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Life in Balance: The Work-Life Balance Stories of Black Female School Leaders

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Dedication

This dissertation project is dedicated to Josephine Smith Johnson (1947-2009).

Thank you for instilling in me a passion for writing and for education. You are at the

center of my narrative. Everything that I do, I do it to make you proud.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge my children. You three have been the pulse, keeping me going on this journey. Each time I desired to quit, so that I was no longer sacrificing your time for my career pursuits, you showed me that everything was alright. Denim, Brandon and Jayde, your presence shines throughout this dissertation.

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Mom, you have been claiming my success since the day I entered the program. Four years ago, I believe you may have been the only one who knew that I would finish. You have shown me how to persevere through whatever battle is thrown my way and to do so with a glow that nobody can take away.

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To my sisters, through blood and through friendship, thank you all for babysitting when I needed you and for being there to support me, even when you didn't want to be there. I love you all!

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Dr. Beabout, thank you for advising me these last four years. I appreciate your your feedback. Your passion for and dedication to education research in New Orleans is on a level that I aspire to reach.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the work-life balance experiences of Black females school leaders. Due to the inherent intersectionality of race and gender that is experienced by Black females, a study of their unique experiences with work-life balance is valuable to the field of educational leadership. The responsibilities associated with school leadership positions are extensive and those school leaders who also have spouses and children must figure out a way to fulfill responsibilities associated with each role. Work-life balance is important to understand for school leaders whose career responsibilities may interact with those associated with their personal lives. The theoretical framework, Black Feminist Thought, guided the data collection and analysis processes, and provided the basis for the resulting narrative findings. This study gave voice to an otherwise silenced, marginalized group, Black female school leaders. All data was synthesized into narratives and from these narratives came six themes: (1) Familial Sacrifice; (2) Servant Leadership; (3) Informal and Formal Work-life Balance Policies; (4) Notion of Self-Care; (5) Upbringing and Black Females' Prideful Identity; and (6) Black Females having to prove themselves. While this study does not show evidence of school leaders having achieves work-life balance, the findings will inform the practices of perspective Black female school leaders and add the voices of Black female school leaders to the literature on Black female school leader's experiences with work-life balance.

Keywords: black feminist theory, work-life balance, Black female school leaders, school leadership. servant leadership, work-life conflict, intersectionality

Introduction

"You can only become accomplished at something you love. Don't make money your goal. Instead pursue the things you love doing and then do them so well that people can't take their eyes off you." Maya Angelou

The experiences of people are placed at the center of every narrative. In conducting this research study, I was fortunate to connect with four incredible Black Female School Leaders, Nikki, Alice, Zora, and Maya. Through the stories each of them shared, we can learn from their experiences with work-life balance. Although I have no prior history with these women, each of them women opened their lives to me, showing flexibility and urgency for my research by making time in their busy schedule to participate in my inquiry. The willingness of these women, to share their most dear memories with me, made this study possible. Throughout this project, I discuss the connections made between participants and their passions for serving as school leaders in their community. As a Black woman myself, I am not excluded from these connections and throughout this project, I found myself sharing my narrative centered on my passion for research, Black feminism, and school leadership. Therefore, before I share the stories of these strong Black women, it is essential that I include my own.

My Upbringing

While my mother is an important part of my adulthood, the matriarch who raised me from birth is my grandmother, Josephine. Having served as a second grade teacher at a New Orleans area Elementary school for two decades, she was my very first teacher. From the age of five, my grandmother began showering me with literature written by

Black females. I remember reading and discussing with her the books Beloved by Toni Morrison and The Color Purple by Alice Walker. At age fifteen, I remember getting excited about Zora Neal Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God coming to life in a movie. My grandmother would volunteer to have me recite poetry each year at the Black History Program at our church. Each time she would assign a poem to me, many from the late Maya Angelou, and have me to study the poem, memorizing it word for word. I would practice in front of my grandmother, my sisters, and the neighbors. I remember the nights before it was time to recite my poem in front a congregation of over one hundred people, I would always dream about messing up Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise". It was the first poem that I learned to recite word for word, each time with more enthusiasm than the first.

My love for researching and writing began developing from Black History Program rehearsals. By the time I entered fifth grade, I was no longer reciting other people's poems, but instead I was writing and reading my own. By eighth grade, I was journaling, and by high school graduation, I had gained skills in storytelling and essay writing. When I entered the English Literature undergraduate program at Louisiana State University, I knew I wanted to read and write, but I knew that writing was a hit or miss career plan. So, I focused on my second love, education. I could teach a classroom full of children to have the same love for writing that I had.

Early Teaching Experiences

To my surprise, my passion was not easily translated into my students. My first year of teaching was the most difficult year of my life. I switched from three different schools within the first two months of the school year. I had already enrolled in the

Master's of Arts in Teaching Program at Xavier University, so I couldn't give up completely. Actually, I liked working in education. I believe that I was good at it. My struggle was getting a classroom of students to understand my love for Literature and to show that love in their writing.

At my third school that year, I remember my first few meetings with the Academic Coaches. I thought to myself, 'these ladies are so smart, they know so much about pedagogy'. I remember quickly being given the opportunity to serve as a peer coach, providing professional development to other teachers. I also remember the opportunities coming to a halt there and thinking that I had no chance at ever becoming a formal leader in the school.

Researcher Beginnings

During my graduation meeting with my advisors at Xavier, a professor asked me 'what are you going to do next?' I remember responding that I would continue teaching and hopefully gain a position as a teacher-leader. My advisor reminded me of her impression of the papers that I turned in throughout the year, stating that she thought it would be a good idea for me to pursue a doctoral degree. At that time, I knew nothing more of a doctoral degree program, other than the fact that completion would maybe allow me to move up the ladder of leadership education. So, I researched education programs and decided to apply for the doctoral degree in Educational Administration program at the University of New Orleans.

The doctoral program had many components that I would describe as my passion. The program emphasized reading and writing as tools to learn more about education and social justice and forced me out of my comfort zone to do more public speaking. One

summer, I enrolled in a Qualitative Research course centered on narrative research. The professor assigned an article by Judy Alston (2005), which discussed Black female superintendents, servant leadership, and intersectionality. Reading this article helped me to determine my broad research topic, which in the following years became the focus of my reading and writing in the program. Prior to taking this course, I did not know that my passion for storytelling could be easily translated into my new desire to conduct research.

Storytelling and Black Feminism

Prior to my even having an understanding of what Black Feminism is, I had a growing passion for telling the stories that placed Black women like myself at the center of attention. The realization that I wanted to study Black female school leaders and do so in a way that allowed them to share stories from their perspective came from my lifelong passion for storytelling and from the coursework completed in the qualitative research course. My choice to study work-life balance, which is detailed later in Chapter four, derived from my experiences pursuing a career in educational leadership. The way in which this dissertation study is organized, from writing this prologue, to choosing to use famous Black female authors as the pseudonyms for my participants, down to the way the narratives are synthesized, comes from the agency of my grandmother, instilled in me early on, to use my love for writing as my gateway to success.

What is a narrative study?

Throughout my coursework in the doctoral program, professors and peers talked about the respectability of qualitative research. Because it cannot be generalized and repeated to find the same results each time, it is sometimes questioned whether or not qualitative research is even valid. As a subset of qualitative research, of course narrative

storytelling receive the same sort of questioning. Narratives studies, like the terms narratives and stories, are not easily defined or understood, but are described as stories with a sequence of events. Within narratives are five essential elements two essential elements, characters and settings. Within the narratives told in this study, there are characters, mainly the participants and the members of their immediate family. The setting is oftentimes the workplace or a place where work-family conflict is recalled in the participant's memory. Throughout each participant's stories, the moments and tenants that are most important are illuminated and emphasized.

At the basis of narrative studies are the stories that are told. Storytelling in itself is a cultural nuance that explores stories that are conditional depending on the audience and purpose (Scion, 2006). There was no structural parameter set for this particular narrative studies, which is why open-ended interview questioning is used, and participants share their experiences at their discretion. Because of this, transparency with my participants throughout the data collection process was essential to earning their trust. Although we mostly met virtually, I used time before the interviews started to share as much about myself with participants, as was necessary to have them be comfortable with exposing their vulnerability. As you will notice, I not only include my own narrative in Chapter four as the fourth participant narrative, but I also refer to myself in first person throughout this study. These are both essential to my positionality in this research study as the researcher and a part of the identity group being studied.

Chapter One

Introduction

Dating back to slavery, Black females, African American females who are the descendants of slaves, have faced systematic oppression that has limited us from achieving positions of power (Collins, 2000). Even as Black females have been navigating White male-dominated career fields, sometimes obtaining leadership positions, our voice has been exuded, leading to "the suppression of Black female's ideas and interests in traditional scholarship" (Collins, 2000, p.5). Scholars attribute this exclusion of Black females to intersectionality, which causes an increase in obstacles faced by Black females due to both racism and sexism (Byrd, 2009; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). This intersectionality of race and gender, for Black females in educational leadership, results in the condition that Black females serve as leaders in education in smaller numbers, in comparison to White females (Alston, 2012). In this study, the experiences of African American females who serve as administrators in K-12 educational institutions is explored. The stories of African American females who are mothers, significant others, community leaders, and educators are highlighted.

Background of the Problem

Black females face unique challenges due to their inherent membership in two marginalized populations (Sundaresan 2014; Shakesfhaft 1999; Thurman 2004). Due to this intersectionality, we hold a position in society as outsiders. Black Feminist scholars have argued that the intersection of gender, race, and class affect the experiences of Black females (Byrd, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989; Jones et al, 2013;Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Grounded in sociological research, studies involving intersectionality seek to include the

perspectives and worldviews of people who are typically marginalized (Hankivsky, 2014). Jones, Misra, and McCurley (2013) define intersectionality using three models: the inclusion/voice model, the relational/process model, and the systematic/anticategorical model. The inclusion/voice model of intersectionality, which focuses on giving a voice to and exploring the perspectives of a disadvantaged group, provides a basis for studies involving the inclusion Black female's perspectives of experiences in their careers (Choo and Ferree, 2010).

Studies have found that, in comparison to White females and Black men, Black females are at a slight disadvantage in regards to their economic and professional success (Collins, 2000; Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Although research into the work-life balance experiences of Black females may provide insight into understanding this disparity, Black females have not been at the forefront of work-life balance studies. According to Harquail (2010), work-life balance literature must take an inclusive approach to looking at the challenges and issues associated with balancing work and life responsibilities because individuals with different gender, social, cultural and racial-ethnic backgrounds experience work-life challenges specific to those in their same demographic. Black females and females of color in general, not only challenge stereotypes of the ideal worker, but also stand out in the workplace and are held to different standards in the workplace than their peers (Harquail, 2010). Studying work-life balance from the perspective of Black females provides a deeper insight into Black female's unique experiences on the road to economic and professional prosperity.

In White male dominated career fields, Black females must navigate the workforce while serving as "outsiders within" (Collins, 1986). As Collins (1986) asserts,

Black females are in a unique position to look both "from the outside and in the inside out" (p. s15), which is a result of the double jeopardy, or intersectionality, that they face. Despite the significance of Black female's position within educational leadership and their intersectionality, research on work-life balance focuses primarily on the experiences of White females. Exploring the stories of the unique experiences of Black females who serve as mothers, wives, providers, church leaders, and teachers is essential to enhancing the discourse on work-life balance (Bass, 2009).

Issues associated with females in the workplace, including their experiences with work-life balance, have been studied (Dolce&Hind 1998; Maden 2012; & Philipsen 2008; Thompson, 1999). Many of those issues, including role conflict, gender bias, and maternity leave, have only been validated from the perspective of White females or from the perspective of females in fields outside of education (Sundaresan 2014; Tajlili 2014; Guillaume &Pochic, 2009). Females working full-time jobs sometimes carry work responsibilities to home which causes conflict with the demands of family responsibilities (Griffeth and Hom, 2001; Sudha & Karthikeyan, 2014) The time demands of positions within educational leadership are not usually conducive to the lifestyles of married females, especially those with children. Although Black females face similar challenges as White females, research cites lower wages and lack of paternal support for their children as barriers that specifically affect African American female's ability to pursue leadership positions (Roxburg et al, 2001; Jean-Marie & Martinez, 2007; Gardiner, Enomoto& Grogan, 2000). Although gender issues in the work place affects both Black and White females, the differences in how these two groups experience role conflict, a situation in which a person is expected to perform in two or more roles with

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nonreciprocal responsibilities, provides the basis for research studies that focus solely on the experiences of Black females. (Williams & Dewey, 2014).

As a double-marginalized group, plagued by the intersectionality of race and gender, Black females not only face sexism in the workplace, but many encounter racism in their careers, which has historically been nested in organizational politics (Coleman, 2005; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Despite evidence that females of color experience work-life balance conflicts, "issues around ethnicity and culture have been absent from the majority of discussions around work-life balance debates and initiatives" (Kamenou, 2008, p.100; Blair-Loy, 2003). Exploring the challenges of work-life balance associated with Black females who serve as educational leaders is essential to understanding the way in which intersectionality makes for unique experiences with balancing work and personal life responsibilities. Studying work-life balance experiences of African American females is important because it may expand previous discourse on work-life balance, which excludes the voice of Black females from the conversation.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to focus on the stories of Black female's experiences with work-life balance as they navigate their careers as leaders in K-12 education. In addition to being leaders in schools and communities, Black females embody roles as mothers, other mothers, teachers, and church leaders (Collins, 2012). Understanding the work-life balance experience of Black female school leaders may enhance the field of educational leadership by providing practicing and prospective school leaders with possible tools for navigating their own experiences with work-life balance. While this study does not seek to eliminate the issues associated with work-life balance that Black

females face, exploring the experiences of this group can help to close the gap in the representation of Black females in school leadership positions (Malveaux, 2013).

In order examine what the work-life balance experience is like from the perspective of those who live it, this study explored the following research questions and sub-questions:

1.	How do Black female school leaders describe their work- life balance experiences?

a.	What personal stories shape their perspectives of their work-life balance experiences?

b.	How does their "outsider" status influence their work- life balance experiences?

<div align="center">**Study Significance**</div>

Females in the workforce face challenges in their careers and at home (Brown, 2012; Daniel, 2004; Noor, 2004; Nordenmark, 2004; Rothbard, Philips, & Dumas, 2005). Females, especially mothers, have the "daunting task of managing competing priorities" associated with work and home (Barge, 2011, pg.1). Dating back to the days of slavery, Black females have always worked outside of the home to help maintain their household. Historically, when obtaining employment, Black females chose to enter the workforce based on economic and social necessity as opposed to doing so out of a need for personal gratification (Barge, 2011; Richard, 2014). Aside from career responsibilities, Black female's lives include familial responsibilities and responsibilities associated with roles within the community. In addition to juggling both career and family roles, Black females have historically taken on responsibilities associated with religious and church activities (Bradley et al, 2005). Despite evidence that work is a significant domain in the lives of

black females, limited research has been done to examine their experiences with work-life balance. This lack of attention to the perspectives of Black females provides the foundation for this study which gives a voice to Black female school leaders to share their stories in order to uncover implications that may be of value to both Black females and others in the field of educational leadership (Collins 2002; Blair-Loy, 2003; Bijawat, 2003).

Black females, although they embrace opportunities for career advancement such as enrolling in graduate programs, fall behind White females in the areas of employment, income, and education (Malveaux, 2013). Malveaux's study found that White female's net worth averaged around $42,000 while the average net worth for Black females is $5, which provides an argument for the existence of an economic gap between Black and White females. Income earned from employment is essential to the foundation of wealth for all people; yet, African American females earn approximately 54% less than White females (Richard, 2014). This disparity in income directly limits Black female's ability to save and invest. As Richard (2014) asserts, childbirth and childbearing strongly affect females' wealth accumulation and labor force participation. In the United States, there 25% of White children are being raised in single parent (single mother) homes while over 67% of Black children are being raised in single parent households (Jacobson, 2013). Black females, who are unmarried mothers, face a significantly greater disadvantage, because the gap in income, along with the financial responsibilities of caring for their children, limits their economic well-being.. Until race and gender disparities are addressed, Black females will continue to face obstacles, keeping them at a disadvantage in comparison White females.

Due to the barriers that females face, which is termed by some scholars as the 'glass ceiling', females remain in the minority in educational leadership positions (Bombuwela, P & Chamaru, A.; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). In comparison to females of other backgrounds, African American females represent a small number of females who serve in school leadership positions (Alston, 2012; Sherman, 2005). While limited statistics are available that cite the numbers of Black females in school leadership positions, scholars have studied females in general and Black females in the superintendency. In a field where, traditionally, leaders are white males, one study found that an astonishing 86.6% of superintendents were males and only 5.1% of superintendents identified as minority (AASA, 2000). Although both Black females and White females face the barrier of the glass ceiling, African American females are not granted access to positions as superintendents as quickly as White females (Grogan and Brunner, 2005). Grogan and Brunner (2005) indicated that 56% of African American females were hired within the first year of actively seeking a superintendency compared to 70% of white applicants. This discrepancy alludes to the idea that Black females face greater challenges in their aspiration to leadership positions, in comparison to White females.

