

Work-Family Balance: A Narrative Analysis of the Personal and Professional Histories of Female Superintendents

Nicole White
Marquette University

Recommended Citation

White, Nicole, "Work-Family Balance: A Narrative Analysis of the Personal and Professional Histories of Female Superintendents" (2017). *Dissertations (2009 -)*. 707.
http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/707

WORK-FAMILY BALANCE: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PERSONAL
AND PROFESSIONAL HISTORIES OF FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS
WITH CHILDREN

by:

Nicole White, PhD, MAE, BSCJ

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

May 2017

ABSTRACT
WORK-FAMILY BALANCE:
A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL
HISTORIES OF FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS WITH CHILDREN

NICOLE WHITE, PHD, MAE, BSCJ

Marquette University, 2017

According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2014), 74 percent of Wisconsin's teachers are women, while only 26 percent of Wisconsin's superintendents are women indicating a significant disparity among the educational ranks. Studies have claimed that women are obtaining their superintendent credentials at the same rate as men, yet in the state of Wisconsin, women account for a mere 22 percent of licensed candidates. Much of the previous literature identifies this problem and rationalizes it with the gender biases that have plagued women for centuries. This study went beyond that and focused on women in the 26 percent who have overcome barriers and obstacles to their advancement and how they have managed to balance their work and family.

This study was a narrative analysis of the personal and professional histories of female superintendents with children. Using qualitative methods through personal interviews of four women, this study addresses the need for role models for work-family balance for mothers who wish to pursue the superintendency. Probing questions were asked to identify what balance means for these women, how they balance their work and family, and what commonalities these women share in their personal and professional lives that relate to their career trajectories.

Catherine Hakim's Preference Theory was used to identify how these women characterize themselves as *home-centered*, *adaptive*, or *work-centered*. This theory was then applied to these women using the data obtained through their interviews in order to identify commonalities and themes among them as they relate to work-family balance.

This study did not dismiss the biases and perceptions of women leaders, but instead focused on how these women navigated these perceptions, and to inherently see the light at the end of the tunnel. This study confirmed that women have a choice in their career decisions, that balance is different for each woman and that stages of career and family play an impactful role in what balance looks like. Finally, this study identifies traits found to be common among the participants that have helped them to find their balance and describe what balance looks like for women superintendents.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Nicole White, PhD, MAE, BSCJ

There are so many people who have earned this degree right along with me. Without their support, I would not be writing this. As I have discovered through this research project, a female leader relies on support networks for success. It is because of my strong support network at home that I was able to achieve this accomplishment. First, I would like to thank and acknowledge my husband, Adam. For without his persistence and support in pushing me to finish my PhD, as well as his countless edits of my papers throughout the program, I would be lost. Secondly, my children, Nolan and Nora were born during the course of this program and although this is all they know, they were always tremendous about their mama needing to go to school or work on her schoolwork. Although much of this dissertation was written during nap-time, or playtime with their voices through the halls, I always will remember the sacrifices they made at such a young age to support me without even knowing it.

Thank you to my advisor, Dr. Ellen Eckman for her guidance and support. Her availability, dedication to my progress, and countless hours of feedback and encouragement helped to shape the way I conducted my research and ultimately finished the program. Also, I would like to extend a special thank you to Dr. Jill Birren and Dr. Heidi Schweizer for their unwavering support of my topic and their own individual contributions to my thought process as I framed my study.

Thank you to the women who agreed to participate in my research study. As superintendents with families at home, I know their time is very precious, and the fact that they carved out some of that time for my study means the world to me.

Thank you to my first mentor, Mr. Anthony Hinden who pushed me to pursue furthering my education in the superintendent field and PhD program to begin with. I would have never considered this program or licensure if it had not been what he had seen in me years ago and for his willingness to communicate these thoughts to me. So often people see potential in others but do not point it out. I thank him for giving me that encouragement and the courage to pursue this program. I have learned so much because of that push.

Thank you to Dr. Danielle Geary for her expert advice and peer editing of this dissertation. Her encouragement along the way has proved to be just what I needed. There are not many people who can conduct peer edits or listen to the stressed calls of students in the dissertation stage of their doctoral programs, which is why this relationship is so worth gratitude.

Thank you to my stepfather, Dan Ost for his interest in my schooling as well as his encouragement for me to pursue my PhD. I may not be as good at golf as his PhD friends, but I will always be thankful for the academic encouragement he has given me.

To my late parents—Donald Johnson and Barbara Ost, I thank them for allowing me to be me, and for raising me the way that they did. My dedication to the education field had to come from somewhere. They were my first teachers, and instilled a work-ethic in me that became innate in nature. Although they will not be here to see me walk the stage this spring, I know they will both be with me in spirit.

And finally, thank you for the child care support system I have had the last few years to allow me to make my many trips down to Milwaukee to attend class and/or meet with my advisor: first and foremost, my husband, Adam, who took time off from work to spend the day with our children while I went to school. I would also like to acknowledge several others who assisted in caring for our children while my husband was working and I was away at school including, my mother-in-law, Martha White, my father-in-law, Terry White, my aunt-in-law, Sara Miller, and my cousin-in-law, Elida White. I am thankful to them for taking such good care of our children so I could pursue my degree. There are no better hands than theirs to entrust our children to, plus, I know they had a blast with them!

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my first role model, my first teacher, my first best friend, my mom, Barb Ost. It is because of your persistence, support, encouragement, and your ability to lead by example that I am the person I am today. You instilled a work-ethic in me like no other, a stubbornness to be reckoned with, and a commitment to envy. I appreciate everything you have done for me through the last 37 years. Even after your passing, you are still my biggest fan, and you are still my inspiration. I can only pray and hope to be half the mother to my children that you were to me. Thank you for showing me what true love looks like and what grit and determination can get you in this world. It is because of your unconditional support and your ability to be superwoman in my eyes, that I dedicate this dissertation to you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS..... | i |
| DEDICATION..... | iv |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | vi |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | vii |
| LIST OF APPENDICES..... | viii |
| CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 10 |
| CHAPTER III. RESEARCH DESIGN..... | 34 |
| CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS..... | 43 |
| CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS..... | 96 |
| A. Preference Theory..... | 103 |
| B. Limitations..... | 110 |
| C. Suggestions for Future Research..... | 111 |
| D. Significance of the Study..... | 113 |
| REFERENCES..... | 116 |
| APPENDICES..... | 120 |

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Reasons for Lack of Women in the Superintendency

Table 1.2: Hakim's Classification of Women's Work-Lifestyle

Table 2.1: Licensed vs. Employed Teachers and Superintendents in Wisconsin by Gender (2014)

Table 2.2: Hakim's Preference Theory Categories

Table 4.1: Participant Career History

Table 5.1: A Comparison of G.B. and U.S.A. Maternity Leave Policies

Table 5.2: Proposed Changes to Hakim's Preference Theory

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Conflicting Roles

Figure 4.1: Career Paths of Participants

Figure 4.2: Conflicting Roles

Figure 4.3: Balanced Roles

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Email Correspondence with Participants

APPENDIX B: Participation Consent Form

APPENDIX C: Interview Questions

APPENDIX D: Catherine Hakim's Preference Theory (table)

Chapter One: Introduction

Research Problem

Much attention has been given to gender roles in Pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade education especially considering that more women teach than men, particularly at the elementary level. It is also generally understood that in the female-dominated education field, there are significantly more men than women running school districts and filling the role of superintendent/district administrator¹. The ratio of men to women at the administration level in U.S. public schools is 4:1 (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Educational researchers have identified many reasons for the lack of women in the superintendency, a school district's highest management position, including the following:

Table 1.1 Reasons for lack of women in superintendency

| | |
|--|---|
| Gender bias | Blount, (1998); Grogan, (1996); Muñoz, Pankake, Ramalho, Mills, & Simonsson, (2014); Reynolds, (1987) |
| Lack of networking opportunities | Brunner & Grogan, (2007); Grogan, (1996); Growe & Montgomery, (1999) |
| Lack of effective mentorships and sponsorships | (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan, 1996; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Muñoz, Pankake, Ramalho, Mills, & Simonsson, 2014) |
| Male hegemony | (Blount, 1998; Grogan, 1996) |
| The role itself/leadership styles | (Blount, 1998; Gilligan, 1993; Grogan, 1996; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Growe, n.d.; Muñoz et al., 2014; Noddings, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1992; Sperandio & Devdas, 2015) |
| Credentialing | (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Sperandio & Devdas, 2015) |

¹ For the purposes of this study, superintendent and district administrator are the same position. The state of Wisconsin has two license categories for this head of district; one as superintendent and the other as district administrator, both of which essentially are the same. Hereafter I will refer to both of these titles under the umbrella term of “superintendent”.

| | |
|--|---|
| Mobility | (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Eckman, 2002; Edson, 1988; Glass, 2000; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Hakim, 2006; Muñoz et al., 2014; Sperandio & Devdas, 2015) |
| Family origin | (Chafe, 1972; Kelsey, Allen, Coke, & Ballard, 2014; Nye, 1974; Treas & Widmer, 2000) |
| Maternal guilt | (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980; Grogan, 1996) |
| Household/child-rearing responsibilities | (Edson, 1988; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Hakim, 2006; Havemen & Beresford, 2012; Hoffman, 1974; Kelsey et al., 2014; Treas & Widmer, 2000) |
| Work-family balance | (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Farmer, 1993; Grogan, 1996; Growe, n.d.; Hakim, 2006; Hill & Ragland, 1995; Noddings, 2005; Reynolds, 2002; Shaevitz, 1984) |

Though the numbers of women holding upper level administrative positions have increased, they still remain surprisingly low. In 1995 women occupied nearly 75 percent of all teaching positions and 5 percent of all superintendencies in the U.S. (NCES, 1996). According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (hereafter Wisconsin DPI), in 2014 there were 472 females and 1,630 males licensed as a district administrator or superintendent in the state. Among licensed women, only 113 are currently working in superintendent positions, compared to 321 males (Wisconsin DPI, 2014) which leaves females making up just 26 percent of superintendents in the state of Wisconsin.

The predominantly female composition of the education workforce in contrast with the relatively small numbers of high-level female administrators suggests that some combination of factors, either in society, educational workplaces, or households present barriers to women advancing to the highest-level administrative positions.

This qualitative case study focuses on the life histories of women superintendents, the focus was on the challenges and obstacles identified by women superintendents with

a particular focus on how they have balanced family responsibilities with their professional aspirations in K-12 educational leadership.

Purpose

Much of the extant literature on gender disparity in the superintendent role examines the problem through a feminist lens and focuses on aspects of women's professional lives such as gender-biased school boards, women's lack of administrative aspirations, improper credentialing, ineffective mentorships, and male hegemonic design of the position (Blount, 1998; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Edson, 1988; Glass, 2000; Grogan, 1996; Shakeshaft & Grogan, 2011). Although studies in this research genre briefly suggest that women might not choose the superintendency due to child rearing, few of them focus on family and its impact. Several researchers have suggested that further research is needed on the relationships between women's educational and professional advancement and their family responsibilities (Grogan, 1996; Edson, 1988; Montenegro, 1993; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Pavan, 1985).

The purpose of this study is to examine the personal and professional lives of women holding superintendent positions and examine commonalities among their approaches to family responsibilities. "What American women need to understand now is that they can be career women, mothers, sex symbols, fashion plates, and community leaders - but not all at the same time, not without personal stress" (Woo, 1985, p. 288). This research study explored the balance required of women who achieve the highest-level administrative roles in the educational field.

Background

The demands of the superintendent role. The K-12 superintendent position is particularly stressful, as evidenced by the high turnover rate among superintendents (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007). The average superintendent spends approximately 5 to 6 years in a district before moving on (AASA, 2006). The position requires lengthy hours, late night meetings, attendance at academic and athletic events across the district, and being on call 24/7 for emergencies, as well as being the top instructional leader, change agent, and fiscal manager of multi-million dollar budgets. The superintendent needs to have an active knowledge of the district budget and finances, employment opportunities, state and federal mandates and their ever-changing policies, as well as maintain a clean image and positive public political persona while pleasing all seven to nine of their bosses (school board members) simultaneously. He/she needs to be able to respond to questions in public without hesitation while maintaining political poise and professionalism. The person filling this role is held to the highest of standards in all public educators. One of the highest areas of pressure for superintendents in the U.S. is the struggle between federal and local control of school districts as the nation battles to transform public education.

A charge to transform public education. K-12 public education is under fire across the United States. It is one of the main platforms for politicians running for office as they try to reveal the next initiative to improve student learning, enhance instructional quality, or restructure school and district leadership. Pressures from globalization and neoliberal policies emphasizing high stakes testing and teacher accountability measures place a great deal of pressure on districts and schools, making the superintendent position

difficult to fill. Some districts hire search consultants to find just the right person to fill the top leadership posts, while others attempt to hire interim leaders from the retirement pool². Accordingly, districts experience intermittent leadership, a workforce lacking direction, and little consistency from one superintendent to the next.

Standards-based educational reform has charged schools with making drastic changes to curriculum and achievement, which demands a shift in thinking about leadership structure. Sergiovanni (1992) has argued that diverse leadership teams are more likely to induce a cognitive shift suggesting that women are a necessity in not only teaching, but in leading as well. Since men and women have different leadership styles (Sergiovanni, 1992), the demands of the changing educational landscape suggest that adding gender diversity to the leadership pool in education by helping more women reach the superintendent ranks could potentially better support reform. Considering women have historically filled many coordinator and curriculum leadership positions in districts nationwide (Edson, 1988), the potential women would bring to the superintendent role is limitless.

The low numbers are not due to lack of interest or skill, in fact, "Women are underrepresented in the principalship but overrepresented among principals of successful schools" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 138). "If superintendents are to resemble those whose education they are responsible for, they must be representative of both genders and of minority populations" (Grogan, 1996, p. 192), and if women are making successful principals, this statement likely holds true for women superintendents as well. In order to induce positive change in public education, all available resources need to be utilized

² Anthony Hinden, personal interview, 2009, superintendent of Cambria-Friesland School District. Louis Birchbauer, personal interview, 2009, former superintendent of Cambria-Friesland School District, instructor at Marquette University.

including employing skilled women administrators.

The predominance of women in the teaching force suggests an untapped pool of potential administrators. However, women are not promoted to these roles, nor do they seem to be seeking them frequently (Edson, 1988). Thus, it is important to consider the complexity of dual roles of careerist and mother and the choices women face when there is conflict between work and family and the time demands associated with each.

In order to understand the implications for women of balancing their multiple roles, I will ground my research in Preference Theory (Hakim, 2000 & 2006), which explores three types of career aspirations for women. Preference Theory offers insight into a woman's identity within each category, reflects her values and career choices, and sheds light on her rationale regarding pursuit of administrative positions such as the superintendency. The three classifications of women's lifestyle preferences according to Hakim are: home-centred (sic), adaptive, and work-centred (sic).

Hakim (2000, 2006) suggests that 20% of all women are *home-centered*, 20% are *work-centered*, and the remaining 60% are *adaptive*. Hakim's suggestion that the majority of women fall in the adaptive category could illuminate the gender gap in the superintendency. Women in the adaptive category struggle to balance various aspects of their lives. They want to be successful both in their careers and in raising and supporting their families, but realize they may not be able to maintain both at the same time (Woo, 1985). Adaptive women obtain credentials and certifications with the intention of using them beyond attaining cultural capital (Hakim, 2000); however, once a family begins, they frequently take leave or reduce their hours to part-time until the demands of the home and family life are lessened; typically once children are in school all day.

According to Hakim (2000), women choose which of these three categories they will be in and divergent preferences are found at all levels of education, and in all social classes.

Table 1.2 Hakim's Classification of women's work-lifestyle preferences in the 21st century.

| Home-centred 20% of women varies 10–30% | Adaptive 60% of women varies 40–80% | Work-centred 20% of women varies 10–30% |
|--|---|---|
| Family life and children are the main priorities throughout life. | This group is most diverse and includes women who want to combine work and family, plus drifters and unplanned careers. | Childless women are concentrated here. Main priority in life is employment or equivalent activities in the public arena: politics, sport, art, etc. |
| Prefer <i>not</i> to work. | Want to work, but <i>not</i> totally committed to work career. | Committed to work or equivalent activities. |
| Qualifications obtained as cultural capital. | Qualifications obtained with the intention of working. | Large investment in qualifications/training for cultural capital employment/ other activities. |
| Number of children is affected by government social policy, family wealth, etc. Not responsive to employment policy. | This group is <i>very responsive</i> to government social policy, employment policy, equal opportunities policy/ propaganda, economic cycle/ recession/growth, etc., including: income tax and social welfare benefits, educational policies, school timetables, child care services, public attitude towards working women, legislation promoting female employment, trade union attitudes to working women, availability of part-time work and similar work flexibility, economic growth and prosperity, and institutional factors generally. | Responsive to economic opportunity, political opportunity, artistic opportunity, etc. Not responsive to social/ family policy. |
| <i>Family values:</i> caring, sharing, non-competitive, communal, focus on cohesion | <i>Compromise between two</i> conflicting sets of values | <i>Marketplace values:</i> competitive rivalry, achievement orientation, individualism, excellence |

Source: Hakim (2000).

Reproduced with permission from copyright owner (2015).

Research Question

The research question in this study is: How do women superintendents understand and manage the challenges of balancing work aspirations and domestic responsibilities? By interviewing female superintendents in their first five years on the job and delving deeply into their personal and professional histories, this study uncovers what steps these women have taken along the way to make them able to “do it all”, what sacrifices have been made, and whether they have found a work-family balance that works for them and their families.

Summary

The next chapter reviews literature on women superintendents, educational leadership, and balancing career and family. The chapter includes both personal and professional sources of conflict women have faced in their career paths as it informs this exploration of women in the superintendency.

Chapter Two:

Review of the Literature

“The educational system continues to be structured as a traditional home: men manage the schools, and women nurture the learners” –Whitaker & Lane, 1990

As outlined in the previous chapter, there is a disparity between the number of women in K-12 education and the number of women in the superintendency. While there are many possible explanations for this gender gap, the one explanation that is most often mentioned in the research is gender bias and discrimination. Many feminist researchers foreground the professional barriers endured by women throughout their careers (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Edson, 1988; Grogan, 1996) by outlining different ways women are marginalized in administrative roles in schools, such as listing required credentials for administrative posts to include coaching, or offering teaching jobs to men promising rapid advancement (Blount, 1998). However, these feminist scholars provide only a cursory overview of other rationales for the low numbers of women in the superintendency, especially regarding personal conflicts. This study focused on an analysis of the personal conflicts and complications that contribute to the lack of women in the superintendency. There are also social and cultural (personal) conflicts women experience that perpetuate their halted and/or limited career trajectories in education hierarchies. The ways in which these women overcome hurdles were examined in this study.

To situate this study of women superintendents' work-family balance in existing scholarship, this chapter reviews research from educational leadership, business leadership, gender psychology, and work-family balance. The majority of the research in these four arenas utilized a feminist lens to consider women's experiences of leadership

in the educational workplace. Despite the focus of this study on familial factors that may cause women to choose not to pursue superintendencies, it is important to acknowledge the large body of work that examines discriminatory practices that play into these decisions and shape the context in which women understand their roles and responsibilities both personally and professionally. The first section of this chapter is a review of feminist literature characterizing discrimination in the workplace. The following section describes promising arenas of research that inform my thinking about women's personal and professional decision-making.

Authors using a feminist lens focused primarily on the barriers imposed on women seeking career advancement in educational leadership. Such professional barriers frequently include: structural gender biases of employment, the "good old boys" network encouraging promotion through networking, male hegemonic design of administrative positions, and the importance of mentorships in these leadership roles.

The next section briefly reviews literature that examines these professional limitations imposed on women. Next, research from work-family balance, educational leadership, business leadership, and gender psychology that explain the personal conflicts and complications female educational leaders experience is described. The review concludes with a discussion of an alternative lens for considering women's leadership experiences as they relate to work-family balance.

Professional Conflicts to Career Advancement

The main professional conflicts of career advancement for female educational administrators are: gender biases, networking, mentorships/sponsorships, male hegemony, and leadership styles. Most researchers in this area foreground these

professional conflicts by outlining the different ways that women are marginalized in administrative roles in schools (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Edson, 1988; Grogan, 1996). This study foregrounds the personal conflicts and the overlaps between the two (both personal and professional) in order to provide a broader view by focusing specifically on mothers³ qualified for this role.

Gender Bias. *Women first, administrators second.* Women aspirants were often faced with blatant gender stereotypes when aspiring to leadership positions

Being good wives and mothers also meant that women generally needed to put their families' needs before their own. These expectations tended to limit married women's career possibilities outside the home because school boards and administrators held married women's family duties against them when considering candidates for promotion (Blount, 1998, p. 128).

