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Women Administrators Negotiate Work-Family Conflicts in Changing Times: An Intergenerational Perspective

Tondra L. Loder

Background: *Concerns about work-family conflicts are becoming an increasing problem for women administrators. Yet these concerns have been overshadowed in the educational leadership scholarship, which has focused on barriers related to discrimination in hiring and promotion and lack of sponsoring and mentoring.*

Purpose: *To illuminate differences and commonalities in how women administrators from different generations and racial/ethnic identities negotiate work-family conflicts.*

Research Methodology: *A qualitative life course design was employed in this intergenerational study of 31 Black and White women administrators.*

Main Findings: *The participants' efforts to enact the multiple and competing roles of administrator, wife, mother, and caretaker proved to be conflicting across generation and race/ethnicity, especially for women born after the civil rights and women's movements, who confronted a strikingly different gender context than did their older counterparts. To reconcile these conflicts, the participants employed various life course strategies that were distinguished by their unique generational locations and racial/ethnic identities. For example, women in the "older" generation were compelled to prioritize family above professional pursuits more so than women in the "younger" generation. With respect to race/ethnicity, Black administrators relied on extended women kinship ties for child care and household support whereas White administrators primarily sought spousal support.*

Implications for Research and Policy: *Further investigation is needed on the work-family conflicts confronting contemporary women and men administrators. From a policy perspective, there is an urgent need for more employer-supported child and elder care, flexible scheduling, and family-leave policies.*

Keywords: *work-family conflicts; women administrators; intergenerational and racial/ethnic differences*

Pervasive discrimination in hiring and promotion, lack of sponsoring and mentoring, and the entrenchment of the "good old boy network" are barriers to women administrators, particularly aspiring and practicing principals,

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which have been well documented in the literature (Marshall, 1993; McGee Banks, 1995; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Schmuck 1995, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999). However, there is increasing evidence that concerns about work-family conflicts among women administrators in the United States (Clark, Cafarella, & Ingram, 1999; Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Grogan, 1999; Hall, 1996; Newton, Giesen, Freeman, Bishop, & Zeitoun, 2003; Smulyan, 2000), and even in Great Britain (Coleman, 2002; Haughton, 2002), may be overshadowed by these frequently cited barriers. Despite some documented gains resulting from the civil rights and women's movements (e.g., the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 [Mertz, 2003]), by recent statistical accounts, women continue to be woefully underrepresented in school principalships relative to their representation in the teaching force. According to Snyder and Hoffman (2002), women represented only 44% of public school principals in 1999 and 2000, compared to 75% of the teaching force during this same period. This same report indicates that the U.S. public-school principalship reflects very little racial/ethnic, age, and generational diversity, as only 11% of public-school principals were Black, and 10% were individuals under age 40 (Snyder & Hoffman, 2002). Recent data on elementary school principals in the United States show that the majority of women principals entered their positions in their 40s and 50s; in striking contrast to men, very few women become principals in their 20s and 30s (Doud & Keller, 1998).

In light of this data, some feminist scholars have expressed skepticism and wariness about the tendency of individuals in the field to overplay the gains for women in educational administration so often attributed to the civil rights and women's movements (Schmuck, 1995, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1998, 1999). Shakeshaft (1998) cautioned that there are not enough reliable data to assess the real impact of affirmative action on increasing women's representation in educational administration, and that the limited data available suggests that pressure from affirmative action and the women's movement have increased women's representation in school administration by only small amounts.

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A number of reports bear out this skepticism. Overall, women have not been successful in offsetting their increasing responsibilities in the workplace with decreased obligations on the home front. An unprecedented number of women in the United States are working mothers, which makes child care a pressing concern (see Taeuber, 1996). Today women are likely to work during pregnancy and to return to work within the first 6 months of the birth of their child. This is in striking contrast to the 1960s when only 1 in 8 women returned to work in less than a year, compared to 2 in 3 in the early 1980s. Notably, only half of working mothers have maternity benefits. And as the baby boom generation ages, not only is child care a pressing concern but also care for aging parents.

The uneven burden of child care and household responsibilities that women so often shoulder has been a major barrier to their advancement to school administration (Edson, 1981; Parkway & Currie, 1992). In a rare study of the support systems of public-school principals, Myers and Ginsberg (1994) found that women principals received less support from family for child care and household responsibilities than did men principals. Likewise, the authors reported that unmarried men and women principals had an especially difficult time finding support for household responsibilities. Notably, support or lack of support from family members, especially from spouses or partners, can make or break a woman's decision to become an administrator (Bruckner, 1998; Nichols, 2002; Young & McLeod, 2001). For example, Bruckner (1998) reported great dissatisfaction among spouses of 575 administrators in Nebraska. These spouses (of whom 82% were women) lamented that the increasing demands of night and early morning duties had taken a toll on their marriage and family life; as one spouse summed it up, "There is not much time left for us" (p. 24).

Not only have women administrators' lives changed since the civil rights and women's movements, but also the demands of the principalship (Goldring & Rallis, 1993). In light of these increasing demands, one study has indicated that women administrators are more likely than men administrators to identify an overwhelming workload as a major dilemma confronting principals (Kochan, Spencer, & Matthews, 1999). Recent reports have confirmed that the number of hours principals work has steadily increased over time. For example, in the 1980s, high school principals worked an average of 53.2 hours per week (Martin & Willower, 1981), whereas now they are reported to work 60 to 80 hours per week (McAdams, 1998; Read, 2000; Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998). The increased workload has been attributed to mounting expectations for principals to complete paperwork, supervise after-school activities, market the school, raise monies, and serve as the official liaisons between the school and the public (Doud & Keller, 1998). These

increased expectations have overloaded the role and compromised the ability of principals to balance their personal and professional lives (Doud & Keller, 1998; Educational Research Service, 2000; Read, 2000).

Now, in the 21st century, as underscored by Grogan (1999), White women and women of color in educational administration face what Marshall (1993) has referred to as a “new politics of gender and race,” which masks the subtle yet pernicious effects of institutionalized sexism.

Educational administration is a prime example of a discourse that has been shaped by men’s experiences. Whether married or single, few male administrators in the past have had to include the duties and responsibilities typical of mothering discourses in their daily routines. . . . With some ingenuity, women principals and superintendents do arrange their work schedules in such a way that they can also take care of their families; but for many, it is the clash of priorities and values inherent in the different discourses that takes its toll. . . . Although there is plenty of rhetoric applauding schools for being family oriented and administrators for being good parents and active community members, there is still a tension created for those who try to meet the demands of family and administration equally well. (p. 526)

The dilemmas that women in educational administration confront mirror those experienced by women in the corporate sector. In her widely acclaimed books *The Second Shift* (1989) and *The Time Bind* (1997), sociologist Hochschild presented compelling stories of corporate women managers’ plight with managing work-family conflicts. Echoing the sentiments of Grogan (1999), in the *Second Shift*, Hochschild argued that the reason more capable women have not advanced the corporate ladder has more to do with the institutionalized sexism that overburdens them with work-family conflicts, than it is has to do with other often-cited explanations such as a lack of role models or personal decisions to forfeit corporate advancement. Hochschild (1989) also pointed out that the intensity and nature of work-family conflicts that women born after the women’s movement confront sharply contrast with those conflicts that their mothers and grandmothers encountered. She observed that the influx of women into the workplace has not been accompanied by a cultural transformation in the expectations for gender roles in marriage, family, and work that would make this transition smooth. Hence, what she has identified as a “stalled revolution” (i.e., a phenomenon “signified by a change in women, a change in the workforce, but a constancy in the workplace policies that are inflexible to family demands” [p. 12]) is arguably the foremost equity problem for working women in the 21st century.

