” is one of the four major areas of synthesis in this study. Women in these multiple roles simply do not have enough time in their days to be maximally effective in all roles. Thus, they spend every minute and more of their days managing them. Gender equality plays a large role in how participants’ time is spent. Some were expected to work full time, attend
graduate school, and maintain the traditional role of mother in spite of these additional responsibilities.

**Gender Equality.** In three of the cases in this study, gender roles prevailed. In the two others, gender roles were not as obvious. During their interviews, Charlotte, Samantha, and Candace expressed that they bore the brunt of the parenting responsibilities in the home, with parenting responsibilities in this study being synonymous with those activities associated with tending to dependent children still living at home. Regardless of the various life roles and responsibilities in which they were already engaged, the women were the ones who managed the schedule of their children. Managing the schedule included arranging the transportation of the children; keeping up with activities and the costs, times, and responsibilities therein; keeping important healthcare appointments; preparing daily for meals; and ensuring household chores were accomplished. Two of the women-- Charlotte and Samantha-- expressed that their husbands could be helpful, but it required effort on their part to actually tell their husbands what to do in order to be helpful. Samantha and Candace referred to the difference between themselves and their husbands when sharing that their husbands were able to focus and immerse themselves in their daily job tasks whereas the women could not do so because they would often be thinking about their children’s schedule and what events were occurring later in the day.

Miranda and Carrie did not reveal much information about the division of roles and responsibilities within their homes, although both made brief statements that served as hints. Carrie mentioned in her interview that she used momentum to keep herself going, especially with household tasks and specifically mentioned preparing dinner and
doing laundry. Miranda mentioned that her husband often went “above and beyond,” referring to how her husband would watch the girls while she went off to study or write. Obviously, she did not consider watching the girls for an extended amount of time a regular duty for a father. Both brief remarks hint at households in which gender roles prevail, but as previously stated, there is just not enough evidence to make that inference.

Charlotte and Candace, when discussing how they managed their children and household tasks, reflected on and shared their inner struggle to determine whether traditional female roles are innate for women or whether they were perpetuated by society. Both seemed to dismiss the argument as soon as it arose and adopted the stance that it didn’t really matter because managing their children and their household tasks must occur. Although they brought up the internal struggle, both seem somewhat content with the gender roles present in their homes at this time.

**Efficient Use of Time.** All participants experienced a constant pressure to equitably and efficiently divide the time afforded them each day. The women had to divide their time between studying/writing for their degree programs, working, attending to household tasks, scheduling/organizing their children’s activities, spending time with their children and spouses, maintaining relationships outside of family, and attending to their own emotional, physical, and mental needs. All participants had to attend class at the beginnings of their doctoral programs and thus used their time away from family to do so. Once classes ended, each had to negotiate how to write and study without interruption from their children, which often meant venturing outside the home. Of course their jobs took up at least nine hours of each weekday and often more if there happened to be a school event in the evening. Household tasks had to be done and most
of the time the participants themselves, as opposed to their spouses, initiated the chores. Scheduling family members’ activities was often difficult and participants often relied upon extended family members for help with transportation. Lastly, participants generally did not make time to care for their own mental, physical, and emotional well-being. It was placed on the “back burner” because they put the needs of their families and their careers before their own. For the women in my study, time management became a survival tactic. There were always pressing needs arising from their multiple roles, and as a result, participants were forced to prioritize constantly. For the most part, maintaining friendships outside participants’ immediate and extended families fell into the category of “unimportant activities,” as did setting aside time for self, including exercising, eating healthy, and any sort of pampering. There was just not enough time to include them.

**Literature Link.** There is quite a bit of research on women and their struggle to make it all happen as they balance multiple roles. My participants struggled to be as efficient as they desired to be in each role. Tiedje (2004) refers to this as the “superwoman strategy,” meaning that women work as hard and as efficiently as possible in all roles, and is part of the larger theme “coping strategies” in the study. He found three other coping strategies, two of which directly relate to my participants: planning and time management and divesting oneself of unimportant activities (Tiedje, 2004). Also mentioned in that study was the prevalence of ‘multi-tasking,’ which by its nature forced the participants to sacrifice some of the quality for quantity. Jarnagin (2005) found that her participants experienced time pressures and role overload frequently. She used the metaphor of juggler to explain the multi-tasking a woman balancing multiple roles, such as family, school, and work, does. She explains that constant juggling can take a toll
on the health of ‘superwomen.’ Compromises are made to reach the ultimate goal. Those compromises, be what they may, can affect a woman’s sense of self, self-care activities, and health (Jarnagin, 2005). The constant lack of time, preoccupation with school and work activities, stress, exhaustion, and feelings of being overwhelmed reminded Jarnagin of a pressure cooker. A pressure cooker, if left unattended, may keep on plugging away until it almost explodes. A doctoral student managing multiple roles must self-reflect and examine whether the heat should be turned down. Jarnagin relates that even a pressure cooker has a safety valve that can immediately relieve the pressure if needed. She suggests that doctoral students experiencing role overload and time pressures occasionally turn on their own safety valves and release some pressure (2005).

