

A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY IN HOW SCHOOL PRINCIPALS  
PRIORITIZE THEIR PERSONAL LIVES IN RELATION TO THEIR PROFESSIONAL  
LIVES

by

Ryan Whitney Ashley

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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## ABSTRACT

The divorce rate in the United States is climbing among professionals. One of the highest of these rates is among educational leaders; it is commonly the perception that a tremendous amount of time and energy must be spent in the school in order for the school to be successful. This means educational leaders must spend large amounts of time away from their significant others as well as their children in order to maintain this status quo. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to discover common characteristics that contribute to school principals having and maintaining a relationship with a significant other while also providing effective leadership to the school. Nine school principals ranging from elementary, middle, and high school were selected for this study. The criteria used to select the principals was that they each must have had two school-age children during their time as principal, and the principal had to have at least three years of experience as head principal. Data were collected using triangulation through the three categories of interviews with principals, spousal questionnaires, and document analysis to include a principal's job description and work schedule. Data were further analyzed by the journaling of experiences and phenomenological reductionism, also known as bracketing. The findings of this study provided several themes of how principals prioritize both their professional and personal life simultaneously. These themes are as follows: (a) be intentional about dating your spouse, (b) be intentional about keeping a healthy relationship with your kids, (c) even though it is your responsibility, delegate tasks, (d) develop trust between your spouse and children and between you and your leadership team, (e) involve your spouse and children in everything, if you can, and (f) take the extra time needed to develop the relationship.

**Table of Contents**

ABSTRACT.....3

    Table of Contents.....4

    List of Tables .....8

    List of Abbreviations .....9

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....10

    Overview.....10

    Background.....10

    Situation to Self .....12

    Problem Statement.....12

    Purpose Statement.....13

    Significance of the Study.....14

    Research Questions.....15

    Definitions .....16

    Summary.....16

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....17

    Overview.....17

    Theoretical Framework.....17

    Related Literature..... 19

        Causes of Divorce..... 19

        Dual-Earner Families and Stress..... 21

        Working Women..... 26

        A Swedish Study..... 30

Leadership Style in Relation to Distributive Leadership.....	32
The Profession of Education.....	41
Effective Leadership.....	42
Impact on Children.....	45
CHAPTER 3: METHODS.....	49
Overview.....	49
Design.....	49
Research Questions.....	50
Participants.....	51
Setting.....	51
Procedures.....	52
The Researcher's Role.....	53
Data Collection.....	54
Interviews.....	55
Spousal Questionnaires.....	57
Document Analysis.....	58
Data Analysis.....	59
Trustworthiness.....	61
Transferability.....	61
Credibility.....	62
Dependability and Confirmability.....	62
Ethical Considerations.....	62
Summary.....	63

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS .....	64
Overview.....	64
Participants.....	65
Betty: Elementary School Principal.....	66
Alice: Elementary School Principal.....	67
Ronald: Elementary School Principal.....	67
Greg: Middle School Principal .....	67
Jack: Middle School Principal .....	68
Ted: Middle School Principal .....	68
Henry: High School Principal.....	68
David: High School Principal .....	68
Phillip: High School Principal .....	69
Semi-Structured Interviews .....	69
Spousal Questionnaires.....	70
Principal Job Description and Schedule .....	70
Results.....	71
Themes.....	71
Research Question One.....	75
Research Question Two .....	81
Research Question Three .....	91
Research Question Four .....	96
Summary.....	98
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	103

Overview.....	103
Summary of Findings.....	105
Discussion.....	108
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs .....	108
Voydanoff’s Boundary Spanning Theory.....	110
Implications .....	112
Dual-Earner Families and Stress.....	112
A Swedish Study.....	113
Leadership Style in Relation to Distributive Leadership.....	115
Effective Leadership.....	117
Delimitations and Limitations .....	118
Recommendations for Future Research.....	120
Summary.....	121
REFERENCES .....	122
APPENDIX A: PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM .....	131
APPENDIX B: SPOUSAL CONSENT FORM .....	134

### **List of Tables**

Table 1: Demographics of Principal Participants and Their Spouses.....	66
Table 2: Themes from Significant Statements and Codes from Data Aggregation.....	73
Table 3: Enumeration Table of Horizons Related to Open-Codes.....	74



**List of Abbreviations**

Emotional Regulation (ER)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA)

School Improvement Council (SIC)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

Traditionally, being a school principal is seen as a profession that requires a significant amount of time outside the home completing various duties such as sporting events, competitions, academics, or ceremonies. As the divorce rate climbs among Americans, it is essential that these educational leaders find a balanced medium between time spent at work and time spent with their families. The United States Census Bureau reported that over 50% of marriages in the United States will fail before their fifth year (United States Census Bureau, 2009). In fact, according to McCoy and Aamodt (2008), the divorce rate among the “helping professions,” which includes education, is higher because these individuals do not know how to keep their “work at work” and spend time with their families in the process (p. 1233). This study focused on discovering common characteristics among educational leaders who have been able to achieve balance between work and family.

### **Background**

As the divorce rate in the United States continues to climb, individuals begin to step back to ask the question of how they can prevent this from happening to them. In 2012, the divorce rate in America hit a peak of 41% of first marriages, 60% of second marriages, and 73% of third marriages ending in divorce (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). These astronomical figures demonstrate that there is a real problem, and one particular area that hosts this problem is the worksite. With 64% of married women over 18 with children employed on at least a part time basis, the modern day household has seen a tremendous strain in married relationships from working long hours (Thorstad, Anderson, Hall, Willingham, & Carruthers, 2006, p. 229). This not only places a strain on the marriage partnership but also on the caring of the children at

home. One particular study found that families with children living in the household have a much greater stress rate than do marriages that have no children (Forsberg, 2009).

In a study conducted by the National Institute of Health, 52 divorced couples participated in research to determine the major causes of divorce in the United States. This study also determined what they called the “final straw,” or the final factor that ultimately led to the decision for divorce. The study’s final conclusions suggested that lack of commitment, infidelity, and conflict or arguing were the most significant causes for divorce. Likewise, the “final straw” for most couples were infidelity, domestic violence, or substance abuse (Scott, Rhoades, Stanley, Allen, & Markman, 2013). However, regardless of what the “final straw” is in a divorce situation or what reasons couples use to justify divorce, most of the reasons can be summed up into one single contributing factor, stress. Stress causes most arguments to occur, and it is one of the leading causes to substance abuse. Stress in a relationship can also lead to infidelity.

Education is also not a field that is exempt from stress. Everyday educational leaders face multiple decisions that can have lasting impacts on teachers, students, parents, and the community. In fact, many of these decisions can decide whether a child will be successful or not. Also, since many Americans look at education as the “equalizer among opportunities” (Morrison, 1992, p. 13), this places a lot of pressure on principals to ensure that each of those opportunities is a good one. After all, it is principal of the school who will bear the full responsibility of its successes or failures.

Very little research has been conducted on the topic of how principals prioritize their personal lives in relation to their professional lives. Also, the question still remains as to how spouses should relate to their significant others during this busy time of work. How is it that a leader in a school can manage both the school and the marriage relationship? It is my hope that

all educational leaders may learn how to set priorities in their personal lives when it relates to their professional lives in the school.

### **Situation to Self**

Because I work in the field of education as an administrator, I have a high motivation to conduct and research this study. How is it, that I, as a future school principal, will be able to manage an effective school while also still managing a family at the same time? First, I understand from an ontological perspective that reality is subjective and can be left up to interpretation. This means that the participants in the study viewed their experiences differently from one another which, therefore, yielded varying conclusions. When conducting a phenomenological study, the researcher must realize that individuals will report their perspectives differently (Moustakas, 1994). Secondly, from an epistemological perspective, being a principal allowed me to completely immerse myself in the culture of the principalship. This allowed me to have a prolonged stay at the research site and allowed a more objective conclusion.

The paradigm that I used in my research was social constructivism. The questions used in this study were very broad and general, which allowed the participants of the study to actually shape the nature of the conversation. Likewise, I used multiple participants in the study in order to look for a “complexity of views” rather than “narrowing the meaning into a few categories” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). A large part of the conclusions of this research were from the interactions with others in the field of education.

### **Problem Statement**

The general problem in America today is that too many hard working men and women have marriages that are failing because of long work hours and job-related stress. How are hard-

working men and women able to sustain effective jobs while also sustaining families at home simultaneously? Likewise, many working parents are forced to neglect their homes, including their children because of this work strain (Thomas & Harrison, 2005, p. 3). Some leaders in education find themselves at a crossroad between work and family where they have children who depend on them for a quality education. But they also have families who emotionally depend on them (Thorstad et al., 2006, p. 230). Likewise, some new leaders find themselves at a crossroad between family needs and job-related tasks that they never actually thought about until they were on the job (Ruder, 2008, p. 36). How does one manage all of this simultaneously?

In the same manner, children during the formative years of growing up require the presence of both a mother and a father. Research and experience shows that children who grow up with one or more absent parent have a more difficult time acclimating themselves to the world. There is always something missing from a child's life if he or she grows up in a single-parent household. This lends the question as to how leaders nurture their children.

In order to solve these problems in the home, it must be discovered how a leader can manage time wisely and manage extracurricular activities related to the job effectively while also providing emotional, physical, and monetary support to his or her family. What common characteristics exist between those who do this are successful at this? Also, are there actually leaders who can successfully maintain both areas of their life effectively?

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify the common characteristics that school principals share when managing schools while they also maintain relationships with a significant other and children. For the purposes of this research, a school was defined as a K-12 institution. In addition, a relationship was defined as a heterogeneous relationship that is not

separated or divorced. The relationship also had at least two school-aged children that lived in the household during the time the participant was the head principal.

An examination of at least nine principals was utilized and commonalities were examined through (1) marital status, (2), age and number of children at home, and (3) length of time as principal.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in the realm of three types of individuals. The first, or most obvious, is the actual school leader. The participants in this study will find the conclusions of this study exceedingly relevant to their lives since all of them have made the statements that their marriages are important, but they also find a significant amount of importance in maintaining effective schools. School leaders today find an ever-increasing job responsibility forum in that they are faced with new challenges, managerially accountable for all of their actions, and working in a very volatile environment among children (Moller, 2012). How then can they also be accountable to a family? Another individual that would be interested in this research would be the spouse. The art of managing a household and work seems like a cumbersome task for many, and many spouses find it overwhelming (Bakal, Pappas, Smith, & Stern, 2003, p. 6). In addition, children will find this study to be relevant. Children crave the attention of their parents, and if their mom or dad is a school principal, that attention is probably diverted much of the time. Finally, other spouses or children whose significant other or parent who have high-stress jobs such as the military or even physicians will find this study to be relevant to their lives. Hopefully, this study will provide some insight as to how a principal can prioritize their responsibilities while also effectively maintaining a family.

The general population that was studied were school principals and how they are able to prioritize time while managing a school and family simultaneously. If a school principal can initially enter a job with established characteristics of former leaders who have had positive outcomes, then the likelihood of success increases exponentially. This study impacted the school principal directly because it gave him or her a basis of knowledge that could lead to successful emotional relationships both at work and at home.

### **Research Questions**

Being that the stress level in the home of parents who have multiple children is higher than those without children (Forsberg, 2009), this begs the questions of how parents who have higher stress jobs maintain successful households. Also, as school principals have ever-increasing job responsibilities (Moller, 2012), how do they also maintain successful schools? These research questions were formulated based on these premises.

**RQ1:** How do school principals balance their time commitment at work in relation to time with a significant other?

**RQ2:** How do school principals balance their time commitment at work in relation to time with personal children?

**RQ3:** What are the common characteristics of principals who successfully maintain a relationship with a significant other while also managing the responsibilities of their job?

**RQ4:** What are the common characteristics of school principals who successfully maintain a relationship with their personal children while also managing the responsibilities of their job?

A relationship with a spouse is defined as a heterogeneous marriage between a man and woman who are not divorced. Children will be defined as being school age while the participant is the head principal.

### **Definitions**

The following are definitions of terms that are pertinent to this research study:

1. *Stress* - Stress is a feeling that people have when they are overloaded and struggling to cope with demands (Nordqvist, 2017).
2. *Marriage* - Marriage is the joining of a man and a woman that putatively lasts until death but in practice is increasingly cut short by divorce (Psychology Today, 2018).

### **Summary**

The problem in the world today is that too many working men and women have high-stress jobs that require significant amounts of hours spent away from their spouses and children. This in turn creates a tension between these relationships that can lead to high rates of divorce or estrangement between the parent and child. Children need the nurture of their parents during formative years, and parents who have high stress jobs have limited amount of time at home with them. Likewise, spouses need relational attention and time spent with them. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify the common characteristics that school principals share when managing schools while they also maintain relationships with a significant other and children.



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

The second chapter of this dissertation will include a number of different resources that relate directly to the research, including the theoretical framework and a review of literature. Discussion in this chapter will synthesize time management issues that leaders face in the workforce, a discussion of divorce among professionals, key components that highly effective principals have in common, and the balancing act of family versus work relationships. Specific information including divorce statistics, how a leader's spouse can relate to the job, and how time management and distributed leadership directly affects a leader's relationships outside of work will also be discussed.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Two theories will be used in this study to formulate the theoretical framework. The framework forms the foundation of this research study and will be utilized to support the research findings. The two theories that will be discussed are Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Voydanoft's boundary spanning theory.

In 1943, Abraham Maslow coined his hierarchy of needs theory in which he described every individual's motivation to reach higher levels of self-actualization. This final stage of satisfaction is only realized if other basic foundational needs are met initially. For example, in education, a child cannot learn unless the basic physiological need of hunger is met first. Likewise, in a spousal relationship, love cannot be attained unless a spouse spends time with his or her significant other. One researcher suggested that, "as one becomes more self-actualized and self-transcendent, one becomes wiser" (Daniels, 2001, p. 1).

In order for principals and school leaders to reach their own level of self-actualization, they must first have their basic needs met as well. Those needs will be different for each individual. Norwood (1999) expanded Maslow's theory by suggesting that each individual seeks information on different levels, depending on his or her own level on the hierarchy. For example, an individual at the lower level would receive information at the "coping level" in order to fulfill his or her basic need. Furthermore, individuals at the safety level need "helping information" and so on until one reaches the self-actualization level, which is referred to as "edifying information." A principal is in need of being edified or providing edification to others because of his or her leadership position. Likewise, humanity in general has been created by God with the basic need of love and affection. Without love, humans are not able to completely fill their need for self-actualization. Not having love would mean a significant part of human relationship is missing, therefore not allowing for complete harmony.

Voydanoff's boundary spanning theory described the necessities for an individual to achieve at work as well as at home. Lawson (2008) stated, "Voydanoff's research explores the demands, resources, and strategies that affect a worker's ability to accomplish, fit, and balance between work and home" (p. 56). This theory suggests that individual demands exist at work as well as at home, and both types of demands must be met equally or stress becomes the norm. If work and home life are not in congruence with one another, then maximum job performance will not be at an optimum level and neither will spousal satisfaction. For example, if one spouse is working all the time while the other resents that spouse not being home, then the work-family relationship will suffer.

Voydanoff believed that certain boundaries must be respected in order for role performance to be at peak levels. Lawson (2008) once again asserted, "The degree in which an

individual and her family are able to achieve work-family fit and use boundary-spanning strategies will affect work-family balance, and the level of work and family role performance and quality” (p. 57). In relation to this study, a principal or educational leader must learn the boundary-spanning processes of his, or her, own job, as well as family. This boundary-spanning process should be seen in relationships at home between husband, wife, and children. Without all being in harmony with one another, the family relationship would suffer and, therefore, the work environment would also suffer.

## **Related Literature**

### **Causes of Divorce**

As divorce becomes more and more prevalent in contemporary society (Stevenson & Wolfers, 1997), researchers must examine the multifaceted causes behind divorce to determine the trigger in a marriage that is the determining factor of whether a couple decides to divorce. Unfortunately, this is a very subjective topic because of the many factors that can cause divorce, educators should want to focus on these issues in order to avoid a divorce. According to Woody (2009), “Children in divorced families are twice as likely to receive psychological help, to skip school or get suspended, to get in trouble with the police, or to drop out of school” (p. 121). If this is true, then educators should want to tackle this epidemic head on so it does not happen to their own families. Educators see first-hand what divorce actually does to children in the classroom; therefore, it should be likely that educators would want to put efforts in place to prevent it from happening. This would be especially true with the leaders in the school since their leadership depends in large on how their own family life is positioned. Unfortunately, the divorce statistics for educators correlate with the rest of society (Stevenson & Wolfers, 1997).

According to the Council on Contemporary Families (England & Bearak, 2012), one leading factor in whether a marriage will last is the level of education as well as when the marriage takes place in a person's life. New York University professors England and Bearak (2012) studied the statistical analysis of divorce rates amongst women and discovered that a woman is more likely to get divorced if she has a lower education level and marries earlier in life. The researchers further disaggregated these statistics into race and discovered that African Americans are more likely to have children before marriage, which oftentimes forces a marriage agreement, ultimately ending in divorce (England & Bearak, 2012). Unfortunately, according to recent studies, over half of all marriages will end in divorce; however, divorce rates are lowest among college graduates. Because college graduates seem to have established themselves with a job that offers financial stability before getting married, the divorce statistic for them is lower (Hurley, 2005). College graduates also are seen to have more mental stability due to their level of education and their ability to reason through conflict, especially relational conflict. The more stable one becomes, the less likely a divorce will happen.

The drive to be successful spearheads many individuals' plights throughout their life. Some feel that their identity is defined by perceived success; however, this level of success can have detrimental effects on the family and can also be a leading cause for divorce. Men especially feel this need to be successful. In Blackaby and Blackaby's (2001) book *Spiritual Leadership*, a leader's quest for success was examined:

One of the great indictments of today's leaders is that in their quest to be successful in their jobs, they are failing their families. Leaders become so focused on leading their organizations that they neglect the most important relationships they have. Because they

carry the ultimate responsibility for the organizations, they often find it difficult to relax and to focus on their families, even when they are not at work. (p. 214)

Unfortunately, success can come at a great price—the price of a marriage or struggling relationship with a spouse or children. A man’s need for respect in the workplace, unfortunately, sometimes outweighs his ability to be a good husband and a good father.