Grogan (1996) highlighted gender biases by stating, "What is revealed powerfully is that women aspirants to the superintendency are seen as women first and administrators second" (p. 107). She came to this conclusion based on reports from her participants citing difficulties participating in the old boys' network. Often, men would conduct business on the golf course or when they were out for drinks with colleagues. Women were either not included or viewed as scandalous for attending after-hours collegial events due to their gender. They were expected to be at home with family after work and therefore missed out on crucial conversations. Grogan (1996) noted there were few female superintendents all through the 1980s. According to Blount (1998), fewer than five percent of superintendents were females in 1990. This was a striking contradiction

³ This study will be focused on mothers in the superintendent role. This is not to say that men or childless women do not experience role conflict in the same or similar situations, but they were not a focus of this research.

given that in the mid 1980s, fifty percent or more of the students in educational administration graduate programs were women (Shakeshaft, 1989). These researchers focused on the politics and sexism that played a factor in women either not aspiring or not being offered a superintendency including the societal expectation that women should be home caring for their children after work and not out for drinks or on the golf course with colleagues.

Higher levels of scrutiny. Various educational researchers (Blount, 1998; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 1987; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; and Muñoz, Pankake, Ramalho, Mills, & Simonson, 2014) suggest that both men and women hold perceptions that might serve as barriers to envisioning high-level leadership roles for women. For example, some people believe that women should teach and men should lead (Blount, 1998). According to WI DPI (2014), 74% of licensed teachers in the state of Wisconsin were female compared to 29% of licensed superintendents suggesting that many educators buy into this bias (See table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Licensed vs. Employed teachers and superintendents in Wisconsin by gender (2014)

| State of Wisconsin (2014) | Licensed teachers | Employed teachers | Licensed superintendents | Employed superintendents |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Male | 14,931 (26%) | n/a | 1,630 (78%) | 321 (74%) |
| Female | 43,214 (74%) | n/a | 472 (22%) | 113 (26%) |

n/a = Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction does not collect gender data on employed teachers.

Women administrators are at the mercy of how others view them professionally, "...leadership can be described as a perception. And while individuals may have some control over how they are perceived, they are also at the mercy of how others see them" (Grogan, 1996, p. 166). Knowledge of the existence of such perceptions and biases impact women's career decisions and impede their advancement. Reynolds (1987) commented that she had applied for an administrative position but her application was not reviewed due to the perception that she would not have adequate time to devote to a job of that caliber because she had four children at home. Women who attain leadership roles are at times met with great scrutiny, "Once appointed to a leadership role, women are not viewed as having legitimate authority, thus decreasing their real or perceived power and the ability of women to progress up the educational hierarchy" (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 99). Muñoz, et. al (2014) found that women in their study were subject to higher levels of scrutiny in the interview process by being asked gender-stereotyped questions about willingness to travel and availability to meet the demands of the job.

Impact of Gender Bias. The impact of these perceptions and biases on women achieving and succeeding in the superintendency are two-fold. First, the perception that women should teach and men should lead (Blount, 1998) and that women are inadequate leaders because their household and parenting responsibilities should come first (Reynolds, 1987) not only impedes women from obtaining such positions, but impedes their aspirations and career trajectories as well. Secondly, not only is it more difficult to attain a top-post superintendent position, but these perceptions and biases may make it

more difficult to succeed in the position once attained and therefore disrupt the balance between the personal and professional lives of these women.

Reynolds (1987, 2002) revealed the importance of perceptions and the fact that they can be a complication for women aspiring to administration positions in K-12 school districts; however, she was discussing principal positions and not superintendent positions. Dana & Bourisaw (2006) were able to flesh out some perceptions of women in the superintendency; however, their criterion was not specific to women with children. Considering the literature fails to address women superintendents with children, this study specifically examined women with children in order to address the identified gap in the literature.

Networking. Another often cited professional complication for women in educational leadership is the lack of networking opportunities afforded to them (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). On a survey of 1,195 female superintendents and aspirants consisting of 100 multiple choice and 8 constructed response questions, insufficient networking opportunities was frequently cited by women superintendent aspirants (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Grogan (1996) conducted a qualitative study of 27 women aspirants in a northwestern state in the United States investigating what type of women aspire to the superintendency. Her research found women's networking opportunities as important to their professional growth (Grogan, 1996). Networks for women are listed as one of the four top necessities for success in leadership. Familial support, mobility, and mentors are the other three top attributes to success in educational leadership (Grove & Montgomery, 1999).

Mentorships and Sponsorships. Effective mentorships (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Muñoz et al., 2014) and powerful sponsorships of women in the field are lacking in educational leadership (Grogan, 1996; Muñoz et al., 2014). Many women had mentors in their careers, but very few of them had female mentors, which suggests there is a lack of female role models who have balanced work and family (Edson, 1988; Slaughter, 2012).

Two studies used “power” in gender studies on women’s leadership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Muñoz et al., 2014). These two studies looked at power through a career advancement perspective stating sponsorships have more power than mentorships because mentors can help with skill building and acquisition, but do not have the power to get the mentee an interview (Muñoz et al., 2014). Without effective mentorships and sponsorships, women are disadvantaged in making lasting networking relationships in the male-dominated leadership field.

Male Hegemony. The fourth main source of professional complications for women’s career advancement to the superintendency is male hegemony. Blount (1998) argues that the superintendent position was created by men and for men as a means of keeping tabs on women teachers after World War II, as women began to outnumber men in the teaching ranks.

Administrative Licensing. Superintendent licensure can be obtained post-master’s degree either through licensure programs or through various PhD or EdD programs. In Wisconsin, this process typically requires a minimum of two years beyond master’s (licensure only), and up to eight years for PhD or EdD. Because not all higher education institutions offer such certification/degrees, there are limited options available and some may require travel to campus. Timing of credentialing can become a challenge for

women with children or other responsibilities at home, and therefore some women delay furthering their education until their children are older.

Dana & Bourisaw (2006) studied a case of a female teacher, Elaine Bloomer, who chose to stay at home towards the beginning of her career to raise her children and planned to resume her teaching when her children were in school. She obtained her administrative credentials at the request of her principal who had noted her work ethic, organization, and leadership skills. Due to her child-rearing duties, it took her longer than expected to complete her credentialing, and therefore she missed opportunities for advancement. She had applied for many administrative positions once her children were at school all day and was always a finalist, but never offered the position (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Considering that women are credentialing as often as men (Sperandio & Devdas, 2015), the dearth of women seated as superintendent is even more apparent. Credentialing is considered part of male hegemony because many credentialing programs for the superintendency were not available to women. Those that were available, capped their female admittance at 2 percent ensuring males would continue to dominate the superintendent ranks (Blount, 1998). Grogan (1996) concluded that the superintendency was still firmly rooted as a male-dominant position with male styles of leadership preferred.

Leadership styles. Leadership styles tend to differ between men and women (Blount, 1998; Gilligan, 1993; Grogan, 1996; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Muñoz et al., 2014; Noddings, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1992; Sperandio & Devdas, 2015). This can be viewed as a barrier towards attainment or a call for more

diverse leadership teams in educational administration. The superintendent position is seen as a political position, and since women are generally relationship focused (Gilligan, 1993; Noddings, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1992), they can be seen as apolitical (Grogan, 1996). However, women's focus on relationships can be helpful in the position because the "superintendent position in the U.S. is heavily based on relations with others" (Muñoz, et al., 2014, p. 766) and because there are so few women in the position, "an uneven balance of leadership styles is severely impacting students in the education system" (Muñoz, et al., 2014, p. 766).

Personal Conflicts to Career Advancement

The Superintendent Role. The superintendent role is one of vast responsibility requiring long working hours due to nighttime meetings, school hours, after-school events, and multiple job sites. In addition to the longevity of these hours, superintendents are also tasked with maintaining expertise in employee supervision, legal prowess, political poise, fiscal responsibility, and professional accessibility. The position requires a great deal of education, credentialing, educational expertise, and political finesse⁴. Typically there are only one or two of these positions per district; therefore finding the right fit becomes a challenge.

In addition to the professional barriers described above, women also experience personal barriers to achieving a superintendent position while maintaining the other responsibilities in their lives. These sources of personal stress include: mobility, family origin, maternal guilt, and household/child-rearing responsibilities. This section outlines existing literature from educational leadership, gender psychology, business leadership,

⁴ Meador, D. (2016). Examining the role of an effective school superintendent.

and work-family balance that examines these personal barriers to achievement for women.

Mobility. Even with the most supportive familial networks, the issue of mobility still plagues many women's career paths (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Eckman, 2002; Edson, 1988; Glass, 2000; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Hakim, 2006; Sperandio & Devdas, 2015). Depending upon the structure of the marital relationship, mobility can play a factor in women's choices regarding advancement to administrative roles. Marriage can both assist and hinder women's career aspirations. Married women's career opportunities are often secondary to their spouse's career (Grogan, 1996; Muñoz et al., 2014; Sperandio & Devdas, 2015) making the ability to move for a job opportunity less feasible. Mobility is not isolated to spousal career location; it can also be in relation to children and their level of schooling. For example, women are not likely to uproot their families if children are nearing the end of their schooling. They may choose to forgo opportunities until their children have moved out of the home (Grogan, 1996) or are of an age where a move is not seen as detrimental to their children's development and social well-being.

Family Origin. Family origin surfaces in the research on women in educational leadership in that education levels, income levels, and number of children have all been shown to play a significant role in whether a mother chooses to work outside the home (Kelsey et al., 2014). For example, higher education levels of mothers, lower income levels of families, and lower numbers of children are all positive indicators for a woman working outside of the home (Nye, 1974). These were all accepted reasons for mothers

to work outside the home; however, if a mother chose to work outside the home for her own personal fulfillment, this was met with societal disapproval (Chafe, 1972).

Treas & Widmer (2000) conducted a study of 23 largely industrialized countries on attitudes towards married women's employment outside the home at four stages of their lives. Overall, these countries had similar attitudes on gendered labor roles, with men voicing more traditional views than women. Largely, married women received more societal support for working outside the home before children and after their children were in school or out of the home than when they had infants, toddlers, and preschoolers at home (Treas & Widmer, 2000).

Maternal Guilt. The traditional role of the mother has been to stay at home and to “mother.” Women, mothers and non-mothers alike, have been joining the workforce at a higher rate than ever before, and it is now almost standard that many women work⁵, especially if there are no children to take care of at home. However, women with children at home continue to have the internal struggle as to whether to continue working outside the home once they become a parent, or to abandon their careers either for a short time or completely to raise their children. Grogan (1996), argued that fear of failing as a mother, responsibility for relationships, and coping with household labor were three of the internal struggles mothers experienced when deciding whether to return to work after having children, “if the dominant discourse of mothering makes a woman feel that she is not being a ‘good’ mother unless most of her time and energy are devoted to her children, then any job which requires not only extended periods away from the family but which also consumes much of a person’s creative energy can be seen to conflict with it”

⁵ Grogan (1996)

(Grogan, 1996, p. 116). Women are having children at a later age than ever before⁶, and therefore, are typically further along in their careers when they become parents than previous generations, intensifying this internal struggle. These women have typically advanced their careers to a point where stepping back from them is more of a leap than a step.

Much of the literature on the topic of women in educational administration is from the 1980s and before, when it was more common and even almost expected for mothers to stay home once children became part of the family. It is much easier for a woman to work before she becomes a parent because there is not the internal guilt telling them they are needed elsewhere. Once children enter the picture, women enter a stage of life where they struggle internally over their decisions about working outside the home (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980). The age of the child also plays an important factor. When children are infants and toddlers, women are more likely to stay home with them. It is common once children reach school age, and are no longer in demand of mother's attention and time during the day, that mothers feel more freedom to return to work outside the home. However, many adopt reduced workloads in order to be available for their children before and after school (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980). Most of the aspirants in Grogan's (1996) study stated that "when the time is right for them" the superintendency aspiration would be achieved, implying they are holding off until other familial duties were minimized. It is important to note that the division of familial and household responsibilities differs greatly from family to family.

⁶ CDC report – National Vital Statistics (2015)

Household/Child-Rearing Responsibilities. Women, who can do it all, labeled as “superwomen”, usually have a team of people who support them and thus can excel when balance is achieved between career and home (Edson, 1988; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Hakim, 2006). This is not to say that women who choose not to work outside the home while raising a family do not have supportive teams; but it is a common attribute that has been found in much research on mothers who are working outside the home.

According to the 2010 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Statistics, 2010), 85% of women and 67% of men reported doing household chores on an average day. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics did not report if these men and women are married or have children, nor what type of position they are working in or if they are working at all. This report found that women were not the only ones keeping the home front in order. One of the biggest issues at work in the conflicting roles of motherhood and career is the traditional view of motherhood, where the mother is responsible for all of the household responsibilities, including the children. Hoffman (1974) stated, “More involvement by the father in household tasks facilitates development of less traditional sex-role concepts and greater acceptance of maternal employment by children and spouse.”

Prime childbearing years for women are when they are in their late twenties or early thirties. This is also the prime age range for lucrative career advancement opportunities (Hochschild, 2012). Hochschild (2012) interviewed 50 couples on sharing the “second shift” of housework and familial responsibilities. She stated, “even when husbands happily shared the hours of work, their wives felt more *responsible* for the home” (p. 8). Hochschild (2012) claimed that men and women had clashing gender ideologies even if they claimed to be happy with their arrangement at home and their

division of household labor. These clashing gender ideologies caused friction, and even resentment, in some of the homes of her participants, and some couples learned to concede, fake it, or throw in the towel in order to survive their marriages based on the gender ideologies and expectations within the marriage (Hochschild, 2012).

Work-Family Balance. Many women feel pressured to choose between marriage and family and believe that having both is not an option (Noddings, 2005). The “Superwoman Syndrome”, described by (Shaevitz, 1984), and widely used for women in the workforce with children, refers to women who do everything for everyone all of the time. Examples include women who do the grocery shopping in the middle of the night, work during the day, and still make sure that her children have everything they need. These women are not a rarity in today’s workforce. Many women working today have children at home and are juggling their many roles

Being the everything woman requires double time. It means that a woman remains traditionally positioned within the mothering and partnering discourses. It also means that in the educational administration sphere, she strives simultaneously to be equally as serious an administrator as her male counterparts” (Grogan, 1996, p. 125).

These women work around the clock to attempt to achieve balance between work and family.

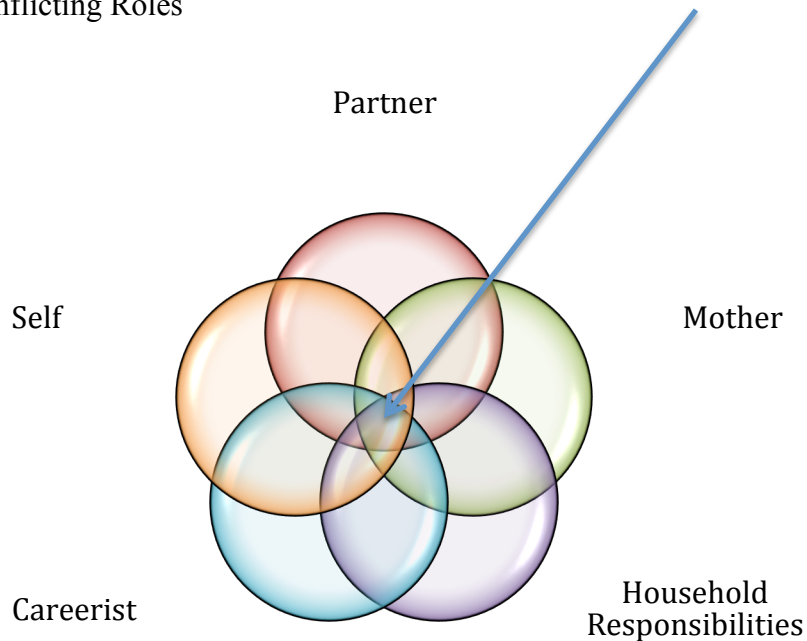
Grove & Montgomery (1999) outlined tips for advancement in leadership. They listed ability and willingness to balance, prioritize, sacrifice, and relax as key components. Hakim (2006) stated that women seek a higher level of work-family balance than men, and when balance cannot be achieved, women were more likely to leave their careers. Because women are more likely to abandon their career aspirations in order to achieve a better balance in their lives, there is a dearth in not only female

superintendents, but female role models for achievable work-family balance (Slaughter, 2012).

Figure 2.1 provides a visual description of the pull between partner, careerist, mother, self, and household responsibilities. As the figure indicates, mother and careerist are on opposite ends of the diagram because they represent conflicting discourses and therefore have the smallest amount of overlap between them. In reviewing the literature for this study, it was found that some women find it more suitable to eliminate one of the five discourses or put it off temporarily until the circle of one of the discourses gets smaller. This study shows how women achieve balance when all of these discourses are pulling them in conflicting directions.

The women in this study are superintendents with children. They each have a partner, a career, children, self, and household responsibilities. In looking at Figure 2.1: Conflicting Roles, these women fall into the center of the diagram in the small pentagon where all discourses intersect and overlap.

Figure 2.1: Conflicting Roles



Grogan (1996) stated that women who aspired to the superintendency were never able to put their household duties of “partnering, mothering, and homemaking” aside; meaning that women had multiple roles no matter what their jobs were. Some women are able to do this seemingly naturally while others experience a sense that they are underperforming in some areas of their lives. “The divided role of professional and homemaker is one of the biggest barriers to women’s career development” (Paddock, 1981, p. 191).

It is also important to consider how women in leadership positions see themselves. “Most successful women leaders measure themselves against 50ish corporate men who enjoy the support of at home wives” (Farmer, 1993, p. 55). Hill and Ragland (1995), interviewed a female administrator who stated, “I learned you can’t be a good teacher (administrator), mother, and (lover) in the same day” (Hill & Ragland, 1995, p.

107). A young, female principal discussed the conflict she experienced between her administrative position and being a mother of young children:

It was terrible, and my advice now to principal trainers...and to administrative interns who are in the principal program, if they have young children, is to wait. Because I think it just tears you apart in terms of trying to commit to both, and I think something suffers; either the job suffers, or the family suffers, so I found that to be extremely challenging, and if I was to do it again, I wouldn't do it. I would devote more time to my children (Grogan, 1996, p. 113).

This principal was describing how difficult it was for her as a principal, not a superintendent; however, the time demands of a superintendent are equal to, if not greater than, a principalship, depending on the level of administration, the size of the district, and the structure of the administrative hierarchy.

Conceptual Framework. The framework for this study relies on Hakim's Preference Theory (2006). This theory was developed as a means to explain women's career choices in affluent societies. Many career theories have been developed to explain men's choices in career development, but her argument was that there was no theory that described women's choices as they relate to career and family.

Hakim's Preference Theory is a relatively new theory that attempts to explain women's choices in career advancement based on where they are situated in the categories within Preference Theory. This theory provides a framework to analyze how women see themselves as mothers and careerists, "It is wrong to assume that a low percentage of women in higher-grade jobs is necessarily due to sex discrimination alone" (Hakim, 2006, p. 285). Hakim argued that feminist theories used to explain the barriers

for women achieving the superintendency were valid but somewhat out of date. She found that women were more likely to strive to achieve an appropriate level of work-life balance than men were and therefore these women must first identify which type of balance they are attempting to achieve.

In examining Preference Theory, this study identified these adaptive women, and how they have adapted to their roles and achieved the balance so many working women are striving towards. It is important to recognize the structural (professional) conflicts holding women back from these leadership positions, but the story that remains untold is that of the personal conflicts that explain why women have chosen their career and family paths.

In order to further explain the lack of women in the superintendency, and their journey to find work-family balance, this study reflects on Preference Theory. Preference Theory was a good lens to use for this study because it focuses on women, their choices in work and family balance, and explains the rationale behind their decisions.

Hakim described three categories of women within Preference Theory to explain women's career decisions: *Work-centered*, *Adaptive*, and *Home-centered* and these choices are prevalent in all social classes and varying levels of education (Table 2.2). Hakim stated that approximately 60 percent of all women fall in the *adaptive* category and 20 percent in *work-* and *home-centered* categories respectively. She attached a disclaimer to these three categories indicating a large variance in the percentages and accounts for them due to the large range of varying public policies between differing societies; some societies have social policies that support women in the workplace and at home, see Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Hakim's Preference Theory Categories

| Home-centred 20% of women varies 10–30% | Adaptive 60% of women varies 40–80% | Work-centred 20% of women varies 10–30% |
|--|---|---|
| Family life and children are the main priorities throughout life. | This group is most diverse and includes women who want to combine work and family, plus drifters and unplanned careers. | Childless women are concentrated here. Main priority in life is employment or equivalent activities in the public arena: politics, sport, art, etc. |
| Prefer <i>not</i> to work. | Want to work, but <i>not</i> totally committed to work career. | Committed to work or equivalent activities. |
| Qualifications obtained as cultural capital. | Qualifications obtained with the intention of working. | Large investment in qualifications/training for cultural capital employment/ other activities. |
| Number of children is affected by government social policy, family wealth, etc. Not responsive to employment policy. | This group is <i>very responsive</i> to government social policy, employment policy, equal opportunities policy/ propaganda, economic cycle/ recession/growth, etc., including: income tax and social welfare benefits, educational policies, school timetables, child care services, public attitude towards working women, legislation promoting female employment, trade union attitudes to working women, availability of part-time work and similar work flexibility, economic growth and prosperity, and institutional factors generally. | Responsive to economic opportunity, political opportunity, artistic opportunity, etc. Not responsive to social/ family policy. |
| <i>Family values:</i> caring, sharing, non-competitive, communal, focus on cohesion | <i>Compromise between two</i> conflicting sets of values | <i>Marketplace values:</i> competitive rivalry, achievement orientation, individualism, excellence |

Source: Hakim (2000).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner (2015).