The presence of gender roles in the home and in relationships exacerbates role overload and time pressures. Leisure (2007), in discussing women managing multiple roles, shares that just because a female moves into different roles, the expectations of them do not necessarily change. She mentions specifically that women often take over the second shift of the day, which consists of caring for children, maintaining the family, shopping, cooking, and cleaning (2007). This finding, regarding women managing multiple roles still bearing the brunt of the household and childcare tasks, is consistent with research (Polasky & Holahan, 1998, and Barnett, 2004). Gender-role socialization contributes to the added stress women managing multiple roles feel.

**Implications for Prospective Doctoral Students.** Concerning gender equality in the home and in relationships, a women managing a career and a family and seeking to add the role of doctoral student should carefully consider her current roles and responsibilities. Asking whether those responsibilities will continue or will decrease with
others’ help during multi-role management is an important question to ask. Women should not go into the process blindly with the expectation that her spouse and children will automatically adjust to her new role. I think the women in this study would agree with me about being clear about expectations up front.

I also believe that the women in this study would agree with me in proposing that since time is such a concern for women managing multiple roles, a schedule of family events should be developed and strictly adhered to by those in a ‘superwoman’s’ support system. The schedule should encompass all activities for each family member, including the study/writing schedule for mom and household tasks that should be accomplished. Then, it would be helpful for Furthermore, preparation for those activities should occur in order to maximize time.

**Implications for Graduate Programs and Staff.** It would be helpful if graduate programs and staff of women doctoral students were knowledgeable of the multiple roles they experienced on a daily basis. Knowledge of those various roles could allow professors, advisors, and/or mentors to be aware of the potential role overload and time pressures women may experience. In that case, they could intervene so as to help the student overcome or navigate through the role conflicts she is experiencing. Graduate programs could even address the potential of role overload with women during the orientation to their particular programs and offer suggestions for time management.

**The Quest for Quality: Effective Use of Time.** In the previous section, the issue of time in relation to efficiency was discussed. This section looks at time in relation to quality, or effectiveness. There was never enough time for the women in my study as they served in multiple, consuming life roles. Samantha made a comment during my first
interview with her that struck a nerve. She said it was difficult dividing her time so that she was “not just getting through each day” and was “living and not just being.” Each woman in this study struggled daily to live and not just exist--to aim for quality and not just quantity in tasks and relationships.

Although the five women were able to identify and share areas of contentment in their lives, it was far easier for each of them to identify areas of compunction. All of the areas of compunction shared by the women were concerned with the quality of their relationships during their multi-role management, the most important relationship being that between mother and children. All five women proclaimed the immense guilt they felt about leaving their children with a spouse, family member, or friend in order to study or work. All desired more time with their children. We are given only 24 hours in the day and it is largely our decision as to how those hours and minutes are spent. For most of the women in this study, their workday is nine hours or longer. Add to that amount one hour to get ready and going in the morning, one hour to collect children from wherever they may be, and two hours to conduct household chores, run errands, plan for and eat dinner, and put children to bed. If the women would like an eight-hour sleep at night, it leaves about three hours in the day. Will those three hours be spent studying? Writing? Completing homework or interacting with children? Attending a child’s sport or activity? Heading back to school for a night function? Exercising and watching television? These are the decisions that the women in my study, and arguably most women managing multiple roles, must make on a daily and weekly basis. Inevitably, some event or activity will divert her attention away from solely interacting with her children in order to focus on an aspect of her roles as student or administrator.
The difficulty for the women, as for me, appears to be appropriating the hours left in the days and weekends in a way that satisfies all roles. Sometimes, this might mean devoting the entire weekend to spouse and children. Other times, it might mean studying/writing all weekend in order to free up weeknights. I posit that this appropriation of time should be equitable--not necessarily equal. A woman managing multiple roles should use her first year as doctoral student to practice making equitable appropriations of her time. This is no easy task. As I have discovered, and from what I can ascertain from the women, it involves three things: being sensitive and “tuned in” to children’s and spouse’s needs and feelings; being able to prioritize tasks at work; and being consistent in adhering to a study schedule. My own quest for quality, as explained in the following section, exemplifies the importance and effects of being sensitive and tuned in to the needs and feelings of those around me.

In addition to being sensitive and tuning in, prioritizing tasks at work can help a woman managing multiple roles better appropriate her time. Several of the participants in this study mentioned how they prioritize job tasks, often at the beginning of each day. This practice encourages determining the importance and urgency of tasks in an effort to be more efficient during the workday.

Adhering to a set study schedule is another important component of equitably appropriating time when managing multiple roles. Before a study schedule is set, it is advisable to have input from family members and consider their activities and opinions. Once the schedule is set, whether it is consistent for the month or agreed upon at the onset of each week, it is important to try to adhere to it as closely as possible. Adhering to a set study/writing schedule sets weekly expectations for the family, promotes
consistency and thus stability in the home, helps ensure the time spent is equitable, and helps alleviate pressure due to procrastination before deadlines. Hopefully, these suggestions will help those pursuing degrees to spend time living and not just existing.

In many instances, the participants missed out on events in their children’s lives due to job or school responsibilities. In fact, carving out time to devote to their children was difficult in general and was a major source of guilt for most participants. Furthermore, maintaining relationships with friends was difficult for the participants because that was one area of their lives they had to place on the “back burner,” so to speak. Still, they found time to correspond with their friends, even if it was in the form of an email.