Relationships are an unavoidable fact of the human race, and when a man and woman come into a relationship which results in a marriage, both individuals possess many expectations for the relationship, but many may be unsaid. According to Eggegrichs’ (2004) book *Love and Respect* book, the two leading emotions that men and women expect out of each other are love for the woman and respect for the man. Eggegrich asserted, “Five out of ten marriages today are ending in divorce because love alone is *not* enough. Yes, love is vital, especially for the wife, but what we have missed is the husband’s need for respect” (p. 1). Likewise, Balswick and Balswick (2007) continued by saying, “Human beings are created by a relational, Triune God to be in significant and fulfilling relationships” (p. 18). Relationships are a natural part of mankind’s existence, but these unsaid expectations must be met in order to enjoy a fulfilling relationship with a significant other. If these expectations are not met, complacency intervenes, emotion withers, and the end can result in two individuals who have decided to merely be roommates for an extended period of time or divorce may potentially fester. This sad fact is seen in marriages all across America today.

### **Dual-Earner Families and Stress**

As the American family has changed over the course of the past 50 years, so have the dynamics of family values. Many women hold jobs now whereas previously, most made their careers as homemakers. One study concluded that 60% of women over the age of sixteen work at

least part time, and many of those work full-time (Entrichit, Hughes, & Tovey, 2007). This shift in the family now contributes to higher stress levels as well as more strained relationships at home compared to a time when the husband was the primary financial provider. Research has shown that “women no longer have the same amount of time to dedicate to childcare and household tasks as they did in the past” (p. 116). These same researchers concluded that the three main contributors to work and family conflict are marital stress, no spousal help, and lack of childcare.

Other data show that more workers are putting in longer hours. Even with the incalculable amount of time workers spend away from their families, they still put in for overtime (Almeida, Maggs, & Galatiibos, 1998). One company found that out of all the workers who had children 12 and under, only 4% of men and 13% of women chose to work part time. It found that it did not matter whether an employee had children at home or not; workers still continued to work even more than their allotted time. In a single work year, the average worker only missed nine days of work excluding holidays and vacations (Hochschild, 1997). The need for men to be self-actualized through work is seen as a huge driving force of men who work long hours. Men see their work as what defines them, sadly spending an exorbitant amount of time away from family.

With the majority of women now working, raising children under the age of 18 and managing a family and career can be quite difficult. In this scenario, the amount of time children are left without their parents significantly increases. One researcher suggested, “Women who have chosen to invest in multiple roles as wife, mother, and professional experience have difficulty in balancing these roles as the demands of each role often conflict” (Thorsad et al., 2006, p. 230). The same can be found true of men as well but on a lesser scale. Men have

traditionally played a more active role in work and have allowed their spouse to manage the family; however, more and more research has begun to suggest that absent fathers are becoming more prevalent in society. In fact, one statistic shows that approximately 50% of American children will live in a single-family household sometime during their childhood (Rodney & Mupier, 1999). Sadly, absent fathers oftentimes lead to destructive behavior in teens, especially in the African American culture where a very large number of African American boys are incarcerated due to the absence of a strong male in their life. Instead, they are being raised by mothers who are forced to work long hours and are also seldom home due to the circumstances.

Educational leaders are also faced with time management issues when it comes to work involving dual-income families. One report suggested that “even the most generous compensation and benefits, creative work arrangements, and healthy work environments provided by an employer cannot compete with the forces of our personal lives at times” (Bakal et al., 2003, p. 288). After all, what work environment can ever compensate for time lost with children or a spouse? The same report also mentioned that many families are trying to arrange work-from-home scenarios in order to compensate for this time lost with loved ones, but this is not a viable solution for educators. Elmore (2005) argued that the demands placed on school leaders in the current age of accountability have universally and fundamentally changed the face of modern school leadership (p. 32). However, even work-from-home scenerios have their downside. One significant downside is that many employers are making employees sign agreements that their children will not be at home with them during working hours. Another difficult part is that work is work, regardless of location. If a person is working from home, that person still does not have time to spend with a child, who oftentimes is in constant need of attention.

Because stress has become so prevalent in dual-income families, the value of “quality time” has become a major factor in these families. Many individuals attempt to define and control their relationships by focusing on the quality of time spent rather than the quantity. One company examined this phenomenon and concluded, “Quality time...holds out the hope that scheduling intense periods of togetherness can compensate for an overall loss of time in such a way that a relationship will suffer no loss of quality” (Hochschild, 1997, p. 25). Moreover, some companies who employ individuals who have little or no time with loved ones because of the increase in job demands have instituted reforms in order to alleviate this. For example, Amerco put in place “flextime” in which they allowed some employees to work from home. However, very few employees took advantage of this program (Hochschild, 1997). Working from home can also have its challenges.

Increased attention has been given to the role of the school principal and its ever-changing role. In the past, the role of principal was seen primarily as bureaucrat (Cuban, 1998); however, that has slowly changed toward a role of instructional leadership where he or she controls every facet of the school infrastructure (Dunklee, 2000). Because of this role-change, principals tend to make a lot of their most important decisions in isolation. Stephenson and Bauer (2010) stated, “Schools have moved...to having principals who must take full responsibility for all the administrative and instructional imperatives of the institution. Principals today tend, like teachers, to make many of their key decisions in isolation” (p. 3). This isolationist tendency is a stress creator for principals. In fact, Dussault and Thibodeau (1997) worked to study isolationism in school principals and its relationship to quality of work. Their conclusions’ suggested that isolationism can quickly lead to burnout, thus reducing the effectiveness of the role of school



principal. Burnout can also lend itself to mistakes on the job, and mistakes that occur around children can oftentimes lead to serious repercussions.

Other studies have also made conclusions in regards to stress and the role of school leadership. Izgar (2009) studied depression in school principals and concluded that there is a direct statistical relationship between principals who are stressed and those who are depressed. The study goes on to say that people who feel loneliness have feelings of weakness, friendlessness, and indifference to his or her surroundings (Dupont & Lachance, 2007). With this in mind, studies also show that the number of people who are willing to cope with the amount of stress of school principals is decreasing. Norton (2003) stated, "Increasing demands upon the work life of the principal, low salary levels, time constraints, lack of parent and community support, and lack of respect are among the reasons that principals are leaving the position" (p. 50). Likewise, whenever a principal does not feel a sense of accomplishment in his or her work, burnout is the most likely occurrence, resulting in dissatisfaction in job performance and a doubt in leadership abilities (Friedman, 2002).

The increased job responsibilities of school principals have also placed a certain amount of strain on other outside relationships such as marital and child-rearing. Williams (1999) described the current ideal worker as an individual who "works full time and overtime and takes little or no time off for childbearing or childrearing" (p. 1). These individuals typically show "individual initiative" and exhibit behaviors such as going into the office on weekends, coming in early for work or staying late, and even volunteering for special projects (Bolino & Turnley, 2005). Studies show, however, that women tend to show less "individual initiative" than do men since women readily identify themselves in family roles more often than men (Guttek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991). However, regardless of gender, this "individual initiative" can have a detrimental

impact on personal family relationships. Role theory suggests that “as individuals do more and more for their companies, they are likely to have less time and energy to devote to their spousal and family relationships” (Hochschild, 1997). Consequently, because school principals demonstrate a large amount of “individual initiative,” they are naturally going to have a larger amount of work-family stress (Bolino & Turnley, 2005, p. 741). Once again, “individual initiative” can be seen as a man’s way of earning respect from his colleagues or even his wife. Depending on the maturity of the relationship, a man may see this type of extra work as a way to show off for a wife or earn her respect. However, most women agree that they would rather have their husband home than have more money or a more prestigious position at work.

### **Working Women**

As many head principals are women in today’s world, the topic of women in the workplace must also be discussed. The debate between men and women working out of the home versus rearing children solely has been a hot topic for decades. In fact, some point back to a more traditional role of women in the workplace by saying women should not be working at all while children are in the home. However, now more than ever, men are beginning to feel pressure to stay home too, or at least figure out how to be successful in the career and a good father simultaneously. The Wall Street Journal reported, “Employers have been slow to recognize men’s roles as caregivers” (Wall Street Journal, 2014). The article also said that as a younger generation of men begin the workforce, employers are going to have to slowly begin recognizing those who wish to be dad and worker at the same time. However, as the article pointed out, some will have to “challenge an assumption their female colleagues have faced for years: It is impossible to be both an involved parent and a star performer” (p. 12).

Women have seen a gradual increase in the workforce over the last several years. Using the Employer Information Report, which employers are required to submit yearly to the Department of Labor, it has been determined that there women were increasingly employed as officials, managers, professionals, technicians, and other managerial positions (Anonymous, 2003, p. 12). That same report also determined that by comparison from 1966 and 2013, women saw an increase in employment from 31.5 percent to 48.7 percent. Women are very clearly beginning to focus their attention on the workforce.

Due to this, women have now turned to finding alternate forms of childcare because of increased responsibilities at work. Even though many families are beginning to see both men and women work simultaneously, it is still traditionally seen as the woman's responsibility to find childcare or to worry about the well-being of the children while at work. In one report, while the cost of hiring domestic-workers (such as a nanny) has increased and the cost of sending children to daycare on a regular basis has increased, women are still finding more fulfillment in their jobs rather than staying at home (Muasya, 2016, p. 2). It is gradually becoming more and more important for women to be equal to a man rather than being a caregiver to a child at home. However, Muasya (2016) said, "It is a challenge for many employees, especially female employees, to achieve a balance between work and family roles" (p. 3). Those lines are gradually being blurred.

Preston (1984), in an address to the Population Association of America, stated the following:

How, you might ask, can we talk about the neglect of children without mentioning their abandonment by mothers heading into the labor market? The answer is that it's not at all clear that mother's work is a source of disadvantage for children, at least not as a direct

determinant. Recent reviews of studies of the effect of working mothers on child development find very few and inconsistent effects, far less clear-cut than those associated with marital disruption. (p. 451)

This statement is important in the discussion involving women and the workforce because there are inconsistencies in the research regarding this subject. Some researchers point to clear evidence that women working has a detrimental effect on children, while others argue that it does not. According to Belsky and Eggebeen (1991), women working during the formative years of life have a detrimental effect on children. Regardless of the truth, there is a conflict between the world of work, women, and the appropriate rearing of children.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) previously defined conflict between the roles of men and women in the family as work-family conflict and family-to-work conflict (p. 77). Work-family conflict is basically a set of roles and expectations that employees face that are basically incompatible. The employees in these circumstances, and many of them women, find a crisis in that they cannot achieve their optimum level of work satisfaction without taking time away from the family. The family-to-work conflict is virtually the opposite in which mothers and fathers cannot be good caregivers to their children due to the fact they have large work responsibilities. It is basically the same definition, just reversed. Muyasya (2016) said women face the largest amount of family-to-work conflict due to their nurturing nature.

Ranihusna & Wulansari (2006) explained that the role of women has changed dramatically; it is not just a western phenomenon. They said:

Nowadays, women emancipation is growing fast in Indonesia. Their role is not only in their family but also in the workplace. Today's workplace conditions has many female contributors, both in the level of technical and strategic policy. Female emancipation is

more prevalent in the workplace because women's existence is acknowledged through high performance. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there are some reasons why women work. There are family needs and self-actualization. Furthermore, by having more out of home activities, a woman will have more self-confidence both in her family and in society. (p. 215)

As more and more women feel the need for self-actualization or self-confidence they feel the need to work on a regular basis. Women are rewarded at work for their accomplishments, and according to Maslow, feeling rewarding is part of arriving at a positive aspect of self-actualization. Without self-actualization, a woman cannot feel a positive self-esteem.

Unfortunately, this is not the biblical worldview of how the family is supposed to work. The book of 1 Corinthians in the Bible says that the "head of the woman is man" (1 Corinthians 11:3, NIV). However, many people like to point out this verse and not talk about what lies before it and what is after. Before this phrase is used it says, "The head of every man is Christ," and after this phrase it says, "And the head of Christ is God." Men are under the Lordship of Christ, and men are supposed to make their wives feel a certain dignity about themselves so they do not feel they must go to work to be recognized and feel a sense of self-actualization. Women should not get their self-esteem from their job. Instead, they should be looking to God and their husbands. However, husbands must do their part in being a Godly husband.

While women going to work is certainly not against the *Bible*, it is clearly seen in the book of Genesis that woman's primary role is to have and to rear children. Unfortunately, some take this to the extreme and say that women should not work at all. This is not the case. In Chapter Three of the book of Genesis, God outlines the duties of men and women. It says, "To the woman he said, 'I will make your pains in childrearing very severe; with painful labor, and

you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (Genesis 3:16, New International Version). Later in the chapter, he speaks about the man and his role in working.

### **A Swedish Study**

One particular Swedish study identified various strategies that middle-class, dual-income families use to reduce work and family-related stress (Forsberg, 2009). It should be noted that this study only examined how individuals cope and deal with the stress of having children in a dual-earner family. Because this study took place in Sweden, it should not be insinuated that the stresses of job performance in Sweden are similar to that of the United States. Sweden is identified as a developed country with a per capita GDP that rivals that of the United States. Therefore, a comparison between the two countries can be seen as beneficial and yielding similar results.

**Delegating.** The term delegating comes from Latour (1999) and Arendell (2001) when they referenced an actor who takes another’s place for a short time, as in this instance, a parent. The study demonstrated that Swedish families often will allow other institutions such as schools, daycare, a nanny, or others to care for their children while they are working. These children most often walk home by themselves or with a sibling within the same family. Likewise, a number of these children spend a considerable amount of time in after-school programs. Another form of delegation comes in the form of social media or television. Television has been a tremendous time waster for parents who wish to complete other household duties instead of watching their own children. Additionally, when children are sick, the parents often delegate the care of their children to neighbors, friends, or relatives who are available or who do not work (Forsberg, 2009, p. 167). Delegation can also be seen as an agreement between a man and a woman of

splitting the time to stay at home when a child is sick. The first time he is sick, he stays with mom and the next time with dad. That scenario is then repeated several times, depending on the illness and the type of job being worked.

**Alternating.** Alternating is another term utilized when referring to managing children in dual-earner families. This term, first coined by Medved (2004), refers to alternating the responsibilities of children from one parent to another and then reversing. This strategy allows for each parent to manage a career while also allowing for time with the children. The problem with this strategy is that it rarely creates time with the opposite spouse. Alternating may allow for a career and time with children to take place; however, it does not allow time for spousal interaction. One family took turns taking the children to work with one spouse taking care of it on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and the other Tuesday and Thursday. The next week the parents switched, and each would make special consideration depending on various work demands and job schedules. Alternating is a special circumstance that works for many couples (p. 169).

Alternating can take several forms. Alternating can occur when both parents always come home with work to do, and they must decide who must put a child to bed that evening. That is usually decided by who has the most work; however, it can also be settled by simply alternating the days of the week. Alternating can also be seen as who cooks the family meal at the end of the day. One day the husband may cook while the next the woman may cook. Likewise, the task of doing household chores may be alternated.

**Multitasking.** A final strategy employed by Swedish couples is the idea of multitasking, or completing multiple tasks while also spending time with family. American middle-class families demonstrate the importance of “quality time” as opposed to just time spent with children

(Kremer-Sadlik & Paugh, 2007). Americans assert that doing homework with children or sweeping the floor with children (basically arduous tasks that no one enjoys) are not examples of spending quality time with children. However, going to the park, throwing a football, or going for a walk is quality time because it is something that both parties enjoy while creating lasting memories. With multitasking in the Swedish study, however, many families would complete computer work related to their job while also helping with homework (p. 170). Regardless, multi-tasking is seen as an invaluable asset to use in order to maximize the amount of time spent with children.

The Swedish study did not differentiate between time spent with children and time not spent with children as a measure of love or affection in the family. The parents in the study had a great desire to spend time with their families; however, as work related issues persisted, time did not allow that to occur. It would be interesting to see a further study that included a component of how to measure love in a relationship that works often.

### **Leadership Style in Relation to Distributive Leadership**

The leadership style of a school principal is a crucial factor when determining the amount of time spent at work or completing certain tasks. Most people would agree that the school principal's desire is for their school to be first in public image, test scores, and teacher retention rate. With this desire comes great pressure for the principal, requiring various leadership skills. Moller (2012), from the University of Oslo in Norway, stated, "With the many transformations in the work environment various discourses of educational leadership are at play, establishing rules about what is possible to think, do, and be as a principal" (p. 453). Instead of the autonomous principals completing all leadership tasks by themselves, a more distributive leadership approach is being taken by school leadership. A distributive leadership approach



“recognizes that there are multiple leaders in a school and focuses attention on the complex interactions of leadership in action” (Moller, 2012, p. 456). Oftentimes, this distribution of leadership comes in the form of delegating authority to subordinates such as assistant principals, instructional technologists, or subject-level department heads.

School leaders are now forced to be unique in their own endeavors because of growing demands of the job. The demands of a principal are now higher than ever before. One author defined the role of leadership as follows:

The key distinctive role of leadership at the outset is that leaders take the initiative. They address their creative insights to potential followers, seize their attention, and spark further attention. The first act is decisive because it breaks up a static situation and establishes a relationship. It is, in every essence, a creative act. (Taylor, n.d, p. 2)

Being creative in leadership, whether it is distributive, transformational, or authoritarian leadership, is essential in the survival of every school principal. Other researchers examined the part of distributive leadership from a district office versus teacher’s perspective and found very similar results. Firestone and Martinez (2007) discovered the same basic outcome whether it is the district office in charge of leadership or teacher leaders who have the authority, saying:

Our findings suggest that teacher leaders complement the district efforts. Teacher leaders in districts contribute to the same leadership tasks: procuring and distributing materials, monitoring the improvement effort, and developing people. However, they do so in different ways. Districts operate at a distance and rely on formal authority and substitutes for leadership while teachers rely more on close relationships at hand. (Firestone & Martinez, 2007, p. 9)

Gronn (2009) argued for this revision of leadership and said that, even with distributed leadership, school leaders are seen “prominently as agents of influence” (p. 1). Regardless of the leadership style, a dynamic and talented leader is necessary to lead a school. Even in today’s culture and society, the ability to influence is the ability to get things done. And when an individual is able to get positive things done in an organization, he or she is seen as a positive leader.