In light of the dramatic changes in women’s gender roles in work and family and their widespread entry into the labor force subsequent to the civil

rights and women's movement, education scholars must pay closer attention to how social change has affected the lives and work of women administrators across the generations (Loder, 2002, in press). In his classic sociological study of the culture of the teaching profession, Lortie (1975) surmised that would-be women aspirants to the principalship were detracted from advancing to this position because of the abrupt shift in the "time ecologies" of teaching and administration (i.e., the divergent time commitment and demands associated with these two roles resulted in irreconcilable work-family conflicts). Notably, Lortie conducted his study at the dawn of unanticipated and unprecedented social changes, which dramatically changed society's expectations for and perceptions of women's roles vis à vis family and work, and increased their options for work and career mobility. In other words, women principals were a novelty at the time of Lortie's study. Consequently, Lortie's analysis left untapped and unchallenged the structural problems inherent in the time ecology of a principalship that privileges the work-family synchrony of men's lives over that of women's.

The existing literature on women in educational administration (Clark et al., 1999; Hall, 1996; Ozga, 1993; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Smulyan, 2000) has failed to consider how social changes subsequent to these two pivotal social movements may have differentially affected the balance of work life and family life for women on opposite sides of this generational divide. Furthermore, the existing literature has only sparsely addressed differences in the life-balancing strategies between women administrators with contrasting family statuses and obligations (Gold, 1993), as well as those existing between women from different racial/ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Gardiner et al., 2000).

The present study was conducted in an attempt to illuminate differences and commonalities in how women administrators from different generations and racial/ethnic identities negotiate work-family conflicts. This study also addresses what Shakeshaft (1999) identified as a gap in the lack of studies linking social movements to women's progress in accessing jobs in school administration. Excerpted from a broader study of generational and cultural differences among practicing and aspiring women principals in the Chicago metropolitan area born prior to and after the civil rights and women's movements (Loder, 2002), the research described here examines women's personal accounts of their negotiation of work-family role conflicts as they either transitioned or considered transitioning to the principalship.

From the perspective of life course theory (discussed below), this study addresses the following questions: As they either transition or contemplate a transition to the principalship, what work-family conflicts emerge for women administrators from different generations and racial/ethnic identi-

ties? What life course strategies do women administrators employ to manage work-family conflicts? How are these strategies shaped by their contrasting generational locations and racial/ethnic identities?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Life Course Theory

Emerging from the discipline of sociology, the life course theory was developed in the 1960s in response to a growing inquiry about how individual lives are shaped by history and social change, and about the processes by which lives are changed by changing environments (Elder, 1991, 1998). Life course theory offers a compelling conceptual framework for approaching the lives of administrators as “adults” who live and work in a changing world. This theory emphasizes the complex interplay between biographical time and historical time and encourages us to consider interdependence among life trajectories (Elder, 1991, 1998; Elder & O’Rand, 1995; Giele & Elder, 1998; Hagestad, 1991).

The *life course* refers to a sequence of socially defined transitions and roles that individuals live out over time (Giele & Elder, 1998). It is viewed as being shaped by the individual’s negotiation of the structural constraints and opportunities presented by her or his historical and social contexts. Life course studies consider historical context, relationships in family, work, and other social settings, and gather data on key life transitions (e.g., leaving home, marriage, parenthood, first job). Issues of temporality (i.e., timing and sequencing of transitions and duration in role engagements) are central and are associated both with lives and contexts.

Several key concepts that are integral to life course studies and guide the methodology and data analysis of this study are discussed below.

Watersheds, Generations, Cohorts, and Intracohort Variability

Watersheds. Life course scholars view lives as unfolding within a changing social context and interdependency. There are dramatic periods of social change—referred to by life course scholars as *watersheds*—that distinguish markedly the life experiences and life chances of individuals who were born on either side of them (Cain, 1964; Foote, 1960). Accordingly, this study focuses on contrasts in the personal accounts of Black and White women administrators born either prior to the civil rights and women’s movements or

after these movements waned. These movements constitute a watershed, especially among women born around 1950, because the time when these women came of age—the late 1960s and early 1970s—was marked by massive social and technological changes, the widespread availability of contraceptives, late industrialism, and increasing individualism. Since that time, they have experienced a world of rapid advancements.

Hence, all of the women in this study confront an altered social context, yet they differ in how and to what extent they have been exposed to social change due to their contrasting historical anchoring (Gerson, 1991). For example, compared to baby boomers, women who were born after the civil rights and women's movements have considerably more opportunities in the workplace (Amott & Matthei, 1996), and greater freedom of choice in sexuality, motherhood, and marriage (Ireland, 1993). Since this era, there have been notable declines in women's fertility rates and increases in the numbers of women both who wait until their 30s to have their first child and remain childless throughout their lives (Taeuber, 1996). Factors such as higher levels of educational attainment and labor market participation, changes in social attitudes, the cost of living, and the cost and difficulty of obtaining child care have contributed to these trends (Taeuber, 1996).

Generations and cohorts. The term *generation* is closely associated with an understanding of watersheds and has a more popular usage. Mannheim (1928/1952) described a generation as "similarly located contemporaries [who] participate in a common destiny and in the ideas and concepts which are in some way bound up with its unfolding" (p. 306). Mannheim proposed that subjective awareness (i.e., a shared consciousness) is the critical link between generational succession and social change. Different generations live at the same time, yet their members experience and live in qualitatively subjective eras. Therefore, it is critical for researchers at any given point in time to attempt to sort out the individual voices of the various generations.

Life course scholars have grappled with how to conceptualize the concept of generation for empirical utility (Ryder, 1965). The concept of *cohort* is integral to life course theory and suggests that people who are born at or around the same time experience similar social and historical events that may affect their role transitions in similar ways (Ryder, 1965). Life experiences are diverse across successive cohorts, especially in times of dramatic social change (Elder & O'Rand, 1995). Cohort analyses, in effect, allow researchers to examine historical change processes. For example, Robison, Moen, and Dempster-McClain (1995) examined change in caregiving across cohorts of White wives and mothers born between 1905 and 1934 and in 1956, and found that women born in more recent cohorts are more likely than

those born in cohorts preceding them to serve as caregivers and to experience two or more different caregiving episodes.

In a cohort analysis of women administrators in the United States circa the civil rights and women's movements, it is important to consider that women born on either side of this watershed confronted strikingly different family policy contexts, particularly in relation to their reproductive and maternity rights. As underscored in Carter's (2002) examination of the teaching profession vis à vis women's movements in the United States, women teachers and administrators have encountered cycles where their maternity rights were either unrecognized or ignored, or expanded—but with inequitable restrictions on their employment rights. For example, as late as 1972, most U.S. school districts mandated that pregnant teachers leave the classroom between their 4th and 6th month of pregnancy (Fishel & Pottker, 1977). Rooted in 19th-century gender-role norms, an underlying premise of these laws was that the roles of mother and teacher were conflicting because it was believed that a mother with young children could not devote her full attention to other people's children (Perkins, 1983; Rury, 1986; Weiler, 1989). Accordingly, many laws mandated that a teacher could not return to work until her child was 1 or 2 years old. In 1972, Susan Cohen, a high school teacher in a suburb of Richmond, Virginia, became the first teacher in the country to challenge the maternity leave policies before the Supreme Court (Carter, 2002). Consequently, these laws were repealed throughout the country because local school districts feared the threat of lawsuits. The repeal of mandatory maternity leave laws signaled the advent of an era where women teachers and administrators would have more freedom of choice with regard to their sexuality and their options for family and work.