**Literature Link.** Tiedje (2004) included ‘James Baldwin’s Paradox’ as one of her main themes. This paradox states that it is possible to hold in one’s mind two ideas that conflict. For example, several of the participants in this study felt extremely guilty for leaving their children in order to focus on work or school. Although they felt guilty, the persevered because they felt it would benefit their children more than harm them in the long run. They struggled with the daily demands of their various roles, yet accepted that those roles could not be perfectly, simultaneously managed. The author also included ‘time enough’ as a theme in her study (Tiedje, 2004). This theme stemmed from participants simply not having enough time to do everything they desired to and providing their undivided attention when doing so. Likewise, Sears (2001) discusses just how ruthless doctoral student mothers must be with their time. Her participants viewed time as a “finite commodity” (Sears, 2001, p. 222). Younes and Asay (1998) expressed the need to be ruthless in scheduling time for multiple roles and responsibilities when saying that one of her participants had to put “blinders” on over the weekends in order to
focus and study/write (p. 4). Another of her participants did the same, but did so when she spent time with her own children. She felt that her children deserved her undivided attention as much as her job and her coursework.

**Implications for Prospective Doctoral Students.** As mentioned, it is critical to tune-in to the needs and feelings of your immediate family members. Gauging how they feel will help a mother managing work and school to balance her roles equitably. Secondly, creating and adhering to a strict study/writing schedule will help all family members by promoting consistency and stability, as well as relieving anxiety for a doctoral student. Thirdly, students should seek to prioritize tasks at work in order to maximize time spent outside of work. Table 15 may be of assistance to women fulfilling multiple roles. This accumulation of prioritizing suggestions was generated based on my experience as an assistant principal managing a family and doctoral study and allows more efficiency in my work so that I can dedicate an equitable amount of time to my other roles and responsibilities.

**Implications for Graduate Programs and Staff.** Most educational leadership doctoral programs are already structured in a way that supports educational administrators who work full time. The structure usually includes evening and weekend classes. The participants largely appreciated this structure, but wished the structure continued once coursework was completed because this was the stage in the process when two of the women stalled. Those responsible for setting schedules should consider allowing doctoral students and candidates to continue in that same structure by creating and posting an independent study schedule and allotting a particular room on campus for
Table 15

Suggestions For Prioritizing Administrative Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Questions to Consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make a list of tasks.</td>
<td>What do you have to do this week? This month?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand what’s involved in each task.</td>
<td>What does each task entail?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider time constraints.</td>
<td>Which tasks must be done today? Which can wait until tomorrow or later in the week?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider people constraints.</td>
<td>Is someone waiting on you to complete a certain task? If so, when does s/he need the task done?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider the consequences.</td>
<td>Does your job depend on the completion of this task? Will non-completion inconvenience someone? What will the ramifications be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-prioritize as needed.</td>
<td>Did a task suddenly become important/unimportant? What is important now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep your list small.</td>
<td>Which tasks can be delegated? Which potential tasks can/should you say “no” to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove unimportant items.</td>
<td>Is there something on your list that keeps ending up on the bottom and doesn’t get done because it isn’t that important?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

such a purpose. For example, Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6:00 pm until 10:00 pm and Saturdays from 8:00 am until 6:00 pm could be dedicated for the purpose of independent study. It would also be of benefit if professors within the college of education would sign up for small chunks of time within those hours to work on their own coursework and publications, but also be available to answer questions or provide feedback to students taking advantage of that time. I know I would have taken advantage
of a structure such as this because it would have allowed me a space and time to better focus.

Researcher’s Relationship to the Study Findings

My Village. I have one incredible village. My family members (my husband, parents, grandmother, in-laws, and children) have all pulled together over the last four years to help support my goal of earning a doctorate degree. Before I made the decision to apply for the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program, my husband and I sat down and discussed this goal of mine. I remember emphasizing the amount of money it would cost, but mostly I remember emphasizing how much time I would have to dedicate to attending classes, studying, and eventually writing. I remember discussing our roles as parents within the home and how they might change. And I remember finding out that I was pregnant with our second child shortly after applying. Surprisingly, it was not a game changer. We decided that since the “perfect” time to obtain a degree like this had already come and gone (“perfect” meaning before having any children), it would most likely only become more difficult as time went on and our girls became involved in extracurricular activities that demanded increasingly more time in our schedules.

So, I began the coursework. In the first semester, I came to the excruciating realization that I did not really understand the demands of a doctoral program. It is not a “glorified Master’s Degree” as I had heard. It is an entirely different animal-- one that is all-consuming and simultaneously intellectually inspiring and draining. Right away I knew that my life roles and responsibilities would have to change even more than had I anticipated if I was going to graduate. I gave birth to my second daughter in my second
semester of graduate school and only missed one class. Dedication and focus became two important keys to survival during those first few semesters.