Regarding distributive leadership, an examination of the duties school districts assign to building principals on a daily basis is required to appreciate the enormity of the job. The following example from one North Carolina school district explains a realistic job description of a principal:

- Reports to superintendent,
- Supervises all school personnel, directly or indirectly,
- Purpose: To serve as the chief administrator of a school in developing and implementing policies, program, curriculum activities, and budgets in a manner that promotes the educational development of each student and the professional development of each staff member,
- General Planning: Conceptualizes the broad goals of the school and plans accordingly to ensure that procedures and schedules are implemented to carry out the total school program,
- General Coordination: ensures that the school program is compatible with the legal, financial and organizational structure of the school system. The principal defines the responsibilities and accountability of staff members and develops plans for interpreting the school program to the community,

- **Enhancement of Personnel Skills:** provides activities which facilitate the professional growth of the school staff and enhance the quality of the instructional program,
- **School Objectives:** identifies the annual objectives for the instructional, extracurricular, and athletic programs of the school,
- **Curriculum Objectives:** ensures that instructional objectives for a given subject and/or classroom are developed, and involves the faculty and others in the development of specific curricular objectives to meet the needs of the school program. The principal provides opportunities for staff participation in the school program,
- **Establishes Formal Work Relationships:** evaluates student progress in the instructional program by means that include the maintaining of up-to-date student data. The principal supervises and appraises the performance of the school staff,
- **Facilitates Organizational Efficiency:** maintains inter-school system communication and seeks assistance from central office staff to improve performance. The principal maintains good relationships with students, staff, and parents. The principal complies with established lines of authority,
- **New Staff and Students:** orients and assists new staff and new students and provides opportunities for their input in the school program,
- **Community:** encourages the use of community resources, cooperates with the community in the use of school facilities, interprets the school program for the community, and maintains communication with community members,
- **Supplies and Equipment:** manages, directs, and maintains records on the materials, supplies, and equipment that are necessary to carry out the daily school routine. The principal involves the staff in determining priorities for instructional purposes, and

- Services: organizes, oversee, and provides support to the various services, supplies, material, and equipment provided to carry out the school program. The principal makes use of community resources (State Board of Education, North Carolina, n.d.).

Likewise, the magnitude of the job as head principal from a private school is defined below:

The school principal shall:

- Establish and promote high standards and expectations for all students and staff for academic performance and responsibility for behavior,
- Manage, evaluate and supervise effective and clear procedures for the operation and functioning of the school consistent with the philosophy, mission, values and goals of the school including instructional programs, extracurricular activities, discipline systems to ensure a safe and orderly climate, building maintenance, program evaluation, personnel management, office operations, and emergency procedures,
- Ensure compliance with all laws, board policies and civil regulations,
- Establish the annual master schedule for instructional programs, ensuring sequential learning experiences for students consistent with the school's philosophy, mission statement, and instructional goals,
- Supervise the instructional programs of the school, evaluating lesson plans and observing classes (teaching, as duties allow) on a regular basis to encourage the use of a variety of instructional strategies and materials consistent with research on learning and child growth and development,
- Establish procedures for evaluation and selection of instructional materials and equipment, approving all recommendations,
- Supervise in a fair and consistent manner, effective discipline and attendance systems

- with high standards, consistent with the philosophy, values, and mission of the school. Ensure a safe, orderly environment that encourages students to take responsibility for behavior and creates high morale among staff and students. File all required reports regarding violence, vandalism, attendance and discipline matters,
- Establish a professional rapport with students and with staff that has their respect,
  - Display the highest ethical and professional behavior and standards when working with students, parents and school personnel. Serve as a role model for students, dressing professionally, demonstrating the importance and relevance of learning, accepting responsibility, and demonstrating pride in the education profession,
  - Encourage all teachers to do the same,
  - Notify immediately the Board and appropriate personnel and agencies when there is evidence of substance abuse, child abuse, child neglect, severe medical or social conditions, potential suicide or students appearing to be under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances,
  - Keep the Board advised of employees not meeting their contractual agreement,
  - Research and collect data regarding the needs of students, and other pertinent information including the collection of detail regarding the sacraments students have received or are preparing for. Keep the Chaplain informed of this information,
  - Keep the staff informed and seek ideas for the improvement of the school. Conduct meetings, as necessary, for the proper functioning of the school: weekly meetings for full-time staff; monthly staff meetings,
  - Establish and maintain an effective inventory system for all school supplies, materials and equipment,

- Establish procedures that create and maintain attractive, organized, functional, healthy, clean, and safe facilities, with proper attention to the visual, acoustic, and temperature,
- Assume responsibility for the health, safety, and welfare of students, employees and Visitors,
- Develop clearly understood procedures and provide regular drills for emergencies and disasters,
- Maintain a master schedule to be posted for all teachers,
- Establish schedules and procedures for the supervision of students in non-classroom areas (including before and after school),
- Maintain visibility with students, teachers, parents and the Board,
- Communicate regularly with parents, seeking their support and advice, so as to create a cooperative relationship to support the student in the school. The Principal may not interfere with anyone's freedom to speak directly to the Chaplain,
- Use effective presentation skills when addressing students, staff, parents, and the community including appropriate vocabulary and examples, clear and legible visuals, and articulate and audible speech,
- Use excellent written and oral English skills when communicating with students, parents and teachers,
- Complete in a timely fashion all records and reports as requested by the Board,
- Maintain accurate attendance records,
- Maintain and account for all student activity funds and money collected from students,

- Communicate with the Board regularly about the needs, successes and general operation of the school,
- Establish procedures for safe storing and integrity of all public and confidential school records. Ensure that student records are complete and current,
- Protect confidentiality of records and information gained as part of exercising professional duties and use discretion in sharing such information within legal confines,
- Organize and supervise procedures for identifying and addressing special needs of students including health-related concerns, and physical, emotional and spiritual needs (keeping the Chaplain informed of these),
- Supervise the exclusion from school of any pupil who shows departure from normal health, who has been exposed to a communicable disease, or whose presence may be detrimental to the health and cleanliness of other pupils. Assure that excluded pupil's parents or guardian are apprised of the reasons for exclusion,
- Maintain positive, cooperative and mutually supportive relationships with staff, parents and Chaplain,
- Attend required committee meetings (e.g.: fund-raising, curriculum, etc.) and extra school sponsored functions and religious events e.g.: First Communion, Confirmation, Graduation, etc.),
- Perform any duties that are within the scope of employment and certifications, as assigned by the Board and not otherwise prohibited by law or in conflict with contract,
- Ensure that schedule allows for regular Mass and Confessions,

- Oversee the development of Curriculum Committee and keep the Board apprised,
- Provide quarterly student grade and behavior reports to parents. Post honor roll lists each quarter,
- Work with the Chaplain to guide and instruct the teachers to provide the spiritual atmosphere inherent in a traditional Catholic educational environment,
- Nurture both students and teachers to achieve their greatest potential academically, instructionally and spiritually,
- Maintain in the school a spirit conducive to prayer and study,
- Provide an atmosphere of piety, obedience and charity throughout the school day,
- Ensure that students and teachers attend scheduled prayers and Mass throughout the school day,
- Enforce uniform policy and appearance policy so as to assure a school environment that is focused on group spiritual and academic achievement rather than on individuals. and
- Provide and supervise a safe recreation and play period for the students (National Association of Private Catholic and Independent Schools, 2013).

These examples alone provide evidence that distributive leadership is required in order to maintain a positive school environment without exhausting its principal. When principals are willing to delegate their authority to other trusted individuals, time will be created for the principal to focus on more critical needs. It may also allow the building principal to have personal time for family. Likewise, the examples above demonstrate that the job responsibilities of a public school principal versus a private school principal are relatively the same. However,



some see a private school principal as acting more like a superintendent since the private school is actually the entire academic system.

### **The Profession of Education**

As quoted by a colleague, the field of education is not just a profession, it is a “way of life” (K. Radcliffe, personal communication, August, 2012). While being an educator does not necessarily mean that one will spend less hours at work or that there will be less job responsibilities, educators tend to take their jobs more personally. Lee Iacocca stated,

In a completely rational society, the best of us would be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less, because passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honor and the highest responsibility anyone could have. (Iacocca, n.d., direct quote)

There is just something different about being an educator than there is about other professions. Being an educator also can be seen as being extremely rewarding to the fact that it is impacting children on a regular basis. When one positively impacts children, future leaders are nurtured.

Bellis (2000) asserted that labeling oneself as a part of a certain profession makes the claim that a person has a particular set of values. If this holds true, there is question as to the particular set of values do educators have beyond other professionals. In the Finnish school system, an educator is classified as someone who is fully responsible for the wholeness of the child. In other words, they are responsible for the care, safety, education, and teaching of their children (Happo & Maata, 2011). Likewise, a Canadian educator and researcher concluded that educators have the responsibility of influencing students to become “something more than themselves” (Molner, 2008, p. 4). Educators have a large impact on the future of young people, therefore making the profession itself a larger responsibility as a whole.

## Effective Leadership

With all the time constraints and pressures of dual-earner families put aside, it is important to understand what skill set is necessary to be an effective educational leader. While teachers will always remain the most important asset to the teaching profession for federal accountability and successful schools, the principal will forever be the second most important individual (Sanzo, Sherman, & Clayton, 2010). Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford (2006) found that “the principal remains an important and significant figure in determining the success of a school” (p. 548). Overall, Sanzo et al. (2010) found that sharing leadership, facilitating professional development, and leading with an instructional orientation are all leading factors in the success of a school principal. One principal within the study said:

We get caught in the day-to-day and being the problem solver. I try to be very deliberate about asking questions and leading people to their own solutions. Without a doubt, empowering others to make people feel they can make decisions on their own and shared decision making is huge. (Sanzo et al., 2010, p. 36)

When interviewing 24 principals in Sweden to find what makes successful school principals, phrases such as “driving force, passion, having fun, spark, interested, and engaged” were used; however, one individual described it by saying that a principal must have “a love for work and people...that [they] enjoy going to work. [They] burn steadily and slowly, not flaming up because [they] cannot cope” (Monnika, 2010, p. 95). The study also demonstrated that being a “people person” is important to being an effective school administrator. In addition to character traits that each leader must possess, another study suggested that school leaders must also exude particular leadership styles which aid in their influence of people. Another article described the “great person theory” in that leaders display one central characteristic above all—charisma

(Lupkin, 2008, p. 23). Pashiardis, Kafa, and Marmara (2012) described five leadership styles that must be used at different times by school administrators to be successful. The instructional style (teaching and learning), structuring style (direction and coordination), participative style (organization), entrepreneurial style (networking), and personnel development style (professional growth) are all leadership styles that must be used at different times. Different situations require different leadership styles.

Another researcher emphasized that “though principals have no direct effect on student achievement, they have indirect effect through the actions they take to shape school climates and shape school instruction” (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, p. 49). Many school principals also rely on the use of data-driven decision making to guide their decisions. One example demonstrated how a group of teachers examined the data of an afterschool program and decided to change how the afterschool program was structured. The article quoted the following:

Last year we had an afterschool program, but after looking at our data the afterschool program did not yield the results that we wanted. For math it did, but for reading it did not. So we talked to the teachers and said that we can we do differently? We are now trying something this year. We looked at remediating during the school day. A lot of the time to children who needed to be remediated did not stay back. (Crum, Sherman, & Myran, 2009, p. 55).

Data-driven decision making can definitely be used to influence a faculty for effective change. The principal did not have to ask his or her faculty, but in the spirit of collaboration, she did and the outcome was successful.

Time management is another essential piece of producing great educational leaders. Time management is never a topic in a college graduate classroom, but it is one of the most important

attributes a school principal can manage that will help him or her keep a tight rein on the school. Ruder (2008) identified a number of time management strategies that are useful for school principals. Items such as using a calendar, keeping an agenda for meetings, letting a secretary know where the principal is, keeping a cell phone available at all times, and setting a limit on the workday are all tasks that Ruder said would make a principal more successful (pp. 37-38). Likewise, a study on university presidents concluded from the wife's perspective that if a head principal, superintendent, or university official will rely on his or her spouse as a confidant with which to share ideas, enjoy personal time, and generally support them, the success rate of the individual exponentially increases (Reid, Cole, & Kern, 2011, p. 549). Basically, the educational leader must have a confidant at home in which to confide.

Dantley (2010) concluded that there is a type of spirituality of many school leaders— basically a higher calling that each leader sees in him or herself. Dantley said, “The adaptive nature of a leader’s work actually operates from one’s spiritual center” (p. 214). It is the one item that creates meaning in one’s life, and when a leader believes that his or her meaning in life is to be an educational leader, then the success rate of that leader is higher. The job of a principal is more a way of life than a profession.

Some principals believe that the foundation of this calling is what forms the bedrock of their administration. Simply put, their spirituality is what a principal relies on to get the job done effectively. Without a solid foundation, the administration will flounder and remain ineffective. Schaeffer (1976), in the book *How Should We Then Live*, argued that Rome fell not because of barbarian invasions but because it had no Christian foundation. Schaeffer said, “Rome did not fall because of external forces such as the invasion by the barbarians. Rome had no sufficient

inward base; the barbarians only completed the breakdown—and Rome gradually became a ruin” (p. 29).

Kouzes and Posner (2007), two extremely respected researchers in leadership, give an excellent example of effective leadership. They identified five essential strategies that have been proven to be successful. The first is for leaders to model the way. Modeling the way is basically the leader’s way of demonstrating by his or her own actions and shared values that he or she is willing to work in order to be successful. People must see that the leader is willing to forge the path before the people will actually follow. The second strategy is to inspire a shared vision. Leaders must find a common purpose for the people to pursue and then be able to demonstrate that vision through illustrations and animations. A third strategy is to challenge the process, which requires the leader to take risks and offer innovation to the institution. Without new and innovative ways of competing work, the people become bored and stagnate. The fourth strategy is to enable others to act. This requires the leader to help develop competence among his or her team, while also encouraging confidence in action. Lastly, the leader must encourage the heart. Recognizing contributions and celebrating small and large victories is important in maintaining an effective organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

### **Impact on Children**

The impact of parents who spend a significant amount of time away from each other has been analyzed; however, one must also consider the impact on children. It is no secret that children who have working parents spend a considerably less amount of time with their mom and dad than those whose parents stay at home. It is important to examine how do parents cope with that lost time when they come home. According to Kamenetz (2017), they do not cope. According to Kamenetz (2017), the amount of time children spend in front of a mobile device or

a television has increased significantly. In 2011, children only spent on average about five minutes in front of the television a day; most children in 2017 spend on average 48 minutes watching television every day. Parents are not spending time with their children because they still have the same household chores to do once they get home. Dinner must be cooked, the house must stay clean and presentable, and the weekly schedule must be maintained. Parents are also coping with not being at home by allowing their children to have a mobile device. That same study said that 98% of children in 2017 have a mobile device such as an iPhone or tablet. Children now need a distractor to stay busy (Kamenetz, 2017).

Another study completed by ProQuest asserted that kids who spent the majority of their week in childcare versus being at home with a stay at home parent showed increased amounts of aggression. The study said, “Mother who were aware of their child’s needs, moods, and capabilities were more successful socially and less likely to be disruptive” (ProQuest, p. 5). In other words, kids who stayed at home with a parent had someone at home who knew them. The parent was invested and could pick up on cues of moods and behavior. Those whose daycare workers “knew” them would show more frustration at home due to the fact that mom and dad did not always pick up on the cues.

At a young age, children need the nourishment and care of an adult in order to prosper. A study conducted by Gray, Mission, and Hayes (2005) concluded that children who do not have the nourishment of a parent or a grandparent at an early age lack the social and emotion developmental skills needed for early childhood. There is a type of bond that is established between parent figures early on that is required for healthy development. Those households that have either a single parent or have no parents lack a considerable amount of emotional nourishment for children. The study concluded that parents must be very careful to spend as

much time at home with their children during the formative years in order to ensure this emotional stability. It further asserted that if a parent figure was not available due to a number of causes, then the establishment of some adult would be needed (Gray et al., 2005).

Even considering who takes a child to and from school or childcare can be perceived as having a significant impact on children and their relationship with their parents. In study conducted in 2007 at Utrecht University (Schwanen, 2007), relationships were compared of children based on who drove them to school in the morning and who picked them up in the afternoon. The study overwhelmingly showed that mothers had a closer relationship with their children due to the fact that 98% of them picked their children up in the afternoon and brought them home. However, the study went further and described the gender differences in who works and who does not work as long of hours based on gender. It is traditionally seen that women work less hours to give them time to spend at home with children; however, the study did imply that the reverse could be true if a father were to work less. The study concluded that regardless of gender, the parent who picked the child up from school had a greater relationship and seemed closer to the child than those who just took them to school in the morning (Schwanen, 2007).

Some studies went further into the psyche of a child by studying the psychological availability of a parent. Danner-Vlaardingerbroek, Kluwer, van Steenbergen, and van der Lippe (2013) said:

Being psychologically available to a child entails having the ability and motivation to direct attention and psychological resources toward the child. The key word in that statement is the word 'motivation'. (p. 741)

From a parent's perspective, it is one thing to love your child, but it is a completely different idea to have the motivation to teach, guide, and be available to them. In a study from Matias et al.

(2017), 51% reported feeling stressed, which is up from 20% in 2010. This stress contributed a high amount of home related stress which, in turn, caused family conflict. The children in those homes then had to go through a period of “emotional regulation (ER)” in order to stabilize to the home environment. The authors stated:

Early childhood is a critical period for the development of emotional regulation skills, which can be fostered by positive parenting. ER is the ability to extrinsically and extrinsically modulate emotional arousal and express one’s emotions. A child’s ER may encompass a lability/negativity dimension, characterized by unpredictability and suddenness of mood change and dysregulated negative affect. (p. 626)

Having a child who struggles emotionally from early childhood is alarming, especially in households of dual-earners. Judging by previous literature, parents who do not spend the majority of their day with their children but instead work do not have the experience with their children to pick up on cues of instability. This then leads to negative behaviors that could manifest additional aggression later in life.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this research study was to discover the common characteristics school principals had in managing schools and having a relationship with a significant other simultaneously. A transcendental phenomenology was, therefore, used to research this study. A criterion sampling was used in order to get a genuine cross-section of individuals and to ensure quality assurance. Chapter Three discusses the research design, choosing participants, the role of the researcher, data collection procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness, and lastly a review of ethical considerations.

### **Design**

In various research studies, quantitative and qualitative designs can be used based on the types of information needed to complete the research. A quantitative design uses deductive reasoning and empirical evidence such as statistics to form a rationale or conclusion. Qualitative designs use inductive reasoning in order to gather data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 300). This particular study used a qualitative design that focuses on transcendental phenomenology. Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research that focuses on a particular phenomenon and then studies multiple individuals who have experienced that particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In the case of this research study, the phenomenon was a principal who was able to prioritize his family life and his professional life simultaneously.

Moustakas (1994) used a term called “transcendental” phenomenology or “psychological” phenomenology. This type of phenomenology focuses on the description of the experiences rather than the meaning of the experiences. Transcendental phenomenology is effective for individuals who may have emotions involved in the research or may already have

an opinion based on personal circumstances, which could skew research findings. It is, therefore, wise to simply describe and then “bracket” certain events to find commonalities in individuals. Its contrast is “hermeneutical” phenomenology, which focuses on the interpretation of events toward a lived experience. Van Manen (1995) used this type of phenomenology not only as a descriptor of the process but also as an interpreter.