Intracohort variability: Racial/ethnic and cultural differences. Life course scholars pay careful attention to *intracohort variability* (i.e., factors that might distinguish how cohorts experience the same social event). Ryder (1965) cautioned against a blanket assumption that cohort members have shared experiences and shared consciousness, because life experiences are mediated by a number of factors such as race and ethnicity, gender, and social class (Dressel, 1988; Estes, 1991; Gelfand & Barresi, 1987). Furthermore, the impact of historical events on individuals' lives depends on their life stage (Elder, 1991, 1998; Stewart & Healy, 1989); such factors give variability to the life course, personal experiences, and the future life chances of individuals.

Key factors that distinguish the life courses and experiences of Black and White women administrators are the history of slavery, oppression, and discrimination of Black Americans and the differential labor market history for

these two groups. Willson and Hardy (2002) noted that the effects of segregation are deeply woven into the lives of Black women. As underscored in Collins (2000), the lives of Black women must be considered within the context of the multiplicative effects of race, gender, and class oppression. Compared to White women, Black women have had higher labor-market force-participation rates at consistently lower wages and status levels (Gilkes, 1990). Furthermore, because Black women spend fewer years in marriage than do White women (Taeuber, 1996; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995), employment is more critical for long-term security for Black women compared to White women (Landry, 2000; Willson & Hardy, 2002). Black women often find that being married and employed offers the most optimum chances for economic security (Willson & Hardy, 2002); however, being married has proved to be a barrier for Black women in nontraditional versus traditional women careers (Burlew & Lemar, 1992).

The centrality of family networks in the lives of Black Americans has been well documented (Billingsley, 1992; Hill, 1997; McAdoo, 1997). Black families are believed to possess a number of attributes that work for the survival, stability, and advancement of Black Americans, for example, a strong achievement orientation, kinship bonds, and religious orientation. Accordingly, Black women administrators' upward mobility must be examined in light of kinship bonds (Higginbotham & Weber, 1992; Miller & Vaughn, 1997; Walker, 1993). Unlike the individualistic model of White male upward mobility, career mobility for Black women is dependent on relationships with immediate family, extended kin, and community members. Several studies have documented that Black women are more likely than White women to reside in intergenerational families and assume caregiving responsibility for younger successive generations (Burton & Devries, 1992; Burton & Dilworth-Anderson, 1991; Caputo, 1999), and to receive care for children from women kin (Benin & Keith, 1995; Minkler & Fuller-Thomson, 2000). Kolb (2000) observed a "history of mutuality" in her study of Black and Latina adult daughters' relationships with their mothers in nursing homes, whereby caregiving was viewed as an act of reciprocity. However, other authors have cautioned that social support from extended family, especially from Black grandmothers, is waning due to economic hardships, marital difficulties, lifestyle changes, and stressors associated with multiple roles (Brewster & Padavic, 2002; Rodgers & Jones, 1999).

The Problem of Time

The headlines of recent reports in higher education—for example, "Timing is everything: Academe's annual baby boom" (Wilson, 1999), "Family

time” (Fogg, 2003), and “The dilemma of the ‘double day’” (2002)—point to a crisis for women administrators with regard to the allocation of work time and family time. The *problem of time*, as underscored in Hochschild (1995), occurs in American society because time is viewed as a fetish (i.e., “what we do for and to relationships” [p. 10]). Hochschild likened time to a “structure for activities which affirm relationships” (p. 10). From this perspective, the individual may be viewed as a “time architect” who “makes” time:

As time-architects we continually build and dismantle shelters for our relationships. Our buildings reflect our subjective will, or our will is coordinated with that of others. But once the temporal structure is completed, it may come to feel objective. We say, “My schedule doesn’t permit.” (p. 10)

In light of the influx of women in the labor force since the civil rights and women’s movements combined with the lengthening of the work day, Hochschild (1995) observed that the scarcity of American time has been exacerbated, and has made time much more salient in human relations than it has been prior to this watershed. Hantrais (1993) described this phenomenon as being a form of “gendered time” (i.e., time as being socially constructed differently for men and women). Women who gain higher education qualifications and undertake professional positions are expected to adopt the same working patterns as their male counterparts. The imprint of gendered time is most apparent in professional occupations where the work time expectations imposed by organizations weed women out of or into certain types and levels of employment.

The problem of time is akin to problems outlined in Lortie’s (1975) description of the asynchronous time ecologies of teaching and administration. As former women teachers assume the new managerial, leadership, and political functions required in the principalship, they give up their privileges as teachers to have shorter work hours, extended vacations, weekends off, and sometimes holidays. Principals’ work hours are often extended during the weekday and sometimes the weekend. Paperwork demands require some principals to take work home with them. This time shift poses serious problems for women principals with young children and relatively young marriages.

Life Course Strategies

Women may attempt to resolve the problem of time as it relates to work-family conflicts by employing a set of *life course strategies*. Moen and Yu

(2000) pointed out that “families have always devised various strategies to deal with the inevitable exigencies that occur in life” (p. 291). For example, marriage and motherhood significantly increase the likelihood of women’s employment discontinuities (Moen, 1985). These discontinuities (e.g., frequent entries to and exits from employment) may be viewed as *strategies* for managing competing agendas across the life course. Life course strategies are especially critical when several demanding and competing roles “pile up,” for instance being a mother of young children and being a 1st-year principal. In such instances, women may employ life course strategies that involve a manipulation of the timing and sequencing of life transitions (e.g., decisions about when to marry, have children, or become a principal), and the duration in role engagements (e.g., decisions about how long to remain in a relatively less time-demanding professional role, for example, teacher or even assistant principal) in an attempt to bring these work and family spheres into balance. Consequently, life course strategies help to free up time for day-to-day tasks such as child rearing and household chores.

The methodology, interpretation of findings, policy and research implications, and conclusions discussed in subsequent sections are informed by this conceptual framework.

METHOD

Study Design and Participants

The study was configured as a 2×2 factorial design (i.e., race/ethnicity by cohort) yielding four cells, each containing a minimum of five participants. Participants were contacted through the author’s personal and professional contacts and support from local school administrator organizations.

The sample included 20 Black and 11 White elementary and secondary-school administrators (see Table 1). Black administrators were oversampled to better illuminate the experiences of a group woefully underrepresented in both the scholarship and professional practice.

To capture the effect of generational change, two cohort groups with a 12-year span between them were identified. Participants in the pre-civil rights and women’s movements cohort were born between 1931 and 1948, and participants in the post-civil rights and women’s movements cohort were born between 1960 and 1972. For brevity, the following symbols will be used to identify the four groups in which the cohort members are represented, and in some instances, pseudonyms will be used: Black Pre-Civil Rights Cohort (BPRE-CRC); White Pre-Civil Rights Cohort (WPRE-CRC); Black Post-

TABLE 1
Characteristics of Qualitative Sample by the Four Cohort and Racial/Ethnic Subgroups

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>BPRE-CRC</i> (n = 11)	<i>WPRE-CRC</i> (n = 6)	<i>BPOST-CRC</i> (n = 9)	<i>WPOST-CRC</i> (n = 5)
<i>Position</i>				
Practicing principal	11	6	3	2
Aspiring principal	0	0	6	3
<i>District</i>				
Chicago public schools	8	4	7	2
Suburban public schools	3	2	2	3
<i>School type</i>				
Elementary	9	5	9	4
Secondary	2	1	0	1
<i>Marital status</i>				
Married	7	4	7	2
Divorced	3	1	0	0
Separated	0	0	1	0
Widowed	1	1	0	0
Never married	0	0	1	3
<i>Parental status</i>				
Mother	10	6	7	1
Not a mother	1	0	2	4

NOTE: BPRE-CRC = Black Post-Civil Rights Cohort; WPRE-CRC = White Post-Civil Rights Cohort; BPOST-CRC = Black Post-Civil Rights Cohort; WPOST-CRC = White Post-Civil Rights Cohort.