Over time, the other important keys to survival became obvious, with the most obvious being the need for a village to help support me. My husband became the first line of defense, so to speak. There have been very few times when I could not study or attend class due to childcare constraints. He consistently followed through on his agreement to do whatever it takes to support me in achieving my goal of graduating. He never asked for very much in return-- only that I keep Tuesday nights free for his softball games and that I make an honest attempt to balance my roles and priorities. There have been countless nights like tonight, in which I arrived home around 5:00 pm, dropped off my older daughter and briefly checked on the state of affairs, gathered my materials, headed to Panera Bread (my favorite place to study and write), and spent three to four hours studying and writing only to come home and kiss my girls on the forehead as they lay asleep in bed. My husband takes care of the nightly routine, including planning for and providing dinner, completing household chores, interacting with the girls, ensuring they prepare for and go to bed. As a result of this routine, my girls have established an incredible bond with their father; one that I do not think would be so strong otherwise.

My in-laws are another piece of the village that I cannot do without. They live about ten minutes from my house. My mother-in-law has an incredibly loving spirit and an uncanny devotion to her grandchildren. For the last eight years or so, she has cared for my niece and nephew much of the time because they attend the private school in which she teaches. My sister-in-law and brother-in-law both work full time, and quite a distance away, so they rely on my in-laws before and after school and many times, overnight. In
spite of this, they rarely turn down an opportunity to spend more time with my girls. They have been such a blessing over the years because of this. There have been times when I attended a night event at work or was involved in a desperately needed study session and my husband had an activity that occurred at the same time. We could always count on my in-laws to be available to care for the girls. My husband and I also relied on them for date nights, which we made an effort to schedule at least once during each month.

My parents and grandmother have also been invaluable, though not as convenient due to their demanding schedules and location. My parents own three businesses together, my mom works part-time as a bookkeeper, and they each have hobbies. Furthermore, they live about 45 minutes away from us. The distance prohibits relying upon them for emergencies and sometimes even scheduled events. Occasionally, they will take one or both girls away for a few days to their condominium on the beach. These times have been as a blessed relief for my husband and me and have enabled us to strengthen our relationship. Likewise, it has given our girls a break from our taxing schedules and fast pace in life. Not only has each of our parents provided support by caring for our girls when needed, but each has been instrumental in my life by offering mental, emotional, and occasionally, monetary support. An encouraging word here, bragging to others about a future doctor in the family, and always questioning about my pursuit that reveal a true, invested interest. These different levels of support have been invaluable and continue to propel me forward to graduation, when I will become Dr. Perkins-- the first family member in either of our families to obtain a doctoral degree.

My girls, now eight and three, have become another kind of support in my life. My older daughter was two when I re-entered graduate school to obtain my Master’s
Degree and because I have taken only one semester off since then, my career and schooling have almost always been a part of her life. She has been such a blessing to me. I often remark, usually sarcastically, that we have two mothers in my house. Although it usually comes out of my mouth with a sarcastic undertone, I have come to rely on her nurturing personality. Since my youngest was born three years ago, she has helped me so much. The bond between sisters is just precious and unexpected, because I do not have a sister. The girls have certainly demanded a balance in my life. There have been so many times throughout the past four years when I have had to reschedule my study session or skip a night event because they wanted so badly to spend time with me. Most of the time, I obliged. They are more than worthy of that time. They are proud of their mommy and I cannot wait for my older daughter to experience my commencement ceremony. I remember what a powerful effect it had on me and what an overwhelming sense of accomplishment I felt at my previous three graduations and at those of others. I hope that my commencement will inspire her educational journey and encourage her to pursue her goals, not matter how unattainable they may appear to be.

In addition to family, friends and colleagues along the way have served as sources of encouragement. It has been extremely difficult, as several in this study have shared, to maintain friendships with those individuals I do not see on a consistent basis. There have been several relationships that have dissipated over the last few years because of my inability to dedicate time and attention to them. Thankfully, I have many friends who are sympathetic to the demands on my time and attention in this stage in my life and have come to terms with the low maintenance status our relationships have entered. We communicate mostly by email and sometimes by phone. Occasionally I force myself to
go to events friends are holding and once there, I am usually happy to have a piece of my life-before-doctoral-program back, if only for a few hours.

A third part of my village consists of two individuals: my major professor and my writing buddy. My major professor provides the perfect support for me. As a mother managing multiple, demanding roles, I need someone who will send me an email from time to time reminding me of the next goal or phase in the process. I need someone who gives me the space to study and write without constant pressure. I need someone who will provide timely and honest feedback that challenges my thinking and pushes me forward as a writer. I need someone who mentors me. When I asked my professor if she would chair my committee, I knew I was fulfilling all four of those needs. Without her, I am not sure where I would be in the process. I also have no idea where I would be without my writing buddy. My doctoral coursework was completed in a cohort situation. Almost every professor was diligent in warning our cohort members that once coursework was over, we would not see one another frequently and should make an effort to do so in order to have the support needed to graduate in a timely manner. I did not take that advice lightly. My writing buddy and I only studied together a few times in the last year and a half, but we have certainly provided one another support in the form of numerous phone calls, texts, and emails. We have listened to each other, given each other advice, shared sections of text with each other, and held each other accountable for the amount of time dedicated to studying or writing. I am so fortunate to have her and not to have experienced writing this dissertation alone.