Work-centered. Women in the *work-centered* category tend to either remain childless or to fit family life around their work. Work is the priority and credentials and further training are seen as necessities and an investment in oneself and one's career. In case studies on Preference Theory, some women have chosen to forgo parenthood in order to continue with their career advancement (Hakim, 2006)

Emergencies can arise in the workplace, just as in private life, and the employee who must leave on time every day at 5pm to collect a child from the nursery will not be dealing with them. It is these unpredictable, stressful demands for overtime hours that makes senior positions less family-friendly and less attractive to women (p. 283).

The women in this category do not see how balancing work and family can be achieved.

Adaptive. Women in the adaptive category strive for a work-family balance and would prefer to do both child rearing and working outside the home if possible. These women are searching for the perfect fit for their families, but if they are unable to find a family-friendly position or part-time work, they may leave their careers temporarily until they are able to achieve the appropriate level of work-family balance for them and their families.

Home-centered. Women who situate themselves within this category prioritize their lives at home and often avoid paid work after marriage unless there is a financial reason for them to work outside the home. If they obtain credentials, it is for their own cultural capital⁷.

Preference Theory provides a lens for examining the underrepresentation of women in the superintendent role because it incorporates the priorities, values, self-limiting behaviors, and varying levels of work-family balance as seen through the female

⁷ Cultural capital is defined as symbols, ideas, tastes, and preferences that can be strategically used as resources in social action. This term was introduced by Pierre Bourdieu. (oxfordreference.com)

superintendents' perspective. Most research studies on females in the superintendency, no matter the niche, focused on the barriers placed before the female aspirants, yet none offered women's perspectives through Hakim's Preference Theory.

Application of Preference Theory. Grogan (1996) provided an interesting look at conflicting discourses between "partnering, parenting, and homemaking" and provided some insight into why women were underrepresented in the superintendency.

The data reveals, at best, a woman aspiring to the superintendency moves back and forth between the different discourses, professional and personal never at any time able or willing to abandon completely the practices that have constituted her as partner, mother, or homemaker (Grogan, 1996, p. 110)

Grogan provided solid research into what Hakim would classify as adaptive women.

These women want to be mothers and careerists, as well as partners and homemakers in the traditional sense. It is interesting to ask how these women in Grogan's study might position themselves within Preference Theory considering their conflicting discourses of partner, mother, and homemaker.

Modern Women's Liberation (Freedom of Choice). The goal of women's liberation was to ultimately provide women a voice and a choice, rather than have others speak and choose for them. Hakim's Preference Theory assumes women have the choice to situate themselves in one of the three categories of home-centered, work-centered, or adaptive. If women are afforded this choice, then women are more liberated than perhaps society gives them credit for because they have the ultimate choice in their life's decisions. Although, women's freedom to choose for themselves shows progress, true liberation would be to not have to choose between these two conflicting roles, but to find

a way to harmonize and balance them so women could feel 100% supported in having both.

There are four central pillars of Preference Theory. First, there have been five historical changes in society which have allowed women more choices in the workplace: the contraceptive revolution, the equal opportunities revolution, the expansion of white-collar jobs, the creation of jobs for secondary earners, and the “increasing importance of attitudes, values and personal preferences in the lifestyle choices of affluent modern societies” (Hakim, 2006, p. 287). These pillars provide women more opportunities than they have had in the past.

Considering the literature presented is almost entirely told through a feminist lens, my research modified the existing feminist landscape by building upon it through the conceptual framework of Hakim’s Preference Theory (Hakim, 2006). Women who experience role conflict believe they have to choose between motherhood and career (Brunner & Grogan, 2007); yet there are women, albeit very few when compared to men in the same field, who have found a way to include both. This study tells the personal and professional stories of these women in order to provide some role models on work-family balance for future and current administrative aspirants.

“Even though they are preparing for the superintendency through certification these women seem to be waiting for the right opportunities to arise or of the coveted tap of the shoulder to be initiated” (Muñoz, et al., 2014, p. 781) perhaps because of their innate psychological development and makeup (Gilligan, 1993) and gendered leadership styles (Blount, 1998; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Muñoz, et al. (2014) found that a significant difference between the women in her study seated as superintendents versus

those aspiring to the position was their willingness to aggressively pursue jobs or be pursued for jobs and their mentoring/sponsorship and networking opportunities or lack of such. Muñoz, et al. (2014) suggested men were more apt to accept jobs as stepping-stones for future more appealing opportunities versus women who are more apt to wait for the more ideal opportunity to arise. These women were a solid example of a possible rationale for the gender disparity in the superintendency. If women are indeed waiting for the perfect position in order to balance their lives, parity will likely never be achieved. After all, women are making career choices with work-family balance at their centers⁸ (Sperandio & Devdas, 2015) and the current structure of the superintendent position makes this balance difficult to achieve.

Conclusion. The main factors explaining the lack of women in the superintendency can be categorized as two fold: professional conflicts and personal conflicts. Professional conflicts and complications are gender bias, lack of networking opportunities, lack of effective mentorships/sponsorships, and male hegemonic design of the position. Personal conflicts and complications include mobility, family origin, maternal guilt, and family makeup and household responsibilities. The focus of this study is on mothers licensed and working as superintendents, their journey and the strategies used in navigating pivotal moments in their lives that led them to becoming female superintendents and how that relates to work-family balance.

Much of the literature referenced in this review included female superintendents' voices of how they got to where they are including the barriers and obstacles they have had to overcome, largely told through studies on aspirants still seeking positions. The

⁸ This is not to discount that there are women out there who have to work and do not have the choice that is outlined in the literature. For purposes of this study, choice may come into play depending on the personal and professional histories as told by my participants.

purpose of this study is to tell the story of female superintendents in Wisconsin and how they successfully navigated personal and professional conflicts and complications through their multiple roles of partner, mother, and careerist. As Edson (1988) argues, we need more role models on work-family balance. This study shares the unique personal stories of such women superintendents and includes the strategies these women use in their personal and professional lives to balance their daily schedules and duties.

The next chapter discusses the methods and design for participant selection, data collection, data analysis, and coding of data.

Chapter Three: Research Design

Considering the disparity between the number of women teachers (74%) and women superintendents (26%) in Wisconsin schools (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2014), it is important to examine the reasons for this gender gap in the superintendent post. There are some women superintendents in Wisconsin who have succeeded in securing positions; yet, the representation of these women is low compared to the representation of women in teaching positions.

Researchers have examined several reasons for the small number of women achieving the top leadership post of superintendent and have described barriers to achievement for women including gender bias, lack of networking opportunities, lack of effective mentorships and sponsorships, male hegemony, the role itself and leadership styles, credentialing, and mobility (Blount, 1998; Brunner and Grogan, 2007; Dana and Bourisaw, 2006; Eckman, 2002; Edson, 1988; Gilligan, 1993; Glass, 2000; Growe and Montgomery, 1999; Grogan, 1996; Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011; Muñoz, et al., 2014; Reynolds, 1987; and Sperandio and Devdas, 2015). The focus of this study was on women superintendents and their own personal and professional histories as they relate to work-family balance.

This chapter includes the research design, participant selection, instrumentation, collection of data, analysis of data, site selection, protection of participant privacy, and ethical considerations.

Research design

This study examined the career trajectories of female superintendents in Wisconsin, exploring their personal and professional life histories through face-to-face

in-depth interviews. The purpose of this study was to uncover similarities among the participants that have allowed them to become district administrators as well as identify any commonalities along the paths they have chosen. The commonalities could include household dynamics, number of children, ages of children, previous positions held, age upon entering administration and the superintendency, as well as insights they shared about their journey.

This study employed a qualitative research design in which data was obtained through in-depth interviews with four women superintendents in the state of Wisconsin. Although this study was limited to few participants, it followed an in-depth narrative analysis approach to the personal and professional histories of these female superintendents. The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to allow the participants to tell their life stories and then “use a narrative approach to interpret them” (Ginsburg, 1989, p. ix).

The use of qualitative methods proved to be the best method to approach this study, considering the value in face-to-face conversations surrounding the personal and professional histories of the participants. The interviews allowed for real and raw emotions and sentiments to surface, and allowed for free-flowing personal conversations to occur.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol was followed and IRB approval was obtained prior to the beginning of data collection for this research through Marquette University’s Office of Research Compliance. (see Appendix B for Participation Consent Form)

Participant Selection

Criteria used to identify the female participants for this study included: (1) a licensed, seated superintendent in Wisconsin for the 2015-16 school year, (2) in the first five years of that superintendent position, (3) a parent during their administrative careers, and (4) ability to devote time to the study. The participants for this study not only met the criteria as outlined above, but also were part of the small group of women who fall into the intersectionality of the five circles in Figure 2.1: *Conflicting Roles*. The women in this study describe how these five conflicting discourses work together in their lives.

Lincoln and Guba's (1986) purposive sampling was used to identify the original participants. Participants were identified from the Administrative Salary Spreadsheet as provided by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2014). From this list, women serving the state's schools during the 2015-2016 school year and in their first five years as a superintendent were selected. Women were contacted via email to determine if they met the eligibility criteria outlined above. Snowball sampling was also used to identify potential participants.

One consideration in selecting these participants was to purposefully gather a list of women to represent different size school districts. From this list of possible participants, four women were contacted via email with a short explanation of the study and the time commitment including the timeline needed to participate (Appendix A). Of the women who were contacted, three responded with an interest in participating. One did not respond. A fourth participant was made aware of the study through another participant and agreed to participate.

Four women superintendents in Wisconsin were selected to participate in this study. Women superintendents without children did not fit the criteria outlined for this study, as it was designed to explain if and how childrearing affects women's career trajectories.

Research Location

Initial interviews did not take place at the participants' place of work in order to minimize distractions and interruptions, and provide a greater level of trustworthiness between the researcher and the participants. The initial interviews were conducted at public places, with follow-up meetings in participants' offices. Follow-up questions and member checks were conducted via email.

Protection of Participant Privacy

The identities of all participants in this study remain confidential and pseudonyms were used for all identifiable information. All data collected has been stored in a securely locked cabinet in a locked private office. The digital voice recordings have been stored in a password-protected manner and all transcriptions are stored in a locked cabinet in a locked private office. All written materials pertaining to the research study will be coded to protect the privacy of the participants.

Collection and analysis of data

Data was collected through the primary source of in-depth interviews with each of the participants. A total of two interviews with each participant were conducted to gather information about their personal and professional life histories. During these meetings, we discussed what made them successful in blending work and family, and dissected their journey to uncover their level of work-family balance, the challenges of being a

female in a male-dominated position, the challenges of being a parent in a time-demanding role, and the decisions in their careers and personal lives that have developed them into the person/superintendent they have become. Throughout these interviews, we also discussed any changes they would make if they were to do it all over again and advice for future leaders aspiring to their position. The first interviews lasted 90-120 minutes with subsequent interviews lasting approximately an hour.

I began these interviews by describing myself as a researcher to the participants. I described in detail my affiliation as a doctoral student, how I came to be a doctoral student at Marquette, my career decisions, my parenting decisions, and my aspirations and challenges along the way. Establishing who I am and being completely open with my participants was key in establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). I wanted to establish a relationship with the participants that would allow them to speak freely, openly, and honestly about their life decisions and histories. The participants were informed that the purpose of the first interview was to gather a timeline of their career paths and personal histories.

The interviews continued with the participants answering the following question: “Tell me how you became a superintendent and the choices and paths that took you there.” This question passed the control of the interview over to the participant allowing her to speak freely in response to the open-ended question and allowing me to “listen with a minimum of interruptions, and tie my questions and comments” to their response “using their own words” (Bell, 1988, p. 100). Follow-up questions were asked based on their responses as they related to their childhood, children, spouse, professional licensing and education, mentors, role models, the superintendent role, domestic responsibilities,

aspirations, role models, career paths, perceptions, and stress management. Due to the personal nature of these interviews, the follow-up questions varied by participant.

This method also allowed for data to be collected on how the participants position themselves within Hakim's Preference Theory framework. The focus of the data collection was on balance and what makes these women different from so many qualified women not aspiring to the superintendency. The women in this study all identified themselves as career-centered, but during analysis, the women presented stories that characterized them differently.

Hakim's Preference Theory characterizations were tested in this study in two ways. First, by asking the women to describe themselves as leaders and identify themselves as *work-centered*, *adaptive*, or *home-centered*. The women tended to describe themselves as *work-centered*, some emphatically without any regard to how it might be applied in Hakim's explanation of her theory. That itself, shows that the women in this study, especially those who were enthusiastic about their classification shows that these women want to be seen as positive women leaders who put their career first. However, these women have also chosen to have children, and shared stories about the joy their children bring to their lives. These stories uncovered some family values these women share with *home-centered* women, showing a crossover between categories. Second, the women discussed how the superintendent role could be made more appealing for women. This question prompted responses regarding employment policy such as maternity leave, flexible hours, and restructuring schedules/meetings so that parents could spend more time with their children on the weekend and especially right after

birth/adoption. Hakim's theory describes *adaptive* women to be the only group concerned with employment or family policy.

How these women identify themselves within Hakim's Preference Theory helps us to understand these women because it shows that there is still a gender disparity in the workforce. These women identify themselves as *work-centered* because they want to be perceived as putting their careers first all of the time. If they do not identify themselves as *work-centered*, it opens them up to being perceived as weak leaders with responsibilities outside the job that could take them away from their duties. How they choose to characterize themselves is their persona, and depending on the situation in which they are asked, the persona may be different.

The interviews were recorded on a digital recording device and were transcribed using SpeakWrite and Datalyst transcription services. A backup recording device was used to protect against equipment malfunction. Data obtained from the interviews were carefully transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes and checked for accuracy. Once transcribed fully, the interviews were stored, transcriptions were reviewed by the researcher, and member checks were conducted in order to check for accuracy. Follow-up interviews consisted of member checks and follow-up questions that were conducted via email.

NVIVO software was used to code and analyze the data after transcription. Transcriptions were uploaded to NVIVO, themes were noted and separated, and data was analyzed for themes. Transcriptions and coding of data were all stored in NVIVO under a password-protected document. Themes emerged through the process of coding (Glesne

and Peshkin, 1992). Following coding, emergent themes were analyzed to identify similarities and differences between the participants. Chapter 4 analyzes these themes.

Ethical Considerations

There were a few ethical considerations that were addressed in this study. First, the personal and professional risk for the participants was addressed. As the women in this study have been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy, and identifying portions of their interviews including names of their spouses and children as well as their school districts have been coded, the risks for the participants were minimal. The participants were given a two-page consent agreement to review and sign prior to beginning the first interview. Each of the women was given a copy of the agreement for their files.

Due to the nature of this study focusing on women superintendents with children and their work-family balance, it was imperative that I, as the researcher, was completely upfront with my own identity, qualifications, and subjectivity. Eisner & Peshkin (1990) stated that researchers bring their own biases to their studies and they need to be forthcoming with these biases for accountability and fairness purposes. For this reason and in order to prevent generalizing to the entire population, (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990) each interview began with an explanation of my background and the significance of this study. The personal and professional account of my life history is what has me so deeply interested in this topic. I realize that the decisions I have made in my family and my career play a huge part in my future career aspirations. I also realize that the decisions I made are not the decisions many women make who have already attained leadership positions and are ascending in their careers. My own personal experiences were set aside

in order to really analyze the personal and professional experiences of the participants in the study.

A final consideration involved compensating the participants for their time. The participants did not expect or ask for any compensation, however, I felt I needed to thank them some way. Each of the participants was mailed a thank you note and a small gift card to a restaurant.

Summary

Chapter 3 included the methods of this research study including the problem to be studied, research design, methods, participant and site selection, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, protection of participant privacy, and ethical considerations.

The research was conducted through an in-depth analysis of interviews with four women superintendents on their personal and professional histories in order to look for commonalities in their paths to success and trailblazing the path to the superintendency for women in the state of Wisconsin. In Chapter 4, the findings of this study are presented.

Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this study is to examine the personal and professional lives of women holding superintendent positions and examine commonalities among their approaches to family responsibilities. This chapter presents the data collected from interviews with female superintendents who have children. The first section of the chapter will describe the demographics of the women interviewed, followed by an in-depth discussion of the participants' personal and professional histories. The final section will include a discussion of emergent themes from the data analysis including how the participants balance their personal and professional lives.

Participant Demographics

Selection Criteria. Participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Administrative Salary Report (2014) was used to compile a list of possible participants who met the following criteria: (1) licensed in the state of Wisconsin and employed as a Wisconsin school district superintendent for the 2015-16 school year, (2) in their first five years of their first superintendent position, and (3) female. Two superintendents were contacted to verify if they had children and were willing and able to devote time to the study. Both of these women participants agreed to be part of the study. Snowball sampling was used to find the additional two participants.

School Data. The four women selected to participate in this study were from different sized school districts. One was from a small school district (less than 1,000 students), one from a small/medium-sized school district (1,000-1,999 students), one from a medium/large-sized school district (2,000-8,000 students), and one from a large

school district (more than 8,000 students). The two smaller school districts have experienced slight declines in enrollment over the last five years. The two larger districts had rather consistent enrollment over the last five years.

Personal Demographics. The participants were between the age of 40 and 49 at the time of the study. Three women were married and one was engaged to be married, following a previous divorce. The age of their children ranged from preschooler to adult. One woman had adult children; one had middle school/high school aged children; one had elementary aged children; and one had a preschooler. The woman engaged to be married will soon have an elementary aged stepchild. The women had different numbers of children. One had 1 child, one had 2 children (plus a step-child in the future), one had 3 children, and one had 4 children. Three of the participants had children still living at home.

Professional Backgrounds. The four women superintendents had all worked as teachers before obtaining administrative positions. One had taught in an elementary school, one in a middle school, and two in a high school. The women were teachers for 6-14 years prior to their first administrative roles.

The participants held other administrative positions prior to obtaining their superintendent position. Three women held positions such as Assessment Director, Language Arts Coordinator, or Instructional Leader/Coach as their first administrative positions. The fourth woman was first introduced to administration through her role as a High School Associate Principal/Athletic Director. All four held more than one administrative position prior to obtaining the superintendent position. These positions included: Elementary Principal, High School Associate Principal, High School Principal,

and Area Superintendent. The women in this study obtained their first superintendent position at the following ages: 36, 40, 41, and 42.

Three women had children at home when they began their first superintendent position. All four women have doctoral degrees. The career paths for the participants are summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Participant Career History

| | TEACHING (years held) | | | 1 st ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION (years held) | | | SUBSEQUENT ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS (years held) | | | | 1 st SUPERINTENDENT POSITION (age) | |
|----------|--------------------------|------------------|-------------|---|-------------|-------------------------------|---|-----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|---|-------|
| | Elementary | Middle school | High school | Dean or Assistant Principal | Coordinator | Instructional Leader/Coach | Elementary Principal | HS Principal | HS AD or Assistant Principal | District Office | 35-39 | 41-45 |
| Angela | | | 6 | 1 | | | | 7 | 3 | | | 40 |
| Michelle | 14 | | | | 2 | | 5 | | | | | 42 |
| Rebecca | | 6 | | | | 1 | | | | 4 | | 41 |
| Sarah | | | 5 | 5 | | | | 3 | | | 36 | |

Personal and Professional Histories of Participants

This section presents a narrative analysis of the personal and professional life histories of the participants. To maintain anonymity of the participants, their names were replaced with pseudonyms. The names of their school districts and communities in which they worked and resided were omitted and/or pseudonyms were used.

Angela. At the time of the study, Angela was a 45-year old female serving as superintendent of Orangetown, a medium sized school district (approximately 3,800 students). She was a high school English teacher for six years (three years out of state and three years at Rainy School District in Wisconsin) before entering administration.

Angela had no aspirations to go into administration before an opportunity presented itself. “I did not have any intention of becoming an administrator at all” until a position opened up mid-year as an Assessment Director/Academic Dean at Rainy where I was teaching. Angela worked in this position while finishing up her administrative credentials and master’s degree.

After serving in that capacity for one year, Angela had her first child and began a new position as a High School Associate Principal at the start of the next school year. She held that position for three years and had her second child during that time. Angela then changed jobs and became a High School Principal in the small city of Two Forks (approximately 1,300 students) and commuted twenty minutes each way to and from work for seven years. She had her third child two years into her High School Principal position.

Angela’s superintendent encouraged her to begin a doctoral program while she was working as the High School Principal of Two Forks. While working on her doctoral degree, she began considering superintendent positions. Angela was recruited by a school district to apply for its superintendent position. She was offered the position at the age of 40.

Angela noted that this option was discussed with her husband who encouraged her to make the move even though it was also a change of location for her family and meant a commute to work for him. Her husband continues to commute to his job as a teacher in another district as they reside in the town where she works. Angela has explained that it is nice to be able to blend work and family as her three children attend school in her

district. At the time of this study, her children were 11, 13, and 15 and she had been a superintendent for five years. Angela holds her doctoral degree.