Statistics from the United States Department of Education (2013) state that only 10.1% of principals in public schools identify as African American while about 80% of principals are classified by race as White. The same study indicates that about 52.1% of school leaders were female and that an estimated 6,000 Black females and 3, 630 Black males work as principals in the United States (NCES, 2013). Growe and Montgomery (1999) state that females in school leadership positions face many issues including

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intense workloads and long hours, along with role-conflict arising from the demands associated with caretaking for a family. For Black females, the double discrimination that they face as both African American and female make their experiences with work-life balance especially difficult (Collins 2002; Spelman 2001; Pigford & Tonnesen 1993). By focusing on the work-life balance experience of Black females, this study not only adds the voice of an otherwise silenced group of people to the conversation, but also provides insight into the connection between work-life balance, the economic and professional disparity of Black females, and the disproportional representation of Black females in educational leadership positions.

Positionality Statement

Based on my experiences and observations as a Black woman attempting work-life balance, it is imperative that I state my positionality within this dissertation research. I am a woman in the educational leadership field of African American descent, who is also a wife and mother. Due to my positionality, identifying with the topic and the participants in this study, I will oftentimes use first person and inclusive terms when discussing Black females. In qualitative research, the researcher sometimes gravitates towards topics of interest based on their background, social statuses, and environment. Being a Black woman provides me with a strong advantage in this study. As a Black woman, I am able to connect with my participants, who share my identity as a Black female and mother, allowing them comfort in sharing their stories with me. I understand that the personal bias to the topic and the preconceptions that I have about Black females, intersectionality, and work-life balance presents both advantages and disadvantages to my study. This bias, which is discussed with the limitations of the study

and later in the methodology section, may impact the research that I conducted for this dissertation study. In recognizing this bias, I am able to plan for ensuring researcher objectivity within this project.

Limitations

One limitation of this study, caused by the need for convenience in accessing school leaders to participate, is that the geographical location of the participants is limited to only two states within the United States, which means that other states in the country are not considered. Because there are only four study participants, the number of perspectives of other African American female school leaders in the same region is also limited. This study does not include the lived experiences of females from other minority groups within the same school districts. Klenke (2015) suggests "researcher bias is one potential threat to validity that has to be controlled" (p. 43). Bias can be shaped by the researchers' knowledge of prior theory, gender, and paradigmatic assumptions, which can impede on the researcher's ability to hear and listen to the perspectives of the participants (Klenke, 2015). Due to this, researcher bias cannot be completely omitted from the qualitative research process. For this study, the use of member checking, reflective journaling, and the thick descriptions required of narrative research (Creswell, 2007; Bold, 2008) was be utilized to control bias. As a result of the inherent research bias involved in qualitative research, conclusions in the study may be subject to varying interpretations and analysis.

Definition of Terms

In this study, to describe the participants, the terms African American and Black will be used interchangeably in order to avoid repetition. This section includes definitions of terms used within the study in an attempt to give a common understanding.

- African American is a term that describes a Black American citizen

- Black Feminist Thought is a term defined by Patricia Hill Collins (2002) as an exploration of the Black female experience and "greater recognition of the interplay of race, class, and gender in shaping female's oppression" (p.241).

- Lived experience an experience that a person has lived and can describe

- Principals a person in charge of elementary, middle, and secondary schools.

- Work-Life Balance is equilibrium achieved between a person's primary responsibilities of their career roles and the responsibilities associated with their private lifestyles as significant others, mothers, friends, and community members.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation study consists of five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study and argues its significance. The second chapter provides a review of the literature surrounding the concept of school leadership, African American females in school leadership, and work-life balance. Chapter two also provides a discussion of the theoretical framework utilized in this study. Chapter three explains the methodology of this dissertation study, followed by the methods used for gathering and analyzing data, framed within narrative inquiry. Chapter four focuses on highlighting participant narratives. The final chapter discussed the themes that emerged from the narratives told from the perspective of the participants; provides a discussion of the findings; and poses recommendations for future research studies.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

As outsiders, female African American school leaders find themselves in a position of double discrimination which may negatively influence their career paths (Dardaine-Ragguet, et. al., 2004). This section highlights the literature that informs this study. In order explore Black female school leaders' experiences with work-life balance; this literature review begins by looking at literature on the broad topics of school leadership, African Americans in educational leadership, and females in educational leadership. It continues with a review of the literature on African American females in school leadership and Black female's significant relationships. This section concludes with a review of the literature illuminating work-life balance.

The Changing Demands of School Leadership

According to Logan (1998), leader retirement, high turnover rates, and a lack of experienced and qualified candidates, has caused an increase in the demand for school leaders during the last few decades. Along with the increase in demand for school leaders, the nature of school leadership is changing, with the role of the school leader requiring more than just instructional and operational leadership. Principals must perform the role of servant, moral counselor, social activist, and educator with the end goal being to maintain the atmosphere of change expected of educational institutions (Murphy and Beck, 1994). Changes in role responsibilities have caused an increase in accountability for school leaders. In some cases, this shift causes discouragement in leaders who must negotiate their own values, their norms as leaders, and their lives, in an effort to fulfill the goals of their organization (Elmore, 2005). Black females who hold multiple roles may,

at some times, be required to negotiate their responsibilities in their roles outside of their careers as school leaders, in order to fulfill the goals of their organization.

African Americans in Educational Leadership

Dating back to the passage of the Education Act of 1870, which allowed Black students to be educated, African Americans served as leaders in schools that served their own communities (Siddle-Walker, 2005). In 1954, with the verdict in the court case of Brown v. Board of Education, the elimination of the separate but equal school system caused a loss of the availability of leadership positions for Black educators (Tillman, 2005). With the elimination of segregated schools, Black educators who once served as leaders of the Black schools, did not have the opportunity to take on a leadership role in the integrated schools (Tillman, 2005). Today, although Black students make up less than 16% of students in public schools, African Americans remain underrepresented in the field of school leadership. Data from the United States Department of Education (2016) shows that during the 2011-2012 school year, only about ten percent of public school principals were Black. In the same school year, about 7% of teachers were Black (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). According to Jones and Montenegro (1983), for African Americans, access to positions of leadership in education has been limited as African Americans are not given the "chance to learn the dynamics of the system and a way to become involved "(p. 22). Even though research suggests that Black leaders serve an important role as role models within their communities, in comparison to Whites (Alston, 2005), African Americans are not granted access to opportunities to serve as school leaders.

Females in Educational Leadership and Barriers to Leadership Positions

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School leadership has, historically, been dominated by White males (Priorities & Barriers, 2001). Females represent the majority in the teaching profession and educational leadership graduate programs, but are consistently absent in educational leadership positions including the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and high school principal positions (Thurman, 2004).Females make up about 52% of public school principals and 55% of private school principals (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).Although females make up around 76% of today's classroom teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), there are challenges for females aspiring to pursue school leadership positions. According to Gupton & Slick (2004), the decision to hire females is "often made within a social context that females are inferior in status, are objects of negative stereotypes, and though a majority of the population, are considered minority because they lack access to power" (p. 29). The underrepresentation of females in school leadership positions is commonly attributed to the stereotype that females do not have the capacity to be successful as school leaders (Jean-Marie & Martinez, 2007). In a historically white- male dominated society whose climate is racist and gendered, females must negotiate different aspects of their character and their lives to prove their ability to lead.

Acknowledged in the literature is the idea that females have had barriers that make it difficult for them to obtain school leadership positions. Females who hold leadership positions, both White females and females of color, receive differential treatment, which limits their access to leadership positions and sometimes their voices are suppressed due to sexism (Harder & Waldo, 1983; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). The barriers faced by females in school leadership are more overwhelming than the

barriers faced by females in general (Jones and Montenegro, 1983). The research suggests that the barriers that females in school leadership faced include family/work conflict, sex role stereotyping, inequitable selection process, and race discrimination. A review of the literature on these barriers faced by females in school leadership follows.

Family/Work Conflicts. Research has found that some females feel that they cannot successfully navigate both family and work. Females oftentimes prioritize their family responsibility over their career aspirations. In cases where females choose to pursue careers, they often find that their career roles and familial roles often conflict with each other (Rossman, 2000). Due to the demands of school leadership positions, including longer work hours, the conflict between work and career is greatly increase for females who serve as school leaders (Growe and Montgomery, 2003). Although some females are able to arrange their schedules in order to balance work and home responsibilities, Grogan (1999) found that "clash of priorities and values" (p. 526) eventually causes conflict because school leaders tend to put their family responsibilities on hold in order to ensure their success in their positions.

Sex Role Stereotyping. In the history of educational leadership, men have been thought to possess the qualities necessary to serve as school leaders (Evans, 2001; Tallerico, 2000; Harris, 2004). These sex-role stereotypes also result in the discrimination of females aspiring to pursue positions in educational leadership. Sex-role stereotypes sometimes cause contradictions between female's innate status as female and their aspirations as leaders. According to Harris (2004), females may have to deny their identity in order to not be judged as either too emotional or too aggressive. Traditional labels of females as the primary caretaker, responsible for parenting and taking care of

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the home, gives men an advantage in obtaining school leadership positions. Marriage and family oftentimes augment a male's qualifications; on the other hand, these credentials sometimes compromise a woman's career (Pirouznia, 2009).Because females are labeled as homemakers, and homemaking is considered a demanding task, females are assumed to be less capable, less competitive, and less productive as men. These sex role stereotypes serve as a barrier for females to school leadership positions and contribute to the underrepresentation of females in these positions.

Inequitable Selection Process. In a study of females in the superintendency, Bronner and Grogan (2007) found that many females perceive the practices and protocols of hiring professionals to be a barrier to obtaining positions in educational leadership. According to Tallerico's (2000) study, search firms play a role in whether or not a female is chosen for specific positions, particularly for positions as superintendents. Tallerico (2000) reported an evident gender bias in the practices of consultants for search firms. The study also found there to be a strong preference for male candidates among these individuals. Oftentimes, the teams given the responsibility to hire leaders are made up of White-males who seek candidates who fit into their demographics. Similar to the way in which African Americans are more likely to obtain leadership positions that serve urban communities, school boards with a diverse demographic makeup are more likely to hire candidates of diverse backgrounds (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). For females who aspire to be school leaders, their chance of obtaining a position is greatly enhanced when the companies are represented by people of diverse backgrounds.

Race Discrimination. In reviewing the literature, it was found that racism is noted as a barrier that affects African American females in their pursuit of leadership

positions. Green-Powell (1993) argue that blatant racism has been replaced by more subtle modes of keeping Black females out of school leadership positions. The term "fit" is a tool used in hiring that allows for successful placement of candidates in influential positions. It is also often used as a tool to keep certain people out of position, particularly African American females who are deemed unfit for certain positions due to the demographic makeup of the people that are served or location (Pecora, 2006). Excuses that Black females are over-qualified or not fit for a particular organization are often given to deter a woman of color from pursuing positions in leadership. Later in this chapter, the literature on Black Females in Educational Leadership is expounded.

Black Female's Significant Relationships

As stated earlier, Black females have historically held roles as mothers, providers, wives, doctors, and teachers. Significant relationships are formed from these roles. According to Mitchell (2014), relationships come in various forms, therefore is possible for Black females to consider a relationship to be significant, regardless of whether or not physical intimacy is a dynamic in the relationship. The significant relationships experienced by Black females in school leadership positions include a wide range of roles, such as partner, daughter, parent, sister, or friend. Black females also hold other roles, such as spiritual leader and mentor, associated with their religious and community involvement.

A review of the literature on Black female's significant relationship, although limited studies are available uncovered that most focuses on the relationships within a familial context. Perkins (1983) noted that while the roles of laborer was forced upon Black females during slavery, they have historically also taken on the role as caretaker.

Lee (1997) noted that there has always been an expectation for Black females to manage dual roles as caretaker and laborer. While their primary role has traditionally been to serve as caretaker, Black females have the expectation to manage responsibilities associated with their family, career, and other significant relationships (Butler, 1994). This study hopes to provide another lens through which the work-life balance experience of Black females can be understood.

Black Females in Educational Leadership

Similar to the history of females in education in general, Black females have overcome obstacles as the makeup of education evolves in the United States. Teaching and learning has been a risky venture for black females since the days of slavery in the U.S., when Black females had to be educated in secret. Jones and Montenegro (1983) found that the first schools to employ Black females as administrators were Quaker-Sponsored schools at the turn of the 20th century. National surveys looking specifically at Black female leaders were not conducted prior to the 1960's. In fact, there are still a limited amount of surveys that study leaders who are both Black and female. According to Shakeshaft (1999), "a historical account of the ebb and flow of females in administration either details the experiences of white females only or obfuscates the lives of females of color by subsuming them within statistics and reports of females in general" (p. 21). Because there is a lack of research data on Black females in school leadership, the experiences of these important players in education, is devalued.

There is an inevitable double marginalization faced by black females because "a Black woman cannot be 'female as opposed to being black'; she is female and black" (Spelman, 2001, p.78). This intersection of race and gender contributes to the devaluing

of Black females in society. Although Black female's professional options have increased (Loder, 2005), in comparison to Black males, Black females face a greater amount of discrimination "since either their race or gender may evoke negative responses from employers" (DardaineRagguet et. al., 1994, p.405). For those black females who are successful in obtaining school leadership positions, marginalization due to gender and race can influence their experiences in their career role (Jean-Marie & Martinez, 2007). Banks (2001) found that Black females who are successful in obtaining school leadership positions are usually assigned to administrative staff positions.

Pigford and Tonnesen (1993) found that Black female administrators are usually assigned to tough, predominantly Black, elementary schools. With these tough assignments, come increased demands and responsibilities in Black female's roles as school leaders, which sometimes influence other aspects of their lives. By examining the stories of Black female school leaders as they navigate tough assignments and responsibilities associated with their career and familial roles, this study may uncover tools for overcoming challenges associated with these experiences and help to increase the number of effective Black female school leaders.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is defined as "the relationship between the institutional and cultural times and spaces of work and non-work in societies where income is predominately generated and distributed through labor markets" (Felsted, Jweson, Phizackles, and Walter, 2002, p.56). Work-life balance is the negotiation between work-lifeand home life. Sundareasan (2014) states that traditionally in European societies, men have been considered the breadwinners of the family, while females serve as caregivers

and nurturers. Since the nature of the workforce has changed, the number of females working full-time jobs has increased (Sundareasan, 2014). Females with careers must take on the responsibilities of two full time jobs, one at work, and one at home (Sundareasan, 2014). William-White (2012) suggests that the reality for career females is that both work and home life are demanding institutions that require them to be available on a constant basis. This section begins by highlighting the literature on work-life balance as it relates to workplace policies, schedule flexibility and role-conflict, and work demands. This section concludes with a review of the literature on motherhood and race as it relates to work-life balance.

Research on Workplace Policies. According to the U.S. Department of Labor and Statistics (2016), today about 57% of females participate in the labor force in comparison to sixty years ago when less than fifty percent of mothers with children under age 18 were employed (Jang, 2008). In 2015, 89.3% of two-parent families, and 60% of married couple families with children had at least one parent employed (U.S Department of Labor, 2016). In families of other marital status with children, 70% of mothers were employed (U.S Department of Labor, 2016). The significant increase in the number of females with children maintaining full time employment status has prompted a demand for changes in workplace practices and the creation of workplace policies to enhance the work-life balance experiences for females. Since the 1960s, the relationship between family structure and workplace policies, including workplace support, supervisory support, and work-schedule flexibility, have been studied. In these studies, it has been found that most females continue to serve as the primary caretaker for children and

household chores (Sunderaesan, 2014; Barnett, 2004; Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Gilligan, 1982). Due to these, research on workplace policies and support has been conducted.

Family friendly formal policies, such as maternity leave, paternity leave, work-schedule flexibility, and childcare options, have been studied (Bombuwela, P. &Chamuru, D, 2013; Evans, 2002; Salzstein et al., 2001). Researchers have found that the availability and use of family friendly resources, such as on-site childcare, have led to an enhanced perception of employees of their work-life balance (Ezra &Deckman, 1996; Salzstein et al., 2001). Findings from studies on other formal policies, such as scheduling and leave procedures, have raised concerns for female's work-family balance (Runte& Mills, 2004). Bruegal and Gray (2005) found that family friendly policies may have an adverse affect on the father's presence in their children's caretaking, oftentimes increasing the responsibility held by the mother. Bijawat (2003) found that both White and Black female participants expected their husbands to share the responsibilities associated with home life. The females in Bijawat's (2003) study expected their husbands to split the duties required to fulfill these responsibilities, which include upkeep of the family home and raising the children.

Schedule Flexibility and Role Conflict. According to Gregory and Milton (2009) work-life balance priorities fall into three categories, which include: scheduling, maternity leave, and childcare. Conflict often arises when attempting to balance these priorities. Thompson et.al. (1999) examined the concept of work-life balance, looking particularly at the issue of role conflict that arises when one holds multiple roles. This study discovered that there are three types of role conflict associated with work-life balance; these conflicts include: time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-

based conflict. In his study, Thompson also found coping strategies for overcoming role conflict which includes modifying the situation, reactive coping, changing the meaning of the situation, and obtaining support from others. McGinnis (1997) study noted the benefits of a healthy work-life balance stating that, when the responsibilities of all roles are fulfilled, there is a sense of satisfaction that is created which has a positive influence on the overall experience. In examining the individual experiences of female African American school leaders with role balancing and role-conflict, this dissertation study seeks to add to the literature available on work-life balance.