The fourth and final part of my village is myself. My self-esteem and self-worth have grown in leaps and bounds from that first semester, when I constantly wondered
what someone like me was doing in a doctoral program. Through observing, listening to, and reflecting upon the experiences my participants relayed, I discovered my own tenacity in life and what a powerful tool it can be, if harnessed and used appropriately. It empowered me to conquer an area of my life that I never quite had control of—my weight. Five months ago, I summoned the courage to look deep inside and find out why, when I have achieved all serious goals that I have set for myself, I have been unsuccessful in this one area. I decided there was no reason I could not accomplish it. I developed a plan to lose weight, using the same tenacity and focus I use to pursue academic and career goals, and it worked. Today I am 54 pounds lighter than I was just five months ago. In addition to my tenacity, I developed the ability to focus better on the task at hand instead of allowing my mind to be distracted by the responsibilities of my other roles. I allotted certain times and days for studying and writing, which were determined weekly. This promoted consistency in my home and created the mental and physical space to focus on my graduate work. Humor is another internal support I employ that enables me to relax and take a break from the constant pressure that comes with multi-role management. My husband and I take in comedies at a movie theater or tailgate with friends before concerts or sporting events. Tenacity, focus, balance, and humor are internal supports I have been able to refine in order to achieve my goals. Those internal supports, along with my family, friends and colleagues, major professor, and writing buddy, make up the village that has supported me throughout this difficult journey. I am so grateful.

**My Marathon.** I am pleased that it has been just over four years since I began this program and I am anxiously awaiting my dissertation defense and graduation. It took
just one semester longer than I originally anticipated. As I reflect on the past four years, my journey most closely mirrors Charlotte’s. Even though I had my second daughter in the middle of my first year of graduate work, I have maintained a steady pace toward finishing. As I mentioned, there was a two-month period of time following my proposal hearing in which I took a short break. There were also smaller portions of time--days and weeks--throughout this process that were devoid of studying and writing. I needed those breaks desperately in order to recharge. However, I was able to keep them small so as not to negatively affect my proposed timeline.

I did experience the “incremental change” discussed earlier because I learned to find and maintain a balance among my roles and responsibilities. That learning mostly came as a result of trial-and-error. For example, in the beginning of my doctoral program, I attempted studying at the public library and at my parents’ home. I soon discovered that the public library’s hours of operation did not meet my needs. Studying at my parents’ home was productive, but I wasted too much time traveling because it was 45 minutes away. My goal was ensuring that my time spent in each role was efficient and effective. Thus, travel time proved to be an issue. Panera Bread became my place of study and writing because the hours of operation were better and it offered food, drink, and free wireless Internet access. Another example was the schedule I created for writing/studying. It took a while to learn to develop a schedule for studying/writing at the onset of each week to make sure that I was not spending too much time away from my family and to ensure that I was allowing time for work tasks that extended longer than the workday. Learning what worked for me took time, but paid off in the end.
I adhered to most of the tips for dissertation completion I presented in Tables 12, 13, and 14, with the exception of three. I wish I had been able to exercise more and enjoy massages or manicures--sometimes I like to be pampered. Also, I should have taken the time to pause and visualize graduation more often. There were many times when I felt lost and without clear direction. Plus, it is so difficult to envision the end if no one close to you has experienced it and you have never experienced it yourself. The only doctors in my life I have formed relationships with are professors and educators at the school district office. Furthermore, I did not stick to my planned schedule and timeline as closely as I should have. Because of this, I am graduating one semester later than anticipated.

There are two tips I presented that I hope to adhere to upon finishing my program. Actually, I have already started one. There are many friendships in my life that I must start rebuilding. Unfortunately, this was an area of my life that I allowed to become unimportant in order to maximize my time for my other roles. I have been trying to reconnect with one of my best friends. She lives in my neighborhood and I have barely seen her since I began this program. Allotting a month or so for the purpose of recovering from my doctoral program is the second tip I need to prioritize. Although I already have several classes and hobbies ready to fill the void that will inevitably be left once my program ends, I must make time to recover from the last four years.

**Can I Borrow A Match?** My job is not a glamorous one. It has been almost two years since my promotion into this job as assistant principal. In just those two short years, many new and time-consuming responsibilities have been added to my job description. In this current age of accountability, it seems like there is no room to breathe; every moment of my day is accounted for and my “to-do list” continues to grow. I work in a Title I
school in which almost 90% of students come from economically disadvantaged families and over 70% of students are classified as minority. Twenty percent of our students are migrant, missing months of schooling in one year. Yet, each student in our school is expected to be proficient in every subject and demonstrate that proficiency on the state exam. This is no simple feat and it creates immense pressure on teachers, staff, students, parents, and me--administration. When combined with the roles of mother and doctoral student, my time and attention must be divided very carefully because there just is not much to divide. As previously mentioned, the study/writing schedule I set at the onset of each week certainly helps divide that time. I usually wake up around 5:45 am to get ready for work. My tasks in the morning include packing my younger daughter’s lunch, ensuring that my older daughter gets ready and remembers all the steps in the process (especially brushing her teeth, which she “forgets” daily), and getting myself ready. My husband takes charge of getting our younger daughter ready and taking her to school. From there, I typically spend nine to ten hours at work. My older daughter and I return home from work around 5:00 pm. If it is a study/writing day, I quickly gather my materials and go. If not, I spend time with my girls and my husband and complete any work tasks from the day that are either mindless tasks that do not require much effort or tasks that must be done to meet a deadline. The most difficult times for me were weekends. It often felt as though I was being tugged in many different directions. I learned to decline certain invitations in order to increase my time with my family or closest friends.