Michelle. At the time of the study, Michelle was a 47-year old superintendent of a small/medium-sized school district (approximately 1900 students) in the small town of Montego. She began her career as an elementary school teacher in a nearby district and taught fourteen years (in two local districts) before she entered administration. Both of her children were born during the early years of her teaching career.

Michelle worked as a Language Arts Coordinator for two years after her 14 years teaching (taught in two local districts), and then as an elementary principal for five years, all of which occurred in Bay Heights School District. When a superintendent position in a nearby district became available, her peers encouraged her to apply. She has been serving in that role for 4 years, a position she began at the age of 42 with no children at home.

Michelle always had aspirations to go into administration at a building level (principal), but never desired to become a superintendent,

I never really had a desire to be a superintendent. I mean I always had a desire to be a principal or a curriculum director, but, actually, you know, (I) started my doctorate because I was at the point where I was teaching a lot of grad classes and the reading cohort. And I really thought that was going to be my future.

Michelle discussed the desire to get her doctorate because she had intentions of teaching at a college level, and never thought about the superintendency. She thought that teaching at the college level would be perfect for her after retirement, so she was planning for it ahead of time. Upon completing her superintendent license, the position she currently holds became available and with much encouragement from the former

superintendent and her classmates, she applied. Michelle earned her doctoral degree during her second year of her superintendent position.

At the time of the interviews, Michelle was divorced from her first husband and engaged to be married. Her children were 24 and 25 and she had three grandchildren. Her fiancé has an 11-year-old child and is the superintendent at a different school district. Michelle explains that this situation is nice because not only is he a great partner for her personal life, but professionally as well. She states that he understands the job and the hours and that this makes a huge difference.

Rebecca. At the time of the study, Rebecca was a 45-year old superintendent of a large urban (greater than 8,000 students) school district. She had been a middle school teacher for six years before becoming a teacher leader/instructional coach, a job that she held for one year.

Rebecca had not served in traditional administrative positions such as principal or associate principal prior to her superintendency, but had served as a Teacher Leader and Instructional Coach, as well as a Chief of Instruction and Area Superintendent for a major metropolitan school district (approximately 400,000 students) in another state.

At the time of this study, Rebecca had a four year old and described her husband as the “lead parent.” She has been serving as a superintendent for 3 years, a position she began at the age of 41 when her child was six months old.

Sarah. At the time of the study, Sarah was a 41-year-old superintendent of a small (approximately 500 students) school district. She had been a high school teacher at two small districts for five years before becoming the High School Associate Principal/Activities and Athletic Director in a small city district (approximately 1,000

students) in a different part of the state. During her three years as an Associate Principal/Activities and Athletic Director, she had her first child. When her first child was one year old, she transitioned into High School Associate Principal position and dropped the Activities and Athletic portion of her duties at the same district. During the second year as Associate Principal, she had a second child. Sarah was working on her PhD during this time and her husband was working on his master's degree. Sarah never really aspired to become a superintendent. She always knew she would go for her PhD at some point, since she had several family members with doctoral degrees, but her aspirations did not lead to the superintendency.

After working as an Associate Principal for two years, Sarah moved on to become a High School Principal in the same district, but at a different school building. The month after she began this principalship, her third child was born.

Sarah was commuting 25 minutes to work each way, was not completely satisfied with her current district, and had three young children who were or would soon be attending school, and another one on the way, so when she was asked to consider applying for the superintendent position in a district where she had taught high school, she figured she had nothing to lose. She began her superintendency in the district she was already living in when she was 36 years old and had her fourth child towards the end of that school year.

At the time of this study, Sarah's four children were 11, 9, 6, and 4 and she described her husband as "Saint Steven". Her husband works in a central office position in a nearby school district.

Of the four women in this study, one had one child, one had two children, one had three children, and one had four children. Based on the variance in the number of children alone, it is difficult to ascertain which of Hakim's categories each of these women would fall in. None of these women pre-determined their amount of children based on social policy or family wealth.

Summary of the Personal and Professional Histories of the Participants

The background and career paths of the four women interviewed varied. Each of the four participants began their first superintendency in their mid thirties to early forties. The size of their school districts varied considerably. Each woman holds a doctoral degree. Three women were married at the time of the study and three had children living at home at the time of the study and at the onset of their first superintendent position. The age of their children varied significantly. The following section discusses emergent themes from the data analysis of participant interviews.

Themes

In an analysis of the qualitative data, several themes were identified. These themes are divided into two subsections: professional factors and personal factors. This section will conclude with a discussion of work-family balance.

Professional Factors. The themes discussed in this section are: aspirations, mentors, role models, and external support/influence, credentialing and career paths, district size, and perceptions of female leaders.

Aspirations. Of the four women in this study, none began their careers aspiring to the superintendency. They were inspired by outside influences or a "coveted tap of the shoulder" (Muñoz et al., 2014). Some of these external influences were colleagues,

acquaintances, or fellow students. Three women were asked to apply for their positions by someone who was a current employee of the district, and the fourth participant was inspired by a female leader whom she emulated from her non-profit experiences. None of the women originally sought a superintendent position when they began their teaching careers.

Two women had external influences pushing them to go into administration at the building level (principal) long before they began receiving advice to pursue the superintendency. Usually this encouragement came from their current principal retiring or being otherwise removed from his/her positions and then someone saw the leadership potential in the participants and suggested they apply.

Rebecca spent some time working for several non-profit educational organizations while working on her doctoral degree. Rebecca admired the female leader at one of her non-profit organizations,

I was just so impressed by her and by the organization because we were working with them as a school..., so she had a lot to do with me thinking about being a leader, but also being a female leader like there was just something about her that was, that was moving to me, like it got me inspired.

It was this experience that prompted Rebecca to look for a leadership position.

Michelle was encouraged to finish her master's degree not only to move up the pay scale, but also to be able to take the open position of an elementary principal who was set to retire. Michelle transitioned into an elementary principal role at a different building and the principal who vacated that position became her mentor. A similar situation occurred again for Michelle regarding her current superintendent position. She was pursuing her doctoral degree in preparation to work at the university level and was asked to apply for the position in a nearby district by a former colleague of hers. He was

leaving the position, as he was a retiree filling in as an interim superintendent. She had not put too much thought into becoming a superintendent before.

And then, my fiancé, superintendent of (another district), and they both, just said holy cow you got to apply for this. And I, it's like oh I don't know if I'm ready. I don't know if I want to do that. And they're like no you're ready. You need to do that. So, that was really the first time I really ever thought about being a superintendent. So, no aspirations.

Angela had a similar experience. She was not necessarily looking for a position, but was recruited. "I did not have any intention of becoming an administrator at all. I was about as far removed as I could have been and... I probably never even would have done it, but I finished up my degree." The timing just seemed right for Angela. She felt she had grown as much as she could have as a high school principal, she had just finished her doctoral degree and a desirable district was asking her to apply for their vacant superintendent position.

Sarah was relatively happy in her current role as a high school principal when she was asked to apply for the superintendent position in her home district. Her 25 minute commute did not bother her although she knew it was not sustainable long-term especially because it was 45 minutes away from her children's school and she had her in-laws and nannies helping at home, "I really was not looking (for superintendent positions). Somebody was working there and said, the superintendent's leaving, it's right in your backyard, would you consider it? So I applied and, before I knew it, I had the job. It was a very fast process. And it just seemed like why wouldn't I try?"

Hakim's Preference Theory classification of adaptive women states that adaptive women "want to work, but not totally committed to work career" (Hakim, 2000), would

assume these women to be adaptive as they were all very happy in their work lives, but not aspiring to move up the ladder until prompted by others to do so.

Career Mentors. The participants were asked to identify mentors they have had throughout their careers. For the purposes of this study, a mentor is an experienced and trusted adviser. For some, it was a very easy answer, and for others, it was not. Angela immediately named her superintendent from the district where she had been a high school principal. She explained that Betty pushed her to get her superintendent license and PhD and actually encouraged other administrators in her district to do the same. Angela explained, “She wasn't a good family mentor...she was very super driven and drove everyone really, really hard but she's one of the biggest reasons I went back to get my PhD; she was always on my case.”

As Angela reflected on her mentor, she recognized the role the mentor played in helping guide her through the stigma of being a woman in a leadership role and breaking through the stereotypical associations with the expectations of what Angela should and should not be doing. Betty was a supportive advocate for Angela and a solid example of a strong female leader. She made herself available for Angela when she had questions on the gender politics that played out in her district and helped guide her through. She was also the one that recommended Angela for her current superintendent position.

Unlike Angela, who had a strong female mentor, Michelle identified a male mentor that assisted her through her first year as principal, but did not identify a mentor that helped her in her superintendency. Her description of her mentor was another principal in the district that she could go to with questions and someone who let her know

he was there to help. This person also encouraged her to apply for the principal position in the first place.

Rebecca stated that most of her mentors were men, but did not elaborate on her relationships with them or the nature of how they mentored her. She did explain that she met with a male mentor on a regular basis and he helped encourage her into administration.

Sarah did not benefit from having a positive mentor relationship, she noted that no one in her district, man or woman, was there to assist her. She described the women in her previous district to be far from helpful in giving other women a hand up. When asked if she felt she had a mentor in the administrative ranks, she responded:

Mentoring, not so much but like from a standpoint of just being supportive or giving a little bit of advice here and there. But there, this sounds really nasty but just not necessarily people I wanted to emulate. Just, you need to learn, so you don't repeat other people's mistakes if you could avoid it. There were no strong female leaders in (that district) when I was there that I could connect with at all.

Sarah felt that the women in particular were not very interested in helping other women achieve their goals as fellow administrators. The next section dives deeper into the need for role models for women superintendents especially as it relates to balancing work and family.

Role Models. For purposes of this study, role models are defined as individuals whose behavior or success is emulated by others. One can be a role model without even knowing it or doing anything, where a mentor is an experienced and trusted adviser⁹ and is knowingly part of an adviser/advisee relationship, actively seeking out ways to help their mentee. Role models are essential for women aspiring to the superintendency in

⁹ Merriam-Webster (2017)

order to provide positive examples on work-family balance (Edson, 1988). Only two participants identified role models in their careers.

Rebecca identified Mary, a female leader at her non-profit organization that she admired as a role model because Mary influenced her to think in particular about being a leader, especially a female leader. She liked the way Mary conducted herself and the type of leader she was and was hopeful that she could emulate her success in her own leadership, “There was just something about her that was moving to me, like it got me inspired”.

Sarah mentioned a male role model, her high school principal while she was growing up. She stated she always wanted to be a high school principal because she was inspired by this man who was very good at what he did and did so much for race relations in her hometown and throughout the United States. He was featured on PBS, CBS, 60 Minutes, and received awards for his work in race relations. He was motivational to so many for his work with race relations in the South. Sarah was not able to identify a female role model or a superintendent role model.

Doctoral Programs. In Wisconsin, a teaching license (bachelor’s degree) and a master’s degree are required in order to obtain a principal license. A superintendent license usually requires an additional year or two of credits beyond the master’s degree and applicants are required to have an administrative license such as their principal license. Although the state of Wisconsin does not require a doctoral degree for superintendent licensure, many superintendent aspirants combine the licensure and the PhD work. Since Wisconsin superintendents are not required to have doctorates, these women would all be considered work-centered as far as their qualifications are

concerned. They have each made a “large investment in qualifications/training for cultural capital employment/other activities” (Hakim, 2000). The four women in this study have superintendent licenses and doctoral degrees. Two women identified strains in their balance between work and family during their doctoral programs.

Michelle had a unique experience with her administrative licensing because her children were older when she was working on her degrees. Her children were 9 and 10 years old when she completed her first master’s degree. She stated it was an easier situation because the children were pretty self-sufficient at that age and she didn’t have to hire a babysitter to get her work done. When she went for her second master’s degree, it was even easier because her children were in high school and demanding less of her time. It was her doctoral work that created more of a problem for the family.

Michelle pursued her doctoral degree after both of her children had graduated high school. Her husband worked a factory job with set hours and was used to spending time on the lake after work; he wanted his wife to be with him. Michelle reflects back on this time when she had to prioritize between career and family, and describes it, “Brian always thought I picked my career over my family but I never thought I did because I always made adjustments for things. I still did everything at home. I would say it was more my course work for my doctorate where I had to make that decision.” Michelle explained that she was always very good at balancing her work life and her family life. She stated that when she was working as a principal, if she needed to be somewhere at a certain time after school, she could be, but that things got more difficult as she added the doctoral program to her schedule. Her children were older and had moved out of the house by the time she began pursuing her doctoral degree, so she never felt a strain on her

time with the children, but did feel a strain on her marriage. She was gone every other Saturday and then would have reading and writing to do when she was at home,

I definitely made Brian sacrifice because I didn't care as much. He's a grown man, you know, but he was almost needier than the kids. Like, he wanted a wife that would, cook for him and clean the house, so he wasn't real willing to pick up any of those extra duties. It wasn't like he was going to be like oh yeah, I got a wife coming home late, I'll cook supper. No. If I didn't get home 'til 7 he was waiting 'til 7 to eat supper. He was, he would sit there, you know, home and not do anything.

The pressure and the guilt got to Michelle and she sometimes would procrastinate on her work to spend time on the lake with her husband. She shared that Brian would comment, "I wish I had a wife. I wish I still had a wife here that cared about me". She stated that he did not understand her dissertation or her deadlines associated with it and that when she would come home from work on Friday, she would change her clothes and sit down at the computer and just keep working until Sunday night. She stated she felt it had to be this way because she took too many days off the first year to be out on the boat with Brian and she was out of balance. Michelle and Brian divorced prior to her completing her PhD work.

Sarah had a very different administrative licensing experience from Michelle, as Sarah had young children at home during this time and her husband was also working on his master's degree. Sarah and her husband had two children during the time she was working on her doctoral program. She describes her experience as "crazy." She had converted a bedroom in their house into a study and had her mother-in-law move in while she wrote her dissertation. She was working at school several days a week and taking two days a week off for maternity leave to work on her dissertation. At this time, they had an infant, an 18-month-old, and an almost 4-year-old. She describes hearing her 18-

month-old playing all over the first floor crashing her baby cart into the walls as she was writing her dissertation. Despite trying to recover from a cesarean, Sarah stated that every third night was an all-nighter, so she was just exhausted.

The difference between Sarah's experience and Michelle's is that Sarah had the support of her mother-in-law and husband during her dissertation-writing phase of her program, and the ages of their children were extremely different. The flow of her routine worked for her family and they were able to get through it.

Although Sarah and Michelle had two completely different situations during the pursuit of their doctoral degrees, their experiences were similar. They both were working around the clock to get what they needed to accomplish completed, and both were anxious to complete it. Sarah had the support of her husband and her in-laws, but the age of her children was a definite obstacle, while Michelle's husband did not show interest or support in her academic accomplishments.

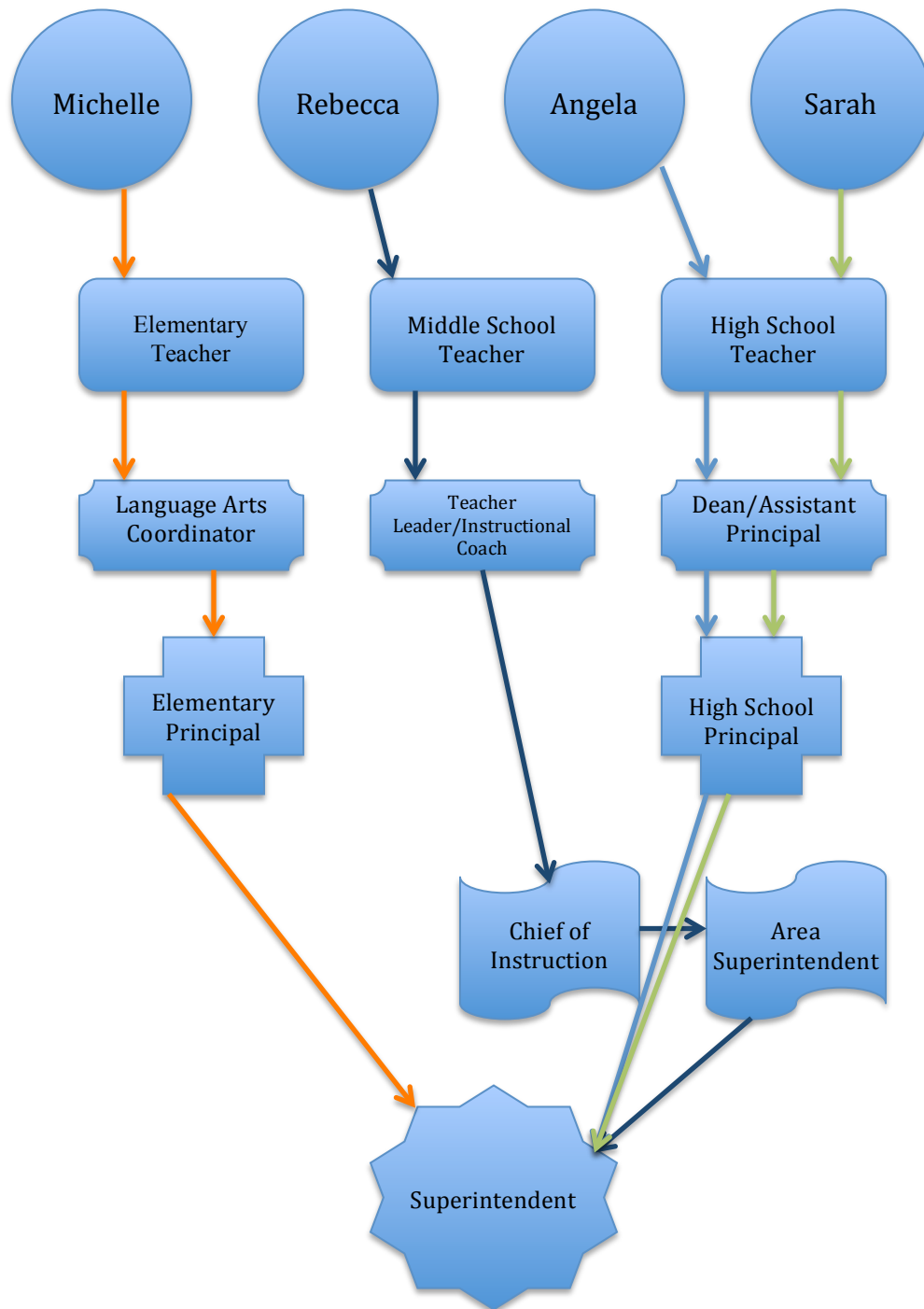
Career Paths. The career paths of the women represented in this study are reflected in Figure 4.1 Career Paths of Participants. The figure reflects the administrative positions each woman held prior to obtaining her superintendent position. The women in this study had been teachers prior to entering administration. Three had been principals: one of an elementary school, and two of high schools. Only one of the women held a district office position prior to her superintendency. Three held coordinator and coach positions. The most common route to the superintendency was through the high school principalship, which is typically a heavily male dominated position (Eckman, 2000).

Rebecca pointed out that women tend to feel the need to sit in every administrative seat prior to feeling qualified to apply for a superintendent position and

also have career backgrounds traditionally with younger children or curriculum work such as elementary principal, or curriculum directors.

Rebecca highlighted some fears women have when climbing the administrative ladder. Rebecca was the only participant in this study to not have been a principal at some point in her career and she explained it like this: “I kind of think that women, tend to feel the need to sit in every single seat, like already they have to prove themselves before they can take the next step and I don’t think that as many men feel that need. So I think that’s probably another factor.”

Figure 4.1: Career Paths of Participants



District Size. The three women who commented on the size of their school districts were leading schools of less than 5,000 students. The superintendent who did not discuss district size was a superintendent in a large (more than 8,000 students) district. Smaller districts have less people working in them and therefore fewer colleagues to share the workload with; however, larger districts sometimes have more political pressures by their school boards and communities. Varying size districts appeal to women for different reasons.

Michelle stated that she liked the size of her district (approximately 1,900 students) because it is large enough to have a business manager and that she would never want to work in a district that did not have one. Sarah explained that she particularly liked her size of her district (approximately 500 students) because she had a lot of control. She is not at the mercy of relying on others or constantly having to hire administrators as they move to other districts. She noted a downside was that she wore many “hats” including often having to hire teachers while she was on summer vacation,

There are lots of nights, there has to be lots of flexibility with whoever your significant other or your partner is, because there are times when the phone rings and we have a pipe burst and it's midnight and it's not do you want to go into work, you have to come into work. Now again, in different size districts, a larger district where there are more people working, maybe you don't have to go and maybe you get the call and the facilities guy is going to go and handle it. So it's, I think it's very equivalent in terms of the amount of work you put in. And probably more work in a lot of ways, because you have to be a doer. You're not like an administrator who sits there and figures stuff out and then has an HR director who goes and does it. You're the one who has to do it all. I think that's where the difference is, is in the large school districts you can hide. And I'm not trying to be mean, I'm just being honest.

Apparently, when it comes to the amount or type of daily work activities, size does matter. If you work in a smaller district, you tend to be wearing more hats, yet on a smaller scale. If you work in a larger district, there can be more high profile politics that

take place, like how you respond to media inquiries regarding high-profile student situations including protests, but you have assistants and other administrators to not only assist with these projects but to also collaborate with.