Civil Rights Cohort (BPOST-CRC); and White Post-Civil Rights Cohort (WPOST-CRC).

At the time of interview, the participants worked in either the Chicago public schools (CPS) (75%) or suburban public schools (25%). CPS administrators served a predominantly poor and working class Black student population whereas suburban administrators served a mostly White and middle-class student population. All of the women in the pre-civil rights cohorts were practicing principals. However, given the sparse numbers of principals under age 40 in the public school system (less than 3% in CPS in 2000), the post-civil rights cohorts included both practicing principals and aspiring principals who held administrative positions such as assistant principal or the equivalent role for their school (e.g., assistant dean, counselor).

The majority of women in this study was married and mothers; however, the WPOST-CRC had the lowest proportion (2 out of 5) of married women and mothers. One third of Black and White women in the pre-civil rights cohort had been divorced at some point in their lives. None of the administrators in the post-civil rights cohort had been divorced, although one Black

administrator was separated. Notably, the three White women principals in the post-civil rights cohort advanced to the principalship at a much younger age than did the other three groups in this study. In fact, their age at entry ($m = 30$) resembled the patterns of men principals more so than women principals in the United States (Doud & Keller, 1998).

The majority of married administrators who were mothers had married and borne their first child prior to becoming a principal. Black and White women in the post-civil rights cohort became administrators during earlier stages of family building than did their older counterparts. This means that they assumed a demanding professional role at the same time that they were entering intense and time-consuming periods of family building. In contrast, women in the pre-civil rights cohort became principals either later in their marriages or after their marriages dissolved due to divorce or widowhood. Notably, almost all of the women in the pre-civil rights cohort who were divorced or widowed (7 out of 8 divorced and widowed participants) opted to become principals after marital dissolution. Thus, they had fewer personal roles to juggle when they assumed their new roles as principals.

Data Collection

Two forms of data collection techniques were used: intensive, semi-structured, open-ended interviews and surveys designed to collect information on key professional and family transitions. The data reported here are primarily from the qualitative interviews. All interviews were tape recorded by the author and transcribed by a professional transcriber. Prior to receiving the typed transcriptions, the author reviewed each tape and developed summary memos and follow-up questions (Huberman & Miles, 1994). After receiving the typed transcriptions, the author reviewed the tapes again and edited each transcript to ensure the accuracy of audio-to-typed word translation. A sample of transcripts was also reviewed both independently and collaboratively by two of the author's former faculty mentor-colleagues. This period of transcription of 550 pages of text spanned 7 months. The author conducted follow-up interviews by phone with selected members of each of the four groups (one quarter of the total sample) to clarify information and discuss themes. During these follow ups, the author sent transcripts to the participants and asked them to provide feedback on their transcripts (Riessman, 1993)

To maintain the agreement of anonymity, each participant was assigned an ID number and a pseudonym. All personal and institutional identifications reported here have been assigned fictitious names.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing, open-ended, and inductive. A composite picture of administrators' personal and professional lives was crafted utilizing personal accounts and survey data (Singer & Ryff, 2001). Data analysis was guided by coherence criterion outlined in Riessman (1993), particularly global and themal coherence. For example, the author examined the overall goals participants were trying to accomplish in sharing their personal accounts (global coherence). Then the author examined closely the themes that figured prominently and repeatedly in the personal accounts (themal coherence). Key themes were analyzed within each of the four groups to identify commonalities and differences. Then the author examined commonalities and differences across the four groups. For example, the negotiation of work-family conflicts figured prominently across all four groups due to their common gender and professional statuses. Singer and Ryff (2001) described this process as a *bottom up analytical strategy* whereby investigators begin with an analysis of the personal account of an individual's life and then identify important commonalities and differences across personal accounts of multiple lives, which culminates into an aggregation of personal life accounts.

REPORT OF FINDINGS

Contrasting Gender Role Contexts in the Work Domain

The contrasting experience of being born on either side of the watershed of the civil rights and women's movements was clearly reflected in the way in which the women administrators across the four groups talked about their gender roles both at home and at work. The most striking difference was a cohort difference between Black and White administrators. Women administrators in the pre-civil rights cohort came of age and began teaching before the advent of the civil rights and women's movements. The prevalence of traditional gender role norms that dictated their career options and their family life figured prominently across all of the accounts. Although none of the women reported being directly involved in formally organized activities of the women's movement, some accounts, particularly those of women who started families and became pregnant circa mid-1950s and early 1960s, reveal that these women forged daily battles to challenge gender-biased employment policies, most notably, mandatory maternity leave.

Pre-civil rights cohorts' accounts of gender discrimination and mandatory maternity leave. The prevailing attitude in the United States toward women administrators in this cohort was prominently reflected in the account of a 67-year-old retired White principal named Emma. Emma is unusual among the women in her cohort because she became a principal in the CPS in 1968 at the relatively young age of 34—a time when women administrators were few and far between. Emma recalled that when she began teaching in 1954, career options for women were limited to traditionally women jobs.

You have to remember something. I graduated in 1959. We used to joke that the options to somebody in 1959 graduating from a very small Catholic girls' school were to be a nun, a nurse, or a teacher.

When Emma pursued the principalship, she was married with two young children and worked as a full-time teacher. Some of the veteran women teachers and her principal encouraged her to pursue the principalship and to take classes at a local university. Emma recalled having a difficult time trying to juggle all of her responsibilities especially given that the certification process required her to be a part-time student while working full-time and managing a household. Emma recalled encountering overt gender discrimination in her efforts to fulfill certification requirements at a local university.

I went to talk to Karl Nathan [a professor and administrator of the certification program]. Now when I was a graduate student I only had him for one of the classes and it was kind of a historical education thing, so it wasn't a big deal. But I had to get approval for the class. I was auditing classes and I just kept hitting all of these roadblocks. It was just frustrating. And he said to me after two or three meetings, "You know you're such a beautiful little girl. Why don't you just stay at home and take care of your babies?" That was the mindset back then.

Given her relatively early entry into the principalship, Emma had a firm grasp of the barriers that women aspirants to the principalship encountered during that time. Emma became a teacher and started a family at a time when mandatory maternity leave dictated that women leave their jobs without pay until their children became toddlers. In fact, her adherence to this policy cost Emma a hard-earned teaching job that she had to fight to reclaim. Emma recalled that the mandatory maternity leave policy short-shifted the pension benefits of women teachers and administrators because being on leave limited the number of work hours these women needed to accumulate toward their pension. In contrast, men teachers and administrators who were drafted

to go to war were not penalized in the same way. Later in her career, Emma forged an alliance with a group of women teachers and administrators that fought for, and eventually won, state legislation to guarantee their receipt of partial credit for pension hours lost due to mandatory maternity leave.