Once my dissertation is completed and I graduate, I do not expect to experience an enormous change in how I divide my time and attention. I will still maintain my roles
as mother and educational administrator. I have already lined up some goals for next year. It is my hope to learn conversational Spanish in an effort to break down, if even just a little, the barrier between myself and the Hispanic parents and families I serve. I want to understand them and be able to communicate with them. I hope to continue developing as a professional and as a human, but in a structure that is much less rigorous than a doctoral program.

**My Quality Quandary.** Tuning in to children’s and spouse’s needs and feelings requires that one pays attention to attitudes and behaviors. For example, I’ve experienced many times when my husband became frustrated with things that normally would not frustrate him. After eliminating health, sleep, and other environmental issues as possible causes of the frustration, I came to the conclusion that he missed me and needed to spend time with me. He was just inept at communicating that need with me. Inevitably, once I dedicated time for the purpose of reconnecting with him, our relationship was strengthened and he more understood when I needed to study/write or donate more of my time to job tasks/events. The same was true for my children. My older daughter, who is currently in third grade and who has a history of being a student who self-monitors her schoolwork, got in trouble on two consecutive days for not completing her homework. It was a clear sign to me that I needed to be home in the evenings for at least a week in order to help her negotiate study procedures. So, tuning in to family members can help appropriate time.

The struggle with time has plagued me since I began this program. In the beginning, it was difficult trying to manage it, but as I went along, I learned to better appropriate my time and tasks by tuning in to my husband and daughters. I also learned
to prioritize my tasks at work and set a weekly study schedule. Prioritizing my tasks at work was difficult. I started a new job during my last semester of coursework. My job as assistant principal has an overwhelming task load at times. My list of tasks to complete ranged from one to three pages of tasks. My personality is such that I have to have a list in order to maintain focus on my responsibilities. If I do not physically write down a task, it will most likely be forgotten and will often remain uncompleted. Over the last several years, I have learned to continue my list making, but keep the list small. I learned the difficult lesson that just because you can take care of a task doesn’t mean you should. There are always others who will rise to the occasion.

A weekly study schedule has been set every week for the last year and a half. My husband and I talk briefly about the week’s activities. He shares the days and times of events or tasks that are critical for him and we discuss the girls’ activities. Once we have identified those things, I choose which nights and which weekend day I will leave to study/write. This process has served us well and has limited frustration between my husband and me and has promoted consistency with my daughters. Even though my girls know what to expect from the week, there are times when one or both will be upset that I am leaving. My three-year-old always asks, “Mommy, where are you going? Can I come with you? When are you coming back?” Though she never cries or makes a scene about my leaving, I always feel guilty about leaving her. Lately, it has been easier because I know that this time of leaving home to study and write is coming to a close.

It took a little over two years to learn how to best appropriate my time in my multiple roles. Tuning in to my family’s needs and feelings helped me know when my time was unbalanced and when recalibration was needed. Prioritizing my tasks at work
has allowed me to be more efficient, and thus more effective. Lastly, a schedule that is created at the onset of each week has promoted better communication and consistency within our family.

**Conclusion**

We often go through life harried, moving from one activity to the next without ever truly stopping to reflect on the particular paths we have chosen in life. Why have we chosen our particular life roles? What experiences have shaped our thoughts, attitudes, and perspectives? What challenges and successes have we encountered along the way? How are our experiences alike or different from others’? I sought answers to these questions from my five participants and allowed them to voice those answers. I combined those answers into the four major themes of a ‘It Takes a Village,’ ‘Running the Marathon,’ ‘Burning the Midnight Oil,’ and ‘The Quest for Quality.’

**Impact of the Study on the Researcher.** This study served as a window into my own life roles and experiences, promoting my deeper understanding. According to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (eleventh edition, accessed online at [http://www.meriam-webster.com](http://www.meriam-webster.com)) the first definition of window is “an opening especially in the wall of a building for admission of light and air that is usually closed by casements or sashes containing transparent material (as glass) and capable of being opened and shut.” This study is like an opening in that it has unsealed a part of me that could have remained sealed. I feel it has done the same for the five women who so willingly shared their experiences with me. It truly has served as an outlet for expression for my participants and me and has allowed us to evince our feelings and opinions about our roles, responsibilities, and experiences. Secondly, this study has admitted light and air.
The light represents the illuminating of women and their respective voices while the air represents the fresh perspectives they bring to the body of research on women managing multiple roles. Furthermore, the study has promoted transparency by allowing my inquiry into the lives and experiences of Charlotte, Samantha, Miranda, Carrie, and Candace (looking out). I was able to make comparisons to my own experiences and roles, which allowed me to better understand and situate them (looking in). Lastly, although this study was opened almost two years ago and will soon come to a close, I have no doubt that the stories these women shared with me and the themes that emerged from them will resonate with me for years to come. It is my hope that they will also resonate with future readers and those superwomen out there seeking an advanced degree.