Work Demands. Due to the heavy demand of work and home, female educators experience higher levels of stress in their jobs in comparison to men (Doyle and Hind, 1998). The demands of the workforce places pressure on females to make their career responsibilities their main priority, even though family obligations are not easily reduced or abandoned (Bombuwela, P. & Chamuru, D, 2013; Bracken, et. Al, 2006; Munn-Giddings, 1998; Philipsen, 2008). Females themselves play an active role in enhancing the stress of work-life balance. Madsen (2012) found that, in comparison to males, females who are college educated express a desire to achieve a balance between work and home. About 73% of African American households in the United States are considered single parent households (Martin, et. al, 2012). These statistics represent an additional challenge for Black females who may not have spousal support as part of their work-life balance experience, which may increase issues with role conflict. By examining the work-life balance experience of Black female school leaders, the study may uncover unique challenges faced by Black females as they navigate their work and home lives.

Motherhood and Work-Life Balance

Since the 1990's, with the increase in females joining the workforce, the gap between working mothers and females who choose to stay at home to raise their children full-time has widened, (Landry, 2000). Landry's (2000) study showed that cultural dichotomies have pitted motherhood against career goals, causing females to feel guilty about choosing full-time employment over staying home to raise their children full-time, which adheres to the traditional of motherhood. Presser (2003) documented, in some cases, mothers decided to work less hours, assume less desirable shifts, and accepted temporary assignments in order to achieve work-life balance. Researchers have found that the conflict that mothers face when deciding whether or not to obtain employment include identifying plans for balancing work and familial responsibilities (Garey, 1999; Gerson; 1985; Moen & Sweet, 2003; Presser, 2003). Norms of motherhood, have historically been widely accepted to be associated with mothers who stayed at home and those who took on less demanding positions in order to maintain flexibility in raising their children (Barge, 2011). Although these studies focused mainly on middle class White females, at the time that they were conducted, there was no delineation made across racial or cultural demographics.

Race, Black Females, and Work-Life Balance

Issues around culture, ethnicity, religion, and race have been absent from studies, discourse, and initiatives centering on work-life balance (Bradley et al., 2005; Kamenou, 2008). Although historically, slavery has impacted and influenced the way that African American thinks, their experiences have been believed to be synonymous with White female's experiences (Barnett & Rivers, 1996; Collins, 2000; Moen & Sweet, 2003). Culturally, Black females perceived their roles as mothers and workers as simultaneous

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realities (Dill, 2000; Landry, 200). Work-life balance requires Black females to learn how to function in two different settings and from bi-cultural viewpoints (Bell, Denton, Nkomo, 1993). The idea that black females experience the workplace from the view of an outsider within, and sometimes have to adopt the norms of their environment in order to survive, makes their experiences with work-life balance unique (Collins, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

Fannie Barrier Williams (1987) wrote, "the colored girl….is not known and hence not believed in: she belongs to a race that is best designated by the term 'problem' and she lives beneath the shadow of that problem which envelops and obscures her" (p.150). Black Feminism, particularly Collins' (2002) Black Feminist Thought, which promotes bringing the stories of Black females to the forefront from beneath the shadows, serves to establish a theoretical foundation for examining Black female school leaders' experiences with work-life balance. As the definition of "feminist" varies (Offen, 1988), it is important to understand that Black Feminist Thought (BFT) focuses specifically on the oppression of Black females. According to hooks (1984), feminist theory generally derives from focus on "privileged White females who live at the center, whose perspective on reality rarely include knowledge and awareness of the lives of females…who live in the margins" (p.1). Traditional feminist theory fails to consider the intersectionality of race and gender, which often negatively influences outcomes for Black females (Peters, 2003). Black Feminist Thought opens the door for exploration into the lives of female African American school leaders who "live in the margins" (hooks, 1984), and are considered "outsiders within" because they work in the White male-dominated world.

While hooks and Collins (2002) support similar notions of Black feminism and the "outsider within" concept, Collins' approach incorporates ideas most applicable to this study. She argues that Black females have a unique position as members of two historically oppressed groups. Due to the intersectionality experienced by Black females, Collins (2002) asserts that the ideas of Black females should be placed "in the center of analysis…not only to privilege those ideas, but to encourage White feminists, African American men, and all others to investigate the similarities and differences among their own standpoints and those of African females" (p. vii). In other words, the ideas and stories as told by Black females are of value not only to the "outsiders within" but also to those on the inside and to those who belong to other marginalized groups. Utilizing Black Feminist Thought as the conceptual framework for this study allows Black female school leaders to share their perspective of their own experiences and to define those things that make their lives what they are (Guy Sheftall, 2011).

Collins (2002) states that "through the lived experiences gained within their extended families and communities, individual African American females fashioned their own ideas about the meaning of Black womanhood" (p.10). These experiences include the stories that shape Black female's meaning as they serve multiple roles as mothers, other-mothers, teachers, and church leaders (Collins, 2002). Considered in Black Feminist Thought are two main areas: (1) the differences in experience and oppression of Black females in comparison to females of other backgrounds and (2) the similarities and differences that exist between Black females when considering religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status (Collins, 2002). In this study, the second consideration is explored, by examining the similarities and differences between

participants' individual narratives of their experience with work-life balance. This section begins with a discussion of Collins' notion of placing Black females at the center of analysis. The outsider-within and intersectionality concepts are then examined. This section concludes by conceptualizing work-life balance through Black Feminist Thought.

Black Females at the Center

Black Feminist Thought places Black females at the center of analysis, considering how their identities are shaped by the interlocking components of race, gender, and class (Collins, 2000). The theory is characterized by six distinguishing features that provide rationale for the need to look at the unique experiences of Black females. The six features are: (1) the acknowledgement that Black feminism is important because African American females constitute an oppressed group; (2) the acknowledgement that all African American females face similar challenges that result from existence in a society that allows the oppression of Black people; (3) the acknowledgement of the connections between Black female's experiences and the development of a group standpoint; (4) promotion of the need for continued, ongoing, and dynamic investigation of Black female's viewpoints; (5) the acknowledgement of the importance of social change and the need to engage in new and current Black Feminist analyses as conditions change; and (6) the acknowledgement of the relationship between Black Feminism and other projects for social justice (Collins, 2000). This study on Black female school leaders' experiences with work-life balance is designed based on the second and fourth premises.

The second feature of Black Feminist Thought, that Black females face common challenges, although their experiences and responses may differ, influences the design of

this study (Collins, 2000). Black females may differ based on age, religious practices, and socioeconomic class. Regardless of our differences, at the core, Black females experience injustices and inequalities that serve to place us in a status inferior to privileged White females, and Black men (Collins, 2000). This study seeks to explore the lives of Black female school leaders who may have diverse experiences, but who may face common challenges with work-life balance as females who are dealing with membership in two marginalized groups. As Hamilton (1995) states, Black females have always attempted work-life balance but that work experience has not been studied from the perspective of Black females. This study seeks to follow the fourth premise of Black Feminist Thought by examining the unique experiences with work-life balance from the viewpoint of Black females.

Outsider-Within Status

Black Feminist Thought describes the Black woman's inherent membership in two marginalized groups, as the outsider within status (Collins, 2000). By not being granted full access into spaces of dominant majority, Black females retain this status of outsider within, or "individuals whose marginality provides a distinctive angle of vision" (Collins, 2000, p. 12). Notable Black Feminist, Alice Walker, described the advantages of the outsider within status as "a radical vision of society or one's people that has not previously been taken into account" (Collins, 2000, p. 13). Scholars have explored the Black Feminist idea of the outsider within status. Hinton (2010) found that African American females at predominately white institutions, functioning as outsiders within, experience feelings of isolation. In a more recent study of the "outsider-within" perspective, Nadia Brown (2012) found that "Black females scholars confront challenges

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as outsiders within; and they are reminded of their marginality in academic settings" (p. 21). The outsider-within perspective, which is rooted in the intersections of race, class, and gender, seeks to re-articulate the voices of Black females who have long been silenced, placing their experiences at the center of analysis (Collins, 2000).

Intersectionality: Relationship between Race and Sex

A central claim of Black Feminism is that the systems of gender, race, and culture are inseparable (Tong, 2014). Black Feminists deny the possibility of the Black woman's ability to focus solely on their gender oppression. The rationale is that Black females cannot escape racism, in fact, they encounter racism in everyday situations in workplaces, schools, stores, and social spaces (Collins, 2000). "If intersecting oppressions did not exist, Black Feminist Thought and similar oppositional knowledge would be unnecessary" (p. 23). This intersectionality makes their experiences of oppression distinct from other groups. Black feminism conceptualizes the recognition of intersectionality as essential to the inclusion of our stories in discourse.

Although Scholar Kimberle Williams Crenshaw (1989) is credited for coining the phrase intersectionality, hooks is considered the revolutionary developer of the concept (Smith, 2015). Hooks argues that Black female's inherent intersectionality allows us to understand the interconnectivity between racism and sexism. Privileged feminist theory, middle class White females, has not been inclusive of diverse groups of females because they do not fully understand the influence that the relationship between race and sex has on their experiences with oppression (Smith 2015). Black feminism acknowledges the need to understand that our intersectionality makes Black female's experiences much more complicated, and different than the experiences of privileged feminists. The study

seeks to explore work-life balance from the perspective of Black females in order to uncover the uniqueness of their experiences.

Black Feminist Thought and Work-Life Balance

Black Feminist Thought categorizes the work that Black females take on as paid work and unpaid work. Paid work consists of work done outside of the home as a condition of employment. Black females, according to Collins' (2000), participate in unpaid work, which consists of contributing to our families' wellbeing by maintaining the family home, keeping the family together, and teaching children valuable life lessons. Collins' (2000) writes that one theme of Black Feminist Thought "concerns how Black female's unpaid family labor is simultaneously confining and empowering for Black females" (Collins, 2000, p. 46). While on one hand, the work involved with keeping our family together may restrict us from pursuing goals outside of the home, "Black females see the unpaid work that they do for their families more as a form of resistance to oppression than as a form of exploitation" (p.46).

Traditionally, family has been described as "heterosexual, racially homogeneous couples who produce their own biological children" (Collins, 2000, p. 47). There are two problems that arise for Black females from this definition. First, within the traditional family ideal argues the premise that normal families assume a separation between paid work and unpaid work. For Black females, who generally take on roles in their communities as mentors and spiritual leaders, in addition to their roles as professionals, companions, and mothers, the separation between work and home is not realistic. Black Feminism asserts that, stereotypically, "Black females become less feminine because they work outside the home, work for pay, and thus compete with men, and their work takes

them away from their children" (Collins, 2000, p. 47). This second assumption, that the men work and the females take care of the family, provides a challenge for Black females.

"Black females have traditionally worked outside the home in numbers far exceeding the labor participation rate of White females" (Crenshaw, 1989). Yet, Black female's experiences have been excluded from conversations about work-life balance. Brooks-Tatum (2015) wrote that Black female's issues should be placed at the forefront because they face similar and overlapping challenges to their success. These issues include racial and gender discrimination, oppressive cultural expectations, and illness due to resulting stress. The notion that Black females must work conflicts with the norms that females should not work, often creating personal, emotional, and relationship problems in Black female's lives (Crenshaw, 1989). Collins (2000) argues that "more Black feminist-influenced studies that examine how intersections of race and gender influence the work experiences of working class Black females are solely needed" (p. 60). The proposed dissertation study seeks, by utilizing Black feminism as a lens, to add to the literature about Black females and work-life balance.

Conclusion

This review of the literature documents the fact that work-life balance is an issue for all females, but Black female's experiences is unique due to their intersectionality. Many of the factors associated with work-life balance in the literature, although dated, is still relevant to females in educational leadership today. The review of the literature offers insight into the issues faced by females who attempt to navigate careers and roles associated with significant relationships. However, there is a significant gap in the

literature that focused on the specific experiences of African American females and the ways that they negotiate their loves in order to balance roles as educational leaders and roles at home. Little attention is given to the way that Black Feminist Theory's notions of intersectionality and the outsider-within status influences their experiences with work-life balance. By exploring the stories of work-life balance, this brings the unique experiences of Black females in school leadership to the center of discourse.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

This narrative inquiry focuses on mothers who are also Black Female school leaders. The study uses stories to explore African American female school leaders' experiences as administrators, mothers, significant others, and community members. Through narrative interviews, this study explores the following umbrella research question: How do Black female school leaders describe their work- life balance experiences? Through the narrative inquiry progress, data was triangulated from narrative interviews, data from school websites, researcher journals and interview notes. The primary purpose of this chapter is to outline the qualitative methodology that was utilized to conduct this study. First, the importance of this study is revisited. This chapter then outlines the purpose of the study and the research question that frames the exploration of the participant narratives. It continues with an in-depth discussion of the research design, including a description of the way that participants were selected for this study. Following the research design section, portraits of the participants that shared their stories of work-life balance are given to provide readers of this manuscript with a picture of the females behind the narratives. A description of data collection methods and the data analysis process is then given. Chapter three concludes with information on ethical considerations and discussions how the methods of this study were verified.

Importance of this Study

When conducting my literature review, I found that there was specifically a lack of existing research on the work-life balance experiences of Black female K-12 school leaders. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Black women account

for 71% of all Master's degrees and 65% of all doctorate degrees awarded to Black students (Davis, 2016). Given the growing number of Black females pursuing graduate degrees in educational leadership, specifically with a desire to serve as school leaders, it is important to explore the leadership experiences of Black females, their challenges and successes, and their experiences with work-life balance. Illuminating the work-life balance experiences of these Black female school leaders within the theoretical framework of Black Feminist Thought may expose the uniqueness and significance of their experiences.

It was important for this research to be based on the examination of personal stories because work-life balance is a nuanced subject; there is implicit meaning in the individual experience with work-life balance. According to Clandinin & Connelly (2000), "experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experiences should be studied narratively" (p.19). I utilized narrative inquiry as my qualitative methodology in order to facilitate deep exploration of the experiences of Black female school leaders who hold roles as mothers, significant others, and community members. The use of narrative methods in this study was vital for gaining insight into Black female school leaders' perspectives of work life balance through storytelling about their personal experiences. Through the perspectives of four participants, I sought to learn more about their work-life balance experiences, allowing Black female school leaders the opportunity to define their own reality as the people who live it (Collins, 2009).

Research Design

Due to the personal and highly subjective nature of individual experiences with work-life balance, a qualitative research design was utilized in this study. Qualitative design was most appropriate for this study because narrative accounts from the participants 'perspectives were analyzed to understand the behaviors associated with their work-life balance experiences. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research begins with a theoretical framework by which researchers view a problem. As noted in previous chapters, the theoretical framework that guides this study is Black Feminist Thought. The main problem that is exposed through the theoretical framework is a lack of opportunity for Black females to share their experiences, which are considered unique due to their intersectionality. Black Feminist Scholars assert that "gaining insight into the everyday lives of African-American females and how they interpret them requires conscious methodological approaches and research practice" (Mullings, 2000, p.20). Through the use of narrative inquiry, this study explored work-life balance from the standpoint of African American females, which Mullings (2000) suggests is valuable to Black Feminist research.

Narrative research is defined as a method of inquiry that studies the lives of participants through the personal sharing of their story (Creswell, 2007). The narrative approach provides the opportunity for participants to define self and personal identity (Bold, 2011). There are many reasons why I chose narrative inquiry as the most appropriate research design to use in this study. First, as it is "grounded in the particular" (Riessman, 2008, p. 12), narrative inquiry opens the door for the exploration of the stories of Black female school leaders' work-life balance experiences in their own words, situating their perspectives within the context of their own reality. Secondly, narrative

inquiry evokes reflective practices within each participant. I wanted each participant to engage in intentional reflection about their past experiences with work-life conflict and their current approach to work-life balance.

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative approach informed this study because their approach focuses on understanding how cultural nuances, particularly upbringing, influences participant experiences. Cultural upbringing is a strong component of people's personal narratives (Sands, 2010). Cultural upbringing, for this study, involves aspects of each participant's backgrounds in terms of class, ethnicity, economic status, birthplace, parent's birthplace, and religious background. It was important to focus on cultural upbringing as a research question for this study because, in order to understand my participants' career journey, I needed to know more about how their cultural upbringing influenced their experiences with work-life balance.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe narrative inquiry as "a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives" (p. 477). Through their storied lives, people's "identities may be fashioned" (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). In other words, the stories that people construct about their life also shape their self-understanding, giving meaning to their experiences. Through narrative inquiry, the researcher seeks to make sense of the participants' experience within cultural, social, and institutional contexts, which according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), contributes to the ongoing meaning making process. Narrative inquiry, through the telling of stories, is "a portal through with a person enters the world and by which his or her experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful" (Clandinin and

Connelly, 2006, p. 12). This study has focused on how Black female school leaders interpret their experiences with work-life balance and give those experiences meaning.

Under the umbrella term of narrative inquiry, there exists different types of narrative methodologies which include oral history, life history, oral narrative, storytelling, autobiography, biography, and others. This research study focuses on the storytelling and oral narrative methodologies. Oral narratives and storytelling, which allow the researcher to structure interviews with open-ended questions, also allow participants to assign significance to experiences that they choose to share and to frame their perspectives of their past experiences with work-life balance within the current reality of their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006).