This research study used a transcendental approach to phenomenology because I actually live within the environment of the research. Being that I am a principal myself and am married with children, I might not have a strong trustworthiness unless descriptors are used. This study also used components identified by Creswell (2007) in order to form a truly qualitative study. Oftentimes, qualitative studies allow the researcher to modify the study as discoveries are made.

### **Research Questions**

**RQ1:** How do school principals balance their time commitment at work in relation to time with a significant other?

**RQ2:** How do school principals balance their time commitment at work in relation to time with personal children?

**RQ3:** What are the common characteristics of principals who successfully maintain a relationship with a significant other while also managing the responsibilities of their job?

**RQ4:** What are the common characteristics of school principals who successfully maintain a relationship with their personal children while also managing the responsibilities of their job?

A relationship with a significant other was defined as a heterogeneous marriage between a man and woman who are not divorced.

## **Participants**

The participants who were used for this study were nine school principals. In order to gather a wide array of the different experiences, three elementary, three middle, and three high school principals were included in the study.

It was important that only participants who have experienced the particular phenomenon being studied participate; therefore, a criterion sampling was used. According to Miles and Humberman (1994), criterion sampling is used when all cases meet the same criteria, which is very useful for quality assurance. The specific criteria that was used was (a) the individual must have been married, (b), the individual must have had at least two school-aged children during the time of the participant being a principal, and (c) the participants must have been a principal for at least three years. Other demographics such as gender, socio-economic status, and/or ethnicity were not considered in this research study.

## **Setting**

The setting of this study included three independent school districts in the Lowcountry of South Carolina. Currently, there are 155 public schools within these counties including six primary schools, 79 elementary schools, 44 middle schools, and 26 high schools. The demographic makeup of Charleston County includes approximately 373,000 citizens which makes up around 67% white, 29% African American, 5% Latino, and around 1% Asian. The median household income is approximately \$50,000. The demographic makeup of Berkeley County includes approximately 194,000 citizens which makes up around 69% white, 25% African American, 6% Latino, 2% Asian, and 2% other. The median household income is approximately \$51,000. The demographic makeup of Dorchester County includes approximately 145,000 citizens which makes up around 69% white, 26% African American, 5% Latino, 2%

Asian, and 2% other. The median household income is approximately \$55,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

The sites were carefully considered and came from a combination of urban, suburban, and rural schools. Consideration was also taken as to the size of the schools that were used. While principals who had a smaller student population may have had fewer students on a daily basis to manage, there were typically fewer assistant principals; therefore, delegation of after school events became difficult. Likewise, while principals who had a significant number of assistant principals to delegate assignments because of a larger student population, the magnitude of the job was still very demanding. Therefore, a combination of each type of school was considered.

Another factor that was considered was the type of school being studied: elementary, middle, or high school. It was taken into consideration that high school principals had considerably more after-school events than that of elementary and middle school principals. This means that the times spent at work for a high school principal may have differed considerably than that of elementary or middle school principals.

### **Procedures**

The first step in the procedures of this qualitative research study was gain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through Liberty University. The research plan was submitted and given approval through the Liberty University IRB. The second step was to begin identifying potential participants to be involved in the study. Surveys were used to identify these participants. Likewise, I made phone calls to potential participants in order to solicit them to participate in the study. I obtained lists of principals from the three school districts by accessing their online websites. I then used South Carolina report card data to determine the principals who

had been in the profession for at least three years. Of those who were in the profession for at least three years, a phone call or email was made in order to ask about potential involvement in the survey, number of years married, and number of children.

Confidentiality was taken into consideration at this point, and no data was shared with anyone else other than the participants. The data was collected through a series of interviews, questionnaires to spouses, and job descriptions, including the principal's schedule. The interviews were recorded with a tape recorder and then transcribed by the researcher. The data from the questionnaires as well as job descriptions with schedules were analyzed in order to discover commonalities. Data analysis was measured through a journaling of experiences and phenomenological reductionism, also known as bracketing.

### **The Researcher's Role**

During the research, I was personally responsible for conducting interviews, analyzing questionnaires, and evaluating the participants' job descriptions as well as schedules. At the time of the research, I was an assistant principal in a large, suburban high school for four years with a student population of approximately 2,300. My primary job responsibilities at work included freshman academy coordinator, master scheduler, Positive Behavior Intervention System contact, textbook coordinator, Early College coordinator, ACT testing administrator, and disciplinarian.

At the time of the research, I had been married for seven years, and I had five children that my wife and I care for. The children's ages were 15, 11, nine, five, and fifteen months. My experience as an assistant principal was limited to seven years; therefore, I had experience as to how the principal related to his job and family simultaneously. I attempted to not bring any preconceived assumptions to the study and attempted to not allow my personal connections to

add any bias to the results. I also used field notes to assist in reducing bias during the research. I included reflexivity, or allowing time for reflection, to ensure no bias was added to the research.

### **Data Collection**

In qualitative research, the validity of data is essential in that a qualitative study has some weaknesses in the interpretation of results; therefore, it is highly recommended that the researcher should find data from at least three different data sources to compare. This particular data collection strategy is known as triangulation. This also allows the researcher to analyze the research questions from a number of different perspectives (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). It does not necessarily mean that results will be consistent throughout the research, however. In fact, Patton (2002) cautioned researchers with the misconception that triangulation does not necessarily provide consistency. Inconsistencies can actually provide strength to research findings. In this particular study, three data sources were used.

The initial meeting with the principal consisted of the principal interview along with giving the principal the spousal questionnaire. The principal was asked to give the questionnaire to their spouse and then return it with a stamped envelope already provided. The principal was asked to not complete the spousal questionnaire along with his or her spouse. It was important that this happen as the nature of transcendental phenomenology attempts to look at the research without a “prejudgment or presupposition” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 181). The principal should not predispose or give his or her spouse a prejudgment about the nature of the questions that may be asked. The principal, likewise, was given a stamped envelope to place his or her work schedule in along with a job description. The principal was given the option of using an electronic mode of delivery, such as email, to deliver the job description and work schedule.

## **Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were set up with the nine principals. Semi-structured interviews are those that allow the research to ask a set number of questions; however, it also allows the participant to elaborate, which can lead to other topics. Creswell (2007) asserted that for one-on-one interviews, “the researcher needs individuals who are not hesitant to speak and share ideas” (p. 133). I initially developed the questions, and then the IRB approved. I used various field experts to field test the interview questions in order to provide clarity to the questions. Any wording that was changed was submitted for IRB approval. The interview was intended to bring forth answers to research questions one and two in this study.

During the field testing of the interview questions, I asked two trusted fellow administrators, both male and female, to pilot the interview. I asked them the same questions that were asked to the principals and asked them to give an explanation to me about the clarity of each question, comfort level in explaining their answers, wording of the questions themselves, and feedback about the length of the interview. I then used these answers to determine whether any interview question should be altered or revised. The field test took place in the high school where I work before any research interviewing began.

The pilot interviews, along with the actual interviews, were recorded with a password-protected iPhone. Likewise, a password-protected laptop computer was used as a secondary recording device in case of an electronic malfunction. I took notes on a notepad during the interview, not necessarily to write down the principal’s exact words, but to transcribe the environment of the interview, any emotion that was given, or any other non-verbal events that were pertinent to the research study. The interviews took no longer than 25 minutes. No more than 15 questions were asked during the interview.

The following questions were used as talking points during the interviews; however, I reserved the right to deviate from these questions if the conversation went in another direction (McNamara, 2009).

#### Marital Questions

- (1) Do you regularly interact with your partner socially? If so, how?
- (2) Do you regularly interact with your partner emotionally? If so, how?
- (3) Please describe some of the events outside of work that you participate in with your partner.
- (4) About how much time per week do you get to spend with your partner that is outside of work?
- (5) Describe a typical week with your partner.

#### Children-Related Questions (were asked to parents only)

- (1) How much time per week do you spend with your children?
- (2) What types of activities do you participate in with your children?
- (3) Do your children ever spend a significant amount of time at work with you? If so, why?
- (4) Is there anything that you wish you could have done extra with your children that your job hinders?
- (5) Do you think your job as principal hinders your relationship with your children? If so, why?

#### Work-Related Questions

- (1) How much time after school do you spend at work in a typical week?
- (2) How would you say you balance your work and family life?
- (3) How often do you delegate authority to your subordinates?



(4) Does your family join you at events that are after work hours?

(5) How do you prioritize your professional life versus your personal life?

The purpose of the marriage and family questions were to get a description of what the family environment was like at the participant's house. I needed to determine what types of events the participants were involved in at home, and how effective they are in parenting and being a husband or a wife. Once again, a description of the events was dictated, not an interpretation.

### **Spousal Questionnaires**

Spouses were given a questionnaire that had similar questions to that of the principal's interview. Principals were asked to take the questionnaire home to their spouse and return it in a sealed envelope for security purposes. The purpose of this questionnaire were to get a perspective from the principal's marital partner as to how the principal's spouse perceived and dealt with the principal's job, time away from home, and time spent with children. Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001) along with Patten (1998) explained that in action research, questionnaires can provide useful data, especially when the researcher does not have direct access to the participants. Although open-ended questions can sometimes be difficult to analyze, they can provide a lot of specific, meaningful information (p. 6) The one large disadvantage of using questionnaires in this type of setting is the danger of participants using answers that are "socially appropriate" rather than actual feelings and emotions (p. 7). However, since I did not have direct access to the spouses of the principals, this was the most appropriate way of data collection. The spousal questionnaire was meant to help answer research questions three and four in this study.

The questionnaire was piloted by four different individuals, two female and two male. The individuals were asked to look at the clarity of the questions, the comfortableness of answering the questions, wording of the questions themselves, and length of the questionnaire.

Their answers provided insight on changing, editing, and rephrasing the questions. The pilot was conducted before IRB approval so that the piloted questions could be addressed in the IRB application.

The following questions were used in the questionnaire:

#### Marital Questions

- (1) Do you regularly interact with your partner socially? If so, how?
- (2) Do you regularly interact with your partner emotionally? If so, how?
- (3) Please describe some of the events outside of work that you participate in with your partner.
- (4) About how much time per week do you get to spend with your partner that is outside of work?
- (5) Describe a typical week with your partner.

#### Children-Related Questions (asked to parents only)

- (1) How much time per does your partner spend with your children?
- (2) What types of activities does your partner participate in with your children?
- (3) Is there anything that you wish you could do extra with your children that your partner's job inhibits?
- (4) Do you think your partner's job as principal hinders his or her relationship with your children?

#### **Document Analysis**

Each principal was asked to submit a job description of their particular job as well as a work schedule. These documents were analyzed thoroughly and used to determine the amount of time the principal spent at work versus the amount of time they spent with family. One particular

schedule that was useful was the afterschool events schedule that included the delegation of events to subordinates. Also, the types of activities spent at home with family were analyzed. The job descriptions were used to determine the magnitude of the job in relation to time and responsibility. This piece of data collection was used to answer different aspects of all four questions of this research study.

Document analysis serves here to complement the data collection strategies of open-ended interviews along with questionnaires. Bowen (2009) stated, “Whereas document analysis has served mostly as a complement to other research methods, it has also been used as a stand-alone method” (p. 29). Just like other research studies, this type of data collection strategy requires data to be collected and interpreted to gain meaning and understanding of the research questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This type of document was created without my intervention; therefore, it served as a credible source for this research study.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to provide a bias-free report of the findings of this research study, I first journaled personal experiences over the course of the study. This is a technique used in transcendental phenomenology that allows the researcher to remove bias from the data analysis of the research findings.

Next, I used phenomenological reductionism (Schutz, 1962), also known as bracketing, in order to analyze the data from the interviews, questionnaires, job descriptions, and schedules. First, the documents were read in order to find significant statements and/or significant events that all the participants who experienced the phenomenon vocalized. Second, these significant statements were divided into various meaning units, or categories, in order to code the transcriptions.

Lastly, three different descriptions of the data was described. A textural description was written in order to describe the “what” in the research. A structural description was written in order to describe the “how” in the research. Lastly, a composite description, which combines the structural and textural descriptions, was used to describe the overall essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Using these types of descriptions is important in qualitative research as it helps the researcher to step aside from the emotion and interpretation of the research. After all, in phenomenology, the researcher is interpreting an interpretation of another person’s emotions or experiences (Schutz, 1962). I was careful not to interpret any of the findings or show cause for the phenomenon since the research study was to discover factors and not to interpret findings.

Using bracketing, I attempted to allow the research participants to “think and feel in most direct ways” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 96). My attempt was to elicit their emotions and find out what was going on “within” instead of a more socially-accepted answer. Bracketing (Caelli, 2001) in this attempt asked the participants to set aside their preconceived perceptions of how a principal “should act” or how a marriage “should go” and focus more on the value of what actually is occurring. Another form of bracketing takes place when the researcher himself must step away from the research to bracket his emotions. Miller and Crabtree (1992) asserted that the researcher must “bracket” his preconceptions and enter the individual’s life-world in order to use the self as an experiencing interpreter” (p. 24). Moustakas (1994) actually pointed out that Husserl alluded to this fact when he called on researchers to “abstain” or “stay away from” (p. 85).

Likewise, I placed in memos thoughts and emotions during the research process. Memoing, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), is the researcher’s way of recording what he sees, feels, hears, and experiences during the research data collection (p. 69). It was important

to differ between descriptive notes and reflective notes when memoing as both brought about different interpretations. Likewise, the memos were dated in order to correlate the data.

Lastly, coding was essential when employing phenomenology. Coding is the process in which common themes emerge when analyzing data from the interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis (Kleiman, 2004, p. 10). The following procedure was used when coding in this research study:

- Read the interview transcript, questionnaires, and document analysis in its entirety,
- Re-read the interview transcript, questionnaires, and document analysis again, this time going slower and noticing common themes that emerge,
- Look at the sections that have been deemed similar in focus in an attempt to make sense of them,
- Memo initial thoughts on common themes that appear to be emerging,
- Make a table of common themes, and
- Interpret common themes

### **Trustworthiness**

I used multiple data sources in order to add trustworthiness to the research. From the use of three different data sources, interviews, journaling, and schedules, I was able to describe the “essence” of the phenomenon. Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that this triangulation of sources will allow transferability, credibility, and dependability to the research (p. 300).

### **Transferability**

Rich, thick descriptions of the findings were used in order to critically detail all the participant’s interviews, journals, and schedules. Denzin (1989) spoke of the importance of rich, thick descriptions because it “presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social

relationships [and] evokes emotionality and self-feelings... The voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard” (p. 83). This allows transferability so the research can determine whether or not the descriptions can be transferred to other settings.

### **Credibility**

I also used member checking to go back and check with the participants to ensure the research findings are accurate. This allows the researcher to obtain credibility in its research analysis and interpretation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Credibility is important because researchers feel a certain sense of confidence that the observations, interpretations, and conclusions are accurate.

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

An external audit was also used in order gain an outside perspective. This allowed an outside source, or research consultant, to examine the process and the procedures of how the research was conducted. The auditor had no connection to the study, and the auditor determined whether the conclusions were supported by the data (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

### **Ethical Considerations**

All information given to the researcher was kept strictly confidential and never shared with anyone, not even the spouse or children of the participants. All information was kept on a laptop computer that has password-protected files. A backup of the information was kept on an external hard drive that was password protected. Pseudonyms were used when publishing the research study, and informed consent was gained from each participant before conducting the study. IRB approval was obtained.

### **Summary**

A transcendental phenomenology was used along with criterion sampling in order to provide research to this study. Phenomenological reductionism, or bracketing, was used to help record my emotions, and memos were written in order to transcend above the research. Through the use of triangulation, principal interviews, spousal questionnaires, job schedules, and principal job description were used to provide data to this research study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological research study was to determine how school principals are able to prioritize their professional lives while simultaneously prioritizing their personal lives with spouses and children. Chapter Four presents a description of the research participants and the findings of this research study. My research focused on nine principals, three from elementary level, three from middle level, and three from the high school level who are simultaneously successful in their marriage and raising of two or more children as well as being a successful school principal. I analyzed the responses I conducted under semi-structured interviews, spousal questionnaires, principal job descriptions, and principal schedules. Throughout the process, I journaled emotions and reactions to the research methods which has helped me to remove bias from the research findings. I then used phenomenological reductionism, or bracketing, in order to analyze the findings.

Four research questions served as my guide throughout the process in order to describe relevant themes and events for the findings of this study. The following four questions were used:

- (1) How do school principals balance their time commitment at work in relation to time with a significant other?
- (2) How do school principals balance their time commitment at work in relation to time with personal children?
- (3) What are the common characteristics of principals who successfully maintain a relationship with a significant other while also managing the responsibilities of their job?



- (4) What are the common characteristics of school principals who successfully maintain a relationship with their personal children while also managing the responsibilities of their job?

A relationship with a significant other is defined as a heterogeneous marriage between a man and woman who are not divorced.

Once all the data were analyzed, I wrote a textural description, a structural description, and a composite description of the data in order to present the findings. This also allowed me set my emotions aside in order to gain the essence of my research findings. The data analysis was conducted as outlined in Chapter Three, and Chapter Four concludes with a summary of the findings.

### **Participants**

Ten individuals were researched, but one individual backed out mid-way through the process leaving a total of nine participants. All the participants selected for the study had been the head principal of a school for at least three years or longer, were married to a heterosexual partner, and had at least two children during the time when they were principal. Three of the participants came from the elementary level, three were from the middle level, and three were from the high school level. Out of the research participants, four of the individuals had either retired or were working in another school district job capacity, and the remaining five participants were still in their role as head principal. Eight of the participants were Caucasian, one was African American, two of the participants were female, and seven were male. All of the participants were from Tri-County area of Charleston, South Carolina. In order to protect the identity of all participants, realistic and culturally-appropriate pseudonyms were used to replace participant names.

I received permission from each principal to interview them and to send his or her spouse a questionnaire. Participants were given consent forms to complete and return. All of the information that I collected remains under lock and key for security purposes.

Table 1

*Demographics of Principal Participants and Their Spouses*

Participant Name	Number of Years as Principal	Level	Number of Children	Spouse's Name
Betty	10	Elementary	2	Jonathan
Alice	12	Elementary	3	Patrick
Ronald	8	Elementary	2	Kelli
Greg	15	Middle	3	June
Jack	25	Middle	3	Teresa
Ted	7	Middle	2	Cynthia
Henry	6	High	2	Jennifer
Donald	5	High	5	McKenzie
Phillip	29	High	3	Denise

*Note:* Data for the principal participant table was obtained directly before the semi-structured interviews.