Like Emma, Reba, a 70-year-old retired CPS Black principal spoke vividly about the sexism that women teachers and administrators encountered when they became pregnant. Reba also addressed the inequity of the public education pension system that credited work hours to male teachers and administrators that were drafted to war but did not do the same for women teachers and administrators that were forced to take maternity leave.

We were mandated to take maternity leave! You couldn't come back until your child was one year old. I was instrumental in writing to the State [of Illinois] to eliminate this law. Somewhere around 1983 it dawned on us that we had been unjustly forced to take leave. So we protested to not have this counted as a break in service. We thought it was totally unfair that the Board gave the service men credit for working while they were away. I believe they should have given the men credit. But it wasn't fair to us. We were getting closer to retirement so we resented the fact that we didn't get those years. I'm not saying that maternity leave wasn't a good idea. But we were forced to leave. We had to leave in our 4th or 5th month, and that was not fair because some of us didn't want to go. I think they kept us out because they thought we might get injured. But it was also because the Board didn't think the children should be exposed to a woman who was in that condition, which was ridiculous!

In contrast to their older counterparts, those women administrators in the post-civil rights cohort who were mothers (8 out of 9 Blacks and 1 out of 5 Whites) discussed the dilemmas they confronted as a result of not having adequate maternity and family leave time to devote to child rearing. All of the mothers in this cohort expressed concerns about being forced to go back to work shortly after their pregnancies. For example, Charlene, a White 32-year-old assistant principal in the CPS who was only a few weeks away from the delivery of her second child at the time of interview, pointed out that because the CPS administration does not really have a maternity leave policy, women teachers and administrators must use their vacation and sick time to take leaves. Consequently, she and her colleagues attempt to synchronize the timing of their due dates with summer break.

I think the business world doesn't understand that you really don't get a maternity leave in education. You only receive your sick days. So you can accumulate your sick days. So you get paid for however many sick days you have. Once you've used up that bank of sick days or vacation days you get "0" days. So you don't get paid anymore, but [the Board] does keep your position for a year. So if

you wanted to take a year off from having a child, you could and you could still go back to the same school. I don't know if you could necessarily end up teaching the same class.

Notably, Charlene was the only member of her cohort to directly address the impact of maternity leave policy on her and other women administrators' ability to negotiate work-family conflicts. Perhaps the virtual absence of any acknowledgement of the employers' responsibility to help administrators manage the demands of their personal lives reflects the individualistic American ideology that places the responsibility for taking care of family squarely on the shoulders of the individual family unit.

Contrasting Gender Role Contexts in the Family Domain

One of the major work-family conflicts that women administrators in both the pre- and post-civil rights cohorts confronted was between their roles as wives and administrators or principals. Married women across all four groups acknowledged the difficulty in balancing these two roles. However, cohort differences were evident in the nature of spousal conflict: Women principals in the pre-civil rights cohort emphasized how becoming a principal clashed with their husband's traditional views of women's gender roles in marriage and family whereas their younger counterparts focused on the problem of making enough time for their spouses.

Pre-civil rights cohort's accounts of spousal conflict. As noted earlier, 7 out of the 8 women administrators in the pre-civil rights cohort, who were divorced or widowed at the time of interview, made deliberate decisions to become principals after their marriages ended to avoid or alleviate conflicts with their former spouses. Both Black and White administrators alike spoke vividly about how the prevailing expectations for gender roles dictated their lives at home and at work. As was the case with all of the Black and White women in her cohort, Marianne, a 63-year-old White principal, described her gendered reality as a matter of fact:

In that period of time the husbands worked and the women were at home. Women stayed at home and ran the show and you never bothered your husband about a leaky basement or something unless he was terribly handy, which mine wasn't.

Donna, a 53-year-old White CPS principal who had been divorced twice, shared that both of her former spouses had difficulty with her attachment to teaching. Donna recalled that her first marriage ended because her husband

felt that she was too engrossed in her job. She said that she chose her second spouse because she thought he would be supportive of her career, but she learned later that he was not so supportive.

I married for a second time. I'd been divorced and I remarried. I married a man whom I had met at Northside [University], who was also in a counseling program. He did not have any respect for principals. So my colleagues were urging me to go and get my principal certification. My husband was very irritated. He was so upset that I was assistant principal. He hated my principal. He hated my talking about the school at all. Now this was a person that I thought, "Gee my first husband was in business and he didn't respect education. Now I've married someone that really would be very simpatico." Didn't work at all. And we divorced. We divorced because it was a very stifling relationship. Had we remained married I would not be sitting in this chair today.

Reba (BPRE-CRC) explained that she did not consider becoming a principal earlier in her career because both she and her spouse were products of their "time." She alluded to having tension in her marriage because she and her spouse had dual careers in education. Both had been teachers earlier in their careers although she described his experience as not being a good one.

I was married and unfortunately my teaching experience was excellent. My husband's was terrible. . . . He got his degree (laughs) at Randolph [University]. I knew what to do; but he didn't!

Reba's spouse eventually became a principal whereas she remained a teacher, and later, worked at the local district office for much of her career. Her account suggests that she had a latent desire to become a principal but felt bound by conventional gender role norms.

In those days I thought I wasn't going to conflict with my husband. That old traditional garbage that young people don't have today. They do exactly what they want to (laughs). Which I think is right. I had no desire to be a principal. I had children. I had a home. I had a husband and all the other things. I had no desire. No, well, let's see. I took the principal's exam before I was divorced [in 1978]. But then in 1980, I was divorced, so I took the next principal's exam, not particularly because I wanted to be a principal, but the certificate was helpful, meaningful in the structure.

Marianne (WPRE-CRC) decided to become a principal after her children got older, partly because she viewed the role of principal as being incompatible with parenting young children. She recalled that her husband did not like the idea of her working—let alone becoming a principal—because he

was a “’50’s guy” who was concerned that people would think that he could not support his wife.

You know when I thought back, well, it’s crazy giving that up. I don’t think young girls today would do that. They would say to their husband, “You know what? You give up your degree while I finish mine.” [Women in my generation] kind of acquiesced a lot.

Marianne also postponed becoming a principal because she wanted to be home with her children. But her husband’s untimely terminal illness and looming death prompted her to get moving on her goal to become a principal, as she anticipated assuming the role as sole breadwinner for her family.

You know I was a girl of the 50s. What did they call that show? “Happy Days” (laughter). My husband’s career came before mine. He had a very good career in banking, and it was very social in those days. A lot of your time was spent entertaining clients, you know, playing golf and going to dinner, that kind of thing. And I was enough of a 50s girl to know what was expected of me. . . . Probably if he had lived, I would have been happy to stay as a school counselor because [as a counselor] once you leave a school and work for a district office or as a principal, your hours are very different and they’re long and demanding. You have to go back to meetings in the evening. You have to give up Saturdays to attend seminars or workshops. And I don’t know if I would’ve done that had my husband been alive.

Gerri (BPRE-CRC) became a principal at age 50, which was both after she divorced and her daughter had become a self-sufficient adult. She suggested that her professional ambitions did not mesh with her traditional first marriage. In comparison to her first marriage, Gerri acknowledged that becoming a principal has not posed undue strain on her second marriage because of her spouse’s acceptance of her “driven” nature.