**Feminist Standpoint Theory, Revisited.** I feel it is important here to revisit Feminist Standpoint Theory and its impact on me throughout this process. After reflecting on the data I collected and on my analysis, I understood just how much my attempt to know and understand the perspectives and experiences of my participants was socially situated. My gender, class, and race (white, middle-class woman) played a critical role in forming what I knew and limiting what I was able to know. Sharing our (my participants and my) stories added to the body of knowledge about how our lives are and about how we experience the world, hopefully debunking the myth that while we strive to be ‘superwomen,’ something in our lives falls by the wayside, as explained in the “Compunction and Contentment” sections of chapter four. However, while I was able to help my participants become a little more conscious of their social situations through the questions I asked (particularly “How do you feel your experience is different from a male’s? A father’s?”), my white, middle-class situation affected what I was capable of
knowing—namely, the selection of my participants (all white, middle-class women) and the convenience in finding those participants (a few were acquaintances). There are many different lives with many different roles, responsibilities, activities, and social relations and thus, there are potentially many different consciousnesses and standpoints. Future researchers must seek to deconstruct the management of the multiple roles described in this study for other groups of women who share a collective identity or consciousness, such as poor women, women of color, or any outside of the white, middle-class woman standpoint. Furthermore, I would not recommend the inclusion of acquaintances and those within your own social class and race to future researchers. Even including casual acquaintances in a study has certain ethical risks involved. Reflecting upon my own study, Samantha Setbacks requested that I not include certain information shared with me—namely information about her father and about her separation. Although both topics were ripe with potential regarding findings, especially since the divorce rate among married doctoral students is so high, I had an ethical obligation to her to honor her request and exclude the information.

**Additional Implications of This Study.** The implications shared within each theme offered advice for mothers (serving as educational administrators) considering or already involved in a doctoral program as well as for advisors, mentors, and professors in graduate programs. The advice shared stemmed from the participants’ experiences as well as from my own. Additional implications from this study are for provided here for those who seek to conduct research concerning women managing multiple roles.

Overall, there is limited research on women who manage more than three roles (such as those identified in this study). Future research should seek to expand and deepen
the perspectives and experiences of women managing multiple roles such as those in this study. Additionally, researchers should do so in a qualitative manner, using interview as a main method to gain that understanding. This ensures that the voices of this sometimes-marginalized group are heard.

The selection of participants was one limitation I foresaw in this study. All five participants are from universities centrally located in a particular southern state. Future research of mothers serving as educational administrators and doctoral students should seek to understand the perspectives and experiences of participants in other parts of the country, and even expand to include other countries. Secondly, including participants from various ethnic or racial backgrounds would deepen understanding of their perspectives and experiences and could allow researchers to compare and contrast those perspectives and experiences across cultures and races, as previously mentioned. A third suggestion is for researchers to study women who are single mothers and how they negotiate the challenges of multi-role management as compared to women with spouses. All five participants in my study were married and relied upon their spouses for support. Lastly, future research should focus upon what women managing these multiple roles do with their degree once they have obtained it. Do they seek professorships in higher education? Do they obtain advanced positions in educational administration? Do they produce publications based on the findings of their dissertations? If the answer to any of these questions is no, then researchers should seek to understand why. If the answer to these questions is yes, how?
References


Appendices
Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about a typical day in your life. (This question opens the door for the revelation and discussion of the conversational partner’s life roles, such as that of mother and educational administrator.)

2. Talk about the educational journey that brought you to your current position as an educational administrator. (This question will allow me to become familiar with the conversational partner’s career path. This will most likely reveal her motivation for pursuing goals and where that motivation stems from.)

3. Describe your experience as a working mother.
   c. Possible follow-up question (PFQ): What challenges have emerged?
   d. PFQ: What successes have emerged?

4. Describe your experience as an educational leadership doctoral student.
   a. PFQ: What led to your pursuit of a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership?
   b. PFQ: What do you hope to attain with this degree?

5. Tell me about your experience juggling all three of these roles (mother, doctoral student, and educational administrator).
   a. PFQ: What special challenges are involved?
   b. PFQ: Under what conditions do you think your experience is different from others’? From a man’s? From a father’s?
6. Describe your greatest achievement in education during this time of simultaneously being mom, administrator, and doctoral student.
   
a. PFQ: How was your role of mother involved?

b. PFQ: How was your role as administrator involved?

c. PFQ: How was your role of doctoral student involved?

d. PFQ: What contributes to your success and resiliency in negotiating these roles?

7. Is there anything else you want to tell me at this time?
Appendix B

Explanatory Letter to Conversational Partners

Dear _________________________ (Conversational Partner),

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. I am pursuing my dissertation topic on the perceived experiences and special challenges that are recognized by mothers who are educational administrators and who are pursuing a doctoral degree in educational leadership. The purpose of the study is to describe and explain the experiences of women who live at the intersection of these multiple roles. Your participation is requested because you have experienced these roles firsthand in the last several years.