**Betty: Elementary School Principal**

Betty served as an elementary school principal for 10 years up until her retirement. She then returned to the school district to become the district's hearing officer and served in that capacity for six years. She has been married to Jonathan for the last 32 years, and they have two girls, Tiffany and Amber, both of whom have gone into education in different capacities. Betty received her teaching degree from the University of South Carolina in elementary education and her master's degree from Charleston Southern University in educational administration.

**Alice: Elementary School Principal**

Alice is currently serving as an elementary school principal and has been for the past 12 years. This is her 27<sup>th</sup> year of education. She has been married to Patrick for the last 34 years, and they have three children, Jeffrey, Allison, and Barbara. Alice received her teaching degree from the University of Alabama, and her master's in educational administration from the University of South Carolina. She has served as an elementary school teacher of reading, math, science, and social studies and served as an assistant principal before becoming a principal. This is her second school as principal.

**Ronald: Elementary School Principal**

Ronald is currently serving as an elementary school principal and has been for the last eight years. He received his bachelor of science degree in elementary education from Charleston Southern University and his master's degree in secondary administration and supervision. He then completed his doctorate in educational leadership and philosophy from the University of South Carolina. Ronald is married to Kelli, and they have two children; both are in middle school. Ronald taught kindergarten for six years before becoming an assistant principal and is currently serving in his second school as head principal.

**Greg: Middle School Principal**

Greg is currently serving as the assistant superintendent of the school district, a role that he has had for the last three years. He previously was an elementary school principal for nine years and a middle school principal for six years. He had the opportunity to open a new elementary and middle school during his tenure as principal. He has been married to June for the past 27 years, and they have three children, Carter, Samantha, and Billy. He received his

bachelor's degree from the University of South Carolina in elementary education, and a master's degree from the Citadel in secondary administration.

**Jack: Middle School Principal**

Jack served as a middle school principal for 25 years before retiring and running for the school board where he has served two terms. Jack has been married to Theresa for the past 28 years, and they have three children, Reece, Daniel, and Jennifer. Jack earned his bachelor's degree in education from Clemson University and a master's degree in school administration from the Citadel.

**Ted: Middle School Principal**

Ted has served as a middle school principal in the same school for the past seven years. Before that he worked as a German teacher at a high school and then seven years as an assistant principal. He has been married to Cynthia for the last 12 years, and they have two children, Chandler and Spann. Ted received his degree in German from the University of Hamburg and then attended Charleston Southern University to earn his master's degree in secondary administration and supervision.

**Henry: High School Principal**

Henry has served as a high school principal for the past six years. He is married to Jennifer, and they have two children, Ian and Dudley. Henry attended the University of South Carolina where he received a degree in mathematics and then the Citadel for a master's degree in administration.

**David: High School Principal**

David served as a high school principal for five years before becoming assistant superintendent and superintendent of the school district where he has served for the past three

years. He is married to McKenzie, and they have five children, Craig, Rowan, Samantha, Diane, and Steven. David attended the University of Minnesota where he earned his degree in physical education. He then attended the University of Rochester to get his master's degree in secondary administration, and the University of South Carolina for his doctorate in philosophy with an emphasis in educational leadership.

### **Phillip: High School Principal**

Phillip has served as a high school principal for the past 29 years and is planning to retire at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. He has served in other capacities such as teacher, assistant principal, and assistant superintendent. He is married to Denise, and they have three children, Hunter, Riley, and Morgan. He attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to earn both his bachelor's degree in social studies and his master's degree in secondary school administration.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

I conducted a semi-structured interview with each of the nine principals in a setting that was comfortable to them. The setting ranged from their office at school to a coffee shop. In order to ensure accuracy, I recorded the interview on two separate devices—a computer and an iPhone. Those interviews are both password protected and the files are kept on an external hard drive. As I interviewed the participants, I used a small legal pad to note phrases I wanted to revisit or remember throughout the interview. After each interview, I went back and wrote a brief journal entry of ideas that surprised me. Regardless of my emotions, I wanted to write them down so as to separate them from the research, and journaling helped me in that experience. After transcribing the interviews, I used member checking in order to ensure their accuracy. Member checking demonstrated to me that no changes needed to be made in the transcripts. Following

this process, I made a list of significant statements from each interviewee and then coded the statements into meaning groups or themes in order to aggregate the data. I found many similarities between participant responses.

### **Spousal Questionnaires**

Similar to the semi-structured interviews, I gave each spouse a questionnaire that closely resembled the topics of the principal interview. Those questionnaires were broken down into significant statements that were further broken down into meaning groups or themes. I saw several themes emerge from the spousal questionnaires that aligned with the principal semi-structured interviews. I kept a journal during the analyzation of data that demonstrated my opinions of the spousal questionnaires. This journaling helped me to transcend above the research in order to keep my bias or opinion out of the research findings.

### **Principal Job Description and Schedule**

In order to collect an artifact from each principal, the principal was asked to write down a brief job description as head principal as well as provide a copy of their average daily work week. Each principal did this in their own way. Some emailed the job description and schedule while others wrote them down on a sheet of paper and submitted them. For the schedule, I received different types of schedules that included a digital copy of a calendar, a digital copy of a typed schedule, and a hand-written schedule. I looked for consistencies between the schedules and job descriptions and wrote them down in the form of meaning groups or themes. Those themes were then transferred to the data I received from the principal semi-structured interviews along with spousal questionnaires. During the process of data analyzation, I journaled my thoughts and emotions in a separate location in an attempt to remove the bias from the research. I

was able to recognize that while I did identify some surprises in the data analyzation, I allowed the data to speak for itself and attempted to provide an objective view in my research findings.

## **Results**

The findings below demonstrate a discussion of significant statements and themes that emerged from the data collected from the semi-structured interviews with principals, spousal questionnaires, principal work schedules, and principal job descriptions. I created a list of significant statements and then broke those down into codes or meaning groups that I used for data analyzation. I attempted to focus on specific information that allowed me to answer my research questions. During the process, the use of all data collection strategies allowed me to get a general glimpse into the personal lives of principals and their spouses to determine how they are able to be successful in their marriage relationship and raising of children as well as in their position as principal. Almost all of the data collected showed similarities in themes and significant statements.

## **Themes**

Data collection from these nine principals consisted of three types: semi-structured interviews, spousal questionnaires, and collection of artifacts in the form of principal work schedule and job description. After transcribing the interviews, I stepped away from the interviews for a period of 24 hours and then went back to re-read the transcripts. During this re-read, I wrote down significant statements that I thought to be pertinent. I then read through the spousal questionnaires and made a list of significant statements for both the semi-structured interviews as well as spousal questionnaires. Then I analyzed the principal work schedules and job descriptions and found some correlations between the significant statements that had already been recorded from interviews and questionnaires. Nothing new was gleaned from the work

schedules or job descriptions. They served as a basis for support from what I had discovered in the principal interviews and spousal questionnaires.

The themes that emerged from the sources of data are as follows: (a) be intentional about dating your spouse, (b) be intentional about keeping a healthy relationship with your kids, (c) even though it is your responsibility, delegate tasks, (d) develop trust between your spouse and children and between you and your leadership team, (e) involve your spouse and children in everything, if you can, and (f) take the extra time needed to develop the relationship. These themes provided a meaningful frame that allowed me to get a general essence and understanding of how principals are able to prioritize the certain areas of their life, both professional and personal, and still be successful at both.



Table 2

*Themes from Significant Statements and Codes from Data Aggregation*

Repeated Words/Phrases	Researcher-Assigned Code	Data Source
Trust your spouse and understand his or her job	T	IN/SQ
Trust your leadership team	TL	IN
Date your spouse	DS	IN/SQ
Be intentional	IN	IN/SQ
Make date days/don't work days	NW	IN
Involve your children and spouse at school-related activities	SC	IN/SQ/WS
Delegate when able	D	IN
All other duties assigned by the superintendent	AD	JD
Take time off	TO	IN/SQ/WS

Table 3

*Enumeration Table of Horizons Related to Open-Codes*

Open Code	Enumeration of open-code appearance across data sets	Themes
Be intentional	18	Be intentional about dating your spouse
Make date days	12	
Take time off	8	
Sacrifice time	10	
Plan to take your husband/wife out	13	
Be creative with the dates	5	
Dates don't always have to involve going out	2	
Spend time with your children	17	Be intentional about keeping a healthy relationship with your kids
Kids are important	6	
Prioritize time with children	13	
Delegate authority	16	Even though it is your responsibility, delegate tasks
Delegate tasks	17	
Trust my APs	18	
Let someone else do it	2	
Develop trust	16	
Grow your subordinates	12	
Invest in people	12	
Trust in your spouse	9	Develop trust between you and your spouse and between you and your leadership team
Trust your team	8	
My spouse just understood	4	
Have an agreement with your spouse	3	
Family obligation	2	
Trust saves time and energy	3	
Be careful who you trust	5	
Involve your children	8	Involve your spouse and children in everything
Take your spouse to work	17	
Take your child to work	17	
Allow family to join you	6	Take the extra time to develop the relationship
Weekend events are fun together	12	
Understand your spouse's job	7	
My family is more important than the job	9	
My spouse understands my job	10	
Sacrifice sleep	4	

### **Research Question One**

Research Question One asked, “How do school principals balance their time commitment at work in relation to time with a significant other?” I intentionally designed this research question in order to get the essence of how principals are able to effectively manage their time between work and home. As I analyzed data, three themes emerged: (a) delegate tasks, (b) develop trust, and (c) involvement.

Every principal interviewed shared common ground with each other. Each principal had a high-stress job that required a significant amount of time away from home, and each had a spouse and children that depended on them. As I began asking questions to principals through the semi-structured interviews, each of them had their own story to share. Each of them had unique experiences that allowed them to transcend above their job responsibilities and still maintain healthy relationships at home. The time commitment varied between principals. I found that although elementary and middle school principals do not have as many activities after school as high school principals do, they have less individuals to help; therefore, it was more difficult to find supervision for after school events. However, I also found a deep sense of commitment from each principal to ensure time was not wasted and a healthy relationship with family was priority.

Spouses were also asked specific questions about their emotional and social connections with their principal spouses. Each spouse seemed to have a connection with their significant other, and there seemed to be an understanding between each that transcended an understanding of time. When answering the questions, the spouse seemed to know that time was essential and intentionally given to them. For example, Greg responded,

My wife just understood that I had an important job, but at the end of the day my family was more important. When I got home I would spend all evening with them, and then

sacrifice my sleep after they had gone to bed if I still needed to work. (Greg, interview, June, 2017).

There seemed to be an understanding in how time was managed between the spouse and principal.

**Even though it is your responsibility, delegate tasks.** Through the interview sessions, a continuing theme developed by all principals was that they found it important to delegate tasks and other activities to their assistant principals. Principals agreed that they spent an exorbitant amount of time and energy pouring into their assistant principals in order to teach them skills and attributes that were necessary to become a principal. Phillip put it like this,

All seven of my AP's want to be principals one day, at least I hope they do. If I don't teach them, how are they ever going to learn? But I also know that I have a hidden agenda in that they can speak for me at times and attend events for me. That is how I get my family time in. (Phillip, interview, March, 2017).

Delegating events to assistant principals helped principals to carve out time in the evening to spend time with family. However, Henry admitted that,

When you first become a principal you want to attend all of the events. You have to have an agreement with your spouse up front about that first year. That first year you show your face and become known to your school and community. Then you start delegating those events to others, but that first year is important to understand. (Henry, interview, July, 2017)

After looking at principal's work schedules, it was very apparent that after school activities contributed to the majority of the time principals were required to be away from their spouses. Also, after examining a principal's job description, it was apparent that anything could

pop up at any time, depending on what the superintendent decided. In every job description were the lines, “all other duties as determined by the superintendent” (Principal Job Description, March, 2017). However, principals still knew which of those duties they could delegate and which to not. In fact, some principals sent assistant principals to meetings in their place on purpose to give them the “face time” and experience in working with the superintendent. Alice said,

I knew my boss (superintendent) very well, we were actually personal friends. He knew when I had a family obligation so he would always tell me to send my AP. He would say that I will teach him a few things. (Alice, interview, January, 2017).

Delegation of after-school events, even ones that randomly popped up, was very important because it opened up family time with spouses and children at home.

Delegating appropriate assignments to assistant principals was also a part of this theme. Three principals, Ronald, Alice, and Phillip, all agreed that they carefully selected the assignments they gave to their assistant principals because work sometimes needed to be taken home. At that point, if the assignment is not delegated, the principal has to take time out of limited time with family in order to get the job done. For example, Phillip said:

I remember a time when we were up for SACS accreditation, and that accreditation write-up was always a pain in the rump. It took so much time just to fill that thing out, and you never knew who was going to read it anyway, if they read it at all. So I assigned that job to my AP who I knew was a fantastic writer and who had the skill to get the job done. I had never done something for myself so good as assigning her that task. When time came to turn it in, I read through it and it was stellar. I didn't have to make a single change. It

gave me the time with my family that I needed and it taught my AP about getting accredited. Win-win! (Phillip, interview, March, 2017).

This statement shows the importance of assigning certain tasks to certain individuals in order to have valuable family time and to teach your subordinates.

**Develop trust between you and your leadership team.** Tied very closely with being able to delegate authority, developing a trust between a principal and the principal's leadership team is important. The principals talked directly about trust or alluded to it in their responses to questions. Trust is one of those things that is developed over time, and it takes a lot of time and energy to foster an agreement of trust. In the final analysis, it is the principal's school and his or her name is on the report card associated with the school. If a principal delegates a report or an accreditation document, he or she is entrusting that individual to do it well. Ted talked about trust in the relationship between principal and assistant principal by saying,

Trust saves you time and energy. If you put the time in at the beginning, you don't have to worry about it at the end. When I give an assignment out, I don't have to stay up all night worrying about it if I have done my job correctly. (Ted, interview, January 2017).

However, trust is also something that can be broken which takes time away from family.

Ted also talked about a time when trust was unexpectedly broken between him and his Title 1 Facilitator. He remembered:

My Title 1 Facilitator was given the job of making sure the Title 1 budget was taken care of. She would keep the books, justify the expenses, and write the report back to the government with documentation. She was a teacher under me for six years before, and I trusted her to do as good of a job in the Title 1 job as she was as a teacher. Year 1 went very well. I taught and she learned. She also had the previous Title 1 Facilitator as an

assistant principal so that helped too. Year 2 passed, and it went well. Then Year 3 came. I don't know what happened, but everything was off. I remember the night my superintendent called me furious that a report had a \$10,000 error. And this was just the beginning of it. Several more errors were made, money was spent without the proper documentation, and I eventually had to take the time to document all of the inconsistencies which eventually led to the dismissal of my Title 1 Facilitator. I have never lost so much sleep in my life, and my wife saw it. It weighed heavily on me. My wife and I eventually had a reckoning at the end of that year, and she told me that I needed to get a handle on that part of my job because this past year had been rough. Ever since then, I have been very careful in who I trust. I always go back and check. (Ted, interview, January, 2017)

Ted's situation is unique in that it ultimately led to the dismissal of an employee, but it is not unique in trust getting broken at certain times. That's why it is important to take the time at the beginning of the job to foster a trusting relationship with your employees so in the end, sleep is not lost and family time is not affected.

**Involve your spouse and children in everything, if you can.** As an elementary school principal, Betty remembered her daughters, Tiffany and Amber, attending the same school where she was principal. She loved every minute of that experience in that she was able to be with and see her daughters at school whenever she wanted, and she was able to make sure they received a quality education. Betty also remembered having her husband, who was a business owner, coming to all those school activities to spend time with the family. Betty's husband, Jonathan, wrote in his spousal questionnaire, "I would always go to school to see my girls and Betty. And it was always funny because I was always a celebrity. Being the principal's husband has some

perks” (Jonathan, spousal questionnaire, February, 2017). Betty also remembered her husband coming to school with her. She stated,

Jonathan would always come, and if I was working that night, he would take it on himself to watch the girls. He knew I had to focus on parents so he would make sure I had that time. But it always nice to see him. He always made the effort to come. (Betty, interview, February, 2017).

Although technically the time was classified as work hours for after school events, the principal and spouse were able to make the best of the situation and merge some family time in as well. Teresa, who is Jack’s spouse, wrote in her questionnaire that she was “always invited to his events, and it was always nice to be on his arm. He made me feel very special, and I made sure he knew I supported him in his job” (Teresa, spousal questionnaire, February, 2017).

Sports and other extracurricular activities is another area that principal’s and spouses are able to spend family time with one another while also supporting their children. The basketball arena always has to have supervision, and an administrator is typically present, and when it is the principal’s child that is the one playing the basketball, when that principal covers the event, it allows for quality family time to spent with one another. While David was the principal of his high school, his son Rowan and his daughter Samantha both played basketball on the high school team. Rowan was on the varsity boys’ basketball team, and Samantha was on the JV girls’ team. Oftentimes, the two teams would play on the same night. This allowed for a great opportunity for the entire family, including his wife, McKenzie, to attend the games. They would sit together, along with their other younger children, and as the night progressed, the family would spend time together. David provided an example of a work week that included basketball games. He purposefully assigned himself these games to allow his assistant principals times to be with their



families but also to see his children play. Sometimes this would occur twice a week and then again on the weekends, depending on the week. The last year David was the principal, his other daughter, Diane, was a freshman in the marching band. He would assign himself, along with McKenzie, the task of going to every marching event and every band concert. McKenzie remembers these events by writing, “

Those band months were long, but while my husband was the principal we might as well get some family time in and attend the competition. Those are some of the biggest memories I have with my family during those band days. (McKenzie, spousal questionnaire, May, 2017).

The principals who had their children attend school with them seemed to have an easier time incorporating their children and spouses in after school events. Not all principals were able to include their children or spouses in the job. From what I found, spouses who were not able to attend job-related functions often found other allotments of time with their principal spouses that they cherished. Nevertheless, when principals could include their spouses at work, it was a unique way of creating family time. The education profession provides one of those unique opportunities to do this. Not all professions have the ability to include family during working hours.

### **Research Question Two**

Research Question Two asked, “How do school principals balance their time commitment at work in relation to time with personal children?” The purpose of Research Question Two was to understand ways in which a principal was able to spend time with his or her children in relation to their time commitment to work responsibilities. Principal interviews

were a primary source of data to help answer this question, and spousal questionnaires further discussed these points.

Eight out of the nine principals had a positive experience in spending time with their children while they were principal. Most agreed that by being involved in raising their children, they became more effective principals. Also, vice versa, being a principal made them a more successful and effective parent. One principal remembered that his children didn't always like for him to be around since he was "daddy" but he liked it because it allowed him to keep a "thumb" on them, and it allowed him to see who they were hanging around. After all, a child's social group is sometimes what can make or break a child during adolescence.