I have a lot of my time devoted to this school. I also devoted a lot of time when I was working at central office. So for me to work until 9 or 10 p.m. was nothing. And if we were working on a publication and working with editors, I would work Saturdays and Sundays. So with my daughter being the age that she is, that was not, you know it wasn’t demanding. And my husband—he is my new husband, I just remarried in September—he spent 26 years in the military so he understands demands. And he’s also in education and works at a school. You know, I think with our respective marriages there is a difference from our first marriages, especially later in life, in say, companionship. So I am able to juggle home with work because he understands where I am. He knew that going into [the marriage]. I’m a workaholic. He knows I’m driven.

Post-civil rights cohorts' accounts of spousal conflict. All of the Black and White married administrators in the post-civil rights cohort reported some degree of spousal conflict. In contrast to their older counterparts, these administrators attributed the source of their conflicts to the time constraints that their roles imposed on their marriages rather than to their spouses' traditional gender role expectations. For example, Annette, a 39-year-old Black principal in the CPS, had been married for only 1 year when she began her 1st year as a principal. Annette acknowledged that her spouse was very concerned about the time she was investing in her job as well as the physical and emotional toll that her new role had taken on her.

I stay in trouble a lot at home because my hours are long. It just so happens that he's on the second shift. So I still generally am able to make it home before he gets home because he works so late. He has noticed a definite change. I have been losing a whole lot of weight. And he can tell that I've lost weight. He knows that my mind, most of the time, is focused on school. As a matter of fact, at one point he gave me an ultimatum. He said, "Look, I'm giving you one year to get it together and after that one year, if you can't change, if you can't get it together; you need to think about a career change. Because you never had to go through all this stuff before [becoming a principal]."

Sandy, a 30-year-old White suburban school principal recalled that problems with her spouse began to surface when she became an assistant principal just 2 years into her marriage. She explained that these problems were exacerbated—almost to the point of divorce—when she recently became a principal.

When I moved here to this job [as principal], I was completely stressed out. And being the assistant principal [prior to this] in Sandersville, I was far from home. I spent really long hours and we drifted apart. It really came to a head this September. We really had some in-depth conversations about getting divorced, and I mean it was a very, very painful time. We've gotten through it—I *think*. But I've learned that I can't neglect him.

Reflecting on the experiences of her female colleagues in the principalship, Sandy expressed reservations about whether the roles of principal and wife really mesh.

Sometimes I look around our principals' table and I look at the other women, and you've got divorces, you've got people who are in their 40s who have never been married. I think if I hadn't been married before I became a principal, I don't know if I would be one now because I wouldn't go out. I know I wouldn't. I wouldn't go out on dates. That would be the last thing I'd feel like doing on a weekend.

Women administrators in the pre- and post-civil rights cohorts confronted strikingly different gender role contexts both at work and at home. Women born prior to the civil rights and women's movements were buffered from the intensity of work-family conflicts that their younger counterparts experienced, mainly because they began working and building families during a time when their options for career advancement were very limited. Gender-biased policies like mandatory maternity leave reinforced prevailing gender roles that dictated that women prioritize family over work. Being kept out of the principal's office meant that pre-civil rights cohort members spent extended durations in teaching where they could focus more on family building. However, some of the women who desired to become principals earlier in their careers were prevented from doing so because of their spouse's traditional gender role expectations. To alleviate work-family conflicts, these women opted to time their entry into the principalship after their marriages ended or after they became empty nesters.

In contrast to their older counterparts, women administrators born after the civil rights and women's movements encountered a new horizon of opportunity for women in the work and family domains. However, the arrival of these new opportunities was not supported by structural changes in the principal's role or policy changes to help them balance the demands of their work and family lives. Given this context, Black and White administrators who were married and mothers often expressed angst about their never ending and seemingly fruitless attempts to negotiate an allocation between work time and family time that was mutually desirable for their spouses and children. In the absence of adequate family policy support, this younger generation of women administrators inevitably had to become highly skillful at devising strategies to negotiate work-family conflicts, for the sake of their personal health and well-being, the quality of their relationships, and their professional survival.

Life Course Strategies for Negotiating Work-Family Conflicts

Buying family time as an assistant principal: The Black post-civil rights cohort. Black women administrators born after the civil rights and women's movements confronted a markedly different opportunity structure than did their older counterparts. Unlike Black and White principals who came of age and began working at the height of these two movements, Sandra, a 29-year-old assistant principal in a suburban school, acknowledged that she had not experienced overt racial or gender discrimination in her career because, from her standpoint, these barriers had already been broken by previous genera-

tions of women administrators, which was a sentiment echoed across all of the accounts of both Black and White women administrators in her cohort.

[Discrimination] hasn't been a problem for me. My school district is dominated by women. Seven years ago it was male-dominated in this district. [Back then] there was this sentiment that women should stay in the classroom. But things have changed since then. So I haven't had any problems. If anything, my race and gender are a plus in this district because they are looking for qualified administrators to diversify.

All of the Black women administrators in the post-civil rights cohort had ambitions to move up the ladder of educational administration, as evidenced by their decisions to leave their teaching jobs for administration. However, two thirds of this sample group (6 out of 9) decided to extend their duration as assistant principals to "buy" themselves time to start new families. For example, Leticia, a 35-year-old CPS assistant principal delayed becoming a principal because she wanted to devote more time to her 15-month-old son.

Within the next three years I hope to be a principal somewhere. The only reason that I've given it that long is because I have a 15-month old, so I'm just learning how to balance motherhood with doing anything else. I mean when I was single I had freedom. I could do anything I wanted to do. I could work as late as I wanted to. Now it's hard. So I don't want to rush into [the principalship]. I just want to do a good job when I get there.

Yolanda, a 29-year-old CPS assistant principal, decided to delay becoming a principal even though she had recently become certified and was approached by her current soon-to-be retired principal to assume this role. But she admitted being reluctant to become a principal because she had two young daughters and was expecting a baby at the time of interview. Yolanda often pointed at her daughters' picture on her desk when she talked about her dilemma.

Right now I've chosen not to be a principal. This [kind of] administration allows me to leave at 2:30 p.m. because I have two school-age children myself, and one on the way. And that's important to me. I know I would do a good job at it, and that's the thing—I give 200% to everything I do. And right now I don't have 200% to divide between my kids, my family, and this and that. So I don't want to be that lead person in front and on top right now.

Sandra opted to delay becoming a principal because, like Leticia, she had a 15-month-old son at the time who she described as being one of the greatest joys in her life. Yet, she expressed ambivalence about staying home with him

and was planning to pursue the principalship fairly soon. She talked about her ambivalence in light of her mother's life. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom who never pursued a career outside of the home. She was recently divorced from Sandra's father, who remarried shortly afterward. Sandra's mother was living with her and assisting her with child care at the time of interview. But Sandra admitted that she did not want follow her mother's path.

I love my son with all my heart and it's so interesting that I stayed at home with him when he was first born throughout the summer. But I don't have a desire not to do what I'm doing. I watched my mother—she could've been successful. As far as I'm concerned, when you look at her and her children, she is successful. But I'm thinking professional-wise now. She chose to stay at home and take very good care of us. But she didn't really prepare herself to have options. I cannot stand the idea of not having an option. I think I have a healthy, happy relationship with my husband. But I promised myself, and I told my little sister at the time, I didn't ever want to be in a position where I didn't have options.

Postponing family building until after becoming a principal: Post-civil rights White cohort. In contrast to the accounts of Black administrators in their cohort, the accounts of younger White administrators reveal that they perceived themselves as having more flexibility and options with regard to choosing a partner and deciding when to get married and have children. Therefore, these administrators opted to delay starting a family of their own until after they became principals.