Participating in the study will require approximately two one-hour, in-depth interviews. The interviews will, with your permission, be recorded by a digital voice recorder and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, you will not be identified by name on the tape. A professional typist will be transcribing the audio files. An outside reader will read the transcriptions of the audio files; however, s/he will only be able to identify the conversational partners as conversational partner A or B. The audio files will be kept in a safe location at my residence. Each conversational partner will be offered a copy of the audio files as well as a copy of the transcription. The conversational partners and I will be the only ones with access to the audio files. Once the audio files are transcribed, a master audio file will be made from the originals and they will be erased. The master audio file will remain in my possession and will be destroyed three years after publication of the dissertation.

Interviews will be conducted at a location of your preference. The tentative schedule calls for one interview during the months of October through November and one interview during the months of December through January.

In addition, you may be asked to share relevant artifacts and documents. Your name and the names of any schools or universities as well as any other information gathered in this study will remain confidential and will only be used for educational purposes.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of my request. I look forward to your participation in the study.

Sincerely,

Krissy J. Perkins

From Janesick, 2004
Informed Consent to Participate in Research
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

IRB Study # Pro00003274

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

There are no foreseeable risks to the participants and they may leave the study at any time.

Please tell the study doctor or study staff if you are taking part in another research study.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:

A Case Study of Women Educational Administrators and Their Perspectives on Work and Life Roles

The person who is in charge of this research study is Krissy Perkins. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. She is being guided in this research by Valerie J. Janesick, Ph.D..

The research will be conducted at a time and place that is convenient for you.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to:

- describe and explain female educational administrators’ perspectives on work and life.
- aide in Krissy Perkins’ doctoral degree fulfillment.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

- The study is expected to last from February 2011 until May 2011.
• The number of people to be interviewed is five.
• The procedure of the research involves asking participants about their views on their multiple life roles and what variables influence female perspectives of their roles and lived experience as mothers, educational administrators, and doctoral students.
• The interviews will be one hour each in length and each participant will be interviewed twice. Participants’ interviews will be audiotaped. The audio files will be protected in my home and will be kept for three years.
• There are no foreseeable risks to the participants and they may leave the study at any time.
• Members may choose to be completely anonymous and all names will be changed for reasons of confidentiality. Only I, and the chair of my dissertation committee, will know this information.

Total Number of Participants
About five individuals will take part in this study at USF. A total of five individuals will participate in the study at all sites.

Alternatives
• You do not have to participate in this research study. Participation in this study is totally voluntary. Refusal to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits.

Benefits
The potential benefits of participating in this research study include:
• Possible benefits are educational, that is to contribute to the body of knowledge about female administrators and their perspectives of their multiple life roles.

Risks or Discomfort
This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation
You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

Cost
There are no costs involved in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality
We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them
completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

• The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, and other research staff.

• Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.

• Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research. This includes the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP).

• The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, staff in the USF Office of Research and Innovation, USF Division of Research Integrity and Compliance, and other USF offices who oversee this research.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

**Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal**

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

**New information about the study**

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in the study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

**You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an adverse event or unanticipated problem, call Valerie J. Janesick at 813.974.1274.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638
Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study and authorize that my health information as agreed above, be collected/disclosed in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study ______________________________ 
Date ______________________________

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study ______________________________

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he/she understands:

• What the study is about;
• What procedures/interventions/ investigational drugs or devices will be used;
• What the potential benefits might be; and
• What the known risks might be.

I can confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in the appropriate language. Additionally, this subject reads well enough to understand this document or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her. This subject does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give legally effective informed consent. This subject is not under any type of anesthesia or analgesic that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and, therefore, can be considered competent to give informed consent.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization ______________________________ 
Date ______________________________

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization ______________________________
Appendix D
Interviewee Member Check Form (sent via email)

May 2010

Dear _________________________ (Conversational Partner),

Thank you for an enjoyable and insightful interview. Attached please find a draft copy of the verbatim transcripts of the interview. Please review the transcription for accuracy of responses and reporting of information. Please feel free to contact me at xxx.xxx.xxxx or via email at krissyjperkins@yahoo.com should you have any questions.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Krissy J. Perkins
### Appendix E

#### Table A1

Perkins’ Estimated Dissertation Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item or Service</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital Voice Recorder</td>
<td>$80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Notebook/ Research Journal</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper &amp; Postage Expenses</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Expenses for Interviews</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript Processing Submission Fee</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy Editing of Dissertation</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Dissertation Copies</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microfilming Fee</td>
<td>$65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProQuest UMI Fee</td>
<td>$180.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20.00 Personalized Lunch Totes for Interviewees</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcription of 10 one-hour Interviews</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,185.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table is my own approximation although “*Stretching* Exercises for Qualitative Researchers* (2nd ed) by V. J. Janesick aided this approximation. Copyright 2004 by Sage Publications, Inc.
About the Author

Krissy J. Perkins received her Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education and her Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of South Florida in 2000 and 2006, respectively. She made the decision to pursue her Doctorate in Educational Leadership during her graduation ceremony for her Master’s Degree. From July 2000 to October 2009, Perkins served as an intermediate grades teacher, a Reading Coach, and a Reading Resource Teacher. In November 2009, Perkins became an Elementary Assistant Principal.

Perkins is married and has two daughters. Kara, her younger daughter, was born during the second semester of doctoral coursework. Since that time, Perkins has been managing multiple roles in her life: woman, mother, student, and educational administrator. She looks forward to what personal, professional, and academic challenges lie ahead.