One principal in particular did not have a positive experience in raising his children. Ronald expressed some regret of being away from home so much. Ronald was the principal of an elementary school, and he attributed the trouble his children got into during their adolescent years to him not being home as much. He stated,

I wish I had been at home more. My wife would always tell me that I was their dad, and I needed to be home to raise them. That caused some tension between the two of us because at the beginning of my career I put work before my family. That changed over time, but it was still difficult. (Ronald, interview, December, 2016).

Ronald's wife Kelli, did mention in her questionnaire that there was tension in their marriage in the early years of him being a principal, and it was mostly regarding the children. She knew that he loved her because they had a solid foundation of marriage before he became principal, but the children did suffer. She is thankful, however, that he had the connections that he did because it allowed him to get them out of some serious trouble at times. She expressed that they made it through, but it could have been better.

Ronald's experience was the outlier of the group. All other principals claimed that their relationships with their children were positive during the time they were principals. Some alluded to the fact that having time away always affects the kids in some way, but overall they were able to cope with the time factor in other ways.

Spending time with children also took on two different meanings as the interviews and questionnaires were analyzed. It was not always extremely obvious, but I got a sense that the phrases "spending time" and "spending quality time" provided a difference in perspectives. For example, one principal, Greg, made sure he delineated his answers between "quality time" and just "time" spent with his children. He even countered one of my questions by stating,

There is a big difference in work time and quality time. My children were around me a lot, but can I say that we spent some quality time with each other? Probably not always. I probably got more out of having my children with me than they did. (Greg, interview, June, 2017)

Another interviewee, Phillip, did not come right out and say it specifically, but through his wordings to answers I could tell what he meant. He would be very specific in his answers and say the words "quality time" versus "time."

Through the aggregation of data, four themes emerged: (a) being intentional (b) develop trust (c) involvement, and (d) develop the relationship. Some of these areas overlap with one another and some overlap with previous themes in other research questions; however, all of them were necessary in their inclusion to fully answer the research question.

**Be intentional about spending time with your children.** Intentionality is important because it requires a person to do something, or to conduct an act on purpose. Most principals and spouses agreed that making the time, on purpose, to spend with a child is most important. It

makes that child feel special, and it develops a sense of trust in the relationship. Summertime and break time were areas in which many principals provided intentional time to spend with their children. Education offers the summer break, Thanksgiving break, Christmas break, and spring break in order to have time off. Jonathan, Betty's husband, remembered Betty intentionally not working on many of those breaks in order to spend time with the kids. He wrote,

Betty would turn her phone off on certain days. She would email her supervisor and tell him that the phone would be off. She would then always delegate another authority to speak on her behalf so she could have uninterrupted time. That was important. (Jonathan, spousal questionnaire, February, 2017)

David also spoke on his intentionality of leaving his computer at school in order to force himself not to work. David said, "One night a week I would leave my computer at work in order to force myself not to work. I know myself well enough that if it were at home, I would open it and look at something" (David, interview, April, 2017). David did further clarify that the day of the week in which he did this would change from week to week. He even placed this on his workweek calendar he submitted as his artifact. It all depended on what was going on during that week, and his children just understood that daddy was busy, but they would at least get one night of uninterrupted time.

Taking vacations was important for principals in order to get away with their children. Vacations typically meant the entire family, including spouses, but the children would also benefit greatly with this intentional moment of time. Jack remembers going to Disney World one spring break and his phone going off a couple of times. He said,

The first day we were at Disney World I had to step away three times for a problem with some parent. They just wouldn't leave me alone. I then looked at my kids who were like,

‘daddy, let’s go’, and I turned off my phone. The parents could wait until I got back in school. (Jack, interview, February, 2017).

Likewise, the phone was a big distractor that was easily controlled in the area of intentionality. Turning your phone to silent or completely off meant the world to principal relationships with children. Five out of the nine principals, and nine out of nine spouses agreed that phones were a huge distractor in relationships. When a principal was able to turn the phone off, it was time well spent. Phillip recalled a time when his children took his phone from him. Phillip remembered:

I came home and put my stuff down and took a shower. When I got out I couldn’t find my phone. I couldn’t remember if I had left it in the car or at work or what had happened. I didn’t have it all night, and then the next morning I found it downstairs next to my bag with a note from my kids saying, ‘I enjoyed spending time with you today, dad.’ That sent a strong message to me (Phillip, interview, March, 2017)

Kids know when they are being ignored, and sooner or later they will stop trying to have that relationship. Phillip’s spouse actually wrote about the same event about his phone, and she claimed that a significant change occurred in her husband after he received that note. His relationships were stronger with his children, and he spent more time with them. Sometimes it just takes a strong message to get through.

Another intentional moment of time that Greg used with his children was to sign them out of school randomly and take them on dates. He purposefully dated his daughter Samantha on a regular basis. He said during his interview,

I wanted to show my daughter what a real man should be and act like. During our little dates I would open the door for her, treat her with respect, and talk to her about her life. She still remembers and talks about those dates. (Greg, interview, June, 2017).

This is an example of truly making time to spend with your personal children.

**Develop trust between you and your leadership team.** Developing trust in anyone is an important attribute to any relationship. However, developing a professional trusting relationship between you and your leadership team is essential. Ted put it like this, “My leadership team was my eyes and ears in that place, especially when I wasn’t there. If I didn’t trust them, I was in trouble” (Ted, interview, January, 2017).

Elementary school principals seemed to usually only have one or two assistant principals, so they would typically name a specific person in which they put in charge in their absence. That person had to be trusted so a principal could have a sense of relief that the building was taken care of while they were gone or away from their phone. Betty said,

I always placed my assistant principal in charge in my absence, and when I was away on vacation or with my family I would turn my phone off. However, my assistant principal would always have my husband’s number just in case. (Betty, interview, February, 2017)

Giving someone the authority to speak on her behalf in her absence always gave Betty a sense of satisfaction and relief. And she knew that if she *had* to get in touch with her, she could.

At the middle and high school level, sporting events seemed to overwhelm the schedule after school, and principals were required to assign different assistants to these events in their absence. Part of leaving assistants in charge was placing trust in them in order to get the job done. And then part of putting trust in them meant developing your leadership team appropriately throughout the year in order for you to have a clear mind during your time off.

Phillip was principal of a large high school for many years, and he spent a considerable amount of time developing his leadership team. He said, “I had to trust the people who spoke on behalf

of my name. My name was at stake so I took my leadership development seriously” (Phillip, interview, March, 2017).

**Involve your children in everything, if you can.** Bringing children to events was an important aspect of spending time with children to principals. There was a lot of travel associated with the head principal job, especially at the high school level. Some of those places included getting on planes and traveling to various parts of the country. Some of them included weekend events that required overnight trips. Regardless, including your children on them was a source of quality time spent, and it allowed the child to see places they would typically not be able to see as a young person.

Henry, a high school principal, was asked to travel to Paris at one point in his career on an international trip for work-based learning. He and other colleagues were visiting career schools in France to learn the European progression of career advancement and how secondary schools completed this task in a different country. His daughter happened to be a senior at the time, and he was able to pay for the plane ticket for her to come with him. Henry, along with his spouse in her questionnaire, spoke on this trip and how it was a great way for him to spend time with his daughter right before college in a foreign country. He was able to include her on almost everything they did as guests in the country, and they worked in some “down time” to be tourists and visit various attractions. Henry’s spouse, Jennifer, wrote, “That trip to Paris is talked about to this day. It really meant a lot to our daughter to go on that trip with her dad” (Jennifer, spousal questionnaire, July, 2017). Another principal, David, would take his son on weekend trips to cross-country events, or state competitions for band or cheerleading. He stated, “Those overnight trips let us bond a little. I think he remembers them. I was gone so much, even the car ride to those events let us talk some” (David, interview, April, 2017).

Principals are typically a part of the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) or the School Improvement Council (SIC) in South Carolina, so some principals talked about involving their children in those areas as well. As a middle school principal, Jack included his son on the SIC all three years he was in middle school with him. The SIC is a volunteer organization that requires the student to lead a group of parents, teachers, and community members in efforts to improve the school's culture. They also often work in collaboration with the PTSA. Jack coached his son on school improvement initiatives in the school, and as the principal's son, he was listened to, even as a 13-year old, middle school student. Jack remembers promoting one initiative in beautifying the school bathrooms with positive quotes to promote school culture. His son talked about the need for better restroom facilities in the middle school, and the parents on the SIC agreed that something needed to be done. He allowed his son to choose the quotes that meant the most to him. After all, he was a student on the council, and he was the most relevant source of information regarding inspirational quotes to that generation of young people. He then worked with his son to organize the project including paint days, clean-up days, and quote days. Jack remembered,

My son's...quote project allowed him to develop some leadership skills that he would not have had the opportunity to develop if I had not been in that position. It also allowed me to get some stuff done that needed to get done (Jack, interview, February, 2017).

Jack's project with his son also allowed him to spend some time with him.

Greg always had trouble finding middle school students to serve on the school's PTSA. He said, "I guess serving on the PTSA wasn't always that popular. It always required after school meetings that no one wanted to attend" (Greg, interview, June, 2017). Greg instead put his daughter and son on the board as student representatives. He always knew he could count on



them since they were his kids, and he was guaranteed to have a student representative present at that point. Greg's spouse, June, also served as a parent representative on the PTSA board in order to have parent involvement. Those PTSA nights served as family dates for them. June wrote, "PTSA nights were always out to eat nights, usually at Denny's. That was our place to go, and the kids always ordered the same thing every time" (June, spousal questionnaire, July, 2017).

Almost every principal involved their children in some way at the school during school hours. Even if they were not directly involved in the event, eight out of nine principals admitted to having brought their children to after school events in order to spend time with them. Many brought them to school plays, sporting events, PTSA or SIC meetings, and booster meetings. Regardless of the event, the important thing was to spend some time with their children, and if that meant being at work with them, then so be it. Ronald said, "The alternative was to not see them. So they came to work with me" (Ronald, interview, December, 2016).

**Take the extra time to develop the relationship.** Developing a relationship, whether it be personal or professional, takes time and energy. Two principals out of the nine interviewed spoke on this subject specifically in terms of specifically and intentionally setting time aside to develop the relationship with their children, and each of them did it in a unique way.

Ted, a middle school principal whose children were in high school where he was a principal, used random overnight trips to keep up the relationship with his children. As a principal, one can always determine which days or times of the year are more appropriate to miss than others. In such cases, fellow colleague principals are much more understanding of absences for your children than just a random parent. Each year, he would treat his children to a random day where he would sign them out of school early and take them on an extended trip. That trip would be determined by what his children were interested in. For example, his son Spann loved

the New England Patriots football program. He would follow them religiously, but he had never been to a Patriots game. Ted signed his son out of school early on a Friday and they flew to Boston for the weekend. He then signed his son in late on Monday as they flew back, but that allowed him to spend some much needed father-son time. He did this yearly with his children, and he believes this helped to develop his relationship significantly with his children. His daughter was given the same treatment, but they always did things that she enjoyed. For example, his daughter liked dancing, so he was able to find a regional dance show in Atlanta and they drove to Atlanta for the weekend to attend. It was those trips that were memorable to him and his children.

Alice, an elementary school principal, developed a relationship with her children through a system of writing notes and letters throughout their entire school career. This is unique in that each note had a theme for the year. When she began high school, she wrote her notes on strong character, integrity, and personal responsibility. As a Christian, she was also able to bring in Bible verses to share that helped to develop her faith. Her husband, Patrick, spoke about these notes in his spousal questionnaire. He said:

Even in my wife's absence due to her job, she was still a constant presence in our children's lives. She was always writing notes, some just a couple of sentences, and some she would write a couple of pages. When the kids went through something, like a broken relationship with a girlfriend or boyfriend, you can be sure a letter would follow about that topic. And she was always great with her words. She always tied it up nice and neat in a bow with a Bible verse that led them back to God. (Patrick, spousal questionnaire, February, 2017)

Alice remembered writing the notes throughout the years, and she said she relied heavily on the Holy Spirit to guide her in her writing. She said, “It all depended on what I felt I needed to write. I didn’t plan them ahead of time, I just wrote what came to mind” (Alice, interview, January, 2017).

### **Research Question Three**

Research Question Three asked, “What are the common characteristics of principals who successfully maintain a relationship with a significant other while also managing the responsibilities of their job?” This research question was developed in order to determine things principals have in common when it comes to developing and keeping a healthy relationship with their spouse while being effective in their job responsibilities. With the responsibilities of being a school principal, the importance of a marital relationship is even that much more important. After examining principal interviews, spousal questionnaires, and artifacts such as principal work, the following themes emerged: (a) date your spouse and (b) develop trust.

The marriage relationship is very delicate, and should be handled with sensitivity and intentionality. Intentionality is important in that it requires a person to put an effort into thinking or doing certain acts that contribute to the relationship. It is not a thoughtless or mindless act, but it requires action. Intentionality should not be mistaken with love. A person can love someone unconditionally, but until certain actions of intentionality are shown or met, the fruit of that love is not seen or perceived. Likewise, developing trust in a relationship is very important for its survival; however, how can one develop trust without certain acts of intentionality? It is important for these themes to be examined further.

**Be intentional about dating your spouse.** Nine out of nine principal participants and nine out of nine spousal participants mentioned dating in their interviews or questionnaires. It

was the one overarching theme that was similar in all data collection. The following is a list of quotes from principal interviews that can be found on dating your spouse:

- “Dating your spouse is basically the gasoline that keeps the flame going. I had to find the time to date my husband or else that flame would go out, and to me, that would have been tragic” (Betty, interview, February, 2017).
- “My husband used to plan dates around my schedule. He had a pretty demanding job himself, but at the end of the day, we were the ones that were married. It wasn’t that we were married to our jobs, even though it felt that way sometimes” (Alice, interview, January, 2017).
- “I wish I had dated Kelli more during the first few years of me being a principal. I look back on those first years with some regret, but we got through them. Here is what I learned from the start. If you don’t set specific times on specific dates to go out with your wife, it probably isn’t ever going to happen. Something will always come up, or something will always happen. Then you just don’t go on dates anymore until the two of you look at each other a year later and wonder where the time went” (Ronald, interview, December, 2016).
- “The best dates I had with June were the times that I spent the most amount of time planning. I would oftentimes ask my office staff what I should do or where I should take her. They were a bunch of married women so they knew the key to a woman’s heart. They were always very helpful and June was always very appreciative of our time together” (Greg, interview, June, 2017).

- “Sometimes the date would start at the school, but by the end we would be out somewhere in town having fun. She always liked going out, and I liked being with her” (Jack, interview, February, 2017).
- “Cynthia had high expectations for me while I was the principal. She expected two dates a month. But those expectations were good for me because they forced me to plan something or else I knew I would be in trouble. Sometimes Cynthia would plan the dates herself to give me a break. She knew I loved her, but the dates were pretty important for quality time to be spent with each other” (Ted, interview, January, 2017).
- “Weekend dates were always fun, but it was the sporadic weeknight dates that kept the candle going. We like spontaneity. That’s just how we are” (Henry, interview, July, 2017).
- “Anytime we got to get away from the kids, it was a quality date night for us. After working long hours, we just wanted the time to be alone and together. Those dates were and still are important” (David, interview, April, 2017).
- “Date nights weren’t always away from the house. Sometimes we just put the kids to bed and had coffee on the back porch. That was a date night to me” (Phillip, interview, March, 2017).

The following are quotes from spousal questionnaires concerning date nights with their spouses:

- “Betty always made time for me, even in the midst of her job responsibilities. Dating was as important for me as it was to her” (Jonathan, spousal questionnaire, February, 2017).

- “I was the initiator of most dates in our home. I find them very important as it keeps the fire burning in the relationship. We couldn’t always go out, but we always spent time with each other” (Patrick, spousal questionnaire, February, 2017).
- “Even in all the busyness, Ronald always made time for me. It was rocky at first, but we eventually figured out the balance, and dating was important” (Kelli, spousal questionnaire, December, 2016).
- “Dating has to happen. If it doesn’t you get complacent and nothing new happens in the relationship” (June, spousal questionnaire, July, 2017).
- “We usually went on 1 to 2 date nights per month, sometimes more. It was nice to get out of the house. I stayed home and raised kids so getting me out of the house was a blessing” (Teresa, spousal questionnaire, February, 2017).
- “Every Tuesday was our date night in our home. If we didn’t go out that week, I always knew that Tuesday I would see him” (Cynthia, spousal questionnaire, February, 2017).
- “We went out almost every weekend to dinner. Sometimes the kids came, sometimes they didn’t. They were always nice, and sometimes we would go to a show or a movie” (Jennifer, spousal questionnaire, July, 2017).
- “Dating kept our relationship interesting” (McKenzie Spousal Questionnaire, May 2017).
- “Dating happened in the morning sometimes for us over coffee and reading the paper. And then sometimes it happened at night after everyone was in bed. We

had to adapt to the kid's schedules, but we had to intentionally find time to spend with each other" (Denise, spousal questionnaire, March, 2017).

One principal clarified the difference in setting up an "intentional date" compared to that of just "going to dinner." Phillip said:

We always went to dinner on the weekends and sometimes during the week. Denise worked too, so the thought of coming home and cooking a big meal was not always the best for us. But there is a difference in eating out lunch or dinner and planning a date. I would take time to look up concert tickets or plan a walk on the beach or go to the park and just sit. Knowing your spouse and what their likes and dislikes are play an important role in deciding those date nights. But the key is to be specific and intentional about what you do. Your spouse knows how much time you spent on your date nights. (Phillip, interview, March, 2017)

At the end of the day, intentionality was an important attribute to dating that all principals shared in common.

**Develop trust between you and your spouse.** Trust is important in the development of any relationship, but trust between a person and his or her spouse is of utmost importance. That trust determines the difference in a lasting long-term relationship, and it has a lot to do with how one rears children. Trust along the marital path paves the way for a rich marriage, even if it is in the midst of a job that requires a lofty time commitment outside the home.

Where one is and what time one is going to come home is important in a trusting spousal relationship. McKenzie said in her spousal questionnaire, "I always knew where he was and when he was going to come home. He would always let me know that and he never let me down" (McKenzie, spousal questionnaire, May, 2017). It was mostly the females that had comments

about their husbands either being away from home or knowing what time they would come home. Open communication was an essential aspect in that trusting relationship. Ted also commented, “If I were running late, I would always either call or text Cynthia to let her know. That way she didn’t worry” (Ted, interview, January, 2017). To follow up in her spousal questionnaire, Cynthia said, “We always talked through text about when he was coming home. It was never a mystery for me” (Cynthia, spousal questionnaire, February, 2017).