Perceptions of Female Leaders. Although these women were successful in the workplace, they still cared and wondered what others thought about them as women leaders. Sarah had four children during her years serving in various administrative roles, and took only six weeks leave with each of her children. Angela had three children during her administrative career and also did not take her full maternity leave. She felt she still needed to prove herself and prove that she was dedicated to the job, the district, and the profession. Angela felt that as a woman, she had to prove it even more so because she did not want to be perceived as weak.

I'd really underestimated the demands of having a baby and what that was going to be like. So I did not take my full leave, I felt like, I have the summer and that was going to be plenty and my husband took some time too...And it was just crazy, it was just crazy! I don't know why I did that; to this day I don't know why I did that. I just felt like I had to.

When Angela gave birth to her second child, she and her husband intentionally planned another summer baby to ease the transition at work. She was an assistant high school principal at the time. She explained that she had different goals this time and that she wanted to get the breastfeeding right, and insisted she was going to take her full maternity leave. Although she did not take her full leave, she took more than she did the first time,

I was just super focused at that point of my career -- and people's perceptions of me I think and what it meant to be a mother and an administrator. And I suffered much less from that when I had our daughter, I was established then as an assistant principal, people knew who I was, people trusted me and liked me and that made it much easier.

Angela elaborated on how good the time at home felt with her newborn daughter. She sent her two year old to daycare a couple of days a week so she could have some one on one time with the baby,

I knew that people would miss me, you know, like I knew that they would be anxious under different leadership a little bit, but I wasn't worried about them thinking that I wasn't committed or I wasn't working hard enough or anything like that, I really wasn't. And I'm not sure exactly why that was but I did not feel that way.

Angela also described the pressure she felt to “have it all together.”

I feel super accountable for what I'm going to wear and I haven't had my nails done...what must people think? There's this whole additional togetherness that you have to be totally together and expectation on women in these leadership roles and your relationship with your clerical staff is very different than if you were a man in terms of some of the -- expectations and judgments and things like that.

Throughout Angela's interviews, perceptions of her as a female leader came up often. Her desire to prove herself definitely changed as she progressed in her career because she felt she had already proven herself and could therefore do some things differently when her subsequent children were born. As her career developed and she became busier and busier, she was missing some of her children's activities and then began to worry less about what her colleagues were thinking and more about how she was being perceived by other parents. Once Angela became superintendent, she was more confident in her abilities and knew the perceptions of her were good, because she earned them,

I don't think there's anybody on the team who doesn't think I'm hard working and willing to do whatever needs to get done. I don't think there are feelings like that. I think there can be isolated times when they feel like, “I can't take a vacation, why can you take a vacation but I can't?” At the end of the day, nine times out of ten, I'm the last person out of here and they know that. They know that I'm not calling in sick.

Sarah, like Angela, did not take her full maternity leaves for any of her children. Sarah elaborated on how hectic her schedule was when she was on maternity leave with her third child. She took a few days a week to be home to work on her dissertation while her third child was an infant and was able to defend her dissertation four months to the day of his birth and then took the family to Disneyland to celebrate.

The perception of women leaders is one of the strongest indicators on how women see themselves as leaders. The women in this study all identified as work-centered without knowing the research behind Hakim's classification of women in the workforce. Considering each of these women told stories about shortening their maternity leaves, needing to appear to have "it all together", and feeling a need to prove themselves in their early years as superintendents, it is not surprising they self-identified as work-centered. If they were to identify differently, they would be perceived as weak women leaders.

This section examined many professional factors that complicate women's aspirations to the superintendency and the ways in which the women in this study have navigated these challenges. The two most significant factors were how the superintendent role could be restructured to attract more women aspirants and how the restructure of the position could assist in the balance of work and family for current superintendents; and the women in this study also were very aware of how they can be perceived negatively as women leaders, so they attempt to go above and beyond to crush these perceptions. The next section examines and discusses the personal factors that pose challenges for women superintendents and provides examples on how the women in this study have attempted to achieve balance between work and family.

Personal Factors. The themes that will be discussed in this section are: childhood; children; and spousal support.

Childhood. Each of the women in this study were asked about their own childhood and their families growing up as a way to capture any instances that may have formed their leadership potential as children. The women discussed several instances that have played a part in who they are, and the decisions that led them to their place in life as superintendents. Several women attributed their success to the work ethic of their parents.

Sarah discussed how she always knew she would get her PhD, that it was not even a question of ‘if’, but ‘when’. She informed me that she came from a family of PhDs and that she was used to academia. Her great-grandfather was an education professor and superintendent, her mother was a French and Spanish teacher, and her father was a research chemist and college professor. She described her parents as very risk-averse people and she felt that becoming a superintendent was probably the riskiest thing she could do. She always felt she had support moving forward with her academic inspirations as well as her career and family aspirations.

Sarah described her childhood leadership experiences of being the lone student on the curriculum committee while in high school and what a big deal that was coming from a tightknit community full of tradition. She describes watching her community debate over creationism versus evolution as they were reviewing their science curriculum. Sarah describes this eye-opening experience as something that drew her into leadership especially in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and describes it as her passion.

Angela shared a similar background to Sarah and told a story about who she was growing up and how her intelligence worked both for her and against her while in high school. Her father was a professor and her sister recently became a professor. Angela is the older of two children and stated that her sister was always in her shadow because she was well behaved and Angela demanded so much more attention due to her misbehavior. She described herself as very studious and compliant and part of a program for the academically talented. She stated that she was very motivated to earn straight As. As she became more and more settled at her school and in her academically talented program, she began to rebel out of boredom and “pushed the envelope” with her teachers. Angela described how she then began to partake in some risky behaviors. Her parents then decided to move her to a different school district to attempt to remedy her behavioral choices. She described herself as a punk rocker that did not fit in at her new school and stated, “I was just naughty and experimenting with drugs and alcohol, I was terrible.”

It was her experience at her new school that interested Angela in leadership and education:

I was very naughty all the way through high school. I knew I needed to be in the top 40% of my class to get into Madison, I knew that's where I wanted to go. I had a terrible boyfriend who was also naughty and awful. And so I really had to break the system, I knew exactly what I needed to get because we have this tracking system it's like...managing to learn nothing in my entire high school experience. It was during the time when I decided that I wanted to go into education in part because I felt like my education had not been very impactful on me. I didn't think my teachers cared that much about me or my individualism or finding meaningful ways for me to spend my time in their classes and -- and now I think all of that was really true, I don't think that the teachers were particularly interested in dealing with someone who was truant and not their typical student. I thought I could do it better for kids who maybe don't conform with the system and value their talents better than I felt like my talents were valued as a student in high school.

Angela described how her behaviors were her own decisions but that they could have been attention-seeking behaviors as well because her parents were not home a lot and she was seeking their attention when they were.

Michelle discussed how she was always just a “take charge” kind of person. She was the first-born and was always in charge of her brothers. She babysat for them and did extra chores around the house, because she was the oldest.

I played baseball and softball my whole life. I usually always played on boys' teams and one year I got the sportsmanship award for the league because I was always in the dugout rambling to the team and just kept talkin' to everybody, which is kind of indicative of my role now.

I always had to do everything myself, didn't want anybody to help me. I was just always driven and I had to be the best in everything, super competitive. Like even when I take those personality tests. I don't want to see it 'cause it's always the stuff you wouldn't want in a leader, like just highly competitive.

Michelle's parents were divorced when she was in third grade and she discussed not seeing her dad for 8 years. Michelle explained that her mother worked second shift so Michelle was home with her two brothers doing the cooking, cleaning, and laundry while her mother worked.

Rebecca explained that her mother was a stay at home mom; Rebecca believed that she got her work ethic and her drive from her father. She stated her father was the first to go to college in their family and that he worked a lot. She was the second born of four children, but took on the responsibilities of being the oldest. Both of her younger siblings are also very successful. She credits her father with her belief system and her ability to be a change agent and risk taker. She explained that they went from working class to middle class due to her father's drive and work ethic.

The childhood of each of the participants explains the potential each of these women had to become leaders well before their superintendent careers. The women in this study all shared experiences of their achievement early on including striving for excellence. These stories reveal a tendency towards marketplace values as outlined in Hakim's work-centered category; however, the next section tells stories of the importance of family to these women, and therefore blurs these categorical lines. The next section examines how children affect the work-family balance of each of these women superintendents.

Children. The participants were at differing stages of their parenting lives. Only three of the women had children at home at the time of this study. The children's ages ranged from preschool to adult and each of the women had differing stories to share based on the age of their children at certain points of their careers.

Michelle had two young adult children with their own homes, jobs, and families. Michelle sometimes had grandmother duties to add to her day, but these duties were not often. Sarah has four young children. Her children are all elementary school age. Rebecca has one young child, and Angela has three school-aged children. The age of their children surfaced several times during this study as a factor in their struggles to balance work and family.

Michelle finds that she is able to spend as much time at work as necessary and stated she does not recommend becoming a superintendent to women who have young children at home,

Once I became a principal my schedule got really kind of busy. But as a superintendent I couldn't imagine having little kids and being the superintendent 'cause I don't think I'll ever be home. I mean, you would have to have one stay-at-

home parent – because there's so many nights I'm here until 8 or 9:00 o'clock p.m. I'm back at it at 7:30 a.m. I wouldn't recommend it.

Michelle compared her life as a superintendent now to what it was like as an administrator when her children were younger. She was a teacher and a principal during her children's more formative years while they were going through school.

When the kids were younger...I had to cut people off, because you did have to go pickup your kids somewhere or you had to get home to make supper, you couldn't just leave them home alone. So then you had to be a little bit more respectful of time. It's actually kind of nice now because you can be a little bit better listener because you can make yourself a little bit more available. So it's almost like it puts less stress on me, I think not having to get home for kids because, I make myself more available and give people that time they need.

Other than the occasional help out with the grandchildren during the workweek, Michelle did not share the same stress to balance her work life and her family life that the other women experienced. Each of them had children who still relied on their parents heavily, although, depending on their age, there was a differing amount of dependence.

Angela has three children ages, 15, 13, and 11. Although her children are rather self-sufficient at home when it comes to feeding themselves or dressing themselves, they still require parental involvement at their school activities. Angela maintains a constant balance between her personal and professional duties in the sense that once she no longer has a professional task to work on, such as her PhD, she fills that time with a new professional task rather than shifting that extra time to her personal life. She has become a creature of habit and is used to working certain hours and this has not changed much even as her children have gotten older. What has changed for her is that her children's involvement at school and other activities has created less time for unstructured family activities,

I mean there are more activities now...I used to just throw them in the car and then go someplace together and we would hike and then get lunch and spend a morning together and now it's harder to do that because they have baseball practice, I got to be at schools, I got all these things going on so it's harder to do things just with everybody together which I really like to do. And when you start a new job and it gets easier but I like start a job and then make it harder by finding more and more things to do. I'm done with my PhD now so I can take care of these 12 things. So in terms of the way you prioritize that time, it's still -- I think it's been about the same.

Sarah has four children ages 11, 9, 7, and 4. Sarah described her outlook on the future in relation to where she was with her young family at the time of the interviews. She realized her children needed her more intensively due to their ages and that eventually this would shift. She felt that the time would remain constant though, but that she would become more of an active observer in her children's lives as she becomes the mother cheering on the sidelines and watching from afar rather than the mother actively teaching them how tie their own shoes. She stated the amount of time spent doing both activities would likely be the same but her role would be the one that would be changing as her children get older.

I think some of it probably has to do with ages and stages of your family. You know my kids are really young and so it's constant intensive stuff at home. You know because they are not old enough to do, they certainly help out with chores around the house. They put their own laundry away, even the little guy does that you know, the (four) year old, but they are not old enough to make dinner yet, safely. They are not, you know, yes they help with little bits of vacuuming and dusting and things like that, but it's you got to be there and supervise that all and basically do whatever else needs to be really done. So I mean that's the thing where maybe some of it has to do with stages, because right now there is no break on the hard work, there is no break on any of it. And I think the flipside of that though is as your kids get older, they are typically more involved in more things.

Rebecca has one child who is four years old. She explained that board members needed to be respectful of family time and especially of the ages of children. Her board meetings, like many other school district's board meetings are held on Monday nights,

requiring board members and executive staff to be working on the weekends reviewing board materials and preparing for the meeting. Rebecca also stated that family issues arise on occasion and that no one can really blame her if she has to go to take care of a four year old. It is what it is and no one can argue with that.

The participants shared interesting dynamics related to the age of their children, especially as they relate to the amount of childcare that was needed. Each had unique childcare experiences related to the age of their children at the time they began their superintendencies.

Childcare. For women superintendents with children, it is important to discuss childcare arrangements as several of these women have young children that need to be cared for while they are at work during the day. Even school-age children may need some before and after school care while their parents are at work.

For Michelle, childcare was a non-issue as a superintendent because her children were grown by the time her career took that turn, but she did explain how childcare worked for her while she was teaching and her kids were young. Michelle described teaching as a perfect job for a mother of school-age children because she could be available for them before and after school. Her husband at the time worked a second-shift job so he was always available before school and she was always available after school. The district she worked at was right down the street from her house and her children attended there as well making her childcare needs when her children were growing up minimal.

Angela's husband was a teacher, so he was able to provide the main source of childcare during the summer months. Angela explained that during the school year, the

children were in daycare so she would do the morning drop off because her husband had a longer commute to work than she did. Once the children were school-age, they used the after school care at school until they were old enough to be at home alone.

Angela's experience with childcare is rather common; however, her commute to and from work and daycare was more complicated. Her husband was working in one city, she was working in another, and they lived in a third. Sarah had a similar routine in place in terms of allocating significant time to commuting; although her childcare came to her, alleviating the morning drop off and afternoon pick up.

Rebecca began her first superintendent position when her son was six months old. Her husband stayed home with him for the first year of her superintendency so she could focus on getting acclimated in her new position and district. The following year when her son reached 18 months and she had completed her first year as superintendent, her husband went back to work and her son went to childcare. Rebecca described her husband as the lead parent who is in charge of drop-off and pick up because his days were more predictable than hers.

Sarah explained her childcare routine for her four young children as it changed over the years. In the beginning, when she had two children, they would go to daycare really close by from 7am until 5pm. Sarah would drop them off in the morning and her husband would pick them up at 5pm because she would still be working and attending classes for her doctoral program two or three nights a week. "So, that was crazy. I mean totally crazy...Delinquent mom that I was driving to (the university) or with work or whatever". By the time they were expecting their third child, Sarah was in the end

stages of her doctoral program and it was the height of the recession. They were able to secure child care through a combination of help from her in-laws and a nanny,

My father-in-law would come on a Tuesday night and stay 'til the next Wednesday night. So he was basically on for a week and then he would drive home and (the nanny) would do a long stint from Thursday morning to Tuesday night and then he would come again and then do the following for the whole week. We did that for 2 years. And at this point, I was transitioning to the job here as a superintendent and my in-laws were moving here about 5 minutes away, so that was really handy. So they split it with (the nanny). And then she had another child and we couldn't fit everybody in the minivan. I was pregnant at this point with our youngest. And so we, we had to part ways with poor (nanny), who's the godchild or godparent of our fourth child. So then my in-laws and then we hired another nanny who does the other half. So I've had childcare from 7 a.m. to 5 pm, reliable childcare for 7 years, which is huge.

Each of the participants had varying levels of childcare during their first years as superintendent. A great deal of coordination went into how these women planned their days and how they made arrangements for their children. The age of the children, the geographical location of their superintendent positions, and the flexibility of their spouse's employment are all considered when making childcare arrangements.

Children's support and perceptions. Overall, the older children in this study seemed to support their mothers' career ambitions. They were helpful at home, and even think it is fun to have their mom in charge of their school district. Angela describes her children's support of her as superintendent,

I think that's really helps a lot like I feel super close towards my kids even though I'm gone a lot of nights. My kids are so understanding of it, they really like and now that they're older again I think it -- they wouldn't have understood so much when, you know, five years ago but they know what my job is because they see me in their schools and their friends know who I am and they like that I'm the superintendent of their school district, like I think that's super cool.

Although Angela described how supportive her children were of her work-ethic and her job as a superintendent, Angela felt the pull. She stated that she cannot be at all of their

events because sometimes the board meeting is at the same time as the baseball game and therefore she has to miss her son's baseball games which pained her. During the course of the interview, Angela shed some tears describing the events she has missed of her children's because of her work obligations. Her children seem to be completely understanding in that they do not ever make her feel badly about not being there and understand she would be there if she could be,

If I'm not making dinner, they'll roll with all that and they don't make me feel bad or guilty about any of that stuff which is super nice and they're mature that way, they even know when you are tired and, they're really good, they're good.

Sarah describes her children and their unwavering support by describing their love for one another. She states that their busy lifestyle is their "normal" and that the children do not know anything different so they have nothing to compare it to. She describes their home, "There's no fighting in our house. There's no, I mean we're very happily married. You know, it's a house filled with love. And so I think they've just experienced it and accept it as normal. 'Cause it is our normal."

Guilt. Angela described more feelings of guilt than the other three women in the study. Her children are all at an age where they have regular activities after school and their need for her is different than when they were infants and toddlers. Angela described a pull she felt about planning their annual two-week family trip and working around a board meeting to make sure she was not letting anyone down at work or at home, "And, you know, so it -- it doesn't really matter it's three days, well we're going to be gone for almost two full weeks but it's those things all the time like how many of those things you sacrifice before you feel like, "Am I still a good mom?, so that's hard."

Angela also reflected on her struggle every Thursday night when she would have to commute to her university to attend her doctoral classes and remembered wondering if it was worth it. Angela described the constant pull she felt between her work and family life by telling a story where she was conflicted between the two. As superintendent, she is required to be at high school graduation and graduation was scheduled for the same weekend as her son's out-of-town baseball tournament. She sent him with another family to the tournament because she had to be at graduation,

He is totally excited to be with his friends and all that stuff but he had his first hit! He had not gotten a hit all season and one of the moms recorded it and so that was fabulous but again, it's a double because I'm not there, I feel like I should be there even though obviously I have to be at graduation - our Rotarian student is graduating - I'm speaking, I have to be at graduation; I can't not be at graduation. I want to be there because I know it's really important to him and I want to see how -- and I want to see him do well and all those other things.

During this conversation, Angela broke down in tears. She was not sobbing but was visibly and audibly emotional about missing out on some of her children's events. She worried what other people thought, but mostly felt badly for her children that she missed their events regularly and often second-guessed herself on the reasons why she missed.

Sarah mentioned that after she had her fourth child, it was much harder to return back to work because she knew it would be her last child and she feared missing some of that. She reflected on her passion as an educator and her sacrifices for her passion while she was on family vacations:

It's just hard to walk away from your family when you are constantly gone. When your phone rings when you're on vacation and it's something you have to drop everything and deal with, that's what their life has been. I mean I cannot tell you how many times we've been on vacation anyplace, across the whole country and in some cases out of the country, and my phone rings where I have to screen teacher candidates because I know that it's crunch time and it has to happen on that kind of an accelerated timeline. And if I don't do it, I'm going to lose a candidate to another district who is doing the same thing we're doing

unexpectedly having to hire somebody. So it's kind've that, it's gotta be flexible, but it's not fun all the time. So you have to decide where is your passion? Where are you going to get, how do you know that you're having the kind of impact in your work life that you want to have? And, are you okay with what that means for your personal life?

Sarah raised some impactful questions regarding sacrifice and guilt but already seemed to have the answers to these questions in terms of her own work and family balance. Based on the section on children above, these women seem to be “compromising between two conflicting sets of values” (Hakim, 2000), since they are working towards focusing on family values when with family, and marketplace values while at work, which would identify them as more adaptive.

Spousal support. Support at home came up regularly during interviews. The three married women spoke very highly of their spouses and their levels of support for their careers and their levels of supportive actions on domestic and child rearing duties. Angela reflected back on her days as an early administrator, “I don’t know how we did it, I don’t know how we got it done but (my husband) really -- I mean he was just very, very, very, very accommodating of everything, he really was, and it really helped -- still helps, I mean, he’s got the summers off.”

Angela stated her husband was extremely supportive and carried the brunt of all the chauffeuring of their children. She acknowledged that there are times where he had parent-teacher conferences or something else equally important going on at night and they had to shift some things around to make it work, “it's a constant juggle and a constant feeling like you're exhausted all the time, 100% of the time.” Since her husband took the reigns on the children’s after school activities, Angela commented that she did not even think about it unless she had to which allowed her to concentrate solely on her

job as superintendent and not watching the clock to coordinate transportation for her children.

Angela draws the line at dinner though. She stated that she realized a long time ago that if she wanted her children to eat a decent dinner, she had to prepare it herself or her husband would feed them processed frozen microwavable foods,

My husband doesn't cook at all. He cannot cook anything at all. It's the most disgusting thing ever. The kids totally love it, by the way. They love all those terrible things. So I will frequently make dinner and put it in before I leave the house in the morning, not always, and then when I get home, if I don't have a meeting, I will make dinner, and I like to do that. I don't mind doing that, as long as the kitchen is clean. I get very crabby when no one has cleaned the kitchen and then I'm making dinner. Yeah, otherwise (my husband) does dinner.