Sybil, a 30-year-old unmarried assistant principal with no children, acknowledged her desire to start a family of her own but was very reluctant to forgo her goal to become a principal. Like Sandra, Sybil reflected on her options in light of the different opportunity structures that existed for her and her mother's generation.

I mean I want to have a family but I can't envision having a family and raising my children in a manner in which I would like to and also being a principal. I definitely have a strong sense of what I want and what I don't want. I definitely want to have a family but I don't want to pull myself out of education. I watched my mom's era do that and you know they really suffered. And I know a lot of them, it was their choice, and with my mom it was her choice, and she did it and she's happy that she did it. But I think there are a lot more options for women today. I appreciate that I'm born in this day and age and I have these options.

One White principal suggested that there is a downside to having more options. Lauren, a 34-year-old unmarried principal with no children, lamented that her life had not turned out the way she thought it would. She viewed herself as being family oriented; yet, she did not feel that her life reflected her

values. Lauren said that when she does eventually decide to have a family of her own, she would stay at home—a life goal that prompted her to get her doctorate so that she would be prepared to return to the profession after family building. But at the time of interview her aspirations for starting a family had eluded her.

All my life I thought, you know, I'll start working. I'll be married at 23. I'll have my first child at 25, and I'll have a house full of them. And then I'll teach when they get older and I can work while they're in school and I can be home. And you know, life just didn't take me in that direction. I still want to get married and I still want to have a family. I never ever in my life thought I'd be a professional person first. I thought I'd very much be an at-home-mom-helping-out-in-school-person.

The Black and White women administrators born after the civil rights and women's movements waned were different with regard to their family orientations. Although the Black administrators expressed aspirations to become principals, they had clearly prioritized starting a family over this professional goal. On the other hand, the White administrators prioritized their aspirations to become principals over their desires to become wives and mothers, although they often expressed ambivalence about their decisions.

Negotiating Work-Family Conflicts With Spouses and Women Kin

There are notable race and some subtle cohort differences in the strategies that the women administrators employed to manage their daily time (i.e., the negotiation of daily tasks such as child rearing, elder care, and household chores). Black administrators in both cohorts relied on support from their mothers and women kin more so than did their White counterparts. There was only one White administrator in the post-civil rights cohort who was a mother, and much like the younger Black women, she relied on both her parents and spouse for help. However, similar to White administrators across cohort, younger Black administrators also negotiated child care and household chores with their spouses and utilized babysitters (typically neighbors or close kin). Notably, half of the White women administrators in the pre-civil rights cohort reported that they relied primarily on their spouses for help with child care as well as paid help (e.g., nannies, babysitters, day care).

Spousal support. All of the Black and White women in the post-civil rights cohort reported that they relied on their spouses for some support for child care and household responsibilities. Ironically, although Black and White administrators in the pre-civil rights cohort reported coming of age

and family building during a time when their spouses and the society held very traditional views about women's domestic roles, two thirds of the older White women and one third of the older Black women indicated that they negotiated child-care responsibilities primarily with their spouses. For example, Ronda, a 53-year-old White principal who married relatively late in life (age 40) and has a 12-year-old, said that her husband changed careers in order to spend more time at home with his daughter. Ronda expressed adamantly that it is impossible for a woman to be a principal without the support of her spouse.

At times during the school year—remember my husband is an administrator so we do tag team—he'll deliver and I'll pick up. So without the support of my husband, there's no way. It wouldn't happen. Personally, any woman with a family who becomes an administrator in this day and age, better have the total support of her husband or it won't happen.

Emma (WPRE-CRC) also negotiated child-care responsibilities primarily with her spouse, who was a police detective. Emma is unusual among women in her cohort because she is one of only two women who became principals in their 30s. Her marriage was also uncharacteristically nontraditional for women during that time. She said she was able to become a principal in the late '60s because she and her husband worked together as a team to raise their children. Emma also relied on her parents as "back ups" when her husband had court dates and said that she only needed "an occasional babysitter."

I was fortunate in a lot of ways. Being the wife of a policeman is very different. They have weekends off once every 6 weeks, they work weekends, they work swing shifts. [But when he] passed the detective's exam all this kind of fell into place. As a detective he would be working a straight shift, so he wouldn't go around the clock. And so he had the 4 to 12 midnight. I would be home from school by the time that he went to work. He took care of the kids in the daytime. So I really didn't have a question of babysitters and child care, which is a huge issue among young mothers.

Like Emma, Gloria, a 58-year-old Black principal, was able to rely on her spouse because his work schedule freed his time up during the day to attend their children's school events.

My husband is extremely supportive. And he has helped, too, with the children. He had the kind of job where he went to work very early so he was off very early. He could help in visiting the children's school and sitting on some of the councils. Plus he likes to do that. I'm not a meeting person. I am not a person

who necessarily likes you know doing all those little mundane things [like] PTA and all that. But he was always there to help do those kinds of things.

Clearly, these women administrators could not have advanced to administration or the principalship without strong spousal support. The general consensus was that formal child care was a last resort. These administrators preferred to negotiate the care of their children with close female kin, their spouses, and extended family.

Women kinship support: African American administrators. The assistance of women kin (e.g., mothers, grandmothers, and mother-in-laws) proved to be a tremendous source of support for most Black women across cohort (2 out of 10 mothers in the PRE-CRC and 5 out of 7 mothers in the POST-CRC). For example, throughout her career, Gerri (BPRE-CRC) had an intergenerational living arrangement with her mother and grandmother, both of whom helped her with raising her daughter. Her daughter was born during her last year of college before Gerri had married. She recalled how things worked out:

The year I graduated she was born, thank goodness! I had graduated in December and she was born the end of June. So it was wonderful. I had all summer with her and then my grandmother had retired maybe two years before she was born. So during her infancy she was with my grandmother. All of us lived in the same household. Oh, it was a luxury! It was just wonderful, just wonderful. And then when she went to elementary school she attended school where my mother was the principal. So Mama would take her to school and I'd pick her up or she'd just bring her home.

Like Gerri, throughout her career, Liza, a 65-year-old retired Black principal, had an intergenerational living arrangement with her mother who helped her with child rearing. This arrangement allowed Liza to return to school to become certified for the principalship.

My mother came to live with me when my oldest daughter was two. So basically my mother helped raise my kids. My kids were probably closer to my mother than they were to me. And I was able to go to school and work. I was able to go back to school to get my Master's [degree] and my mother was there. So she didn't move out 'til my youngest daughter was in high school, ready to go on to college.

Liza's relationship with her mother was reciprocal. When her mother became ill, Liza took 1 full year's leave prior to retirement to take care of her mother. Notably, a quarter of the Black principals in the pre-civil rights co-

hort had elderly parents who needed some kind of care. For example, 54-year-old Karla discussed how she managed elder care for her father, but admitted her anxiety about the prospect of having to assume full responsibility for his care in the near future.

I'm responsible for seeing that his bills and housekeepers are paid. I visit three times week and try to get my brother to make sure that he does certain things in terms of his cleanliness and health. Doctor's appointments, clothes cleaning, and things of that nature are the kinds of things I do. But he has his own home. . . . He's trying to stay out of the nursing home!

Black administrators in the post-civil rights cohort also relied on women kin for support. For example, Yolanda received support for child care and household responsibilities from her mother-in-law, mother, and spouse. Yolanda also reported that her mother-in-law often prepared dinner for her and her family during the week to alleviate her from meal responsibilities after work.