Ronald also spoke about a different type of trust that was found to be essential in his relationship with his wife, and that was being honest in all circumstances, no matter the topic. Although at times at the beginning, the marriage was a little rough due to trying to balance work expectations with home expectations, Ronald and Kelli worked together and maintained an open relationship in regards to communication. Kelli commented, “I never minced my words in how I spoke to Ronald. I always tried to be respectful, but I told him how it was, especially regarding our children” (Kelli, spousal questionnaire, December, 2017). Ronald also commented that he appreciated his wife always openly speaking to him. He said, “While I didn’t always like what she said, I knew she was right. At the end of it all, we made it right and we have survived this long to tell the tale” (Ronald, interview, December, 2016). The two of them having open communication helped them to survive in their relationship, even when times got tough.

#### **Research Question Four**

Research Question Four asked, “What are the common characteristics of school principals who successfully maintain a relationship with their personal children while also managing the responsibilities of their job?” This final research question was posed in order to determine if there were any additional characteristics that principals exhibited that related to managing a relationship with a principal and his or her children while also managing job



responsibilities. It was already determined that being intentional, developing trust, being involved, and developing the relationship with your children are all important characteristics based on Research Question Two. However, one additional theme that emerged from principal interviews and spousal questionnaires that related to this topic was the theme of delegating tasks.

This particular theme is different than would typically be considered delegation. The typical type of delegating when it relates to principals is for principals to give authority to their subordinates in order for important decisions to be made in their absence. However, this particular type of delegation is in relation to the typical husband and wife roles in a relationship. In a marriage relationship, there are assumed roles in the relationship. Those differ from couple to couple. For example, one couple may determine that the husband handles the finances while another couple may determine that the wife handles the finances. Regardless of who holds the role, there is a defined source of authority in regards to that particular area of the marriage. When there is a situation where a spouse is out of the house for an extended period of time due to job responsibilities, the couple decides to delegate those areas of responsibility to the other. This could happen in a military family, but according to the principal interviews and spousal questionnaires, it also happens in relationships between spouses who are principals of schools.

This in turn affects the children in whom they go to for certain aspects of their life. Jack said in his principal interview, “My strength has always been the disciplinarian in the household. I don’t like discipline, but I am good at it. My job makes me good at it. But I’m not home enough for it to be effective. I have to delegate that to my wife” (Jack, interview, February, 2017). This delegation of Jack’s disciplinary authority allows for his children to be disciplined under the same measurement as his other children. It also allows for discipline to be consistent. Jack did continue by saying that he and Teresa talk about all the consequences for his family. But because

he is out so much due to work responsibilities, he is the follow-up guy rather than the hammer. His wife, Teresa, automatically assumed this role when he got his job as principal. Her questionnaire stated in regards to discipline, “I am the authority on deciding consequences for our children. Jack is consulted with, but Jack relies on me to decide the punishment. Not everyone agrees with that, but that is the way it is done” (Teresa, spousal questionnaire, February, 2017).

Another area of delegation that I saw in the relationships that affected children was in the area of finances. Alice liked balancing the checkbook, and for years before she became principal, she kept the financial books for the family. She would make sure money was saved, the kids got lunch money, groceries were bought, and money for school clothes was saved. However, after she became the principal of her school, she quickly learned that she did not have the time for those particular details any longer. It was affecting her kids in the fact that sometimes she forgot to write a check for lunch. Their district had a no charge policy so her kids would sometimes go without eating. When this began happening, she consulted with her husband, Patrick. They determined that for the good of the children, he would take over the finances of the family. Alice openly admitted how difficult it was for her to do so, because she and Patrick did not always see eye to eye on how to spend their excess cash. She is a saver and he is a spender. However, she had to delegate that authority to him in order for her kids not to suffer.

### **Summary**

Chapter Four of this dissertation focused on the findings of how school principals are able to have successful relationships between spouse and children while simultaneously being effective in their role as principal. Through nine semi-structured interviews, nine spousal

questionnaires, a principal's job description, and a principal's work schedule, the participants shared their perceptions of how this can be done effectively.

Principals and principals' spouses shared their experiences of how their relationships with each other as well as principal's relationships with their personal children can be successfully fostered. Principals were asked a series of questions through semi-structured interviews, and their spouses were asked similar questions. Several themes emerged after compiling the data: (a) be intentional about dating your spouse, (b) be intentional about keeping a healthy relationship with your kids, (c) even though it is your responsibility, delegate tasks, (d) develop trust between your spouse and children and between you and your leadership team, (e) involve your spouse and children in everything, if you can, and (f) take the extra time needed to develop the relationship.

I reviewed the data for all four research questions. In researching Research Question One, the themes of delegating authority, developing trust, and involvement emerged. Principals generally agreed that delegating their authority to subordinates was essential in being able to spend quality time with their spouse. It depended on which level of school he or she was principal of, whether elementary, middle, or high, that determined how much delegating a principal had to do. High schools generally have a significant number of after-school events that required a lengthy amount of time away from home. The more assistant principals one had, the more time the principal was able to spend at home due to the delegation that was allowed. Likewise, developing trust between spouses as well as developing a trust between principal and assistant principal was extremely important. A principal had to know that they could trust their subordinate; therefore, a significant amount of time and energy was put in to developing their skills. Someone always had to be in charge when the principal was absent.

The final theme of the first research question was about involving the principal's spouse in as many events as he or she could. If an event allowed for significant time to be spent with the spouse, then the spouse came to the event. Regardless of level of school, the majority of spouses wrote about significant amounts of time being spent at school with their principal husbands or wives. This was their way of spending some time with each other.

Research Question Two was similar to number one, but it focused on the relationship with children. It sought to answer the question of how principals prioritized their time in order to spend quality time with their own personal children. Four themes emerged from this research: (a) being intentional, (b) develop trust, (c) involvement, and (d) develop the relationship.

Being intentional in spending time with children is important in any relationship. Being intentional means that principals schedule time, even if it is in a car ride. One principal spoke about turning off the radio and having an unplugged time in the car just to talk. Another spoke about putting electronics away completely during one day of the week in order to have quality conversation. Regardless of the tactic, intentionality was important. Developing trust between children and subordinates is important as well. Trust with children demonstrates to them that you have their best interests at heart. Trust with subordinates once again shows that one is able to take the time off work to go on trips or just be home.

When a principal allowed his or her children to come to the school with them on a regular basis, it was important to their relationship. Some children actually went to school with their principal parents and played in the office or on the playground while their parents worked. In high school, children who were involved in a sporting event or an extracurricular activity such as band or chorus allowed for the parents to attend the events. The principal was present at the school anyway, so it provided common ground for time to be spent with each other. Going on a

random trip or going on a school trip with a parent who is the principal to a special place is part of developing the relationship. One principal spoke about surprising his children with random trips out of town and signing them out of school early. Spouses agreed that those were some of their children's fondest memories.

Research Question Three saw two themes emerge: dating your spouse and developing a trust between the principal and the spouse. Eight out of nine principals and spouses agreed that dating was probably the top priority in the marriage relationship. This research question sought to determine what characteristics were present in those principals who prioritized their personal and professional lives simultaneously. Dating always emerged as a priority theme. At times, these dates would be random and at other times would be planned, but the act of having a date was essential. And the date did not necessarily mean going out to dinner or to a movie or show. One spouse mentioned drinking coffee in the morning before work was a date that started her day off great.

Trust between spouses was also important. Principals and spouses seemed to have great communication skills between each other. One spouse said that she always knew when her husband would be coming home because he always called. The couples did not have to worry about each other because trust and communication always occurred.

The final research question regarded the characteristics of principals who were able to prioritize relationships with children as well as their jobs simultaneously. A large part of this question was answered in Research Question Two; however, one additional theme emerged from the research. That was the theme of delegating. However, this was not the typical act of delegating authority as one delegates to a subordinate. This delegating between spouses was based on the amount of time the other had. An example of this was finances. The one who did

the finances typically was the one who had the time. In relation to children, the one who was home most often, which was most likely the spouse, was the one who administered discipline. The principal spouse was always consulted and in on the same team as the other parent; however, due to the amount of time the principal was away from home, the spouse typically dealt with discipline.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to determine how high school principals are able to prioritize both their professional life and home life simultaneously. The study used semi-structured interviews, spousal questionnaires, work schedules, and job descriptions in order to study what is most important when attempting to balance both areas of a principal's life. The semi-structured interviews, work schedule, and job description demonstrated a large part of how the principal was able to manage his job responsibilities at school and at home while the spousal questionnaires demonstrated, in essence, how the home life of spouse and children were given priority. Overall, the balance between the two areas of a principal's life was given credence.

McCoy and Aamodt (2008) demonstrated that the divorce rate among the "helping professions," including education, is higher than that of other professions due to the fact that individuals feel more of an obligation to go above and beyond to help individuals. Likewise, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that over 50% of all marriages will fail within the first five years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). These staggering statistics give credence for this study, especially with the overall stress and time commitment of the job as head principal of a school. Principals today find increasing job responsibilities and they face new challenges daily. They are also managerially accountable for themselves as well as their employees and children (Moller, 2012). It is very difficult for them to find the time and energy to focus on family, especially after a long day of work. Spouses and children may also find this study to be invaluable as it gives them insight as to the demands of the principal job, but it also shows the principal the perceptions of their spouses and children. Managing a household can seem like a very cumbersome task and

many spouses already find it overwhelming (Bakal et al., 2003, p. 6). Children also crave the attention of their parents, even those that are absent or who work long hours.

This study is important to those who are pondering the thought of becoming a principal. Those with large families or who want to begin a family must weigh their personal priorities as well as their professional priorities. Individuals must have a good understanding of the demands of the principal job as well as the amount of time required to do it well. Conversely, they must also determine how they are going to manage their time with their family. They must discover how to successfully manage their personal life and professional life simultaneously.

The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ1:** How do school principals balance their time commitment at work in relation to time with a significant other?

**RQ2:** How do school principals balance their time commitment at work in relation to time with personal children?

**RQ3:** What are the common characteristics of principals who successfully maintain a relationship with a significant other while also managing the responsibilities of their job?

**RQ4:** What are the common characteristics of school principals who successfully maintain a relationship with their personal children while also managing the responsibilities of their job?

Data gathered from semi-structured interviews from principals, questionnaires from spouses as well as work schedules and job descriptions answered the four research questions. The data collected focused on principal's job responsibilities as well as the time and techniques principals used to spend time with spouse and children. Principal interviews were transcribed and then analyzed along with spousal questionnaires. Significant statements were found among the



interviews and spousal questionnaires. Chapter Four produced the themes and data analysis. The narratives and quotes in Chapter Four discussed the participants and spouses lived experiences with the particular phenomenon.

Chapter Five presents a brief summary of the findings followed by a discussion in relation to the project's theoretical frameworks as well as literature review. Also, recommendations for future research are given.

### **Summary of Findings**

A detailed analysis of the data demonstrated several significant statements that were then broken down into common themes. The common themes were: (a) be intentional about dating your spouse, (b) be intentional about keeping a healthy relationship with your kids, (c) even though it is your responsibility, delegate tasks, (d) develop trust between your spouse and children and between you and your leadership team, (e) involve your spouse and children in everything, if you can, and (f) take the extra time needed to develop the relationship.

The first research question attempted to determine how a principal balances time committed at work versus that with a significant other. Analysis of the data showed the emergence of three themes: (a) delegate tasks, (b) develop trust, and (c) be involved. Principals shared that a large part of being able to have the time to spend with a spouse is determined by the amount of authority they are willing to delegate to a subordinate. Assistant principals and others are able to attend after school events or supervise the school in the absence of the head principal. Alice recalled that her superintendent was a good friend, and he understood the importance of family. Therefore, at times, he would tell her specifically to send her assistant principal (Alic, interview, January, 2017). However, delegating authority requires a significant amount of trust between a principal and his or her subordinates. This means that principals are required to invest

in their assistant principals in order to train them to appropriately learn to run the school in their absence.

Also, principal interviews and spousal questionnaires demonstrated that principals brought their spouses along as much as they were able in order to spend time with them. If an after school event allowed for a wife or a husband to attend, then time allowed for some quality time to be spent together.

The second research question attempted to answer the question as to how principals were able to prioritize their time commitment at their job versus time spent with personal children. In the analysis of significant statements, four themes emerged: (a) being intentional, (b) develop trust, (c) involvement, and (d) develop the relationship. Being intentional is essential in spending time with children. It takes a purposeful time commitment for spending time with children. However, when that time is planned, it is also important to keep that commitment so as not to danger the relationship in always canceling events. This goes into the theme of developing trust. Children must know that they can talk and express themselves to their parents at all times. In the absence of trust, deep, meaningful conversation do not exist.

Another theme that emerged was the importance of involving a principal's children in everything they did at school as well as developing the relationship. These two themes at times seemed to go hand in hand as they centered on time. Allowing children to come on weekend trips with the school or allowing children to attend events at the school would always be special. But developing the relationship with children during those events tended to garner a tremendous amount of capital when it comes to investing in children.

Research Question Three sought to determine how it was that successful principals were able to successfully maintain a relationship with a significant other while also participating in

their full job responsibilities. Two themes emerged for this question: (a) date your spouse and (b) develop trust.

Dating one's spouse must be intentional or it will not happen. Betty stated, "Dating your spouse is basically the gasoline that keeps the flame going" (Betty, interview, February, 2017). Without dates there is limited or no relationship at all, and without that relationship, marriages tend to easily fail. Couples grow apart from one another without that fresh, dating relationship. One principal even commented that dating required each couple to get to know the other just a little bit better. That is what dating is all about. However, it must be intentional and scheduled. Yes, random acts for a date are important; however, scheduling time away is essential as well.

Trusting one's spouse as well as the individuals one works with is the other half of being successful in the relationship. Individuals must trust their spouse to tell them what is true and right; this is a large part of a relationship. If the trust is there, then one tends to believe what the other person says. If he or she says tonight just cannot be helped, then in a trusting relationship one understands and looks forward to the next date. Trusting subordinates as a principal is also of equal importance. Going on vacation and turning off a cell phone or any way of communication can be very disconcerting to a principal. The building and the children in it are the principal's responsibility, and delegating that responsibility to another is difficult at times. But turning off the cell phone and spending quality time is important, so trust is essential and required.

The fourth and final research question sought to determine how a principal was able to successfully keep a relationship with multiple children while also being successful at work. One would think that common themes would emerge that were similar to the spouses; however, this was not the case. Likewise, the majority of this question was answered by Research Question

Two. However, one additional theme that emerged to answer this question was the act of delegation. However, this type of delegation is not the typical type that one may consider delegation.

Many principals and spouses alluded to the fact that they were required to assign certain roles to themselves based on time and who had the majority of it. One such role was the act of disciplining children. In order to remain consistent, the non-principal parent would typically be the one who gave consequences. The principal, when home, reinforced that consequence, and the children always knew that mom and dad were on the same team; however, the disciplinarian become the parent who was home the most. Also, the spouse who was home the most took care of the finances in order to keep everything consistent.

### **Discussion**

This section contains a discussion in how the research is related to the theoretical framework that supported the implications for this study.

The two theories that supported this research are Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, and Voydanoff's boundary spanning theory. Both theories provide explanations as to the behavior of the individuals implicated in this research study and provides support for the research findings. Further discussion will be provided in greater detail concerning the connection between the two theories and the findings of data supported by the semi-structured interviews, spousal questionnaires, principal work schedules, and principal job descriptions.

#### **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Maslow (1943) provided research and believed in the need for every individual to reach a certain point of self-actualization before truly being effective in his or her job or life. Maslow believed that it was required that a certain hierarchy exist in a person's life before that person

was able reach their optimum level of performance. For example, if an individual does not have their basic need of food or shelter met, it is not reasonable to assume that the individual will be productive in a work environment. As stated before, Daniels (2001) argued “as one becomes more self-actualized and self-transcendent, one becomes wiser” (p. 1). The same is true in the love relationship between a man and woman. If a man is to be successful in his job, then the marriage relationship should be healthy and fulfill his need for relationship and respect. If a man is in an unhealthy relationship, one might argue that he is not performing to his optimum level at home or at work.

This is directly related to the research findings. As principals were able to provide evidence of time spent with both spouse and children, there was a sense of satisfaction and freedom in their responses. Spouses exhibited a similar reaction. All the principals identified were chosen due to them being married and not divorced. Likewise, they were chosen due to them being identified as being part of a school that is successful. While the definition of a successful school was not clearly defined in this study, it is evident by the school and community in general that they are successful. Those principals have a certain self-actualization about them, and they are able to perform at near-optimum levels.

Norwood (1999) argued that Maslow’s hierarchy has additional dimensions that Maslow himself did not record. Norwood said that individuals go from the coping level to the helping level and eventually to the edifying level. One principal even noted that when he saw his almost failure in raising his children due to his absence at home, it was very difficult to be at work because he was constantly in a state of worry about his family. According to Norwood, this principal would thus be in his coping level from trying to deal with the stress of a wayward child. However, the principal did say that the struggle brought about a change in him and his lifestyle at

work, and now he and his spouse are in a healthy relationship. That principal has now gotten to the point where he is at the edifying level. He is able to pour his life into others to teach them similar attributes he learned over his lifespan.

In relation to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it makes sense that the topic of this research study is directly related. The Peak Performance Center (n.d.) argued that Maslow's hierarchy is all about motivation. The website stated, "Maslow's theory of motivation is that human beings are motivated by unsatisfied needs" (Peak Performance Center, n.d.). Everyone has the need for relationships, and successful relationships will bring a person to the next level towards self-actualization. If a principal can be successful in both areas of life, both job and family, then naturally self-actualization becomes more of a reality. Maslow's (1943) theory is also a discussion of priorities. If one must have power and one must have relationship, then how is it that both are attained simultaneously? This research study helps to answer that question and provides a framework for principals to use in order to be successful.

### **Voydanoff's Boundary Spanning Theory**

Voydanoff's argued through boundary spanning theory that there must be a balance between work-home relationships in order for an individual to perform at an optimum level in both arenas. Lawson (2008) stated, "Voydanoff's research explores the demands, resources, and strategies that affect a worker's ability to accomplish, fit, and balance between work and home" (p. 56). Without a thoughtful and meaningful lifestyle at home while simultaneously having a good and beneficial atmosphere at work, one cannot be happy or work to his or her full potential.