Michelle had a very different recollection of the level of support she received from her spouse. When she was asked about spousal support, her response was:

I did it all. It never changed after I got my doctorate. Yeah, I did everything, mowed lawn, cleaned house, cooked, did all the shopping. When I went and got my first master's degree, my ex-husband worked second shift so I actually got a babysitter for the time I was in class. And, finished out the first master's pretty much on my own, you know, because he wasn't around so he didn't help much with the kids or anything.

She stayed up late after the children went to bed and got up early in the morning to work on her school work, pay bills, and get the house in order without any help from her husband.

When asked if Michelle could name a time when she felt a pull or a conflict between career and family, she stated that Brian always felt she chose her career over her family but she never felt that she did because she always made adjustments to make things work. She reflected on her divorce and stated that her course work for her doctorate really caused a rift in the marriage. She became tired of needing to be "the everything person" for her husband and for his lack of compassion and teamwork. She

described her doctorate degree and her decisions that went along with her doctorate degree to be the downfall of her marriage. If she chose to work on her doctoral work, her husband would be unappreciative and she gave up hope and trying to make the marriage work,

'Cause (he) didn't want me to go and get this degree. He just wanted to have fun and hang out. This degree wasn't important to him at all. In fact, he kind of would cut me down a lot. We were on the lake and people said hey, congratulations, you're Dr. Mancini and then his reply was always "well, she's not a real doctor." Every single time, that was his reply. He wouldn't even acknowledge it... So, the vote is as non-supportive as you possibly can get. And I was just like, I don't even really like you anymore. It just provoked me. I just had it – 'cause it's like it took 2 years, 3 years of just no support. But I did see that in a couple of other instances with our cohort crew, we're all pretty close and talked a lot. Like, people's spouses you know, got sick of it at the end, like we just had enough.

Michelle also reflected on the differing levels of support she received from her first husband compared to her fiancé. Her fiancé was also a superintendent, so she attributed some of the levels of understanding to the fact that he had the same job and therefore understood on a different level,

People are calling you on the weekends and you got to take it. You know, you can't ignore those phone calls or you say you are going to be home at such and such and time. You know the meeting gets done at 8, but you're not out of there until 10 because we got a line of people that are waiting to talk to you and then I would hear that like – "well just tell them you gotta go." It's like, you can't. Not when you're the one in charge.

It's like I have no stress with that at all (anymore) because I'll just tell him like – you know hey, I just got done – you know, I'm finally leaving and he never really questions anything or his last board meeting gets done at like 11:30 at night, and you know – he said two board members cornered him for an hour and half. Now that's no big deal. So in that way even though I got a stressful job – I'm really under a lot less stress now- because he gets that.

Rebecca stated that her husband stayed home with their 6-month-old son so she could dive into her first year as superintendent without having to worry about child-care. She described her husband as the lead parent and that none of this would have worked

without him, “His cooperation, coordination, and willingness to get the job done.” She stated that their situation was successful because she checked in with him and her child frequently to make sure their needs were being met and that it was still working for everyone. She claimed that these check-ins were crucial to their success.

Sarah had high praises of her husband. She remembers they never really had a conversation about whether or not she would work and in what capacity after children; that it was just assumed she would and no conversation was necessary, “Well, first of all, it helps that I'm married to Saint (Steven). But, I mean, he requires zero sleep. And that's really helpful.” She described how their personalities just blend very well and they are able to “just make it work”. Sarah and Steven refer to themselves as “happily married single parents” because they are often like two ships passing in the night without getting to see much of one another,

Last night he was coaching our first-grade son's baseball team from 5 to 7. So I get home at 5 to relieve the nanny and they're already gone. I'm doing dinner and everything, and then they come home and then I go because I had some things to finish up at work. So I go back to work. It's just how it is. Tonight's the same thing. He's working until like 6:30 and then he'll get home and I'm going to, yet again, have to go back to work to finish things up. And some things you can do remotely. But there are some things you just can't. So there's just a constant give and take. Tomorrow night I have a school board meeting so I won't get home until like 9 or 10. You just make it work. But I always said, it's like swimming 10 feet underwater in the deep end. Like you come up for air, and you kinda check around every once in a while and you just go back down because if I put my head up too much and think about it, I will lose my mind.

The two most significant personal factors affecting women's advancement to the superintendency are childhood and balance. Interestingly, they each shared some similar experiences in their childhoods including their leadership potential being recognized early on, as well as similarities among their parents. Each of the participants stated their parents were hard working and had high expectations of them. There was a lack of role

models for how to achieve this balance. The only way these women knew how to achieve balance between work and family was to give something up, and each of them chose to give up time for self.

Again, this section shows these women to be more adaptive in nature than home- or work-centered. They want to blend both work and family and do everything they can to make it work including delaying job advancement, relying on spouse, and sacrificing personal time to make it happen.

Work-Family Balance: Putting it all Together. These women are good at what they do because they all share some common attributes that have allowed them to achieve superintendent positions. Although each of the participants has stories to elaborate on how out of balance their lives were at certain points of their career, they have each found ways to make ends meet in their unique situations. This next section discusses the superintendent position itself, including the daily routines of the participants, stress management, and job satisfaction as they relate to work-family balance.

Angela started discussing balance by reflecting what it was like for her to become a high school principal with all other administrators being male,

The way they balance their family is very different than how I could balance my family, you know, and they have expectations of what their spouses will do but when I have expectations of what my spouse will do, (the response is), “oh my God how did you train him?”, which just irritates me all the time, all the time I'm like come on. But, anyway, to this day I mean that part of the world is so difficult, if I'm going to have big luncheon for whatever, I have to bring in all the dishes to pass and organize all the details about all these things and I do...(if I was a man) those expectations would be just entirely different.

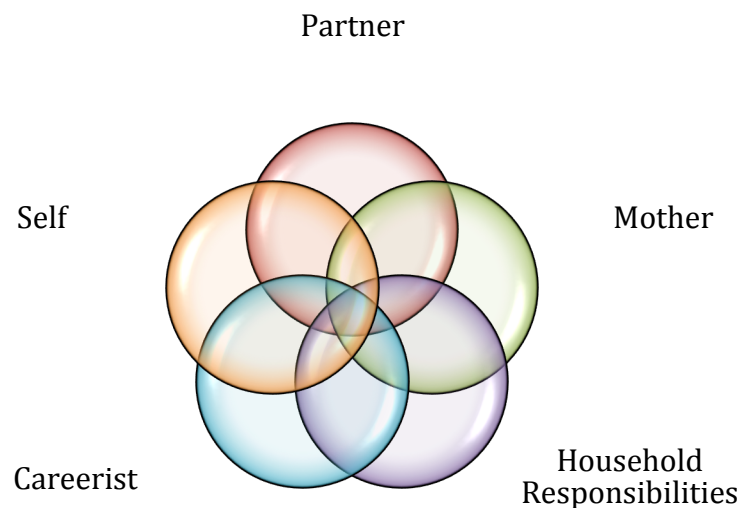
While Angela compared the different types of work-family balance from a gendered approach, Sarah took a different spin on work-family balance. She questioned the difference between work-family balance and work-life balance. She explained that she

has had to sacrifice many of her old friendships because in order to create the type of work-family balance she needed and desired, something had to go and that was her social life. In her pendulum of life, there was only room for two wholes, not three.

She described only communicating with her old friends via Facebook and other social networking means, and abandoning herself when it comes to her physical fitness routines. She described not having any time to herself to work out, watch a movie, or even go on a date with her husband. The only participant who did not share these sentiments about her social life is Michelle who had no children living at home and got out with her fiancé regularly in addition to taking golf lessons.

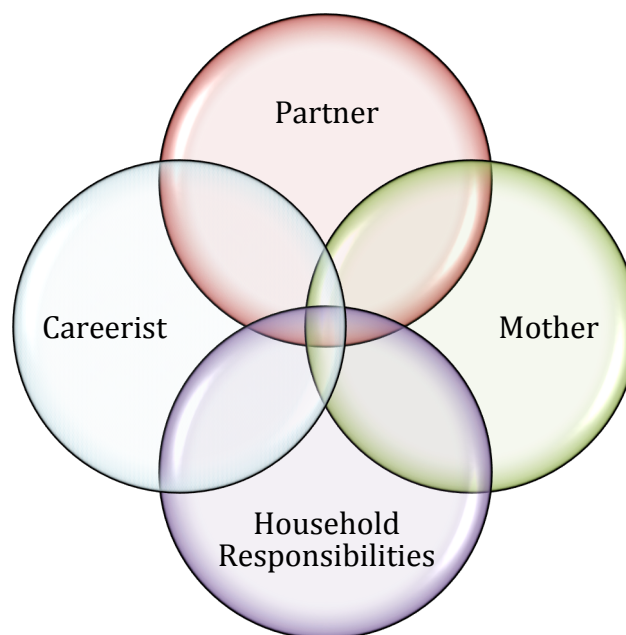
Figure 2.1 below depicts the women this study intended on studying. The purpose of this study was to uncover how these women can seemingly balance all five of these aspects of their lives including being a partner, careerist, and mother while maintaining self and household responsibilities.

Figure 4.2: Conflicting Roles



What this study revealed through analysis of these women's personal and professional histories is that balancing all five of these discourses is not as easy as it seems. The women in this study have succeeded in balancing three to four of these discourses at once, but not all five. The Figure below (Figure 4.3) demonstrates who these women are at the present time of their careers as they have all sacrificed themselves to a certain extent to give everything else to their careers, their children, their partners, and their homes.

Figure 4.3: Balanced Roles



Superintendent position/Daily Routine. Angela explained her initial excitement of her first superintendent position on many levels. She discussed how she was excited for the new challenge and the fact that she thought the hours might be different than that of a high school principal, "I had this silly idea that the superintendency might require fewer

nights because I wouldn't have to go to all the athletic events, but that just has not really panned out. There's probably...there might be slightly fewer nights but just with all the board meetings and then your committee meetings are at night.”

Angela described her job as superintendent as predictable. The board meetings are the same day every month, committee meetings are scheduled in advance, and she knows what her week is going to look like before it starts, most of the time. This allowed her to plan for the week with her husband and make sure they have all their bases covered. She compared it to the unpredictability of her schedule as a building principal or assistant principal because of unexpected suspensions or family issues that arose. Her hours were still long because as she described it, “it just takes that long to do the job, but I know that, and that's okay.” She also stated her position now has much more flexibility than it did at the building level especially in comparison to a teacher. Teachers need to be in front of their students at certain times of the day and there is just no way to get around that, but superintendents spend a lot of their time in meetings which can be scheduled appropriately.

Angela described that a strong work-family balance would be more attainable if the school board was compassionate and respectful of time.

It varies depending on who's on the school board and what they want of you. I have a couple micro-managey sorts of members of my board and that becomes time consuming, so now something that a year ago I could have accomplished in one meeting, I have to have five meetings for. Sometimes it depends on how efficient your staff is and how much you can ask of them and what they can and cannot do. So those things play a role where we are staffed at a very, very minimal level for a district of our size in terms of our central office support.

She also explained that if their central office had more support, then her entire team could have some weight off of them and begin to find a better balance in their lives as well, but no one wants to hear that the central office needs more support in a tight budget.

Michelle described her job demands as “not predictable at all.” She described meetings that were scheduled to go until 5pm, that did not end until 8pm, and the line of people that want to talk to her after meetings,

After our strategic planning session last Monday, I should have been done; we had one hour with the parents and then one hour with the board back to back that should have been done at 7 o'clock. But one of the parents wanted to talk with me after her session which pushed into the board session, so the board started without me and by the time I got in by the board, they should have been just finishing up, well that was at 7, they needed to talk to me about other things. So that was 7:45 and then I needed to wrap things up here, so I left at 8:30 when I thought I was going to be done at 7. So it's like that, all the time. If I want to get out of here, you know like for something now with my own kids or my grandkids, if I know I have to get out of here, I have to actually, physically block it on my calendar because otherwise I can't get out.

Michelle elaborated on the importance of blocking off time on her calendar to get work done and to get out of the office for awhile including spending time with family. She described the superintendent position as a second-shift job because all of the meetings are held at night because the parents and board members that are attending these meetings are working during the day. She suggested a flexible schedule for superintendents that could help them to achieve a better flow in their day and a more reasonable work-family balance such as treating the position like a second shift job and not going into the office until later morning, such as 9 or 10 am. Most days there are nighttime meetings so this flexibility of hours would help bring some peace and rejuvenation to the superintendent and provide them with a fresher insight into operations,

I easily could come in at 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning, if I wanted to, because most of my work I would say falls in the night time hours...but you know if there

was some way that being home in the morning worked better for you then I think you could flex your time in the morning pretty easily.

Rebecca shared the same sentiments as Angela in the predictability of her job demands. She recalled,

I feel like it's quite predictable. I mean it's predictable and then it's predictable that there are some things that are not predictable. So every year there is going to be something. I would think about things like ACT10 and student walkouts because there are just so many things that you can never plan for. But aside from those major exceptions I think most things can be anticipated, and I try to keep my days structured. I don't like feeling things are chaotic, I want to know what I am doing each day and each week. I feel like it's disruptive to the organization when I am canceling meetings and rescheduling them. We try to keep that to a minimum, and I don't function well in that environment so we try not to -- we have to do it sometimes but we don't do it often. We don't intentionally work in that way.

Rebecca, like Angela, mentioned the school board as a time consuming part of her job because it takes a lot of attention and a lot of work due to their differing individual needs. Board members all have differing levels of experience and usually have varying backgrounds as well. "This slows things down sometimes, things that I think we should do, I can't do because the board doesn't want to do it and that just doesn't happen too often but it's frustrating".

The job itself has been mentioned as a high-pressure job by several of the women.

Rebecca reflects on her own personal goals in her career,

There is just the pressure of the job. I mean it is my personal desire for results for children or parents' and community's desire for results for their own and each other's children, it's about children's lives, right, so there is just sort of this general weight of the job which generally doesn't get me down, but it's there.

Rebecca had some insights to share on what potential changes could be made to the position to make it more appealing for women and lessen the burnout for current

superintendents as well. She described many workplaces as not very family-friendly including her current workplace.

We don't have a maternity leave, our employees have to take their vacation days and their personal days and sick days, they use those from maternity leave and I don't know I have some fundamental issues with that, I think there is a problem if you are adoptive parents, like it's just maternity leave.

She described the differences in maternity leave between her current district and her former metropolitan district where the employees received six weeks of 100% pay before they were required to use their sick days. If employees wanted to extend their leave beyond six weeks, they received 75% salary for the next 30 days. The following 30 days was 50% pay, and then after that they could use their own sick and vacation days.

But you could really take a lot of time if needed, which I think is revolutionary, I mean, I think that's excellent. (We have) so many young mothers in particular and fathers but many young mothers around, and we want to retain them in the profession to be more progressive when it comes to family-friendly policies, just it seems like a no-brainer to me, right? So I do think there are things that we can do not just for the superintendent, but for whoever we want, yes.

In addition to the more liberal family leave policies, Rebecca suggested that board meetings on Monday nights should be moved to a different night of the week. Having meetings on Monday nights requires not only the superintendent and other executive staff to spend Sunday preparing board materials, but also requires board members to spend their Sunday reading the board materials in order to be prepared for Monday's board meetings,

That means that I spend Sundays tracking questions that are coming from the board, so we are essentially on call. It's not respecting the family, the fact that I have got a kid at home. It's definitely not respecting, (my colleague who is also at board meetings and preparing for them) who has two young children, four and under, at home. That's what I am saying, you know (there's) a mother with three young children on the board who I know does not like reading board materials on Sunday so either she does do it and not spend time with family or she is ill

prepared on Monday and none of those things feel good. So anyway, so I do think that there are things that can be adjusted to make it more doable.

Rebecca stated that more women would probably be attracted to the role of superintendent if it were more family-friendly, and that there is no reason why it could not be.

Sarah had an interesting perspective on gender in the superintendency. She saw the superintendent role to be more at fault for the lack of work-family balance, and that gender had nothing to do with it.

I don't see a lot of gender difference at this point in what's going on. I hang out equally probably with men and women who are superintendents at these kinds of events, and I just don't see a difference. I see everybody struggling with the same thing, which is how do you balance being a good parent?

Sarah continued by stating that the male superintendents are just as torn between work and family and that they are busy with the family in different ways than women are, but feel the same pull in today's society, especially if their spouse also works outside the home,

Because I think if there's, and it doesn't matter who it is that stays home, but I think if somebody's staying home and can like manage all the stuff, the logistics and kind of keep the home front running, then the other person has a shot at getting a chance to relax and to work out instead of every spare minute when you're home just going. I mean, I never sit down at home. But I don't think, I don't think the man who's a superintendent does either, 'cause I know these guys. They're coaching their kids' teams. You know, they get home or they're changing clothes in the car just like I'm doing and running kids between events. It's just what we're all doing.

You're working long hours but you have to love what you're doing. And I think a lot of the time people are just not sure that the juice is worth the squeeze for managing contentious boards, from managing, or for sitting around and writing board policy. Those aren't highlights of my job either, but part of the reason I was so intrigued with this district is, 'cause I'm in the same building as the kids. So you want to stay connected to the kids, what do you do? You stay as a principal.

Stress management. The women had mixed reviews on managing stress. They each tended to handle it differently, and had varying levels of time they take for themselves to de-stress. One attribute they all had in common was that the women did not put themselves first, and stress management had become easier for them as they become settled in their roles and as their children got older.

Angela went running with her friends a couple of times a week to keep her friendships open, keep her energy levels up, and de-stress. She also had dinner date nights with her husband weekly. Michelle took golf lessons weekly and enjoyed time off with her fiancé and her grandchildren but stated that it needed to be a priority for her or her work schedule will take over her life. She purposefully schedules time on her calendar that is not to be disrupted with work.

Rebecca mentioned an interesting observation she has made over the years regarding the life span of female superintendents. Female superintendents that she knew had not lived very long, and she attributed that to stress. She stated she did not know why but that it was a concerning observation of hers which is part of the reason she is very intentional about how her days are structured. She spends all of her time away from work with her husband and four-year-old. She does not exercise, but would like to. She has scheduling rules for herself that promote time with family such as not scheduling more than 2-3 night time work meetings/obligations a week, and no work on Saturdays. She explained that her stress levels are much lower when she feels in control and her own scheduling rules are not being broken,

So I think that helps keep stress levels manageable for me. I know what my day is and usually my days go the way that I plan them. So the major stressors for me are probably the things that I feel are sometimes is in my control and I think that -

- I think working with the board is probably the most stressful thing to be perfectly honest. I think most superintendents would probably say that.

Rebecca tried to keep her days structured and not allow too many changes of schedule because it helped keep her in control of her day and her stress.

Sarah wavers back and forth between exercising and not exercising like many adults. There were busy times and less busy times where she could take advantage of getting in some exercise. She also, maintained somewhat strict scheduling rules and explains the importance of being present when with her family. If she is helping them with their homework, then that is her focus, and not the television or her email. She stated she does not feel stress the way she used to because she has been able to stick to her schedule and be fully present while at home.

These four women have all put their careers and their children first. Because these two parts of who they are involve a large portion of their day, they are neglecting themselves to a certain extent. The women were collectively having difficulties finding time to take care of themselves, time to indulge in a hobby, time to exercise, time to spend alone with their spouse, and time with friends. The women truly believed women can have it all, but they had to be selfless to have it.

Angela was asked if she felt women could 'have it all' and her response was:

I think probably no one can have it all. I don't think you can do everything absolutely perfectly, but who can? I mean if I was home with my kids, would I be doing any better of a job of being a mother than I'm doing from a distance? I don't know. I'm sure I would find other things to do wrong. You've just got to do the best you have with what you've got. I certainly would say for me, I want to be in this role and I think I can do that and be a good mom. I definitely think I can do both those things and I think other people can do both those things.

Rebecca had similar feelings that women could have it all; she felt she already did:

Well I kind of feel like I do have it all, well it's not perfect. I actually wish I had more time to be a better superintendent, I always like that to happen, I don't know but most evenings, and I enjoy the ride home at night, I feel so fortunate and I am driving home to my beautiful family in my beautiful town, have a good job, and everybody is healthy and happy like it just can't stay this good forever. I just feel really lucky and I don't think I would change much about it. Which is perfect now I want more of everything yes, but then I have got it pretty good.

Sarah had a unique take on the question. She felt full of love and life with her family and her job, but felt that the part that had to give was her social life. She explained how she had no social life, rarely worked out, and taking care of herself was not a top priority.

You prioritize your family in the moment and then you just pick up the pieces for work and you're up late and you're up early and you never work out...I never work out and I have no social life and I have no friends outside of the profession that are local. I think that's the toll, that's the price and the sad thing is, here we were at the superintendents' conference and everybody was saying the same stuff; nobody works out the way they want to, if at all. Nobody has a social life or friends because we're in a profession where all you do all the time is talk to people and honestly you get home and it's late and you're tired and you've probably barely seen your family and what do you want to do? You want to put on your jammies and you want to watch some mindless television or read a book or just go to bed.