You know what? I couldn't be where I am without my husband or without my mother-in-law—without my own mom too. But my mother-in-law is my babysitter. I don't know if I could honestly leave for work everyday with peace of mind if my children were with anybody besides my mother or mother-in-law. Knowing that these are the people who raised my husband and myself, so I know the love they gave us. So how much more will they give my children. And that gives me the peace of mind to come to work everyday.

In the absence of employment policies adequate enough to alleviate the demands of their family life, it is highly unlikely that these women would have become administrators and principals without learning how to become adept at and having the necessary resources available to employ life course strategies.

DISCUSSION

In the preceding sections, the author described findings from an exploration of two cohorts of Black and White women administrators' reflections on their negotiation of work-family conflicts as they either transitioned or contemplated transitioning to the principalship. In a significant departure from previous educational leadership scholarship, the author employed life course theory in this study to capture the dynamism of social change in the lives of women administrators born prior to and after dramatic and unprecedented

changes for women (and men and children) in the workplace and home. The author maintains that being born on opposite sides of the civil rights and women's movements and being a member of different racial/ethnic groups uniquely shapes women administrators' perspectives about what they are up against and what resources they have available to them as they attempt to negotiate demanding work-family conflicts.

Findings from this study make it woefully apparent that the overwhelming responsibility for managing work-family conflicts falls largely on women administrators. Hantrais (1995) aptly noted that the "the task of reconciling constraints, pressures, and stress resulting from the need to interweave individual biographies with the social constraints of time within organizations is shown to require expert managerial skills" (p. 141). The need for expert managerial skills as an unspoken prerequisite for becoming a principal points to a strong tendency toward self-selection in the principalship of those women who either (a) do not have pressing and competing family obligations or (b) have unusually resilient, flexible, and accommodating systems of family support.

All of the women administrators in this study employed a number of life course strategies that facilitated their transition to school administration. These strategies reflected both cohort and racial/ethnic differences. For example, women in the "older" generation were compelled to prioritize family above professional pursuits more so than women in the "younger" generation. With respect to racial/ethnic differences, Black women were more likely than White women to rely on women kin and extended family for child care and household support, a strategy that has been documented in other research (Benin & Keith, 1995; Minkler & Fuller-Thomson, 2000). Some older and younger Black women administrators initiated intergenerational living arrangements so that their mothers and grandmothers could care for their children while they pursued their career goals, which is another strategy that is consistent with findings in previous studies (Burton & Devries, 1992; Burton & Dilworth-Anderson, 1991; Caputo, 1999; Kolb, 2000). In contrast, both older and younger White women administrators relied on their spouses for support, which in one instance jeopardized a marriage.

There were also striking differences between Black and White women administrators in the post-civil rights cohort with regard to their prioritization of career and family goals and aspirations. White administrators tended to prioritize their aspirations to become principals over their desires to start families of their own, as evidenced by their decisions to sequence the principalship before family building. On the other hand, Black aspiring principals prioritized their goal to start families of their own over their expressed desire to become principals by extending their duration in the assistant

principalship until their children got older. These differences may be explained, at least in part, by Black and White women's markedly different options for marriage and family. Demographic projections indicate that White women's options for marriage are far more promising than those for Black women (Taeuber, 1996; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). Therefore, younger Black women may have opted to prioritize family over career because delaying family poses more of a risk for them than it does for White women. Furthermore, their behaviors are economically rational in light of studies that indicate that being married and employed offer the most stable form of economic security for Black women (Willson & Hardy, 2002). However, these findings are suggestive given the small and uneven sampling of married and unmarried participants within these two groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND RESEARCH

At a recent academic conference focused on gender equity in education, Nell Noddings asked the audience to ponder on the question, "Are women losing ground?" with respect to their representation in educational administration. During a session at which this author and another speaker presented findings on women's barriers to the principalship, Noddings's question prompted a vigorous dialogue regarding the role that work-family conflicts play in contributing to the underrepresentation of women in educational administration. After their deliberation, the participants concluded that concerns about work-family conflicts pose perhaps an even more formidable barrier to women's access to the principalship than do overt gender discrimination in the hiring and promotion process.

How can the workplace be made more amenable to the needs of women (and an increasing number of men) administrators? One place to start is in the home. Noddings (2003) contends that a major task of every adult is that of making a home, yet few adults receive formal training in this critical life domain. She proposed that lessons about time management should be a part of children's general education in order to help them become more adept at creating healthy and nurturing home lives.

A few promising reports indicate that the spouses and children of women administrators are assuming more responsibility for making homes. Nichols (2002) reported that when his wife became a principal, both he and their children had to assume more responsibility for household chores and allow their private spaces to be encroached upon. He wrote,

As my wife's school day lengthened into the evening hours to fill the void, I found my responsibilities as a father and husband increased dramatically. I was forced to balance my university position with my expanded role as family chauffeur, PTA, dad, and academic tutor for my children. (p. 60)

But reports like this are rare. Unfortunately, Bruckner's (1998) despairing findings on the dissatisfaction of administrators' spouses is more the order of the day, where these spouses lament that the lifestyles of their administrator-spouses leave little time for cultivating relationships.

But there is some encouraging news in the arenas of teachers' unions and higher education. The leadership of the American Teacher's Union recently called for more emphasis on family policy, noting that child care, elder care, family leave, and flexible schedules are among the topics on which unions should be "setting the standard for the rest of the country" ("PSRP Conference: Balancing work and home," 2001). On the higher education front, Wilson (1995, 1996) reported that an increasing number of colleges and universities are attempting to make it easier for faculty and staff members to combine their work and family lives (e.g., child-care centers, job-sharing opportunities, money toward the cost of adoption, support groups for those with sick relatives). Hobson, Delunas, and Kesic (2001) cite emerging trends in the corporate world (e.g., onsite or subsidized child care and elder care, flexible work hours, job sharing, dependent-care spending accounts, easy access to employee assistance programs, supervisory training on the importance of work/life balance).

Findings from this study point to an urgent need for new research on comparing the contemporary experiences of women *and men* administrators. Many of the current genres of gender studies are focused exclusively on current women administrators' experiences, and furthermore, make comparisons to men's experiences as documented a generation or more ago. Yet, it is safe to assume that men's lives have changed significantly since the 1960s and 1970s social movements. Hence, it makes very little sense to continue drawing conclusions about women's progress in achieving gender equity in educational administration based on comparisons between "today's" women administrators and "yesterday's" men administrators, which may be invalid or erroneous comparisons.

CONCLUSION

Very few individuals would argue that the great strides made in the civil rights and women's movements have remarkably changed the way that

women's roles and work are viewed in American society. However, the accounts of these 31 women administrators reveal that the American workplace and the home are in desperate need of another gender revolution if women are to gain real parity in educational administration. Feminist economic scholars and sociologists have already raised this clarion call (Budig & England, 2001; England & Folbre, 1999; Hochschild, 1989, 1997; Rosaldo, 1974). They argue that it is not enough to change workplace policy, but rather society's cultural views about time and gender roles must also change. Yet, history tells us that revolutions must be preceded by drastic changes in individuals' and groups' subjective awareness of the injustices that underlie their circumstances. Hopefully, the dialogue sparked by Noddings's (2003) question, "Are we losing ground?" will begin to reverberate throughout the field and raise the consciousness of more women—and men—regarding the obligation that American society should shoulder to promote healthy and productive work and family lives for *all* school administrators.

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