Participant Selection

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recommend that participants for studies of narrative nature be selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is used in narrative studies so that the participants selected are those who can inform the study. Narrative research design requires participants to be involved on a personal level, for an ongoing period, to promote self-examination and reflection. The narrative researcher can gain a deeper understanding of their topic by focusing on a smaller sample size within the larger context of a population (Greene, 1994). In order to ensure adequate time to foster a sense of trust between researcher and participant, which is considered necessary for the collection of such personal data, I sought out to recruit three to five participants for this study. I dedicated time to four participants, each of whom I spent two to three hours with, allowing them to share detailed accounts of their experiences. The participants were selected through purposeful criterion sampling and personal connections. The small

number of participants allowed for sufficient time to analyze the written and spoken stories given by the participants.

The participants for this study were recruited and selected based on the following criteria: self-identification as African American, female, and a mother, with at least five years experience in education, current employment in a position within K-12 education as a school leader (Principal, Assistant Principal, Special Education Leader, Instructional Coach, or Dean), and willingness to share and reflect upon their experiences with role balancing. Although ten females responded out to participate in this study, many coming from the same network as the chosen participants, the final selection was made based on participant's maternal status. The study focuses on work-life balance experiences of females who are mothers and who consider themselves to be active socially and in the community in which they live, in addition to their career roles. Black Feminist Thought and the research questions provide the basis for the race and gender requirement for participant selection. As noted earlier, Black females serve in school leadership positions in small numbers (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). In order to ensure that the potential participant pool is sufficient, this study sought out females who hold diverse leadership positions in schools, including Principals, Assistant Principals, Curriculum Specialists, and Charter Network Leaders.

Once IRB approval was received, email invitations were sent out to potential participants, many of whom were recommended by the researcher's professional connections. Due to the use of purposive sampling and convenience to the researcher, participants were selected from different schools in the Southeastern region of the United States. In order to ensure that participants fit the criteria necessary to gain rich

information for the study (Patton, 1990), the email invitation included an electronic demographic questionnaire (Google Form document). Once the potential participants were determined to fit the criteria for answering the study's research question, the participant pool was narrowed down four participants. Two interviews were scheduled with each participant, at their convenience. Through email correspondence, participants reserved interview time slots for both interviews, and reviewed the informed consent documents for their signature.

The first interview, which was designed to get to know more about each participant and their backgrounds, lasted between 45 minutes to an hour for each participant. I was able to research information on each participant via the internet, and use that information to connect with the participant prior to asking the first protocol question (see Appendix B). After the interview, I used the data to write participant portraits, outlining each participant's background. Participant portraits, which are written narratives about the interviewees, were included in this project to give a specific and contextual picture of each participant (Golsteijn and Wright, 2013). While the participant portraits do not give a physical description of the participants, they were written to provide specific information about each participants' upbringing, family, and current career roles to set the stage for understanding their narratives as written and discussed in later chapters.

As you will notice, the fourth participant portrait is excluded from this chapter. While conducting the first interview, it was discovered that the participant did not meet the demographics required for participant selection. Although my fourth participant was not a mother, I decided to schedule a second interview with her. Having already heard a

lot of her story, I became interested in continuing my inquiry into her work-life balance story. During the data analysis process, I found the fourth participant narrative useful to the discussion and I included specific details regarding the final participant's narrative in chapter five.

Data Collection

The principal data collection method that was used in this study was audio-recorded interviews and electronic journals for follow-up. The researcher proposed to use of document analysis of employee handbooks to clarify information regarding formal work-life balance policies, as a secondary method of data collection. As it will be discussed later, the participants cited a lack of policies beyond the state mandated leave policies to help with their work life balance experiences, eliminating the need to analyze employee handbooks. Researcher perspectives served as a secondary method of data collection. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that the researcher's personal story is an inextricable part of the research conducted, as well as the presentation of findings. The researcher served in the dual-role of researcher-participant by collecting secondary data which included constructing my own work-life balance narrative and completing reflective journaling after conducting interviews with participants.

Semi-Structured Narrative Interviews.

Creswell (2007) highlights that one of the advantages of using interviews in research is that interviews allow the researcher to have control over the line of questioning. Because interviews allow researchers to gather a considerable amount of information in a condensed time frame, interviews were the primary data collection method for this study. Due participant preference, all interviews were conducted

electronically via Zoom conference. The first interviews with participants took between forty-five and sixty minutes to conduct and the second interviews were each completed in about forty-five minutes.

The interview process placed emphasis on avoiding preconceived notions of what I planned to hear from the participants while gathering their stories during two semi-structured interviews. Creswell (2007) considers open-ended interview questions using everyday language to be essential to effective qualitative interviewing. I developed open-ended interview questions around the three research questions, which frame the basis for inquiry in this study. The first interview included questions about participant career roles and upbringing. I began the first interview by asking each participant to describe current career. Questions such as how family influenced their career decisions, helped me get a deeper understanding of each participants' upbringing. The second interview, dived deeper into the study's purpose by looking at the work-life balance experiences of the participants, asking participants to describe their most memorable work-life balance experience. The interview protocol (Appendix A) was designed and used as a guide for participants to tell their stories of their work-life balance experience. The semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Journal Entries.

Journal writing, as a method for collecting data, has been historically been used in the Arts and Humanities (Janesick, 2003). For this study, electronic journals were used as a tool for clarification and communication between the researcher and the participants. After participant interviews were transcribed and analyzed, additional questions and points for clarification were posed through electronic journaling. According to Janesick

(2003), "the clarity of writing down one's thoughts, will allow for the stepping into one's inner minds, and reaching further into interpretations of the behaviors, beliefs, and words we write" (p. 162). The researcher identified one instance, which needed clarification from the eight interviews conducted. For one participant, journal entry questions were created and sent via email, in order to solicit clarity and further expand on an idea that surfaced during the interview.

Researcher Journal and Interview Field Notes

While conducting narrative interviews, I wrote field notes. A sixteen-page electronic researcher journal was used to house these notes, which were taken during each interview using Google Docs. In these notes, I tracked what was happening in the background as the participants shared their story via the virtual platform and noted environmental factors. I also wrote down notes about participant responses and interesting parts of participant narratives, as they shared their story. I also kept a five page researcher journal, which allowed me to track my thinking, connecting participant narratives to that of my own stories of work-life balance experience. As a Black mother who is an aspiring school leader, I found myself drawing connections and engaging in deeper inquiry about the participant stories. The researcher journal and field notes taken during the interviews provided me with a space to write down burning questions to ask in later interviews and during the participant follow-up process.

Secondary Data Collection: Artifacts

According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic material" (p. 27). Similar to other qualitative data collection methods, document collection and

analysis requires the researcher to review relevant documents in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For this study, document analysis was initially proposed as a means for the triangulation of data. I proposed to look at documents explaining workplace policies associated with the participants' place of employment for themes that connect to the participant stories. As discussed in chapters four and five, the inexistence of formal work-life balance policies eliminated the need for document analysis of employee handbooks in this study.

During the data collection process, I found a need to do further research into the schools that these Black female school leaders served. I gathered information about these schools via school websites, accessible to the public via the internet. While none of the websites included employee handbooks or workplace policies as public information, I reviewed the information available about the school leadership model and school history. This information was available to the public via an internet search and the websites were accessible without the necessity of a password. The data gathered from this was useful for triangulating the data from the interviews that was specific about school leadership teams and the school communities in which the participants served as school leaders.

Participant Portrait One

Currently working as an assistant principal in New Orleans, LA at a high school, participant one joined me for a virtual interview from her office. While the interview took place during summer break, because of her position and the transitioning of school leaders within her organization, participant one was scheduled to work the entire summer. Participant one shared the duties of her position, stating that she is the curriculum specialist on her leadership team. Having earned a doctoral degree in curriculum and

instruction from an Ivy League university, participant one has enjoyed close to a decade of working in education. She talked about her former position as a college professor, and transitioning back into the K-12 sector due to the lack of uncertainty around compensation that she experienced in higher education.

Participant one was born the Northeastern United States and raised in many cities throughout the country, because her father was in the army. Having attended eight different schools by the time she graduated high school, participant one realized early on the inequities in the education system. As she explained, her parents had to be extra particular in choosing a school for her to attend, because of the lack of resources available in some inner city schools. Participant one moved to New Orleans after graduating college to pursue a career in education, as a Teach for America Fellow. After the fellowship ended, participant one wanted to expand her knowledge but did not want the debt that came with earning a master's degree. She did research and realized that some doctoral programs provided funding, and decided to move away from New Orleans to enroll in the program.

Very soon after earning her doctoral degree, participant one secured a position in Louisiana as an Assistant Professor in the college of education of a university. She worked there for two years, dealing with a budget freeze and no promise of a salary increase. Someone in her social network contacted her about a leadership opening at a school in New Orleans, and she applied and was offered the position. Participant one has remained within that school as a leader for the past three years.

During her first year as a school leader, participant one gave birth to her now two-year old son. Complications at birth prompted participant one and her husband to make

arrangements for around the clock care of their child. Participant one and her husband decided that he would put a pause to his career, becoming a stay-at-home dad. Today, participant one is leaning on the flexibility within her organization while searching to find the perfect balance between work and life, as her family navigates a one-income household, having no family in close proximity, and nontraditional roles in the household.

Participant Portrait Two

Participant two engaged in a virtual interview from her current residence in the District of Columbia. Excited about sharing her experiences as a Black female school leader, working to maintain a balance of work and life, participant two dialed in to our interview prior to beginning which she described as a loaded work day. This first interview was one of the shortest conducted for this study, lasting only about forty-five minutes. Participant Two described her position as a middle school principal with pride, stating that she does not find pressure within the responsibilities of her role itself but in the time sensitive material that she must handle. Starting her mornings early, usually arriving to her school building at 6:30am, participant two shared that she finds value in setting goals and creating lists and schedules each day to help achieve those goals.

Although education is a second career for participant two, prior to teaching, she spent two decades working in information technology she described her current career choice as her passion. The story behind pursuing a career in education centered around her mother, who at the time she became ill, encouraged participant two to become a teacher. Participant two shared that her mother was a single mother who stressed the importance of education and that her mom, along with many influential teachers helped

to shape her views about education. Each question that was asked of participant two were answered by making a connection to her mother, stating that her mother is her role model who made her feel like being a Black woman is a strength. Participant two stated that Black females are resilient and are capable of doing the work in leadership and the work associated with family and community. She also claimed that her work is more about making a difference with the children that she has today than it is about compensation.

Participant two explained that she just finished an executive Master's degree program. She started thinking about work-life balance after taking a course dedicated to the topic. She alluded to current research and articles centered around work-life balance, claiming that a recent article that she read stated that work -life balance is difficult to achieve as a school leader. Participant two stated that her husband would be elated by her participating in a study that makes her think about intentionally balancing the responsibilities of work and life. While she has been making shifts to her schedule to ensure that she makes time for her husband, participant two was transparent about her struggles to find balance. Although participant two's children are grown up now, she stated that being a grandmother puts pressure on her to find balance in her career.

Participant Portrait Three

At the time of her interview, participant three was on summer vacation from her leadership role at a New Orleans Area charter school. A veteran educator and current assistant principal, participant three pride-fully described her seasoned experience, stating that she is a 50-something year old mother of a daughter in her twenties and is also engaged to be married. Although the charter network is led by educators who are much younger than participant three, she stated that she is able to her insight to the table,

always making sure to center conversations around students. participant three talked about her comfort in being an Assistant Principal, stating that as number two, she gets to spend less time on paperwork and more time connecting with families. As a single mother, participant three talked about her growing understanding of the challenges that families face in educating their children and how that understanding helps her excel in her position.

In her narrative, Participant Three highlighted that although she was the custodial parent to her daughter, making her a single mother, her daughter's father was active in their daughter's life. She also had the extended family she formed when she moved to New Orleans with raising her daughter. Participant Three highlighted her membership in a notable African American sorority. She also described herself as someone who immerses herself in the cultural events offered around the city. Participant Three stated that she oftentimes celebrates with the families of her students by attending cultural events such as second lines parades and she is a member of different Mardi Gras organizations. Although she is a transplant to New Orleans, coming from the Southeastern Region of the United States, Participant Three has spent decades in the city, transitioning into the New Orleans educational landscape pre-Hurricane Katrina to referring to the city as "home" today.

When asked to describe her family, Participant Three talked about being one of the tallest people in her family. The participant stated that she once believed that her above average height would automatically place her at the center of attention. In her earlier years, she realized the inaccuracy of her assumption, oftentimes finding herself being looked over within her family. Participant three is a first generation college student.

While her sisters have gained successful careers, she is the first in her family to earn a 4-year degree, and the only person to earn an advanced degree. Participant three was encouraged to complete a doctoral degree from her master's program professor, who was the only Black female professor at the school that she was enrolled. She persisted to earn a doctoral degree in educational leadership as a single mother and full-time employee. Participant three contributed her success in completing the program to her peers, who she said motivated her to finish her dissertation, even at the face of adversity.

Unique to her story is Participant Three placed her daughter at the center of her narrative. Although she admittedly made sacrifices with work-life balance, prioritizing work over family, Participant Three described her daughter as a willing participant in her career. Participant Three, like many educators, thinks of her students as her family. She stated that her daughter did the same, treating some of her most memorable students as her own siblings. Dedicated to serving her students and figuring out the best practices for work-life balance, Participant Three says her daughter's willingness to sacrifice time with her mother so that she could influence the success of students, has been motivation for her to continue her work in education.

Data Analysis

As Clandinin and Connelly (1990) advise, narrative researchers must be conscious of the end as inquiry begins. The end for this study involves answering the research questions and identifying the similarities and differences of Black female's experiences with work-life balance, using Black Feminist Thought as a guide. Narratives, unlike studies done under other methodological approaches, derive from the sense of the whole. Therefore, data should be analyzed and the story should be written from the

explanations that surface from the whole (all of the data collected) (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990). The participants' stories "functioned as arguments in which we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual life as lived" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990, p.8). In analyzing the data collected, the researcher served as a mediator, attempting to construct the participants' stories from beginning to end, in order to discover meaning that may shape the way that work-life balance is understood from the perspective of Black females.

The initial structure of my data analysis was based on the participant. I transcribed each interview, comprised the field notes related to that participant, and arranged data and interview recordings by that participant. As I moved on in the data analysis process, I began compiling data by organizing information based on connections found and arising themes.

Data Analysis Process

Narrative analysis involves analyzing data within their social, cultural, and historical context. As mentioned earlier, data for this study was analyzed under the social context, or theoretical framework of Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000). The data analysis process included the analysis of the narrative interviews, follow-up journal entries, and relevant artifacts. Throughout the data analysis process, member checking was used to ensure that the researcher fully captured the meaning of the participants' stories of their experiences with work-life balance (Creswell, 2007). A detailed account of how the researcher conducted the data analysis process is outlined below.

1. <u>Story Summary</u>: Following each interview, the data was transcribed and then summarized to remove all but the crucial elements of the story (Hunter, 2000),

constructing work-life balance stories and participant portraits. Reading through the data for the first time, without taking notes or shifting any information, I identified stories in the participant interviews. From those stories in the data from the first interviews, I wrote participant portraits, creating a short, introductory biographical story for each participant. Then, I extracted the participant's actual work-life balance story, which was probed from an interview protocol question during interview 2 (see Appendix A), to be written as the defining story that shaped participants' perspectives of their experiences. These stories, as told in the participants' own words, are shared in the findings section.

2. <u>Coding:</u> The next step in the analysis process was the coding process. This functioned as a second instance of coding. This time, I searched for and recorded representative quotes, themes, and interesting findings in each interview. The structure of the coding process involved initial coding, defining what was happening in the data. For example, codes such as: hard knock life, serving students, and giving up were used to describe instances in the data where the code fit. Then I began creating categories for those initial codes. Examples of codes for categories were: servant leadership, sacrifice, and work-life conflict. The entire coding process was first done by hand, on printed copies of the transcriptions and then translated on electronic documents.

3. <u>Narratives:</u> As explained earlier in this study, narrative inquiry involves collecting stories from the perspective of participants. In the final stage of the data analysis process, I constructed participant narratives, using representative quotes to guide the discussion of their stories. Participants told narratives during the interviews

because either the open-ended questioning asked them specifically for a story or by explaining their own experiences from their own thinking. Participant perspectives were described throughout the data and then synthesized into a story, each one following a natural yet sensible sequence.

My data analysis process, true to narrative inquiry, was process based and followed a sequence. Clandinin and Connelly (2006) outline a process for analyzing data in narrative research, which was the guide for data analysis. This process was used to ensure that participant narratives shared their perspectives. First the researcher engaged with the participants in the field, through the interview process (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). Then field texts were created, which included verbatim interview transcriptions, researcher field notes, and researcher journals. A thematic analysis, uncovering connections between participant stories and an analysis of individual texts were a part of the data analysis process (Rosenthal & Fischer-Rosenthal, 2004). The final stage of the analysis process involved the format of each participant's narrative which provided answers to the research questions.