The way these women prioritize their families and careers differs from hour to hour throughout the course of their day. This fluidity in their ability to multi-task their priorities shows these women are blurring the lines in the way Hakim categorizes women's work-family preferences. This theory is presented as rather black and white with large variances for accuracy. The variances for accuracy should be developed into how much time each of these women spends in each category rather than labeling them simply as one or the other. Hakim's simplistic quantitative model of Preference Theory does not fit all women on any given day or in all stages of their career. It is possible that women flow in and out of these categories throughout varying stages of their careers and varying hours of their days.

Blending roles. With only 24 hours in any given day, the women in this study had to find a way to blend their roles so that they could be two places at once. Angela shared her perspective on how she was able to blend her role as a mother with her role as a superintendent. Since her children attended school in the same school district she was superintendent in, some of her nighttime duties could be double duty. Angela would bring her children to the basketball games since they were cheering for the same team and Angela “had” to be there for work anyway. This type of blending roles works for her in more capacities than just the basketball court. She could sneak peeks at her children while doing site visits at their schools without being too invasive as a parent. She also could take them along to other after school functions they might enjoy and spend time with her children while fulfilling her role as superintendent as well. This worked exceptionally well for her because her children were in the same district as her job and had an interest in the community and the high school athletics.

Time off. Each of the participants discussed time off with their families as an important way for them to recharge during the summer months. Angela takes a two-week vacation each summer with her family and frequently camps on summer weekends. Sarah, Michelle, and Rebecca all discussed their vacations as well. All four women regularly take vacations in the summer time, usually in July when the previous school year is wrapped up and there is a short lull before the next one begins. Not all of the women are in full vacation mode while they are gone though. With the nature of the position, each of them discussed needing to respond to various emails, although they were selective, and needing to take the occasional phone call while on vacation. Sarah even recalls needing to screen teacher candidates over the phone during her vacations out

of the country for fear that if she waited until when she returned, she would lose the candidate to another district. These women were taking time away from work to rejuvenate and reconnect with their families, but it was not completely “time off”.

While these women are on their vacations, they are trying to be home-centered, but considering the high pressure of their leadership positions, they are stuck in more of an adaptive mode to their vacations and time off as they attempted to balance work and family.

Job satisfaction. The women in this study described varying levels of job satisfaction from one day to the next but their passion for their work remained constant. They were in their positions because they truly loved what they do. None of these women mentioned that they were in their position as superintendent for money, yet all of them mentioned that they had a passion for their work.

When Sarah was asked why she continued to remain in her position after struggling to balance it all, she pointed to a picture in her office of a windy road that she was familiar with. She explained that she may not always know what is around each corner, but she always knows what the destination is, and sometimes the journey to get there is even more enjoyable than anticipated by looking at the picture. She then elaborated with this statement,

I think there are plenty of days when I have gone, wow, why am I still doing this? But I think if you love kids and you love education, and you believe in the power of public education, I think that’s why you stay as a superintendent because you know that the bad things will pass and the good things are usually what people remember and they usually are impacting lives in a way that almost no other profession can but the positive.

Michelle described the turnover of superintendents in her district as occurring every two years for approximately ten years. She stated that she did not understand how

you could accomplish anything in two years as superintendent because it takes so long to understand the system, the culture and climate of the district, and the people and community. She compared it to the principal position where she felt change could be made much more quickly,

But at the district level every time I make a change in like salary or benefits or something that really affects employees' working conditions that transfers over into what I'm also trying to achieve instructionally 'cause, I think I worry about climate more than I did as a principal. Just seemed like climate was easier as a principal. Probably 'cause you're onsite and you're in classrooms and things. But as a principal you don't have control over any of those human resources types of issues whereas now I'm also the HR person for the district. For example, we still had cash in lieu in the district up until about a month ago. You got \$4,500.00 if you didn't take our insurance. Well our insurance premiums are so high that now that's against the Affordable Care Act. As of January we're gonna get fined so I had to eliminate cash in lieu. People just lost it. They took it as you personally changed their benefit and they've been expecting this.

Although Michelle reported really liking her job as superintendent, she compared it to her previous position as an elementary principal where her summers were much slower paced and she could have shorter working days. She stated that the superintendent position is not like that at all and that it never stops. There is always so much to do, and you are always on call.

Advice for Female Superintendent Aspirants with Children

Although all four women had varying backgrounds and paths to the superintendency, they all shared some common attributes and each of them had advice for women aspirants with children. This next section will provide their advice for achieving balance in the superintendency.

Angela described a conversation she had with one of her female assistant principals,

You just do it. You just do it and you figure it out. I think not to be afraid of that, because first of all, we need women in these leadership roles. This is education that's dominated by women teachers and then dominated by male administrators and that is not a healthy dynamic. It is just not. So I think it's important obviously to do whatever you feel is most comfortable, but it's certainly not impossible to be a mother and to be even pregnant and going through that process as an administrator. And I think it's got to be normalized too that that's okay, that women can be in leadership roles and they can be mothers and they can be pregnant and that's just an accepted part of what we do. So I don't know and yeah, that it will work out and your children will be fine and they will love you. I mean, I really do sincerely feel like my kids are proud of the work that I do and I don't feel like I'm not close to them.

Michelle took a different approach than Angela in her advice on achieving balance,

I wouldn't recommend it. It's interesting so I am having this conversation right now with my high school principal who has two very small kids. And she is even at this point, willing to give up her high school principalship to take a less paying job as an elementary principal or an AP just to have that family time back because she is seeing the time commitment and the time away from her family.

I still value the time that I had my teaching career when the kids were little. I mean when you have summers off, I mean it's really what 8 weeks, 6 weeks, you know that you really have time off, but I enjoy that time off, I see that with my daughter who is a teacher you know that was just, it was almost less stress on me knowing that she was home with the kids and I didn't have to deal with the babysitter and you know getting up and trying to manage all of that and I was trying to help her with that a little bit.

Although Michelle discourages young women with children to enter a superintendent position while their children are young, she felt that an elementary principal position would be fine because it does not require all the night time activities that a high school principal position or a superintendent position does.

Rebecca's advice to aspiring female leaders is to "develop a plan to make it work with your partner (if there is one) and always attempt to meet at the 50 yard line – if one person isn't trying to get there, it won't work". She cites frequent check-ins and adjustments as keys to success and to find a way that works for you and your family

because every situation is different. She also recommends making sure that family time is high quality and that you are completely present when you are there.

Sarah took more of a gung-ho approach. She is the cheerleader for women who want to pursue the superintendency. “Do it, do it all, you know, you can have your cake and eat it too, I mean it is 2016”. She described some of the moms in her district as the female leaders of international corporations, so the parents in her district could maybe empathize with her multiple roles as well,

I don't think in Corporate America, everybody is always happy all the time either; I think there is plenty of evidence to the contrary. So I don't think it's different that way either, I just think if you want a family, you got to figure out how you are going to make it work. There are lots of nights, there has to be lots of flexibility with whoever your partner is.

The participants in this study have set themselves apart from many other women in education simply by pursuing and becoming superintendents. The demands are many, and the time it takes is cumbersome; however, they have found ways to have families and lead school districts. Their successes are many, and some would argue that they have found balance. They have managed their work and their families, but not without sacrificing balance and themselves.

The next chapter discusses how these women have achieved their roles, what challenges they have navigated through to get there, and how they see the balance of their work and family lives.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the personal and professional lives of women holding superintendent positions to find commonalities in their approaches to family responsibilities related to creating a positive work-family balance. Considering that women are underrepresented in the role of superintendent when compared to their representation as K-12 classroom teachers, this research study explored the work-family balance required of women who have achieved the highest-level administrative roles in the educational field.

This qualitative study was conducted through personal interviews with female superintendents in Wisconsin. Data from the interviews were collected and analyzed to identify themes around work-family balance. Several themes emerged that either reinforced the literature or refuted it. The themes in this study were separated into two overarching areas: Professional Factors and Personal Factors.

The most significant theme found under the Professional Factor umbrella is that the superintendent role itself creates barriers for women's success in the position. We expect too much from our superintendents, and have created this important leadership role unaccepting of family-friendly policies.

Another major finding was that none of the participants had actively sought the superintendency. They all described being influenced by someone, and having received the "coveted tap of the shoulder" (Muñoz et al., 2014). Additionally, the participants described being cautious of how they were perceived as a superintendent until they had been in their role for a few years and had earned positive reputations.

The major Personal Factors discussed by women in this study revolved around children and spousal support. Those with spousal support discussed the importance of having a very fluid and well-coordinated schedule with their partners that contributed to work-family balance.

This chapter discusses the findings, relates the findings to Preference Theory, outlines the limitations of the study, suggests future research, and details the significance of the study.

Professional Factors. The professional factors that were most noteworthy in the findings of this study were perception of female leaders, career paths of the participants, and structure of the superintendent position. These three themes came up regularly in interviews and many of the participants shared similar experiences in these areas.

Perception. Several of the women brought up the perception of themselves as leaders as part of their histories. They discussed not taking their full maternity leaves because they did not want anyone at work to think they were not committed to their administrative roles. One described the need to always be put together with her hair and nails done so that she would be perceived as “having it all together”, and several women did not feel comfortable shrugging off these perceptions or feelings of disapproval until they were well established and several years into their positions. Brunner and Grogan (2007) stated that women are perceived as weak leaders. The typical masculine face of the superintendency has created a limitation for a feminine face to be taken seriously in the role. The women in this study certainly felt that they had the potential to be perceived as weak, and that they needed to prove themselves as strong, capable, and committed leaders. To show their dedication to their job, they believed that their families would have

to take the backseat, at least for the first couple of years, until they had a chance to prove themselves as capable as a male leader. One participant suggested that these perceptions might also apply to men as well as women, but the stigma is still there for women working in this male-dominated position. As demonstrated through the women's stories, they felt they had to overcome that stigma.

Career Path. Another professional factor that had significant impact on the participants' career trajectories was the career path leading up to the superintendency. The women in this study had varied career paths to the superintendent position. One aspect of their paths that was similar was that all four women left their previous administrative roles and districts for superintendent positions at smaller districts. Blount (1998) argues women only obtain superintendent positions in smaller and rural schools, and as much as this is no longer the case since women are leading larger districts than ever before in the state¹⁰, it is still interesting that each of the participants in this study left larger districts for smaller districts when pursuing their superintendent positions. It is also interesting that some of these women were able to relocate for their superintendent positions; two women who relocated were the primary earners for their families.

Interestingly enough, the women did not pursue these positions as superintendent. Each of them was influenced and encouraged by outside parties to apply for a superintendent position. None of the women aspired to become a superintendent during their careers until someone "tapped them on the shoulder" (Muñoz et al., 2014). These women either changed where their interests were, or they did not see the leadership potential in themselves that others did.

¹⁰ WI DPI (2014)

Superintendent position. The current structure of the superintendent position itself impedes women from wanting to go into the superintendency. It further highlights that the structure of the position has not advanced to best suit women leaders.

Sarah made an interesting point during one of her interviews regarding superintendents with children. She mentioned that these superintendents are constantly on the go, changing clothes in their cars, going from one child's event to the next, and sandwiching meetings with these parenting duties. She stated, "It's what we are all doing", men and women alike which raises some insights into the rigor of the superintendent position itself. These superintendents are on call 24/7, so maybe these are the people who should be in charge of deciding what needs to change about the position itself in order to recruit more qualified candidates into the role. Possibly the position is too demanding and too big of a position for anyone to find balance.

For example, Rebecca stated that Board of Education meetings on Monday nights are not respecting the family time of their board members or their superintendents and other staff that need to be prepared for Monday night board meetings. With a Monday night meeting, people are reviewing and preparing for these presentations and discussions on the weekend when they could be spending time with their families. If they choose to spend that time with their families, then they are ill-prepared for their board meetings. Possibly there is a better night of the week to have these regularly scheduled meetings to allow for a better balance for all involved.

Secondly, Rebecca mentioned the absence of family-friendly policies in the workplace, including her current workplace. If school districts would adopt a more

European or liberal policy on “maternity leave” to not only allow but encourage women to take time off, this might help attract more women into the position. (See Table 5.1)

Table 5.1: A Comparison of Great Britain and U.S.A. Family Leave Policies

| | Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) Great Britain | Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) United States |
|--------------|---|---|
| Longevity | 39 weeks | 12 weeks |
| Financed | By the government | Either unpaid or the employee may use their paid time off |
| Pay schedule | <u>1st 6 weeks</u> : 90% of average weekly income <u>weeks 7-39</u> : 90% of average weekly income or €139.58 or whichever is lower | Unpaid or 100% funded through employee’s accrued paid time off |
| Source | https://www.gov.uk/employers-maternity-pay-leave/entitlement | https://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla |

Rebecca also pointed out that “maternity/paternity leave” should apply not only to biological parents as a means to recover from birth, but also to adoptive parents to spend time with newly adopted children.

The third suggestion made to improve the superintendent position was flexible scheduling. The superintendent position can be seen as a second shift job, so why are superintendents expected to be there morning, noon, and night? Superintendents should be able to flex their hours as long as they are getting their work done, advancing the school district, making meetings, and meeting all expectations set forth for them by the school board. There is no reason why this position needs to be sixteen hours a day onsite.

Personal Factors. The personal factors that attributed most significantly to this analysis were childhood, and balance.

Childhood. The childhood of these women was discussed in order to provide an overview of their predisposition to leadership as children. Curiously, women in this study were either the oldest child in their family or took on the role of the oldest child. They shared leadership experiences they had as children from taking care of their younger siblings to taking part in leadership responsibilities at their high schools. Each of the women had hard working parents who demonstrated a strong work ethic. Several women attributed their work ethic and leadership abilities to their parents, their upbringing, and experiences they had growing up. Some of their family members were in education, but it was not common among them. The tireless effort their parents put into their own careers was common among the participants.

Work-Family Balance: Putting it all Together. The women in this study began their superintendent positions feeling the need to prove themselves as capable, strong, and qualified women leaders in order to avoid the bias toward female leaders. They were worried about how others perceived their leadership and their commitment to the profession, as they made sacrifices to balance work and family.

The women in this study struggled to achieve balance in their lives although each of them felt particularly balanced between their work and family lives. Where they felt out of balance was in their social lives. The participants described sacrificing their social lives in order to free up time they needed to achieve balance between work and home. They stated that balancing all three was unreasonable, and their social lives were the part that they could handle being without. This meant no or very few dates with their spouse, never seeing their friends, and certainly not having any time for themselves outside of their primary two roles of mother/wife and superintendent.

The participants were selfless and gave of themselves around the clock to their families and to their careers, leaving very little to nothing left for themselves. Each of them shared discouraging stories about attempting to maintain workout plans, whether they loved them or despised them, each of them wanted to have a fitness routine for their own health, but just could not carve out the time. They began each new year with good intentions and when reality hit, something had to give, and their exercise regimes were usually the first to go.

Job satisfaction for these women depended on how balanced they felt at the time of the interviews or at any given point in their careers. The less frazzled the women felt, the more they seemed to enjoy their jobs as superintendents, and the amount of support they had at home played an enormous role in that sense of balance.

All the women seemed to have a passion for their work, and therefore made it a priority in their lives. They have developed schedules and routines to make them less stressed and have carved out time on their calendars for things that matter to them both at work and at home. Without these non-negotiables, the women found themselves stressed and not enjoying what they did. At the time of the interviews, the women had many stories to share about being unbalanced and stressed, but they had found ways to manage the stress in order to heighten their level of job satisfaction.

After completion of this study, it is apparent that although there are some career mentors for women, there is a lack of women leaders who are in a position to be positive role models on work-family balance for women aspiring to superintendent positions. If women do not have role models for work-family balance, they are struggling unnecessarily to figure out what balance means to them, and how they can achieve it.

Preference Theory

Catherine Hakim (2000) argues that feminist theories used to explain the barriers women face in achieving high-level administrative positions such as the superintendency are valid but somewhat out of date. She claims that women are more likely to strive to achieve an appropriate level of work-life balance than men are and therefore women must first identify what balance means to them. Hakim developed Preference Theory in order to describe women's career decisions using the following three categories: *Home-centered*, *Adaptive*, and *Work-centered*.

Home-centered women have home and family as their main priority throughout their lives, prefer not to work, and obtain credentials as cultural capital. The number of children they have depends on government policy and family wealth and their values are focused on family. *Adaptive* women want to combine work and family. They want to work but are not totally committed to career. They obtain their qualifications with the intent of using them and working. They are very responsive to government policy, social policy, employment policy, educational policies, school timetables, child-care services, public attitude towards workingwomen, and work flexibility. They tend to compromise between two conflicting sets of values.

According to Hakim's theory, *work-centered* women hold their main priority as work and they are fully committed to it. They make a large investment in their qualifications and training. They are responsive to economic, artistic, and political opportunities and are not responsive to social and family policies like they are to marketplace ideals. Childless women tend to be concentrated here.

In analyzing the data for this study, it became clear that the participants did not fall into any single characteristic within Preference Theory. Rebecca, who identified herself as *work-centered*, identified some needed improvements in her district as it relates to maternity leave for new parents. Hakim's theory suggests that *work-centered* women are not responsive to family and social policy, meaning "they are not affected by incentives to have more or fewer children" or by policies allowing them to stay at home and raise children (Hakim, 2000, p. 165). (See Appendix D) Although these policies did not impact Rebecca's decision to have one child, she has shown a sensitivity to these policies for others in her field and is actively advocating for more liberal policies for these women (and men).

The adaptive category states that women want to work but are not totally committed to their careers. Each of the women in this study were committed to their careers. They invested significantly in their administrative qualifications and training (*work-centered*), but yet were very responsive to educational policies, childcare services, public attitudes towards working women, and work flexibility (*adaptive*). The participants were all blending their lives the best way they could in order to achieve a balance that worked for them between their work and family (*adaptive*).

As Hakim defines *home-centered*, none of the women shared any of the home-centered characteristics as they all preferred to work, and did not consider social policy¹¹ when family planning. It could be argued however, that some of these women obtained their doctoral degrees and superintendent licenses as a form of cultural capital (*home-centered*), because although they knew they would work, they did not aspire to the

¹¹ government policies which encourage women to have more or fewer children or which allow women to stay at home to care for children

superintendency, each of them had completed or was near completion of their licensure when they were first considered for a superintendent position.

This study provides a new perspective for Hakim's Preference Theory. As Grogan (1996) discussed, the conflicting discourses of "partnering, parenting, and homemaking" meant women were constantly shifting between the different discourses and were never fully willing to abandon one discourse or another. This begs the question then of, "Can women really have it all?" As Woo (1985) pointed out, "What American women need to understand now is that they can be career women, mothers, sex symbols, fashion plates, and community leaders – but not all at the same time, not without personal stress" (p. 288).

The women in this study have been unwavering in their drive in their professional lives and several of them classified themselves as *work-centered*. This study argues that women do not fall into just one of Hakim's Preference Theory categories. Many women leaders may want to be perceived as *work-centered* so that they do not appear to be weak or less committed than their male counterparts, but in fact, they tend to blur the lines between *work-centered* and *adaptive*. Some even move back and forth between these two categories at various stages of their careers and their positions (teacher, principal, superintendent), their family lives, and perhaps throughout any given day.

This study argues that Hakim's theory on women's career preferences is flawed and not applicable to all women. The categories Hakim presents are not sufficient in explaining women's career choices. For example, Michelle is more *work-centered* now that her children are grown and no longer living with her than she was when they were younger and at home. Rebecca characterizes herself as *work-centered* but makes efforts

in her daily routines to schedule in time for her child and her husband, which classifies her more as adaptive in Hakim's theory. Rebecca used to be more *work-centered* before she had a child and made a point to mention that she felt something was missing before she became a mother. Although she is very focused on her work, she still meets the criteria in the adaptive category since she became a parent. Sarah stated she has the ability to turn it on and turn it off when it comes to work and family. She stated she is *work-centered* when she is at work, and *home-centered* when she is at home. She does not check her email or her phone when she is with her family and emphasized the importance of being present completely when with her husband and children. And finally, Angela, who is arguably the most adaptive of all the women, still feels that she can improve in certain situations on how she balances work and family, but has always had high aspirations for her career and her expectations of herself as a mother and wife.

The women in this study proved that there are no distinct buckets for working mothers. Educators tend to want to incorporate children in their personal lives as well as their professional lives and therefore, it is possible that the nature of education professionals would suggest that it is unusual to have a truly work-centered professional. Hakim's Preference Theory has some merit, but is a rather generalized version that gives too much credence to the characterizations of women's choices in the marketplace. The women in this study did their best to balance their work life with their family life and revealed some common characteristics among them.

This study sought out traits and characteristics of women superintendents with children in order to identify commonalities among them as they relate to work-family balance. One common trait the women in this study shared was the ability to switch

gears and be completely present and focused on their task at hand. While at work, the women had the support systems and the coordination of their family life completely handled so they did not have to juggle their child-care or other family needs during the workday. While at home, they were very good about setting limits on checking their emails and phones and set up their schedules to allow for uninterrupted, quality family time.