This research study is full of examples that are supported by Voydanoff's theory, and the balance between home and work is essential for individuals to be happy. One such example is the idea that eight out of nine principals spoke about dating and being intentional in the

relationship. This overwhelming majority of ideas demonstrates that a principal must be able to put work aside at times and look forward to a dinner date or a small trip or vacation. Alone time with a spouse is essential for a healthy lifestyle. Moreover, principals wanting and willing to bring their spouse to work with them when time and the situation allowed showed their constant need for the relationship. It is well researched that there is a difference between men and women and the idea of relationship; however, regardless of gender, this theory implies that both the principal and spouse must be happy in order for a proper balance to take place.

Also, the relationship between a principal and his children can be seen in Voydandoff's theory. A principal has the need to see and have a healthy relationship with his children, regardless of age. Most of the principals demonstrated in their interviews a healthy relationship with their children. That foundation began at a young age when many of them were in grade school and the principal was working his arduous and time-consuming job. However, the principal found that balance between work and home in order to spend time or contribute to the relationship with his or her children.

Boundaries are clearly a theme in the discussions on how principals are able to prioritize both areas of their life. Cloud and Townshend (1999) pointed out that a spouse must be able to determine when to say "yes" and when to say "no" to certain tasks or responsibilities (p. 3). Principals must set boundaries in their life in order to protect that which is most precious to them. If a family is most precious, the principal must intentionally prioritize time away from school in order to develop those relationships. Without that time, the family relationship will gradually fade and not be significant. Boundaries provide a balance between work and home.

## **Implications**

The literature review connected the significant statements that eventually emerged as themes. These themes were identified in the research: (a) be intentional about dating your spouse, (b) be intentional about keeping a healthy relationship with your kids, (c) even though it is your responsibility, delegate authority, (d) develop trust between your spouse and children and between you and your leadership team, (e) involve your spouse and children in everything, if you can, and (f) take the extra time needed to develop the relationship. The principals and spouses addressed these themes in their semi-structured interviews as well as in the spousal questionnaires. Likewise, the principal job descriptions along with their work schedules further developed these themes. The section below identifies how these themes relate and are intertwined with the literature identified to support the research topic.

### **Dual-Earner Families and Stress**

As the American way of life has changed over the years, one such change is that women have gone to work full time jobs. One study suggested that 60% or higher of families now have dual income families and that women over the age of 16 are now working on a regular basis (Entrchit et al., 2007). This means that “women no longer have the same amount of time to dedicate to childcare and household tasks as they did in the past” (p. 116). In conducting this research study, it was apparent that some families were dual-income families, and they had to find a way to make it work. For example, both Betty and Alice who are elementary school principals have husbands who also work a full time job. This puts an extra amount of stress on the family as both parents have jobs, especially the mother who has a high stress one. Alice, whose husband worked as a banker, said, “We just made it work with him having a job. Whoever



was home first cooked or we ate out. We just had to figure it out” (Alice, interview, January, 2017).

Almeida et al.’s (1998) research rang true as they claimed that workers are now putting in long hours. It is no longer a 40-hour work week, but salaried positions are becoming more and more popular. Employers know that if they pay a salary then they can require whatever they want and the job will get done regardless of the amount of time put in. The study also showed that out of the dual-earner families who had the choice of one spouse not working, only 4% of men chose not to work versus 13% of women. Dual-income families are becoming more and more popular, and the principal and spouse must work it out.

However, this research study demonstrated that seven out of the nine principals interviewed had a spouse that stayed home. With most of the spouses being male, it was not surprising at that number; however, the dual-income family has a very different family atmosphere than that of the family who has one parent that stays home. Time management is not as much of an issue in single income families. Bakal et al. (2003) reported that “even the most generous compensation and benefits, creative work assignments, and healthy work environments provided...cannot compete with the forces of our personal lives at times” (p. 288). That same study also reported that many dual-earner families try to work out work-at-home arrangements. Even though working from home can still be stressful, having the opportunity remain at home during the day does solve some problems for dual-income families.

### **A Swedish Study**

Forsberg (2009) identified several strategies that middle class dual earner families used to reduce work and family related stress. This study took place in Sweden, and the first strategy the families used was that of delegating. In the Swedish study, delegating referred to passing the

responsibility of raising a child to another entity such as a babysitter or daycare; however, one researcher went so far as to saying allowing children to watch television was a substitute for a parent since it keeps children distracted for long periods of time. However, in this particular research study, delegating referred to a principal's role of passing responsibility on to a subordinate, or as Research Question Four asserted, passing a particular family responsibility on to the spouse such as the role of family disciplinarian.

Delegating for a principal is really important in that it allows for a principal to "get away" from the chaos of the school environment. The principal even at times had the capability to turn off his or her cell phone and just be with a spouse or children. This form of delegation does not necessarily put the responsibility of raising children onto someone else, but it does pass on the responsibility of the principals' job duties to someone else for a short time.

Another part of the Swedish study referred to the strategy of alternating, which suggested that parents alternate back and forth between whom cares for the children at certain times. Medved (2004) first coined the term asserted that alternating allows each individual parent to have their own personal career while allowing for child rearing simultaneously. Principals and spouses alike agreed that this so-called alternating is a term that is easily practiced but not necessarily in terms of ensuring each parent has their own career. Principals and spouses generally agreed that allowing each other the flexibility to care for the children as they were able was best. One spouse said that the children would get cared for one way or another. It just depended on who was at home and what was going on.

Lastly, the Swedish study identified multitasking as another strategy that dual-income families could perform in order to allow both sets of parents to work. Multi-tasking, according to

Kremer-Sadlik & Paugh, 2007), include “tasks such as sweeping the floor or having a digital meeting while going to the part were all acceptable examples of multi-tasking.”

Principals and spouses generally agree that time spent with each other or time spent with children has to be quality time and has to be intentional. The Swedish study did create an atmosphere of getting things done and spending time with family; however, the Swedish study did not account for the health of each relationship. When intentionality is required for a date or a trip with a child, multitasking just takes away from those moments. Unplugging a cell phone for a weekend in the mountains with a spouse is a small price to pay for a lifetime of marriage. Some couples deal with multitasking differently than others, but the overall general consensus was that multitasking does not work in of itself due to lack of focus on the spousal or child relationship.

### **Leadership Style in Relation to Distributive Leadership**

In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century the idea of distributive leadership has begun to take effect as educational leaders are beginning to agree that the head principal cannot do it all. Twenty years ago it was generally accepted that a principal was a building manager and he or she dealt with schedules, desks, textbooks, and discipline. However, as the classroom has gradually changed with the age of accountability, it is nearly impossible for principals to complete the task on their own.

One study showed that “teacher leaders...contribute to the same leadership tasks [as others]: distributing materials, monitoring the improvement effort, and developing people” (Firestone & Martinez, 2007, p. 9). As time goes by, principals have begun to pass assignments along to subordinates while keeping more important tasks such as developing the master schedule or casting the school vision to themselves. Gronn (2009) even argued that with

distributive leadership, school leaders are seen “prominently as agents of influence” (p. 1).

Delegation is a must-do in the educational leadership world.

This particular study was filled with principals who made claim that they invested a significant amount of time in their assistant principal in order to get them ready for the next level but to also assign them after-school or other school related tasks. Many principals felt comfortable with turning off their cell phone if a certain individual was in charge. It was the only way to get away from the hustle of the school and spend time with a significant other or children. Sometimes it was even required to take time to themselves in order to de-stress or reflect on the process for a while.

The principal work schedule was generally thought to be a model of distributive leadership as it reflected many times when subordinates would take on the PTSA meeting or basketball game. Likewise, the principal job description provided some details as to what was allowed to be delegated and what was not. Items such as the following were seen as items that could be delegated:

- New Staff and Students: orients and assists new staff and new students and provides opportunities for their input in the school program.
- Supplies and Equipment: manages, directs, and maintains records of materials.
- Services: Organizes, oversees, and provides support to various services.

Other areas were those that could not be distributed to others. Those could be considered as the following:

- Reports to superintendent.
- Supervises all school personnel, directly and indirectly.
- Purpose: to serve as the chief administrator of the school

- School Objectives: identifies the annual objectives for the instructional, extracurricular, and athletic programs of the school.

Regardless of which example fit into which category, the principal was responsible for choosing the areas he or she could delegate and the areas he or she could not.

### **Effective Leadership**

The definition of effective leadership is one that can be debated by a thousand researchers over time, but educators generally agree that the most important part of the educational team is the teacher and the second most important is the principal. No one can have a school without a teacher, but it would be very difficult to have a school without having a growing, dynamic leader that supports and challenges his or her faculty. Gurr et al. (2006) stated that “the principal remains an important and significant figure in determining the success of a school” (p. 548). The educational leader can make or break the institution.

However, the principal cannot be an effective leader if he does not form some sort of balance between work and home life. Some would argue that a principal can be a really good leader in the school and just not be a family man; however, others could argue how is it that a man or woman is truly happy without a happy family at home. It is one thing to go through the motions of life on a regular basis just to get by but is completely another to go through the emotions with a support system in place along with others who depend on you or their well-being. Students also see the lifestyle a principal takes. Hallinger and Heck (1996) argued that “principals have direct impact on how students live their lives outside the school” (p. 49).

Time management is another essential piece of effective management. The principal in this particular case study mostly agreed that keeping a calendar of school-related activities as well as home related activities was essential. Male principals generally made a calendar of dates

of when the next spousal date or next time to be alone with their spouse could take place. Female principals generally made a calendar of family events. Regardless, time management was an important ingredient in deciding whether or not a principal and spouse were successful in spending quality time with each other. It was also an important factor in spending quality time with children.

The literature of this study clearly outlined a connection between what psychology and science demonstrates and the results of this research study. Stress, the conversations of dual-earner families, and how principal distribute their leadership, just to name a few, are all themes that directly relate back to the literature. Stress is a high indicator of divorce, and without coping mechanisms and understanding in place between spouses, the divorce rate will continue to climb. The United States is seeing more and more dual-earner families, which in turn causes stress on the relationship. Time is an asset that there is not enough of now due to always working to earn wages. The literature has clearly outlined how this dual-earner stress has impacted the family dynamic, and this study has demonstrated some tactics in order to battle it. Also, how principals decide to lead their schools is a large determining factor in how much time they have to spend with their family. Without the delegation of authority, there is no time to come home and simply enjoy one's spouse or children.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

Some of the delimitations for this study were the fact only principals who had more two or more children were selected for this study. The need for larger families was evident as the literature was reviewed. Also, in order to get the perspective of a principal who had gotten past his initial years as principal and was well-seasoned, only principals who had been on the job for at least three years were selected. This provided more credibility to the study. Lastly, divorced

individuals were not considered. This study was focused on individuals who were successful at the topic of study and not necessarily those who had not been successful and then learned valuable lessons as a result of their failure.

There were also a few limitations to the study that should be discussed. The first limitation was the size of the sample. Only nine principals were identified for this research study. Naturally as the sample size increases, the reliability of the data also increases. However, the sample size was determined to be acceptable for a phenomenological research study, and the participants were able to identify a specific view of their lives as it relates to their work and family. However, this view was limited by the number of research participants.

Another limitation of the study is that the research only focuses on individuals who have successful marriages and large families. It does not provide for a context of individuals who have failed at their marriage or who might be identified as not having a positive relationship with their children. Additional insight may be gleaned from individuals who have gotten it wrong over time and the regrets they possess currently. Likewise, additional insight may be considered if the children were interviewed as a part of the study. Children were left out on purpose due to them being difficult to find and some still being of school age. I did not want to risk interfering with the relationship between a family and children.

The final limitation of this study was the amount of time I had with each principal. I attempted to keep the interview at or below 30 minutes as a lengthier interview could have been considered rude or inconsiderate considering a principal's already limited time. Likewise, I only had one interaction with the principal during this timeframe. If I was able to span the interview over a multiple-day timespan, it might have given the participants time to think about and marinate on the topic at hand. I had one principal who I saw after the fact who mentioned to me

that he thought of some additional information he would liked to have shared. But because I only interviewed each principal once, I did not think including that information in this study was appropriate.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The phenomenon explored in this study was how school principals were able to prioritize their personal lives and their professional lives simultaneously in relation to their relationships with their spouses and biological children. It was found that the majority of principals in the study were able to find a good balance between work life and home life. Only one principal expressed any regret in the decisions that he had made earlier in his career, but after a few corrections, he expressed that he and his spouse now live productive lives.

Based on the findings of this research study, future research should be considered in terms of relationships that may have failed. This study only took a look at the success stories, and participants were required to be married and never divorced. It was actually a little difficult to find such a population of principals since the divorce rate is high in the profession. A study examining those principals who had failed at their marriage or failed in their school but lived to tell their story would be beneficial. Insights on lessons learned would glean a tremendous amount of data and recommendations for those who are seeking to be principals. It could give insight into what not to do in the relationship, and it may save others from the heartache of making difficult decisions.

Another viewpoint that I think should be considered for future research is that of the viewpoint of the children. Children specifically were not chosen as research participants in this study, but rather principals and spouses were asked about them. However, these recollections were simply impressions they have of what they think their children think and feel. A real-world



research study into the lives of principal's children could glean data that would help future principals make quality decisions about taking a high-stress job.

### **Summary**

The need for a study on how principals are able to prioritize their professional lives in terms of time spent with family was a much needed research study. To speak plainly, Christians have a tremendous responsibility to shine the light of Christ in a very dark world. This includes shining His light in their professional life as well. If one looks at the body of literature that surrounds school leadership, there is a gaping hole on the topic of stress and how the job as school leader takes a toll on personal family and relationships with children. Christians have the duty and responsibility to shed light on the topic and study how individuals who have been successful in their high-stress jobs while also maintaining positive relationships with their family have been able to make it work.

It was clear that priorities was a constant theme in the conversations that were had about this topic. An individual must decide what priority is more important to them, a highly successful school that educates hundreds of children yearly or a relationship with family. It is seen that both may be done simultaneously; however, it takes some wisdom in order to this. One must be willing to help others grow, and by doing this, time is automatically given to spend at home. But the priority must be clear as God has endowed both a highly influential job as well as a family, and one must be a good steward of both. Luke 12:48 states, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (New International Version). A clear set of priorities will determine how much God entrusts each of us with.

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## APPENDIX A: PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

### CONSENT FORM

#### **A Study in How School Principals Prioritize their Personal Lives in Relation to their Professional Lives**

**Researcher: Ryan Ashley  
Liberty University  
School Of Education**

You are invited to be in a research study of how school principals are able to prioritize their personal lives in relation to their professional lives. You were selected as a possible participant because you meet the following criteria: 1) you have been head principal for at least 3 years, 2) you are in a heterogeneous marriage relationship without separation or divorce, and 3) you have/had at least 2 children during the time you were head principal. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by **Ryan Ashley, a doctoral candidate in Liberty University's School of Education.**

**Background Information: With the divorce rate in the United States climbing, it is essential for leaders to determine how to balance their professional relationships at work with their personal relationships with their significant other and children. The field of education is not exempt from this circumstance as head principals are tasked with many stresses from students, teachers, parents, and the community. The success or failure of the school lies solely on the head principal. The purpose of this study is to identify the common characteristics that school principals share when managing schools while they also maintain relationships with a significant other and children.**

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: You would be required to sit through an interview that would ask you 15 questions about your work, relationship with your spouse, and relationship with your children. The interview should not take more than 20 minutes. I will be recording the interview on a password protected electronic device, and no one would have access to the contents of the interview. You would then be asked to give your spouse a questionnaire that includes questions about their relationship with you and your relationship with your children. The time for your spouse to complete this questionnaire should take no longer than 20 minutes. Lastly, you would be asked to provide me with a copy of your work schedule as well as a job description.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

The risks of this study are no more than what you would encounter in everyday life. No significant amount of stress will be associated with participating in this research study.

There will be no direct benefits from participating in this study.

**Compensation:**

You will not be provided with compensation for participating in this research study.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All information given to the researcher will be kept strictly confidential and never shared with anyone, not even the spouse or children of the participants. All information will be kept on a laptop computer that has password protected files. A backup of the information will be kept on an external hard drive that is password protected. Pseudonyms will be used when publishing the research study, and informed consent will be gained from each participant before conducting the study. IRB approval will also be used.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. If you wish to withdraw from this research study, please email the researcher at [rwashley@liberty.edu](mailto:rwashley@liberty.edu). Your information will immediately be destroyed and not have any bearing on this research study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Ryan Ashley. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [rwashley@liberty.edu](mailto:rwashley@liberty.edu). You may also contact his advisor, Dr. Russel Claxton, at Liberty University at [rlclaxton@liberty.edu](mailto:rlclaxton@liberty.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_By checking here, you are giving consent to being recorded for the purposes of this research study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B: SPOUSAL CONSENT FORM

### CONSENT FORM

#### **A Study in How School Principals Prioritize their Personal Lives in Relation to their Professional Lives**

**Researcher: Ryan Ashley  
Liberty University  
School Of Education**

You are invited to be in a research study of how school principals are able to prioritize their personal lives in relation to their professional lives. You were selected as a possible participant because you meet the following criteria: 1) you are married to an individual who has been head principal for at least 3 years, 2) you are in a heterogeneous marriage relationship without separation or divorce, and 3) you have/had at least 2 children during the time your spouse was head principal. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by **Ryan Ashley, a doctoral candidate in Liberty University's School of Education.**

**Background Information: With the divorce rate in the United States climbing, it is essential for leaders to determine how to balance their professional relationships at work with their personal relationships with their significant other and children. The field of education is not exempt from this circumstance as head principals are tasked with many stresses from students, teachers, parents, and the community. The success or failure of the school lies solely on the head principal. The purpose of this study is to identify the common characteristics that school principals share when managing schools while they also maintain relationships with a significant other and children.**

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: You would be required to fill out a questionnaire that would ask you 15 questions about your spouse's work, your relationship with your spouse, and your relationship with your children. The questionnaire should not take more than 20 minutes.

#### **Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

The risks of this study are no more than what you would encounter in everyday life. No significant amount of stress will be associated with participating in this research study.

There will be no direct benefits from participating in this study.

**Compensation:**

You will not be provided with compensation for participating in this research study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All information given to the researcher will be kept strictly confidential and never shared with anyone, not even the spouse or children of the participants. All information will be kept on a laptop computer that has password protected files. A backup of the information will be kept on an external hard drive that is password protected. Pseudonyms will be used when publishing the research study, and informed consent will be gained from each participant before conducting the study. IRB approval will also be used.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. If you wish to withdraw from this study, please send an email to [rwashley@liberty.edu](mailto:rwashley@liberty.edu). Your data will immediately be destroyed and not have any bearing on this research study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Ryan Ashley. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [rwashley@liberty.edu](mailto:rwashley@liberty.edu). You may also contact his advisor, Dr. Russel Claxton, at Liberty University at [rlclaxton@liberty.edu](mailto:rlclaxton@liberty.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_