Researcher Reflexivity

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert that, "narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical. Our research interests come out of our own narratives of our experiences and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines" (p. 121). As part of my researcher reflection process, I analyzed my journal entries and field notes, to remain transparent in my position within this research process. After coding, the emergent themes contributed to the resulting narrative. Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher

continuously read the data in order to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and themes.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that the geographical location of the participants is limited to two states, due to convenience, which means that other states in the country are not considered. This study does not include the lived experiences of females from other minority groups within the same school districts. Klenke (2015) suggests, "researcher bias is one potential threat to validity that has to be controlled" (p. 43). Bias can be shaped by the researchers' knowledge of prior theory, gender, and paradigmatic assumptions, which can impede on the researcher's ability to hear and listen to the perspectives of the participants (Klenke, 2015). Due to this, researcher bias cannot be completely omitted from the qualitative research process. For this study, the use of member checking, reflective journaling, and the thick descriptions required of narrative research (Creswell, 2007; Bold, 2008) were utilized to control bias. As a result of the inherent research bias involved in qualitative research, conclusions in the study may be subject to varying interpretations and analysis.

Research Quality

In qualitative research, there is a focus on data trustworthiness, which consists of the following components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recommend the use of various methods of triangulation to address the question of credibility and dependability with narrative research design. For the purpose of research credibility, the researcher triangulated data from different sources and different participants, rather than from a single participant.

Rich, thick description (Creswell, 2007) was used to convey findings and ensure dependability in this study. Purposive sampling, because it requires certain criteria of participants, which allows the researcher to collect specific information from a specific population, was used to address transferability in this study (Shenton, 2004). By being transparent about the methodology process, the researcher provides confirmability of data collected, analyzed, and constructed in this study.

Verification

Member checking and peer debriefing were be used as methods to verify the quality of the study (Birt et al, 2016). Member checking was used throughout the data analysis process to verify that the researcher has accurately transcribed and interpreted the data collected to ensure that the participant's experience with work-life balance is fully captured. Within forty hours of interview completion, the researcher sent interview transcriptions and written portraits to prospective participants. Although participants did not have corrections or additions, they were encouraged to clarify, add to, enhance, and omit their original responses in order to ensure that their stories are conveyed from their perspective.

A fellow doctoral student was solicited to review the data collected and analyzed throughout the process. As stated earlier, reflective journaling was also used in this study. The peer also reviewed the journals in order to avoid subjectivity within the researcher's analysis.

Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that proper respect for human subjects is exercised, the information for this study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for approval

before the collection of any data commenced (Glense, 2011). The purpose of the study was clearly communicated to participants during the recruitment process. Participants were asked to review and sign letters of consent before formally participating in the study. The researcher assigned pseudonyms to each participant, referring to participants by their pseudonym in the written works produced for this study. Any and all identifying information was changed or excluded to maintain confidentiality. The researcher ensured that there is transparency throughout the data collection and analysis process to remain respectful of participants' right to privacy.

Chapter Four

Findings

This chapter presents the author's personal narrative as well as findings from the narrative data collected for this study. This findings chapter is structured to paint a picture of the participants in the minds of the readers of this manuscript in two distinct lenses. In order to give a reader a sense of the different aspects of the participants' lives that play a part in their work-life balance experience, their overall individual narrative is told first. Later in the chapter, an in-depth presentation of each woman's most memorable work-life balance story is shared. The transcripts of these stories were member-checked to ensure accuracy in presenting the participants' intended narrative.

In my narrative piece, I exist as an "outsider" in the sense that I am a Black woman, under thirty years old, a mother of three, and someone who is working to find my position in a career field in which Black females function as the minority. As stated in Chapter Three, while doing data analysis and constructing the stories of the three participants interviewed for this study, I assigned each story a quote spoken or written by a Black female writer. I did the same for my piece.

Filling Up Blank Pages: Author's Personal Narrative

"If there is a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, you must be the one to write it." Toni Morrison

This quote sums up my work on this manuscript. I learned early on in the doctoral program to choose a topic that allowed me to add value to the literature. As I embarked on the journey, I learned about Black Feminist Theory and work-life balance, two topics that I had a connection too. I realized that those two topics were not heavily researched

and, in a sense, created the opportunity to write the book that had not been written yet. Choosing to do narrative research was the least difficult part, I self-identified as a writer since the eighth grade. As the program progressed and I gained a deeper understanding of qualitative research, I realized that through storytelling as a research methodology, I am afforded the opportunity to give voice to the voiceless. Just as Toni Morrison says, there are books centered on Black female school leaders that I want to read but are not available to me. I begin this section with my own most memorable experience with work-life balance, adding to the literature, by writing the book that has not yet been written:

"Let me explain why we are here," says Brent as he sits at the table with his official documents in his hand. To the right of him is a man dressed in uniform, one leg across his lap and arms folded. At the moment, I am not sure if he is there as a formality or because there is some terrible news coming. "I am here with the Department of Family Services, we received a complaint about possible neglect of your children, particularly your younger son."

Shocked, I responded, "neglect? Really?".

"Yes, Can you tell me what happened on Sunday? How did you son get glass in his foot?"

As I explained to the DFS worker about the event on Sunday, the event in which my son was running around the backyard with other kids, excited to play in the Spacewalk at their grandmother's first ever party for the grandkids, I struggled with the word "neglect".

"My son did not mention the glass being in his foot until this morning. He played all day Sunday and yesterday, we rested preparing for our return to school today. He

never once complained before and when he did, I asked him why he waited to say

something" I continued as I was interrupted by Brent.

"What did he say when you asked him that?" Brent asked.

"Well, he said he did not tell me anything because he was afraid that I would

make him sit down and he wanted to play with his cousins" I explained.

Brent took notes. Putting down his pen, he looked at me to finish his interview.

"Your son told me the same thing. I spoke with him before calling you down from your

classroom. He doesn't seem to be neglected but I have to complete a full investigation.

When will you be available for a home visit?"

As the logistics for the home visit were completed, I knew that the rest of the day

would be particularly hard to get through. I had always thought that she was the best

mother that I could be, and this investigation made me question what I thought I knew

about myself.

I am currently transitioning from a role as a Special Education case manager, into a teacher-leadership position in an education non-profit organization. Like my participants, I am also a mother who oftentimes finds myself in a conflict between meeting the demands of my career and ensuring that I fulfill my responsibilities as a mother. At the time of this experience, it was difficult to separate work-life and home-life because my children were enrolled in the school that I was employed. The innate conflict caused by having to be both Mrs. Teacher and mommy in the same setting, although sometimes convenient, was many times overwhelming. This particular instance represents a time where it was more overwhelming than convenient.

When conducting the interviews for this study, I saw aspects of this particular experience within each of my participant's stories. As participant Nikki described the sacrifices that her daughter had to make because of her career duties, I thought about having to serve breakfast on the go, which oftentimes caused my children to get messy before school, triggering a concern of neglect. When participant Alice shared that she missed visiting her out of town family to work on finalizing a school policy, I thought about the times that I had to decline invitations to family gatherings to spend more time working towards a work deadline. Zora's story about neglecting her family to take calls in the evening time brought up memories of walking away from my children as they completed projects to have phone discussions with co-workers. Similar to the way that these memories resonated with the participants as central to their work-life balance experience, this story sticks with me in that way.

The CPS story highlights a pivotal time in my career when I started to become concerned about work-life balance and my own identity as a Black woman. Prior to this experience, I had a growing dedication to obtaining my PhD and advancing in my career, for which I sacrificed time, particularly time with my children, to develop my skills as a potential change agent in education. After this experience, I questioned my place in the educational leadership sector, oftentimes wondering if as a mother, it was right to pursue a field which my own sacrifices influenced my children. I started making changes in my life to focus more on my children and less on my career. I stopped applying for leadership positions, turning down a few employment offers. I dropped extra coursework, freeing up my schedule to spend less time in class for my PhD. My priorities shifted to be intentional about completing homework assignments with my children and not feeling

bad about missing work to make their scheduled doctor's appointments. After this time, I also withdrew them from the school that we had spent four years at together and placed them in the school closer to home, utilizing my family to help me with ensuring that their needs were met.

The story also represents a vital experience that prompted this study. Having to think about my own approach to work-life balance generated many ideas used to develop the data-gathering tools used in this study. Although the research questions and interview protocol came from findings within existing literature; they were also supported by my experience as a Black woman, mother, and aspiring school leader. In thinking about my participants, my search centered on looking for specifically for Black female school leaders who were mothers.

Participant Narratives

The three mothers who agreed to participate in this study: Nikki, Alice, and Zora brought a varying set of personal characteristics to this conversation. While each woman identified as Black, female, and mothers, the ranges in their age and their upbringing brought some diversity to the conversation. These three females, two of whom transitioned into education as a second career, have worked in urban school districts throughout their careers. Each participant grew up in a different community from the communities in which they now serve as school leaders. Prior to the interviews, the participants identified as females who were interested in sharing stories about their individual experiences with work-life balance. During the individual interviews, they highlighted experiences that connected them to the other participants in the study, whom they never met.

Nikki's Work-Life Balance Strategy: My Daughter's Sacrifices

"Some say we are responsible for those we love. Others know we are responsible for those who love us." Nikki Giovanni

When constructing Nikki's participant portrait, it was evident that her narrative around work-life balance centered on her daughter. In her answers to many questions, Nikki referenced her daughter, who, due to the demands of her mother's work, spent a lot of time in schools, working alongside her mother to meet the responsibilities of her role. I chose this quote from Nikki Giovanni, a Black female poet whose biography says that she had to make adjustments in life and sometimes those adjustments would include her son (Giovanni, 2018), because it highlights the story behind participant Nikki's experiences with work-life balance. In her interview transcriptions, there were many instances of Nikki highlighting the responsibility that she had not only for her own child, but also for the children at the schools that she led. Nikki's work-life balance experiences oftentimes included adjustments made to her life, which included her daughter, because her passion for educating children required that of her.

> "When I was in the doctorate program, the PhD just kind of dropped in my lap. I
> am alternatively certified. I was working at [Tech Company] and I started subbing
> at a junior high school. I worked at night and subbed during the day."

Nikki is an African American female in her mid-50's who holds a PhD in Educational Leadership. She is currently working as an Assistant Principal at an urban charter school in New Orleans, LA which, according to their website, serves around 450 students in grades Pre-K through eight. Having spent over twenty years in education, Nikki has served in various roles, including Principal, Assistant Principal, and

Instructional Leader. Prior to her career in education, Nikki worked in the information technology industry. Major life events caused to make a transition in her career. After her divorce, Nikki decided to get a second job as a substitute teacher. The administrator at the school where she was a substitute teacher offered Nikki a permanent teaching position by the end of that school year.

"I am the Assistant Principal at a charter school. As the Assistant Principal, I do everything that the principal does not want to do. Ironically I was a principal before. The difference is that the assistant principal get to say 'you have to go ask the principal' and I love saying that."

Currently, Nikki serves as an Assistant Principal in a charter school. In this position, she states that she does all of the things that the Principal does not want to do. Nikki shared that although she held a position as principal before, she enjoys the connection that she gets to form with families and teachers as an assistant principal. She describes herself as the administrator families approach the most. Her background is in curriculum development, so she spends a lot of her work-day coaching teachers and conducting observations. As someone with a background in information technology, Nikki says that she is the data person on her team. She does a lot of the data-driven work, which involves submitting reports to the state and making decisions regarding policies in the student handbook.

In describing some of the responsibilities associated with her role, Nikki was not shy about the fact that her role as a school leader is a lot of work. Serving in the role of Assistant Principal and being in charge of vital components as a school leader oftentimes spills over into the home. When asked about how she balances her responsibilities as

Assistant Principal and her role in her family, Nikki described her family situation. She explained that her immediate family consists of her daughter and her fiance.

> "I have a twenty something year old daughter and a fiance. I kind of put that on hold because of my work life. It's time to finally say yes to the dress before im 70 and sitting in the house by myself."

In the participant demographics survey, although she is not married, Nikki identified as both a wife and mother. As the interview progressed, I found that although Nikki's daughter is now older, she spent a majority of her career, putting dating on hold, in order to meet the demands of being a school leader. Nikki stated that she was not involved in serious relationships previously because of her work life, but now she is in a significant relationship and is engaged. During our first interview, Nikki talked about being over 50 years old and finally being at a point where she is ready to take on the demands of marriage. After being a single mother to her daughter for over twenty years, she feels comfortable with her adding a layer to her familial relationship. This is significant to this study because, according to Henderson (2014), it is not rare for Black females to face conflict between their careers and marriage, oftentimes leading to Black females putting marriage on hold to focus on their careers. Research centering around Black female's career and relationship states that when Black females are raised by working mothers, there is more concern about the conflict between potential marriage and careers (Barnett et al. 2003).

When asked about her upbringing, Nikki started with sharing that she is not originally from the South. Her family is from the North. Part of Nikki's decision to become an educator is based on her family's transition from living in the North to

moving their life to the South, where the educational experiences are different. Nikki's decision to move to New Orleans was based on her being offered a full scholarship to a local university. Her experiences playing basketball for the university shaped her approach to educational leadership and her ability to be a team player.

"I was born in Brooklyn, NY. We stayed there off and on and then we moved to Florida. I stayed there for Elementary school and then we moved to Gulfport. I came to New Orleans to [attend college] because i ended up with a basketball scholarship. I wasn't a good basketball player but I am a good team player. I believe as a leader it's important to be a team player."

Although Nikki calls the community where she currently serves as a school leader her home, she is not originally from New Orleans, although she spent most of her life in the neighboring state, Mississippi. Coming from a small community in Mississippi, Nikki described herself as the only person in her family with an advanced degree, but she always preferred to be number two instead of in the spotlight. Although having an advanced degree for some would mean that she is ambitious, Nikki stated that she felt that she could accomplish more because she was not in the spotlight. She said, "I like being number two because it's a lot that you can do in the number two position." Nikki said that her resistance to being the center of attention came from growing up in a family in which she was always the tallest person. Nikki moved to New Orleans as a college student and decided to make it her home, although her family remains in Mississippi.

Moving away from family is not always an easy transition. Nikki found family in the families, students, and colleagues in the schools that she led in New Orleans. She talked about how her former co-workers parents became godparents to her daughter.

Nikki oftentimes adopted students, allowing them to reside with her so that she could help them pursue their education in a stable environment. She explained that when her daughter was growing up, she made sure that her daughter understood how demanding her position as a leader is.

> "It's funny. I tell my daughter all the time that I don't have family here. Well, my school is my family. I tell my daughter that it's [the work] demanding. I am the test coordinator in the school. When my daughter was younger, she would come to school and sharpen the pencils, count out paper for scratch paper. Because I was a single parent, there were sacrifices that she [my daughter] had to make."

In this quote, Nikki talks about settling into a new town and making it her home. Her only blood family in New Orleans is her daughter. Nikki relies on the family created by her network of friends who are also educators and the families of the students that she serves to fill the gap. Nikki stated that her daughter had to sacrifice time and sometimes she had to share her mother with other students. As the interview with Nikki progressed, she talked more and more about the sacrifices that her blood family, her daughter, had to make as she navigated her career in educational leadership. Nikki's talked about how her daughter emphasized with her passion for educating students and would oftentimes assist her mother in completing her work. In particular, when Nikki decided to allow a student to reside at their house, Nikki said that her daughter did not complain. Instead she embraced the student as her sister and overtime grew a strong bond with her mother's student.

> "You know one time we were in a store and she told me 'you buying that for those kids.' I told her quit calling them those kids. She knows how I feel about

those kids, I brought a wedding dress for a kid, i had a kid living with me, so she

knew how I felt."

In this quote, Nikki describes how she translated her passion for her students into

her relationship with her daughter. She wanted her daughter to feel as though those

students were a part of both of their lives, like family. Nikki grew emotional throughout

her interview, when she would talk about her daughter and the sacrifices that she made so

that her mother could serve students, including having to share her bedroom, spending

weekends at the school, and sometimes being bullied because she is was the school

leader's daughter.

> "I told her do not tell those kids I'm your mother because they will pick on you.
>
> We walked by the third grade class and [my daughter] says hi mommy. By the
>
> time we get through the third grade hall, they were harassing her. One student was
>
> picking on her and they ended up fighting."

This quote represents the consequences that impacted Nikki's daughter due to her

position as a leader in the school. Nikki said that the students oftentimes referred to her

daughter as a princess because of the way that she worked alongside her mother to

educate students. Nikki said that her daughter never showed any jealousy towards the

students, although she was aware of the sacrifices being made to accommodate those

students. The experiences as a parent of a student, working as a servant leader for other

students, shaped Nikki's work-life balance experience. Her understanding as a mother

helps her to deal with the families of her students.

> "I always treat parents the way that I want treatment as a parent and I always treat
>
> people's children the way that I want my child to be treated. I give parents the

benefit of the doubt. Like if they can't make a program; they might have to work, might have been at a job."

In her interview, Nikki referred to herself as a true servant leader. One of the principles of servant leadership is empathy, the ability to strive to understand and empathize with others (Spears, 2010). Nikki states that she always looks outside herself to serve her people. While her height may place her in the spotlight physically, Nikki felt that making a connection to the families in the school communities in which she lead, allows her to better serve them, placing the students at the center of decision making. In describing her servant leadership, she discussed the Ester principal, which she describes as being put in a position that we feel like we might not deserve or are uncomfortable in. Being a Black woman in a White male dominated career field functions as one of those experiences of being in a position in which Nikki may have felt uncomfortable.