When the women in this study were in their first year or two of any of their administrative positions, they were more stressed than they were at the time of this study. They wanted to establish themselves as strong women leaders who were just as capable as their male counterparts and had to sacrifice some personal time to make that happen, but now that they were established themselves, they were more comfortable in setting limits on their schedules in order to achieve a balance that would work for them.

In summary, the women in this study would appear to have been more work-centered during the first two impressionable years of their administrative careers and have found a way to blur the lines between *work-centered* and *adaptive* categorizations that allow them to focus 100% on family and work, and this categorization ebbs and flows as the day and week progresses. A good portion of their days are *work-centered*, but they have family time that is *home-centered* or more *adaptive*.

In analyzing how Preference Theory applies to these women, this study suggests that women cannot be placed in just one classification, but perhaps their days and years can be split among several buckets, depending on their task at hand and the intensity of which task they are focusing on at that given moment. Hakim's theory should be expanded on to become more of a spectrum of characteristics rather than a distinct

classification of women's preferences. There is a vast flexibility of movement between the classifications and each of the women's unique career histories and familial situations allows them to flow in and out of these distinctions at varying times of their careers.

The women in this study may view or situate themselves in one category or another partially because they are decision makers, and partially because of how they are reflecting on themselves at that particular moment in time; however, women tend to blur the lines of Hakim's categories and are more *adaptive* than they think and have moved through each category.

Table 5.2: Proposed changes to Hakim's Preference Theory

| <u>Family Only</u> | <u>Adaptive</u> | <u>Work Only</u> |
|---|--|---|
| Family life and children are the main priorities throughout life. | <i>Women who want to blend work and children.</i> | Childless women <i>who work</i> are concentrated here. |
| Prefer not to work. | <i>Want to work, but not at the expense of their children.</i> | Committed to work. |
| Qualifications obtained as cultural capital. | Qualifications obtained with the intent of working | Large investment in qualifications/training for cultural capital employment/other activities. |

Though Hakim has written on women's fertility, it is interesting she does not take it into consideration when classifying women into one of these three characterizations of *home-centered*, *adaptive*, and *work-centered*. Simply labeling a woman as *work-centered* bears nothing on whether the work-centered woman is focused on career because she wants to be or because she has not been able to have children of her own, or

whether she is delaying having children until a more suitable time in her career. Hakim also fails to take into consideration whether or not women are *work-centered* because they are the primary wage-earner for their family or if there is a spouse. These classifications should be considered more of a generalization or a guide of common attributes among women rather than a labeling of women.

Many women are *home-centered* for part of their lives if they are raising children. Many women choose to stay home with their children from birth until the children are school-age. This does not make these women any less interested or less committed to their careers. The same scenario can be described for a woman who has always wanted to have children, but was unable for whatever reason. She may throw herself into her work unknowingly or unwillingly due to circumstance, and not necessarily because she was hard wired to be *work-centered* rather than *home-centered*, or *adaptive*.

Some questions that should be taken into consideration when analyzing Hakim's Preference Theory categories are: Do you wish to have children? Do you have children? How old are your children? Do you wish to have a career in management/leadership? Are you committed to your career? Do you wish to combine career and children? How would you prioritize career and children? Was your career choice planned? Were your family/children planned?

It seems unfair that women would be classified into one of these characterizations without at least asking them the above questions. It also seems unfair that men do not seem to have to fit into such categories or make the same trade offs as women do in order to have both. Although the questions themselves may seem like a quiz from an online tabloid, they will unveil some very important attributes about the interviewee on who

they are and what their policy views are on working mothers, rather than the cut-and-dry approach of Preference Theory. This theory could be advanced more if thought of as more of a continuum of focus for women throughout differing stages of their career development.

Limitations

One of the limitations in this study involved identifying participants, and the use of a theory based on life experiences for women in Great Britain. Collecting data on women in education is difficult because no educational agency disaggregates data by gender. For the purpose of this study, the gender information on women in the superintendency were obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The DPI publishes data a year after it is collected; so the information is not current school year data. Most of the DPI data on superintendents had gender associated with the individual because the individual self reported on licensing paperwork. However, DPI does not mandate gender reporting, nor do they publish gender information on all of the state's administrators. For those without gender information listed, distinctions were made based on first and sometimes middle names. For those where a gender-neutral name was listed, designations as male or female were made through further research.

Another limitation to this study was discovered after data collection. The women in this study all fall within a small age range. Although one of the women had older children, all the women participants began their first superintendent position at or around the age of 40. There was no demographic for other age groups in this study.

This study does not attempt to generalize to the entire population of women superintendents in Wisconsin or otherwise. In fact, this study is meant to provide a few examples of how women have navigated their career trajectories as women, mothers, and professionals telling each of their stories through their own experiences. This narrative analysis is also a benefit to the study because it gave voice to an underrepresented group of women in the superintendent position in which started a necessary dialogue with an important message.

The final limitation for this study was that Hakim's Preference Theory came from a British background. Great Britain's social policies as they relate to childcare and maternity leave are not comparable to the social policies in the United States. Her theory described how women in certain categories either are or are not responsive to social policy. It should be noted that they were discussing topics of social policy in Great Britain, and not in the United States, where this study was conducted.

Future Research

After completion of this study, several questions remain which may prompt some opportunities for future research. First, a longitudinal study of these same women might provide data on mobility and career paths. Would these women remain in their current districts? Would these women move to smaller or larger districts or make geographic changes? What happens to the career trajectories of participants as their children get older? Do they become more mobile and therefore more inclined to switch districts? Do they remain in their positions as superintendents for the remainder of their career in education?

Although more women are earning superintendent licensure and doctoral degrees than ever before, the number of women in the superintendency (26% superintendents in Wisconsin are female) is still disproportionately low when compared to the number of women in the field of education. If the data can be disaggregated by gender, a future study comparing degree completers for EdD and PhD programs versus the number of students who drop off at ABD (All But Dissertation) or just after obtaining superintendent licensure might produce some interesting findings. Could more men be obtaining necessary credentials, and then seeking employment in the superintendency? How do these numbers compare to those who complete doctoral programs? What barriers might exist in doctoral and licensing programs that are specific to women, particularly mothers?

According to the women in this study, women who are parents seem to have struggles with maintaining a positive work/family balance in their role as superintendents. It would be interesting to conduct a study of women in administrative licensure programs to investigate their reasons for or not for aspiring to the superintendency as Wisconsin has a shortage of superintendents. Are women aspiring to move into superintendencies, and if not, why not? Are they moving to fill vacancies?

Many school districts, especially the rural districts or smaller districts are having a difficult time hiring for superintendent vacancies and keeping superintendents once in the position and have been forced to hire interims and retirees to fill their vacancies. It would be important to investigate whether districts with assistant superintendents found that their highest-level administrators (superintendent and assistant superintendent) report

having a better work-family balance as compared to districts without assistant superintendents.

It would also be important to examine levels of confidence at completion of superintendent licensing programs considering all four women in this study were not aspiring to the superintendency until they were “tapped on the shoulder” (Muñoz, et al., 2014). Does this have to do with the lack of mentorships and networking available to women or more about the insecurities regarding the perceptions of women leaders? Would these women be mentors to future women aspirants and superintendents? Could it be about the demands of the superintendent position itself or family demands? This research study raises many possibilities for future research not only on the subject of women superintendents with children, but on women leaders in education on their leadership aspirations as well.

Significance of Study

As Blount (1998) argued, “To understand clearly the mechanism of gender-role polarization in educational employment, it is important to look closely at the cases of persons who have crossed socially defined gender lines, in this case women who have challenged the bounds of a traditionally male domain” (p. 3). This study is significant for several reasons. First, there is a lack of female superintendents nationwide. Women make up the majority of teachers in K-12 public education, yet they continue to be underrepresented in the top leadership post. Many studies have outlined gender biases and other barriers that keep women from achieving the superintendency, yet there were no published findings specific to female superintendents for Wisconsin, nor research that

attempted to look more deeply at women superintendents' experiences in their efforts to achieve a positive work-family balance.

The research regarding female superintendents examined women's oppression and inability to climb the career ladder in K-12 public education because: (1) women were perceived as weak leaders (Brunner & Grogan, 2007), (2) women were not given the appropriate amount of pre-job training through mentoring (Blount, 1998; Eckman, 2002), (3) women did not have networking opportunities (Brunner & Grogan, 2007), and (4) women may have faced tokenism (Edson, 1988). Rather than setting this study in the context of potential experiences of gender bias, this study examined the issue of the low number of women in the superintendency as a preference issue, using Hakim's Preference Theory (2006) as a way to ground the personal and professional histories of four women superintendents to identify their commonalities, the ways they have secured their positions, and the methods they have used to balance work and family. To date, there were no published studies on women in the superintendency applying Preference Theory as their framework.

This study found a problem while applying Preference Theory to women's career decisions. Although the participants were identifying themselves as *work-centered* when asked how they characterized themselves, they proved to be far more *adaptive* in their actions. The women in this study all have children, and all have found a level of satisfaction with their careers and their families that allows them to continue to remain passionate about their careers. What Hakim's Preference Theory does not take into consideration are the sacrifices the women endure in their personal lives, in order to

continue their work lives. By Hakim's definition of adaptive, it would seem that all workingwomen with children would be considered adaptive.

Adaptive women, according to Hakim, are responsive to social policy including childcare services, maternity leave, public attitude towards working women, and the promotion of female employment. The women in this study spent much of their time discussing these topics and how they have navigated the challenges. However, one can be responsive to such policies without making life-altering decisions based off of these policies. The women in this study were sensitive to social policies, felt the pressure of certain policies, and expressed an interest and desire to change some policies as well, especially around maternity leave and the perception of women leaders.

The women in this study revealed their struggles balancing work and families. As society's expectation of motherhood changes, so should the inner voice in women's heads, the voice which tells them they have to be everything to everyone all of the time, and that it is the only way that women can "have it all." Having it all has many definitions and women should be the ones to define it for themselves.

The superintendent position is a difficult and time demanding role with high expectations of input, knowledge, preparedness, and time. The women in this study had excellent time management skills, extremely supportive networks in their personal lives, solid foundations to work from, and were selfless beyond expectations.

REFERENCES

- Bell, S. E. (1988). *Becoming a political woman: The reconstruction and interpretation of experience through stories*. In A. D. Todd & S. Fisher (Eds.), *Gender and discourse: The power of talk* (pp. 97-123). Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex.
- Belkin, L. (2003, Oct 26, 2003). The opt-out revolution. *New York Times Magazine*, Oct 26, 2003, 42-47, 58, 85-86.
- Biklen, S. K., & Brannigan, M. B. (Eds.). (1980). *Women and educational leadership*. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books.
- Birchbauer, L. (2009). Personal interview.
- Blount, J. M. (1998). *Destined to rule the schools: Women and the superintendency, 1873-1995*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Brunner, C. C., & Grogan, M. (2007). *Women leading school systems: Uncommon Roads to Fulfillment*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Center for Disease Control. (2015). National Vital Statistics Reports. Vol. 64, No. 1. January 15, 2015. (2013 birth data)
- Chafe, W. (1972). *The American woman: Her changing social, economic and political roles, 1920-1970*. New York: Oxford University.
- Dana, J. A., & Bourisaw, D. M. (2006). *Women in the superintendency: Discarded leadership*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Eckman, E. W. (2000). *The high school principalship: A woman's perspective*. Dissertation. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
- Eckman, E. W. (2002). Women high school principals: Perspectives on role conflict, role commitment, and job satisfaction. *Journal of School Leadership*, 12(No. 1), 57-77.
- Edson, S. K. (1988). *Pushing the limits: The female administrative aspirant*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Eisner, E.W., & Peshkin, A. (1990). *Qualitative inquiry in education: the continuing debate*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Farmer, E. (Ed.). (1993). *Paying our rent*. Austin, TX: Texas Council of Women School Executives: Sam Houston Press.

- Gilligan, C. (1993). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Ginsburg, F.D. (1989). *Contested lives: The abortion debate in an American community*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Glass, T. E. (2000). Where are all the women superintendents? *School Administrator*, 57(6).
- Glesne, C. & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. White Plains, New York: Longman.
- Grogan, M. (1996). *Voices of women aspiring to the superintendency*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Grogan, M., & Shakeshaft, C. (2011). *Women and educational leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Grove, R., & Montgomery, P. (1999). *Women and the leadership paradigm: Bridging the gender gap*.
- Hakim, C. (2006). Women, careers, and work-life preferences. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 34(3), 279-294. doi: 10.1080/03069880600769118
- Hakim, C. (2000). *Work-lifestyle choices in the 21st century: Preference theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Havemen, H. A., & Beresford, L. S. (2012). If you're so smart, why aren't you the boss? Explaining the persistent vertical gender gap in management. *ANNALS, AAPSS*, 639 (January 2012).
- Hill, M. S., & Ragland, J. C. (1995). *Women as educational leaders: Opening windows, pushing ceilings*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Hinden, A. (2009). Personal interview.
- Hochschild, A., & Machung, A. (2003). *The second shift*. New York: The Penguin Group.
- Hoffman, L. W. (1974). Effects of maternal employment on the child: a review of the research. *Developmental Psychology*, 10, 204-228.
- Kelsey, C., Allen, K., Coke, K., & Ballard, G. (2014). Lean in and lift up: Female superintendents share their career path choices. *Journal of Case Studies in Education*, 6(September 2014), 1-11.

- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1986). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Meador, D. (2016). Examining the role of an effective school superintendent. Retrieved 1/7/17 from <http://teaching.about.com/od/admin/a/Superintendent-Of-Schools.htm>
- Muñoz, A. J., Pankake, A., Ramalho, E. M., Mills, S., & Simonsson, M. (2014). A study of female central office administrators and their aspirations to the superintendency. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 42(5), 764-784. doi: 10.1177/1741143213510508
- National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) nces.ed.gov/ccd/rural_locales.asp. Accessed 10/17/16
- Noddings, N. (2005). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education* (Second Edition ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Nye, F. I. (1974). Sociocultural context in Hoffman and Nye. *Working Mothers*.
- Paddock, S. (1981). Male and female career paths in school administration. In P. Schmuck, W. Charters & R. Carlson (Eds.). *Educational policy and management: Sex differentials* (pp. 187-198). New York: Academic Press.
- Reissman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Reynolds, C. (1987). *Naming the experience: women, men ,and their changing work lives as teachers and principals*. University of Toronto.
- Reynolds, C. (2002). *Women and school leadership: International perspectives*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (1992). *Moral Leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. Publishers.
- Shaevitz, M. H. (1984). *The superwoman syndrome*: Warner Books.
- Shakeshaft, C. (1989). *Women in educational administration*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Slaughter, A.-M. (2012). Why women still can't have it all. *The Atlantic*.
- Sperandio, J., & Devdas, L. (2015). Staying close to home: women's life-choices and the superintendency. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 53(3), 335-353.

Statistics, U. S. D. o. L. (2010).

Treas, J., & Widmer, E. D. (2000). Married women's employment over the life course: Attitudes in cross-national perspective. *Social Forces*, 78(4), 1409-1436.

United Kingdom Government (2017). Retrieved 1/7/17 from <https://www.gov.uk/employers-maternity-pay-leave/entitlement>

United States Census Bureau (2010). <https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/GARM/Ch12GARM.pdf>
Accessed 10/17/16.

United States Department of Labor (2017). Retrieved 1/7/17, from <https://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla>

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2014). Administrative salary report. Retrieved 8/3/14, from http://lbstat.dpi.wi.gov/lbstat_newasr

APPENDIX A

Email Correspondence with Participants

Email message to superintendents

My name is Nicole White and I am a PhD student at Marquette University. I am a mother of two children and have recently left education temporarily to stay at home with them.

I will be starting my dissertation this spring and am looking for two more participants. My research is on work-family balance of female superintendents with children. I plan to conduct 1 in depth interview, (and 1-2 follow-ups either via phone or in person) of each of my 5 participants. The study will be a narrative analysis of the women's lives that led them to this point in their careers and family lives including their personal and professional histories as they have shaped their career decisions.

The first interview would likely be the longest lasting approximately 2 hours. The 2nd and 3rd interviews may not be needed and could possibly take place over the phone for follow-up questions. I don't have an exact timeline yet, but I am thinking interviews would take place in May/June. Please let me know if you are interested and willing to participate.

Regardless of your decision, I am also looking for more participants. I have made a list of some women superintendents that might meet my criteria, but am looking for any insight you might have as well. These women would need to 1) have children, 2) be willing and able to devote time to the study, 3) be willing and able to answer follow-up questions, 4) be female, and 5) be a licensed and seated superintendent in the state of Wisconsin preferably in their first 5 years on the job. I hope you will consider being a part of this study and realize that all participants' identities will remain completely confidential. Please let me know if you are interested and enjoy your holiday! Hopefully you get a break as well!

Please let me know if you are interested and meet the criteria as outlined above and if you have any other name suggestions. I appreciate your time. Thank you.

Take care, Nicole White Marquette University PhD student

APPENDIX B

Participation Consent Form

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY
AGREEMENT OF CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Work-Family Balance: A narrative analysis of the personal and professional histories of female superintendents with children

Nicole White
PhD Candidate
Educational Policy and Leadership (EDPL)

You have been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. Participation is completely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research study is to examine the personal and professional lives of women holding superintendent positions and examine commonalities among their approaches to family responsibilities and work-family balance.

PROCEDURES: I understand that I will participate in interviews during this calendar year. The interviews will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy. The recordings will later be transcribed and will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of this study. For confidentiality purposes, your name will not be recorded. Interviews will cover personal and professional life histories of the participants including how they adapted their lives to achieve work-family balance, how they obtained their current positions, their career trajectories and histories, as well as personal obstacles that may have occurred along the way.

DURATION: I understand that my participation will consist of two or three interview sessions of approximately 60-90 minutes during this calendar year. I understand follow-up phone calls may be necessary.

RISKS: I understand that the risks associated with participation in this study are no more than those I would encounter in everyday life. I understand that if I become uncomfortable answering questions during the interviews I will be able to stop the interview at any time or I may choose to skip any questions with which I am uncomfortable.

BENEFITS: I understand that the only known benefits for my participation in this study is to help improve the understanding of the demands of female superintendents with children and the complexity of work-family balance.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All information you reveal in this study will be kept confidential. All your data will be assigned an arbitrary code number rather than using your name or other information that could identify you as an individual. When the results of the study are published, you will not be identified by name. The data will be destroyed by shredding paper documents, deleting electronic files, and destroying audio-recordings five years after the completion of the study. I understand that the data will be stored in a locked personal home office and on a password protected laptop. I understand that the data from this research may be used for conference presentations and publications. Finally, I understand that research records may be inspected by the Marquette University Institutional Review Board or its designees.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION: I understand that participating in this study is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. In order to withdraw from this study it is only necessary to notify Nicole White by phone (920-210-3347) or by email (nicole.white@marquette.edu). I understand that all data collected prior to my terminating participation in the study will be destroyed per my request.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Nicole White, 920-21-3347. If you have question or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact Marquette University's Office of Research Compliance at (414) 288-7570.

I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS CONSENT FORM, ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND AM PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Name

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

INTERVIEW 1 PROTOCOL

1) CONSENT FORM

2) Introduction of myself

3) My objective for this first interview is to gather a storyline and timeline of your career and family life and how decision making for each has impacted your path to the superintendency.

4) That being said,

a-When do you think you first had the desire to become a superintendent and why?

TIMING CAREER PATH MENTOR

b-Let's walk back through what you just told me to fill in any holes timewise. Tell me how your family life meshes into your career life on your timeline

CHILDHOOD CHILDREN

c-Can you identify times when you had to prioritize family versus career situations?

BALANCE

**Questions for follow-up interviews were individualized based off of data gathered from interview 1, and varied by participant.*

APPENDIX D

Catherine Hakim's Preference Theory

| Home-centred 20% of women varies 10–30% | Adaptive 60% of women varies 40–80% | Work-centred 20% of women varies 10–30% |
|--|---|---|
| Family life and children are the main priorities throughout life. | This group is most diverse and includes women who want to combine work and family, plus drifters and unplanned careers. | Childless women are concentrated here. Main priority in life is employment or equivalent activities in the public arena: politics, sport, art, etc. |
| Prefer <i>not</i> to work. | Want to work, but <i>not</i> totally committed to work career. | Committed to work or equivalent activities. |
| Qualifications obtained as cultural capital. | Qualifications obtained with the intention of working. | Large investment in qualifications/training for cultural capital employment/ other activities. |
| Number of children is affected by government social policy, family wealth, etc. Not responsive to employment policy. | This group is <i>very responsive</i> to government social policy, employment policy, equal opportunities policy/ propaganda, economic cycle/ recession/growth, etc., including: income tax and social welfare benefits, educational policies, school timetables, child care services, public attitude towards working women, legislation promoting female employment, trade union attitudes to working women, availability of part-time work and similar work flexibility, economic growth and prosperity, and institutional factors generally. | Responsive to economic opportunity, political opportunity, artistic opportunity, etc. Not responsive to social/ family policy. |
| <i>Family values:</i> caring, sharing, non-competitive, communal, focus on cohesion | <i>Compromise between two</i> conflicting sets of values | <i>Marketplace values:</i> competitive rivalry, achievement orientation, individualism, excellence |

Source: Hakim (2000).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner (2015).