> "Sometimes it is assumed that we [Black females] don't know. When they find
> out we know, when I say they I mean White people, they are like oh, wow. Being
> a Black woman with a PhD is almost like, they will automatically go to calling a
> White person by their title, Dr, but then just call me by my first name."

Nikki's stated that her outsider identity influenced her work-life balance experiences. While she admitted to being hesitant about calling it out, she highlighted how being an older, Black woman in an educational landscape where there is a lack of respect for Black veteran educators, impacts the way in which she goes about advocating for students and making decisions. Nikki said that being a Black female leader in her city has been tough, although she believes that people are becoming more concerned with what Black women bring to the table, more than they care about who they are. As a Black

female school leader, Nikki's work-life balance experience is defined by the dual-sacrifice of integrating of her daughter heavily into her role, making sure that she is always able to her best work to the table, despite her responsibilities outside of her career.

Alice's Work-Life Balance Strategy-Decreasing Family Demands, Increasing Workload

"In search of my mother's garden, I found my own." Alice Walker

The second participant, Alice, centered her narrative about work-life balance as a school leader, around her mother. Alice is a seasoned educator, who is also a wife and mother to children in their mid-thirties. This quote from Alice Walker, a world renowned novelist who grew up in the South in a two-parent household with eight siblings, comes from Walker's work which centers around her own mother and her quest for understanding her identity as a black woman. Seifert (2014) summarizes the Alice Walker's literary prose collection, In Search of Our Mothers Garden, as being about mothers who leave their marks on their children. These mothers, through the spirit and beauty, inspire their daughter to create their own identities as black women. Participant Alice is not only the daughter of a mother whose guidance inspired her to pursue a career in education.

> "When [my mother] passed my husband pretty much said that there was a reason why my mother said [I should teach] and I should go try to see what she meant and go teach. Growing up, you know, my mom was a single mom. Education was important to us and she instilled in us that getting an education was something that we needed to do."

Like Nikki, education was a second career Alice. In this quote, Alice talks about what inspired her to become an educator. Alice currently works as the principal of a charter school in Washington, D.C. Prior to securing a position in education, Alice spent over two decades working in technology systems development. Emphasizing that making the switch to education cost her a fifty percent reduction in pay, Alice said that her mother always told her that she should become a teacher. It was not until her mother passed that Alice actually made the transition from technology systems development to working in the classroom. When asked how to reduction in pay associated with her move from one field of work to education affects Alice's role as an educator, she said that her passion for making a difference in the lives of children and showing children that she is committed to her work, helps to make the minimal pay and the demands of her role as a school leader worth it. She described her position as a school leader as being highly demanding:

> "I run a middle school in D.C. We are an urban school, serving 300 students and roughly 75 employees. [My role] includes managing staff, making sure we have appropriate curriculum, meeting the requirements of the state board and charter authorizing agency; dealing with parents; fundraising; grants management; managing our students with special needs. You know, it's funny because you don't realize you are doing so many things until you are asked to list them."

Alice's work reaches far beyond the school building. Although Alice talked about how much work is involved in her everyday life as a school leaders, she stated that she is so comfortable in her position that she does not necessarily feel pressure in her everyday workload. Her workday begins at 6:30 am, leaving home an hour earlier to ensure that

she beats traffic and staying late until about 6:00pm to avoid the 4:30 pm traffic rush. She describes the two hours between the dismissal of students and her commute home as time to work on the things that can be done in the time she would be sitting in traffic. She has a participatory leadership style, ensuring that she is visible and accessible to students, parents, and staff throughout the day. Alice is able to accomplish the work associated with her role, while remaining an active participant in the everyday matters of her school building, by remaining organized, and prioritizing important tasks.

> " I am a person who is all about lists and schedules. At the beginning of the week, I create my big three. Each day there is a smaller list of three things that i need to accomplish so sometimes I have to readjust myself to make sure that I am getting everything done. I use something similar in my personal life. I have so many things to juggle, that it I didn't prioritize it, I would probably go crazy."

Making goal-setting and scheduling her day a priority, stems from Alice past experiences with being unable to juggle the demands of work and life. Alice talked about how when she neglected the demands of her home life, in order to meet the responsibilities of her job as a leader, she would feel a sense of burn out. For example, when she took advantage of opportunities to vacation with her family, Alice stated that she would spend the first few days of her trip catching up on sleep, instead of enjoying the activities available to her at their destination. Alice's husband played a major part in her shift to prioritizing her duties when he gave her feedback after they returned from a vacation, where Alice spent most of the trip in the hotel room.

> "My husband kind of told me if I kept that up, then I would burn out rather quickly. So now in my calendar I put time in there that is for us personally. We

have been married for 38 years, so in my calendar, we have a standing Friday date."

Carving out time in her schedule to connect with her husband, exercise, talk to her children and grandchildren on the phone, has been essential to Alice's work-life balance experience. Beyond Friday date night, Alice spends twenty-minutes each night engaging in conversations with her husband about everything, except work. Although her schedule does not allow for much time to socialize with her friends, Alice stated that if she does not make it an effort to spend time doing things other than work, that time gets lost. Focusing on work-life balance has become a more recent attempt for Alice to ensure that she is not losing time that she is unable to get back:

> "I just finished an Executive Masters Degree program. Half-way through the program there was a course dealing with work-life balance. There was a recent Washington Post article talking about the fact that there is no work-life balance in education and its nothing available to tell me how to get that work-life balance. This [interview] is making me think about having more deeper kind of training with my staff about work-life balance."

It has only been a year since Alice completed her executive master's degree program, so her thoughts about the information learned on topic of work-life balance from her courses are still fresh in her mind. In describing the significant stories of her work-life balance experience, Alice continued to talk about lost times and the demands of her work. Although she stated that she has no regrets about her work, she did emphasize the importance of navigating work as a school leader and maintaining a healthy balance between work and home. Alice said, "I can't have my job going great and then my family

not being in order." Her current recognition of work-life balance as an issue for educational leaders shape the decisions that she make in her position on a daily basis.

Having chosen to pursue a career in education, taking a significant cut to her pay, Alice's story focused on the impact that her position made in the lives of her students. Regardless of the challenges finding work-life balance in her career, Alice remains focused on being a lifetime educator:

> "I am at a place in my life where money is not a factor. I think that the work that we do is really important. You are either called to it or not. The compensation is fine but the most important thing is the work itself, so no I would not change."

When asked if her financial status were different, meaning she had achieved financial freedom, would Alice change careers, she was insistent that she would continue to make strides as an educational leader. Alice stated that the compensation is not as important as the work itself, even though the demands of the job are high level. Throughout the interview, Alice connected her personal experiences to work-life balance to those of younger mothers facing more intense demands. She discussed her understanding of work-life balance and how as she has aged and her students have grown older and have started their own families her work-life balance experience has become less difficult. Alice said, "I'm older and my kids are older but there are females who are younger with young children and husbands who they are trying to create those careers and balances for themselves". Navigating work and family has gotten easier for Alice as her children have grown older and have started their own families.

Alice's commitment to a student-focused mission echoed, as we completed the second interview protocol regarding her experiences as an outsider. Black women who

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enter White-led organizations and White male-dominated career fields are considered outsiders (Brown, 2012). As stated earlier, In her narrative, Alice acknowledged being an outsider in a male-dominated role but stated that because her school is connected closely to a Historically Black institution, the influence that her outsider-status has on her decision-making is minimal. She discussed the history of Black females in America and her upbringing as the guideline for her discussion around her outsider status.

> "The history of black females is that we have handled those pressures. My upbringing again is that my mom was a single mom who managed services for the city of New York, a school system which was one of the largest in the country. She modeled to me that the fact that you are a woman is a strength even though the world doesn't see it that way."

Alice's mother taught her to use her status as a Black woman as strength, even though society continues to double marginalize women of color. She stated that "there is definitely a black ceiling when it comes to the black woman in education." Alice confronts that glass ceiling by making strides in her position and emphasizing the importance of education to her students. Being a Black woman and being raised by a single mother who emphasized the importance of education, provided the basis for Alice's ability to navigate the sector of education leadership. Describing her perspective as a school leader, Alice hinted to the innate servant leadership characteristics that she cited as being central to her success as a school leader:

> "African American female school leaders are successful and I think its because the role is more about supporting the whole child rather than academics and it is the black female who is doing the most work to support the whole child. We

recognize the importance of males in the family unit, but the Black female in the family have a powerful role and the black females in education also have a powerful role."

In this quote, Alice talks about the strength of Black women and their placements as the matriarch in the Black family. Collins (2004) emphasizes the roles that Black females have in the family, stating that historically, Black females have worked, taken care of the homes, and maintained significant relationships. In Alice's interview she framed the idea of the Black woman holding multiple roles as something that gives Black females the power to be successful as leaders. Alice claimed in her interview, that her mother would often emphasize the role of Black females in society as being vital to its functioning. She said that her mother inspired her to embrace being a Black woman.

"It's a lot that Black females bring and they face those challenges but we have to get to a point where we are comfortable where we say this is not enough and start paving that way to getting even higher in the education realm".

The challenges, including access to leadership positions, navigating work and life, and feeling respected as outsiders, that Alice discussed in her narrative have been researched, oftentimes centering around Black female leaders. Hoyt (2007) states that Black females experience greater negative stereotypes, unfair treatment, and difficulty gaining access to promotion opportunities. Despite these difficulties, Alice says that she feels as though Black females have the tools necessary to face the adversities caused by their membership in a double marginalized group. She talked about the fact Black females are realizing their potential and beginning to pave the way for more Black females to come. Although Black females are gaining access to positions of power more

than in the past, Black females should learn how to navigate the push back they may receive as they rise to positions of authority.

"I sometimes have to explain why i'm even qualified to do exactly what I am doing. I no longer get insulted by it. I know it's not meant to be insulting but I don't ask that question of someone else. I often have to defend the fact that I am qualified to be here. I am hoping to get to the point where that is no longer necessary."

Alice's work life balance experience is defined by the strategies that she uses to navigate the demands of her role as a school leader and her responsibilities as a wife and mother. She talked a lot about making lists and schedules, purposefully dividing her time between her multiple roles. Inspired by her mother to pursue education as a career, Alice's experience also contributed to the overall issue of work-life balance for Black women by naming the challenges associated with outsider status and motherhood that are oftentimes faced by Black women in leadership positions. Alice stated in her interview that "people don't recognize that we [Black women] are capable of doing the work, maybe we don't realize that we are capable of doing the work". For Alice, it is important that Black women begin to recognize their abilities and use tools, like scheduling, to help them navigate the challenges of their career.

Zora's Work-Life Balance Strategy: Working Mommy, Stay-at-home Daddy

*"She had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew how not to mix them."-*Zora Neale Hurston

Zora is the youngest of the participants interviewed for this study. She is a wife and a mother of a two year old son. This quote by Zora Neale Hurston was chosen to

represent [participant] Zora's narrative because her story centered around transitioning between solely being focused on her career to now having to balance life as a school leader and a mother. Zora held her "outside" position within education for close to a decade, but more recently gained an "inside" as she got married and gave birth to her child. Her story reflects the changes that had to be made to accommodate both her career goals and the needs of her family, attempting not to mix them together.

> "I think having a baby definitely blew things up. The sort of things that you do when you have time to yourself, like cooking, reading books, and exercising, these are three things that you do when you don't have a child and are now hard to do."

Serving in a school leadership capacity as an Assistant Principal and Curriculum specialist is not new for Zora. In fact, she has spent her entire career in education, serving in various roles including classroom teacher and college professor. Although Zora attended a college that did not offer teacher certification, she was accepted to the Teach for America program and then placed in New Orleans, where she began her journey teaching. Zora described the birth of her son as the first time she had to think about splitting time between carer and family. In doing so, Zora has spent the last few years negotiating time for doing the things that she once enjoyed doing for work-life balance.

Unique to Zora's story is her husband's position as a stay-at-home dad. Although more women are entering the workforce, it is rare that fathers stay at home to care for the children. As stated earlier, in Black households, both the father and mother worked outside of the house. Zora said in her first interview "my husband stays home with the baby. [He] is watching a two and a half year old for twelve hours a day." This became a

defining feature of her work-life balance story. When describing the routines of her day, Zora explained that she makes sure to spend as much time handling the demands of their two-year old son while she is home, since she is the one leaving the home each day to work:

> "Generally speaking, it's just the three of us. We do not have a ton of money. We live in this little shotgun [house]. So the first thing in the morning, my son hops out of his bed to our bed and wakes me up, generally between 5am and 6am. I get up and I take him into the living room and we hang out together while my husband gets a little more sleep. I give him some breakfast and watch train videos and eat strawberries. I wake up my husband and get myself ready to go around 7."

Zora explained that one of the unplanned sacrifices that she made once having her son was to become the sole provider for her family of three. Due to her son being born premature and not having family living nearby to help with caretaking, her husband quit his job, taking a step back from his career, to care for their son as she continued to pursue her education leadership career goals. She makes up for the sacrifice that her husband made and him spending long hours each day with their son, by taking over the primary parenting duties on the weekends:

> "I pretty much am the head parent on the weekend so that my husband has time to chill too. So on the weekends, I like to get my son out of the house. We will go to the zoo, or to the library, or something like that."

Zora dove deeply into the compromises made with her husband that deviate from family, in a traditional sense. While Zora works over forty hours a week, generally making it to the school at seven in the morning, she makes sure to make it home in

enough time to allow her husband to have time to do the things that he was unable to do while caring for their son. Emphasizing that the administration at her school is understanding of her life circumstances and accommodates her because of that, Zora stated that she makes it a rule to leave the campus by four o'clock so that she can cook dinner and spend time with her son. She makes sure to communicate with her staff that she can only dedicate one evening per week to working late. Zora stated that leadership meetings and schedules are created based on accommodations made to meet individual team members' needs.

> "My school community is pretty understanding of these things. We are in the middle of a baby boom in my building. I am going into my third year in this position, and in the last years, something like ten babies have been born on staff."

When I asked Zora about work-life balance policies at her school, she talked about the importance of the informal policies in her building. Unlike both Alice and Nikki, due to having smaller children, Zora's work-life balance experience is defined by the accommodations made by the administrative team at her school. She says, "most of the things that are helpful are informal." On professional development days, the school set up a babysitting room for staff kids. Enrolled students would volunteer to watch staff kids while parents participated in professional development sessions. Zora also explained that there is no pressure, if she has to rush of campus for less than a few hours to handle an emergency with her son. These informal policies strongly influences Zora's work-life balance experiences.

"There are formal things [policies] in place that help. In terms of time off, there are no fault days, in addition to sick days and vacation days. There are 7 [no fault] days that we get during the school year."

Zora's school allowing her to focus on her son, as long as the responsibilities of her work is being met, is described as vital to her ability to remain in the position. Although both informal and formal policies assist with Zora's work-life balance experience, she describes times when she found herself experiencing a conflict between work and life, having to decide whether to bring work into the home. When asked how being a Black woman influences her work-life balance experiences, Zora described how sometimes conflicts between work and being a parent can sometimes be perceived as neglect by others.

"So if it's after school, and I'm with my baby at the library, and he is running around. Say I get a text about a teacher being out the next day and needing a substitute; I get really conscious about responding to the text. I'm thinking people are like look at her she she is texting."

Zora talked about not wanting to look like a negligent Black mother by responding to emails, texts, and phone calls while spending time with her son in public places. People's perception of her ability to care for her child and of her son's behavior in public places plays a huge part in her decision-making.

She also discussed how people's perception of her in the workplace as a Black woman, affected her work-life balance:

"It really affects how I present myself at school. Like I am generally super casual, super low maintenance. Am I projecting a professional enough image? If I were a

White man wearing Khakis everyday, I wouldn't be worried. But as a Black woman, I am like I need to make sure my hair is done, I need to look cute. This is where the challenge happens."

The demands of being a wife, mother, and school leader makes it difficult for Zora to project her image in the way that she feels is appropriate for someone in her position. Zora discussed how vital people's perception of her as a leader, which she believes is influenced by the way she looks at work, is to her career. She also talked about the pressure she places on herself to make sure that she excels in her job, so that her qualifications are not questioned or attributed to affirmative action.

"I really need to do a good enough job so that I am not questioned, but I can't do a really good job if my child is waking up twelve times a night for no good reason. I think that is where the work-life balance thing really comes in. It feels extra important for me to do my job really well, even with the demands of work-life balance."

In this quote, Zora discusses the pressure associated with being a Black woman in a school leadership position. She described having to do extra in an attempt to outperform expectations, in order to prover her worthiness of being in her position. Zora continued her narrative describing the way that being a Black woman has helped her in her position in many ways. She praised the idea that families of her students, who are majority African American, are particularly happy that she is a Black woman in a leadership position. Zora's school has a majority Black female administration. Zora discusses how working in a school with many female leaders is beneficial, and she also describes how her Black female colleagues differ from her peers in the past:

"Just thinking about my colleagues, other Black females who are helping to support their parents. [My] White counterparts who came from more money; if they suddenly need $10,000 to replace their roof, they can call their parents. I think in work-life balance, I have sometimes had to do postmates [rideshare and food delivery], because I needed money. Coming from a background with no generational wealth and in a low-paying field like education, my work-life balance experience is heavily driven by money."

Zora explains that she often finds herself making compromises with her family, in order to meet the demands of her position. She is not often able to travel to family events due to scheduling and financial conflicts. Her work-life balance experience centers around doing the things necessary to make sure that she has income coming in to support her family. Although she is in a leadership position, which some might associated with a higher income, Zora stated that she does side jobs such as Uber rideshare and food delivery to make extra money. She said that her White peers are oftentimes able to rely on their parents when they need extra money, but she does not have that luxury. According to Bloomberg (2017), "one powerful factor seems to be that whites are five times as likely as blacks to receive substantial gifts and inheritances, and the sums they get tend to be much larger." Zora's story highlighted this claim. She describes her upbringing as a typical middle class background, stating that her father served in the military and her mother was an accountant. Zora does not have access to the financial gifts that are likely accessible to White people in America. She expressed that her family is oftentimes confused by her financial instability, considering the amount of education she has obtained:

"In terms of family, no one in my family has ever gotten a doctorate degree before. No one in my family has been a school administrator before. My family is kind of confused by the whole thing. Like if you have a doctorate, why are you broke? Like they don't understand, they think that I am being self-sacrificing or something"

In this quote, Zora explains the outside perception of her situation as an highly educated, Black female school leader who chose a career with a reputation for low compensation (in comparison to other career fields. She stated that her family often questions her level of wealth, considering she has earned an advanced degree. Despite the financial challenges and demands that come with her position, Zora continues to work as an educator. Throughout the interview, Zora held on to the premise that her passion for education remains strong enough that she is willing to navigate the low compensation to fulfill her personal mission of educating students. She is one of those educators who claims to have known early on that they would become a teacher. When I asked Zora the protocol question, if money were not an issue, would you remain in education, she lead her response with her passion for education. Although she has gained access to a higher level of leadership within education, Zora would take a step back, returning to the classroom, if money were not a factor: "I would go back to the classroom. I would go back and teach for a few years because there is joy in teaching."

Zora's work-life balance story centered around her financial situation and her husband's position as a stay-at-home dad. Although she expressed a passion for being an educator, she talked a lot about how money determined her current path to educational leadership. Zora, in her early thirties is the youngest of the participants and she is raising

a young child. Unlike the other participants, Zora indicated that there are informal work-life balance policies within her organization which help her to better navigate her career and motherhood. The accommodations made by Zora's administration for mothers and having her husband handle primary care responsibilities for their son serves as Zora's work-life balance strategy.

Work-Life Balance Stories

In search for answers to the first research sub-question: What personal stories shape Black female school leader's perspectives of their work-life balance experiences, participants were asked to describe their most memorable work-life balance experiences. These stories made up the bulk of the participant narratives and shaped the remainder of the interview. During the data analysis process, I extracted the work-life balance stories from each participant's narrative, placing it aside from the other data. This section highlights each participant's most memorable experience with work-life balance, as told completely from the participant's perspective.

A Daughter's Sacrifice: Nikki's Story

So my daughter was in 8th grade and she was at [private school]. The only reason she was there, when we came back after the storm she was in third grade, we lived around the corner from what was [neighborhood school]. I didn't have a car at that time. I did have a friend whose parents were helping me out at that time. She always wanted to go to the school where those girls wear the jackets. She had endured the storm, she lost everything, so i'm like 'ok, you can go to there.

She goes there and gets to 8th grade. It's the promotional ceremony. The ceremony has not even started and I get a phone call. The art teacher calls to report a

bus accident involving students. The bus was hit by a drunk driver. I tell the teacher soon as she gets there to call me. She calls me and says its bad.

So, I jump in my car. I had a car by this time, my daughter's family is there and I'm like I have to go, I will be back. My daughter seeing me leave, she asks me where I'm going and I'm like I have to handle an emergency.

You know one time we were in a store and she told me 'um you buying that for those kids huh'. I told her 'quit calling them those kids.' She knows how I feel about those kids. I bought a wedding dress for a kid, I had a kid living with me, so she knew how I felt.

She looked at me with that face and I'm like I'm going but I'm coming back. Her dad tried to reassure her that I would come back but he and her transplant parents were all there.

I get to the accident. The accident is so bad they had a bus ambulance taking the students on bunk beds. I called back to the ceremony to ask what they were doing. I knew we would have many kids there going to many hospitals. I called a master teacher and divide my people up so that they were attended to.

I go back to the ceremony, my daughter sees me, she is good. After the ceremony we were taking pictures and my daughter asks 'what happened?' My friend says 'you know mama has to go check on the kids'. Her [godmother] said she would take her out to eat. I promised I would come back.

I'm starting to get emotional because my daughter is strong, her jealousy of those kids was not mean. It was like a siblings type jealousy. She knew I had to be there for those kids and she understood. She allowed me to be that to them because she knew, you

know. I think about when I was at [New Orleans High School] and a kid had to come stay with me and [my daughter] was in that same child's wedding. They would call her the [school mascot] princess.

I was able to balance that because she never felt pushed to the side because of those children. I remember when she got a fight at the school and I told her do not tell those kids I'm your mother because they will pick on you. We walked by the third grade class and she says hi mommy, by the time we get to the third grade they were harassing her. One student was picking on her and they ended up fighting. I ended up suspending my daughter.

The other kids mama was like what y'all not gonna suspend her. I had to stay home with my child for three days. The principal told me to take her with me to work and let her work in the office with but I said the rule is participants in a fight are suspended, she had to get the same punishment.

Although I met with Nikki via a virtual meeting platform, I felt empathetic to her work-life balance experience as she became emotional while telling her story. As stated earlier, Nikki's narrative centered on her daughter. She explained that although her daughter's father was active in his role, she still considered herself to be a single mother. Nikki chose to leave clients in the information technology field to pursue a position working with students in education and oftentimes found herself unable to separate her career from the needs of her daughter. Being away from her hometown and her family put Nikki in a position to rely on the people in her professional network for support with her daughter. As the conflict between work-life balance presented itself at her daughter's promotion ceremony, it was the family that she adopted (her daughter's

godmother, her work colleague, and her colleague's parents) that she relied on to step in for her daughter, at a time when she had to prioritize her students. Nikki boasted about her own passion for her students throughout her interviews. It is through her most memorable work-life balance experience that we see the depth of the sacrifices that were made by Nikki and her daughter, as a result Nikki's passion.

A Team Effort: Alice's Story

It was the beginning of the school year and we were working on a master schedule. I was the principal of the high school at the time. We worked all day Thursday. We worked to get it fixed. We got it fixed but we worked through the weekend.

We had plans. It was Labor Day weekend. We were going to go see my son, but my husband went because I couldn't go.

I remember when he got back he was explaining to me how disappointed my grandsons were. He understood it, but the kids did not. They just kept saying you didn't come and that broke my heart.

Now I have team members available to take care of things. You know I think you don't live to work, you work to live. So now I'm like I would never let that happen again. I can't have my job going great and then my family not being in order.

So I kind of moved from there to make sure that it wouldn't happen again. So, when things happened after that, I either had my team ready to deal with it or I took my family with it.

One time the building needed repair, and so I took my family with me to help with the repairs, in order for the building to be ready. I got everyone here. Everyone was here and we all worked together, that way I got everything done while spending time with

them. It helped them because they got to see what exactly it is that I do and I got to spend

that time with them that I wouldn't have otherwise.

Alice's work-life balance story not only involved conflicts between a mother's career and her children, but it included her grandchildren. The story that she told came from a time where Alice's children were already grown and had started their own families. Her children already had an understanding of the demands associated with her position as a school leader. Her grandchildren, on the other hand, expressed disappointment in their grandmother's inability to visit them, due to having to finish a task at work. Alice, determined to never disappoint her grandchildren by not showing up again, decided to focus on growing a team capable of functioning without her. The other option of having her family come to work with her to fulfill her responsibilities, highlights Alice's constant reference to her team throughout her interviews. Although Alice holds the title as the top leader at her charter school, her approach is to adopt a team approach to navigate work-life balance conflicts.

Hard Boundaries: Zora's Story

One thing I can think of is my first year back here as an administrator. There was a conflict between a student and teacher that I was trying to mediate. It was taking up a lot of my time during the day. The teacher asked me if we can talk so I came up with a time to talk.

Of course this was in the evening after the baby had gone to bed. The teacher kept me on the phone for like an hour and a half, it was bonkers, it was terrible. She was crying and hollering, it was out of control. It was that time where I should be cooking, or relaxing, or spending time with my husband. It was not that big of a deal but

experiencing that conversation and not knowing how to end that conversation, how to get

off of the phone.

I felt like after that I became much better at putting hard stops on things. Like when meeting with my principal this year she would be like can you stay and talk after school and I'm like absolutely. But at this time I am going to stand up, I'm going to end the conversation, and I'm going to walk out of the room, at 4 o'clock. We can definitely talk until I stand up and walk out of the room.

In general, I am being better and being protective of time. Kind of being strategic about what needs to happen when. Like its actually not a thing that has to happen that we have to be on the phone talking until the evening about a student. Or if it is, it has to happen after my kid is in bed and I've done other things that need to be done.

Of the three participants, Zora is the youngest and is newest to motherhood. Although something like taking a work call after you have left the job site might seem normal and minute to others, this experience was significant enough for Zora to share. This experience caused Zora to negotiate between her role as a mother and as a school leader and made her reevaluate the norms and boundaries she set with her staff around her availability for work-related circumstances. Nora's narrative is filled with references to her two-year-old son, who is described as having many needs, including having personal time with both his mother and father. On top of that, Zora must also find time to meet the needs of her husband, by cooking dinner and prioritizing time for her spouse. This experience is significant for Nora because it represents the conflict that arises when you bring the demands of the job into the home. In this instance, she had to sacrifice her routine and her time after work, to provide support to a teacher, after having

already spent time at work discussing the issue. The negotiation of time for family and time for work was a pivotal moment in Zora's career, causing her to set hard boundaries for work demands in the future.

Conclusion

The three participants highlighted in this study represent a group of females, diverse in age and experiences, but similar in that they are Black females who hold leadership positions in education. Similar to the Black female authors whose names were assigned to the participants as pseudonyms, these females have stories to share, which contribute to the research on work-life balance, a sector in which the unique voices of Black females have been left out. From their stories, come themes of negotiating between the demands of work and life, servant leadership, sacrifice, setting priorities, resilience, and leaning on support systems. The chapter that follows will discuss the themes found in the interview transcriptions and provide implications for aspiring school leaders and suggestions future research

Chapter 5

Discussion

In Chapter four, I opened with my personal work-life balance narrative and then shared the stories of three mothers navigating the demands of their school leadership positions. This chapter begins by sharing a closing narrative, Maya's work-life balance story. This story was not included in my original findings for one particular reason, because, Maya is not the mother of any children. Although, when recruiting Maya for an interview, she checked off the "mother" box in the roles section of the demographic survey, minutes into the interview, she revealed that she did not have any children of her own. Nonetheless, I continued the interview with Maya. During data analysis, I found many of the same themes from the other participant data existing in Maya's stories.

In Chapter two, when discussing the history of Black females in Black families, I quoted research that placed Black females as the matriarch. Proponents of Black Feminist Theory, which serves as the conceptual basis for this study, assert that "in the Black community, family has always included other mothers (females who assist blood mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities), extended family, and fictive kin" (Everett, Marks, & Clark-Mitchell, 2016, pg. 336). In a sense, Maya's narrative below, which highlights her shared responsibilities for her nieces and nephews, fits into the Black Feminist Theory definition of a mother. Although I excluded her story from chapter four because being the caregiver to children is not one of Maya's primary responsibilities in her everyday life, Maya's story is synthesized and included in this chapter as impactful data collected for this study:

The Other Mother Career Woman: Maya's Story

I've learned that whenever I decide something with an open heart, I usually make the right decision. ~Maya Angelou

Maya currently works as the new Assistant Principal in a small charter school network in New Orleans. She described her work as having derived from a passion for education, which is why the quote from Maya Angelou was chosen as representative of her. Throughout her interviews, Maya talked about making decisions for her students, stemming from her love for them and for educational equity, which most times ended up being the best decisions she has made as a leader. Having worked in a traditional public school district prior to starting her new position, Maya led the interview with the claim that there is no such thing as work-life balance. Although Maya explained that, overtime, she has had to learn to manage others and set boundaries, as the leader of every aspect of school leadership, she still does not feel comfortable in her ability to effectively navigate her role and manage life roles that may come with marriage and children. Being a single woman with no family in the city in which she lives, Maya admits to not having a ton of family demands, but having difficulty dealing with the demands that she does have. Like Nikki, Maya is holding off on pursuing significant relationships due to the threat of work-life conflict.

After working a minimum of nine hours in the school building each day, Maya responds to emails until about 9pm. She stated that her job has no formal work-life balance policies, although having a Principal who is committed to self-care has always helped make the imbalance easier to manage. While executives in education (school leaders) often do not get paid as much as executives in other fields, Maya said that she

would not give up her position in education, even if more money presented itself in another field. In fact, Maya attributed her passion for education to her upbringing.

Maya grew up in Tennessee in a two-parent household. Both of her parents received their high school diplomas and completed technical school programs, yet they emphasized to their children the importance of attending college. Her parents enrolled her and her sister in magnet schools and Maya went on to succeed in college, by connecting her love for Math and Science to her passion for public service, earning degree in education. Her success as a classroom teacher led her to pursue a career in educational leadership.

Maya stated that New Orleans, relative to other cities, has a lot of Black females in school leadership positions. Because of this, Maya feels that it is the duty of Black female school leaders in the city to not only fight for good pedagogical practices for students but for equitable education for students of color. She said that being a Black female school leader has given her a sense of connection with the Black families at her school, but on the other hand, Maya's qualifications are oftentimes questioned by White families. Even though she is often in fear of being questioned, Maya states that she is always prepared to give unsolicited advice about any child and their education experience. Although Maya is not a mother, she shared the following work-life balance story:

> "I distinctly remember, that I have always been career driven, pursuing one goal
> or another in my career. My nieces and nephews are actively involved in many
> activities within their school. I remember having to miss those activities because I
> had to work and I couldn't travel to them to participate. I felt bad about missing

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out on so much in their lives. Any story that I can tell about work-life balance would involve the people that I care the most about calling me out for missing out on things. Now, this is no longer an option. I am not missing major events anymore. I make it a point to be there. Once my dad passed away in 2012, I started to look at things differently. I started to be there more often, putting my family first."

While Maya's work-life balance story did not go as in depth into details as those of the other three participants, I felt that her overall narrative would serve as a vital component in this study. On one end we have three females, four if you include the researcher as a participant, all of whom make sacrifices for their careers that directly impact the children that they are raising. These mothers balance the hats of motherhood, companionship, and friendship alongside the demands of their career positions. On the other end, there is Maya, also navigating life in her career while attempting to keep her distant family as close as possible.

There is one point that was noticeably absent in every story. The participants did not explicitly talk about their "blackness" in their narratives. While some of the protocol questions prompted participants to discuss their outsider-within status, the narratives did not include specific details about how race affected their work-life balance experiences. The stories focused on motherhood and familial status more deeply than originally assumed when this project was proposed. The absence of mentioning of race in these stories can be attributed to the connection made between the researcher and the participants, who were all a part of the same affinity group. In other words, there was likely an implicit common understanding of the problems that Black women face causing

the topic of race to be left out of the narrative. Although the stories did not include much discussion on race, all of these stories connect six themes, which will be explored in this chapter. Those themes are: (1)Familial Sacrifice; (2) Servant Leadership; (3) Informal and Formal Work-life Balance Policies; (4)Notion of Self-Care; (5) Upbringing and Black Females' Prideful Identity; and (6)Black Females Having to Prove Themselves.

Familial Sacrifice. At the center of each narrative is the idea of familial sacrifice as an inevitable component of the work-life balance experience. According to Cross (2016), "individuals as well as the family system are often required to make sacrifices that alter the life course of the family and the other family members. On a personal level, one must often sacrifice time, resources, values, goals and self-care" (pg. 2). For Nikki, she oftentimes altered the life course of the family by including her daughter in the daily operations associated with fulfilling her role as a school leader. Zora, made a complete shift in her family dynamics by stepping up as the sole financial provider, allowing her husband to remain home as the primary caretaker of their son. For Maya, the familial sacrifices were more on a personal level in that she had to sacrifice time spent with her nieces and nephews in their many extracurricular pursuits for work obligations.

According to Kumari & Devi (2013), work-family conflicts negatively influence the family domain. In her narrative, Alice described a time in which she disappointed her grandchildren by not showing up for a pre-planned visit, due to conflicts with work. While the adults fully understood Alice's need for sacrificing time with family to finish the master schedule for the school year, the grandchildren were negatively impacted emotionally by this experience, causing Alice to make adjustments for her future. Although females in leadership positions are often cited as having to be prepared to

sacrifice family for working in these roles, the participants in this study have attributed those sacrifices to them finding ways to navigate their work-life balance experiences (Pringle, Olsson, & Walker, 2003). A recurring theme in the narrative data is that the participants found greater difficulty with work-family conflicts early on in their career, especially when their children were younger. Over time, they learned to better navigate work-life balance issues, using strategies and negotiations from their experiences as guidance.

Servant Leadership. In her dissertation, Faith Wambura Ngunjiri (2006) wrote "A servant leader does not withdraw from engagement with the system but rather critically engages the system in search of social justice" (pg. 8). This idea, which centers around Robert K. Greenleaf's (1977) work on servant leadership, was highlighted throughout the work-life balance narratives shared by the participants in this study. When the participants were asked how their existence as a black female in educational leadership influences their work-life balance experiences, their responses focused on the social justice aspect of their positions. Maya, talked about having to serve as an advocate for students of color within her position as a school leader of a diverse charter school. Both Zora and Alice shared that being a Black woman in a leadership position in a school which serves majority Black students, has given them the opportunity to serve as the voice for the children in their community, through the connections made with the families.

Each participant described their upbringing in an African American household, generally in low income communities, as a source for passion in doing the social justice work attached to their leadership positions. As the research claims, black women in

school leadership positions oftentimes identify as servant leaders and "as servant leaders, the females empower their constituents, build or reconstruct community, heal both themselves and their constituents, and enact service because it brings them fulfillment" (Ngunjiri, 2006, pg. iv). Nikki's story was unique in that she the servant leadership role that she has embraced is personal and close to home. Working within a community that she adopted as her 'home' to empower families, whether by participating in cultural events or inviting students to live in her home, Nikki is extending her work as a school leader and doing the work of a servant leader. Servant Leadership surfaced in the participant interviews as an innate component of their work-life balance positions. While the Black female leaders in this study all cited having to make many sacrifices to be successful in their position, their stories circled back to a desire to serve their communities by making a difference in the lives of students.

Work-Life Balance Policies. In Chapter two, I discussed some of the work-life balance policies that were highlighted in the literature. For the most part, work-life balance policies that are available in the United States include Family Medical Leave Policies and in some companies, child care opportunities are offered to employees. For the participants in this study, there is a lack of formal policies which enhance the work-life balance experiences of these Black School Leaders. Out of all of the participant stories, Zora's narrative described the most concrete work-life balance policies, which was primarily paid time off policies. None of the participants had access to work-provided childcare opportunities or specific policies aimed at providing leaders with leave time to properly care for their family while serving in the position.

Skinner and Chapman (2013) assert that, "workers are finding it harder to juggle their working lives with commitments at home; and work-life conflict, imbalance and strain are now common" (pg. 1). Although this study shows that employees are more productive when organizations provide assistance in achieving work-life balance , the data presented here shows a lack of intention in implementing policies that may benefit employees. Maya stated that although she has never worked in an organization that had formal work-life balance policies, she was closer to achieving balance when her managers expressed a concern for minimizing employees' work-life conflict. Alice, as the leader of a single site charter school, stated that it is her responsibility to prioritize her life to achieve balance. For the females in this study, access to minimal formal and informal policies, has required them to navigate their experiences individually.

Notion of Self-Care. The interview data revealed diversity in how each woman made time for extracurricular pursuits outside of work and family. Nikki, considered herself to be a socialite, and with an adult child, she has made time to attend cultural events and travel with her network of friends. Alice, although she too has adult children, stated that she is oftentimes too busy to socialize. Her main priority is carving out time to spend with her husband in the evenings. Zora, with a toddler son, described her extracurricular activities as play dates with her son and other mothers in the community. Maya, although she is single and does not have children, relies on her network of Black female school leaders to hold her accountable for attending social activities and prioritizing self-care.

The notion of self-care was a theme that surfaced throughout the interview data. In researching the notion of self-care and its implications for Black females, Patricia K.

Tillman-Meakin's (2017) dissertation on the strong black woman concept surfaced. According to Tillman-Meakins (2017) a strong black woman is "an ever self-sacrificing woman who is emotionally unaffected, self-sufficient, and responsible for meeting the needs of others in her family and the community before herself" (pg. 4). For the most part, self-care did not come as natural as fulfilling their servant leadership did for the participants. If self-care was important for participants, as it was for Nikki, it was described as coming after discomfort from work-life balance conflicts forced them to make the decision to place self-care as a priority. The findings presented above extended our understanding of self-care in the following ways as it was highlighted frequently in the participant interviews: the participants often rely on a network of people to promote and facilitate social experience; making social activities outside work a priority by establishing routines and schedules is an essential strategy to ensuring self-care; and setting hard boundaries for spending time on work related responsibilities outside the regular work day helps with separating work and life.

Upbringing and Black Females Prideful Identity. The purpose of the initial interviews with participants was to get them to share their stories of their upbringings. For some, this came easy, without questioning. For others, specific questions about their childhood and parents had to be asked in order to get the participant to share. All of the participants, though, connected their upbringing, particularly their relationships with their mothers, to their passion for pursuing a career in education. According to Everet et al (2016), "the connected relationship between African American girls and their mothers extends an adolescent's future expectations and fosters resilience" (pg. 336). Both Nikki and Alice left lucrative careers in information technology to pursue careers in education,

based on the nurturing and advice provided to them by their mothers. Zora cited her ability to navigate tough times as stemming from the values instilled in her as a child by her parents. Maya, who as a high school student, watched her mother pursue training as an x-ray technician, said that her mother's pursuit of a degree after a decades long break dedicated to raising her family, inspired her to succeed in college.

In their study on black mother-daughter relationships and resilience, Everet et al (2016) looked at the effect of black mother's guidance on the self-esteem and resilience of their daughters through the daughters' lens. Significant in this study, was the idea that "black mothers exercise agency when they raise their daughters to think positively about themselves, to value their self-worth, and to be proud of their race" (Everet et al, 2016, pg. 347). In Alice's narrative, she discussed how her mother exercised agency in raising her, oftentimes boasting about being a proud Black woman. Today, in her work as the school leader of a charter school located on the campus of an Historically Black College and University, Alice is proud and leads with her identity as a black woman. Based on the data, similar in all of the participants is that their upbringing and the agency of their mothers helps them in navigating their experiences with work-life balance as school leaders.

Black Females Having to Prove Themselves. Four participants, all discussed their experiences with having to prove their worth and qualifications as school leaders. According to Bernstein (2015), "Black females are more likely than other females to report having to prove themselves over and over again" (pg. 1). Maya discussed that she feels respected as a leader by the Black families at the school she serves. On the other hand, she feels that she has to prove her qualifications to the White families. Although

Alice stated that she is no longer affected by having to prove herself, she explained that the notion is very true for her experience. While she is accepted on her campus, when meeting with White charter authorizers and funders, she feels a need to lead the conversation with her qualifications in order to earn respect. Zora is in a unique position, where there is no shortage of Black female school leaders in her city, yet she still feels a necessity to work extra hard to prove her worth, but evoking recognizable change within her organization.

The notion of breaking the glass ceiling, which refers to barriers to female's advancement, has been studied throughout Feminist research (Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010). Throughout the data analyzed for this study, were indications that the glass on this 'ceiling' may be thicker for Black female school leaders. As stated earlier, black female school leaders are already considered outsiders within the educational leadership community. As outsiders, black women oftentimes "are not afforded the full rights and privileges in hierarchical and cultural structures controlled by this insider group [white men in educational leadership]" (Brown, 2012, pg. 20). Therefore the navigating the inside [shattering the glass ceiling] is considered more difficult for women of color. As participant Alice stated, when she has to interact with the insider group, "I sometimes have to explain why I'm even qualified to do exactly what I am what I'm doing". This extra layer of having to prove qualifications, and therefore worth, makes breaking the glass ceiling much more difficult for double marginalized black women.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to focus on the stories of Black female's experiences with work-life balance as they navigate their careers as leaders in K-12 education. In

addition to being leaders in schools and communities, Black females embody roles as mothers, other mothers, and teachers (Collins, 2012). The data collecting process included recruiting participants who were mothers and served as school leaders and conducting two qualitative, open-ended interviews with each participant. Because the study is designed as a narrative study, the data analysis process involved writing the portraits of participants based on their stories and then constructing their work-life balance experience into a story.

In Chapter one of this dissertation, I introduced the background and significance of the study. A comprehensive review of the literature made up the second chapter. In the third chapter, the methodology used to collect and analyze data was further explained. Chapter four began with a fourth narrative, the narrative of the researcher, before the three primary participant narratives were constructed and their stories of work-life balance were told. In the final chapter, a fifth participant narrative was introduced and themes extracted from the data were discussed. In this section, I will provide a discussion of the answers to the research questions that guided this study. This study sought to explore the following research questions and sub-questions:

1.   How do Black female school leaders describe their work- life balance experiences?

a.   What personal stories shape their perspectives of their work-life balance experiences?

b.   How does their "outsider" status influence their work- life balance experiences?

Research Question Discussion

Question 1: How do Black female school leaders describe their work-life balance experiences?

Each participant described a day in their life as school leaders before highlighting the duties associated with roles outside of their positions. A single mother and newly engaged woman over fifty, Nikki described her work-life balance experience as the Assistant Principal of a charter school by placing her daughter at the center of her narrative. Alice, charter school principal, wife and mother, shared a narrative which highlighted her dedication to her role and her intentional prioritizing of role responsibilities and family time to move closer to achieving work-life balance. Finally, charter school Assistant Principal, wife, and mother of a toddler, painted the picture of a life of making adjustments and flexibility in the workplace as her means of working towards work-life balance.

As a whole, the participant stories expressed dual commitments to their career and their families. When conflicts surfaced between those commitments, all of the participants prioritized their careers over their families, and had to reconsider that negotiation later. In Nikki and Alice's stories, as more seasoned leaders, we see the future for Zora, a new mom and rookie school leader. While she is struggling now to truly balance motherhood and her role as Assistant Principal, there is hope that the impact of work-life conflict will lesson as time progress. The participants' stories of work-life balance are described with emphasis on their passion for their work as educators and their connection to the people who they call family.

Sub-Question 1: What personal stories shape their perspectives of their work-life balance experiences?

Highlighted in chapter four are the most memorable stories that shape each participants' perspective of work-life balance today. Two themes in the stories are that of work-family conflict and familial sacrifice. The participants told stories that shared the impact of negotiating work and family in instances of work-life conflict. From these stories, we gather that instances of conflict between motherhood and positions in school leadership, are common between participants and significant enough for them to share them as their most memorable work-life balance story. These stories were pivotal moments in the lives of the participants', which caused them to shift the way in which they handled work-life conflict in the future. Whether it was setting hard boundaries between work and home or assembling a team that could handle issues in their absent, these experiences caused these school leaders to make intentional adjustments in how they prevented and approached work-life conflict.

Sub-Question 2: How does their "outsider" status influence their work-life balance experiences?

While the participants were self-aware of their outsider status as leaders in education, the influence that their outsider status has on their work-life balance is evident in their explanations of being a Black female leader in their perspectives organizations. Common to participant stories was the shared theme of having to prove their worth as school leaders. Oftentimes in wanting to maintain a reputation of quality and effectiveness, the participants' outsider status caused them to choose fulfilling work responsibilities over completing commitments with their families. The participants attributed their decisions to work harder, many times having to sacrifice family demands for work demands, to feeling a need to go the extra mile to secure their position in school

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leadership. While the glass ceiling is described as being thicker for black women, the participants' common dedication to their career exemplifies an eagerness to work towards breaking down boundaries associated with their outsider status for the greater good of educating students.

Future Directions

Overall, this study has laid the foundation for further research into the work-life balance experiences of Black female school leaders. The next step would be to design and conduct a larger qualitative study, expanding to include leaders across the United States, and then translating that data and analyzing it using quantitative measures. Researchers could then look into Black female school leaders work-life balance experiences and the connection to the persistence and promotion of Black females in educational leadership role. A mixed-method study looking specifically at the availability of work-life balance policies and it's the influence on Black female school leaders could be conducted for further insight into the topic.

This study revealed several implications for practice. The implications that arise are for employers, black female school leaders, and mothers. The implications are described below.

Employer implications:

- While the study did not uncover any formal policies which help Black females to achieve work-life balance, informal policies such as flexibility in work schedules, creating spaces for childcare during professional development sessions, and informal leave allowances help females to balance work and life, while still meeting the responsibilities of their role.

Black female school leader implications:

- Although the data collected provided no evidence of work-life balance being an achievable notion, Black female school leaders have found resolve from work-life conflicts by scheduling, prioritizing, and setting hard boundaries between work and life.

- Black female school leaders should develop a network of other school leaders as sources of motivation and collaboration. This may also help school leaders focus on self-care.

Motherhood implications:

- It is especially important for mothers to remain considerate of the sacrifices made by their children as they pursue careers in school leadership. As such, mothers should be intentional about prioritizing (and making time for) responsibilities associated with their children.

Epilogue

In this epilogue, I describe the connections to my own life as I interacted with each participant's story. Going into this dissertation project, I found myself struggling with the notion that I had to remove my personal bias from the experience and put on my researcher hat. Honestly, it was difficult not to envision the possibilities of my future as an educational leader as I listened to and examined the stories of the participants' work-life balance experience. Through their stories, I gained guidance on moving forward with intention in prioritizing work-life balance while in pursuit of a career in educational leadership.

Nikki

Nikki's story was the most memorable and most relatable for me. I consider myself to be a very ambitious young mother and oftentimes my quest to reach my career goals either involves my children fully or excludes them. Like Nikki, my daughter spends many days with me as I work into the late hours of the nights. Nikki's work-life balance story brought up memories of the sacrifices that I have made even early on in my career. I made a connection with having to leave and oftentimes outright miss my children's milestones events, so that I could fulfill the demands of my career.

Alice

Although I am younger, in a newer marital situation, I connected with Alice's husband's involvement in her work-life balance experience. There have been many times where I have neglected my marriage, for work. There have also been times when my husband has had to basically cover for me, attending to familial obligations in my absence. In listening to Alice's story, I heard implicit advice to not only prioritize family,

but to make sure that I value time with my husband, who too makes sacrifices as I pursue my dreams.

Zora

Zora, the youngest participant and new mom, told a story of both transitions and beginnings. She transitioned from a career in higher education to K-12 school leadership. /the stories she shared focused on her beginnings as a mother and her family's new normal of having her husband take on the role as a stay-at-home dad. From her story, my perspective of what a school leader looked like changed. As she talked about her concerns of her casual appearance and having to leave work to care for her son, I could not help but nod my head in agreement. Her story made me think about the times that I underestimated my ability and worthiness to persist in the doctoral program, and my career, because of my visible youth and my status as a young mother of three. I realized from her story that my circumstances is not a crutch but it gives me an edge to connect with students and their families on a very meaningful level.

In the prologue, I talked about my initial avoidance of conducting narrative research due to the subjectivity involved with the process. Now that I have committed to and completed this project, I have found a deeper love for storytelling and listening. I have also become empowered by the idea of my connection to my participants as a Black woman studying Black women as strength as opposed to a bias. As stated earlier, my participants never really disclosed particular feelings as "Black" women experiencing work-life balance. Beyond answering intentional questions, which probed their thoughts on their outsider-within status, the participants never mentioned their race. The connection created between researcher and participant, with the innate understanding that

we are all a part of the same affinity group, set the stage for compelling stories to be told

and analyzed to comprise this final dissertation project.

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Narrative Interview #1 Protocol
I. **Research Question: How do Black female school leaders describe their work-life balance experiences?**

1.   Tell me about your current job.

a.   Describe the work that you do.

b.   What kind of demand does your job make on your time?

c.   How do you accomplish your work and when do you do so?

d.   How would you describe your pressure in your job?

2.   How do you spend your time outside of your job? (family and other demands that compete for your time)

a.   Describe your family.

b.   Describe a typical day in your life.

c.   How do you juggle the demands of your family and other demands with the responsibilities associated with your career?

d.   With the hours (demands of your position) how do you find time to socialize or pursue other hobbies/interests?

3.   What has influenced your decisions regarding your careers (i.e. money, ambition, balance)?

a.   How has your family or family issues influenced your career decisions?

b.   How has your career decisions influence family decisions?

c.   Does your job offer any work-life policies (informal or formal) to help you? If so, describe them.

d.   If money were not a factor (meaning you have already obtained financial security) would you change anything about your career goals/pursuits?

Narrative Interview #2 Protocol

II. **Research Sub-question 1: What personal stories shape their perspectives of work-life balance?**

4.   Describe your most memorable work-life balance experiences.

a.   Tell the story about a specific time where career duties and familial duties conflicted.

b.   How did you juggle/manage responsibilities during this time?

c.   How did this experience influence the way you approach issues with work-life balance today?

III.   Research sub-question 2: How does their "outsider" status influence their work-life balance experiences?

5.   Has being a Black woman influenced, in any way, your experiences balancing career and family? If so, how?

a.   Describe how your identity as a Black woman influences your role (and decisions within that role) as a school leader.

b.   Describe how your identity as a Black woman influences how you utilize informal and formal work-life balance policies at work.

c.   Describe how being a Black females (factoring your upbringing, parents, community, and background) influences your role (and decisions made within that role) within your family.

Appendix B
Demographic Survey

1. Race: _____

2. Gender: _____

3. Position/Title:_____

4. Years experience in education: _____

5. Grades you serve: Elementary   Middle   Secondary

6. # of Children: _____

7. Marital Status: _____

8. Age Range: 20-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70

Vita

The author was born in New Orleans, LA. She earned a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of New Orleans in 2012. In 2014, she completed the Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Xavier University of Louisiana, gaining certification in secondary English Teaching and Special Education. She joined the University of New Orleans Educational Administration Doctoral program in 2014.