Is a Principal Still A Teacher?: Role Discontinuity in the Lives of Women Administrators

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Abstract

From a life course perspective, this paper examines role discontinuity as a potential barrier to women aspirants to the principalship. Common barriers to the principalship, such as discrimination in hiring and promotion, lack of mentoring, and the entrenchment of the "good old boy network," have been well documented. However, role discontinuity between teaching and administration has been under explored as a potential barrier, especially for women aspirants who have had long tenures as teachers. On the contrary, prior literature portrays women's transition from teaching to administration as a continuous (and presumably, harmonious) trajectory. Because scant research exists on within-group differences and barriers among women aspirants, we know very little about their subjective experiences with this dramatic role change.

Utilizing personal accounts and surveys, I examined the transition experiences of 31 African American and Caucasian women administrators in the Chicago metropolitan area. On their way to the principalship, these women experienced intense role conflicts which emerged from their movement from the relatively private and intimate domain of the classroom where they focused on instruction and on students, to the public domain of the school where they shifted their focus to managerial and political tasks, and confronted power dynamics with adults both inside and outside of the school. In an attempt to achieve continuity in their lives, these women employed both rhetorical and life course strategies. However, their efforts to achieve continuity were complicated by their strong attachment to teaching, the perception among role partners (i.e., students and teachers) that they were no longer teachers, and the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act which dramatically redefined power dynamics between principals and their constituencies.

"Being a principal is so different from being an assistant principal [or teacher]. Honey, they say 'the buck stops here'-- and everything stops here with you. You have to be a person who's able to deal with the parents, the students, the teachers, and the community. You have to deal with it all. The whole gamut." (Freda, OB)

There are barriers to the principalship which have been under explored in the education literature, most notably the potential for role conflict in the transition from teaching to administration. Lortie (1975) broached the problem of role conflict as it relates to women in his classic work, *The School Teacher*. He surmised that women teachers would be detracted from becoming principals because the abrupt shift in both work tasks and what he referred to as the "time ecology of teaching," would potentially disrupt their professional and personal lives. With the exception of Larry Cuban's *The Managerial Imperative and the Practice of Leadership in Schools*, education scholars have not picked up where Lortie left off. This is a curious oversight in light of the profound social changes within the last 30 years that have dramatically increased women's opportunities to enter the ranks of educational administration and leadership.

Education scholars have paid very little attention to the relationship between teaching and administration and the structural constraints and opportunities attendant in the transition from one role to the other. Teaching and administration are treated as discrete and distinctive pathways (Kremer-Hayon & Fessler, 1992) and roles (Cuban, 1988). This treatment has implications for identifying and understanding women's barriers to the principalship. For example, the typical starting place for investigating barriers is women aspirants' first attempts to become principals, although the journey to the principalship begins long before this point. Teaching is one of the most traversed paths to the principalship, yet prior work overlooks this critical entry point and its relationship to the work tasks and roles associated with administration.

Education is one of those rare professions where "managers" are typically drawn from the ranks of entry level positions (i.e., teachers). In contrast, managerial-equivalents in other professions (e.g., medical doctors) are generally not drawn from the ranks of entry-level professionals. As one participant in this study observed, "You don't have to be a nurse first to become a doctor."

In consideration of these issues, this paper explores the following questions: What role conflicts emerge in the transition from teaching to administration? From the perspective of women administrators, how continuous or discontinuous are the roles of teacher and administrator? What rhetorical strategies do women administrators employ to achieve continuity between these two roles?

Role Discontinuity

The concept of role discontinuity falls under the purview of life course scholarship (see Bengtson, 1996). From a life course perspective, the concept of *role* is central to understanding career trajectories because transitions are constituted by changes in roles. As Van Gennep, (1960) observed, "to live is to act and to cease, to wait, to rest, and then to begin acting again, but in a different way" (p.189). People in western society typically occupy multiple roles in family and work. Each of these roles entails rights, duties, and constituencies.

All roles are not equal; indeed, there are some that are more salient than others. Goffman (1961) underscored the idea of role salience in his writings on social interactions. He described two types of role salience: *commitment* and *attachment*. Commitment refers to the claim that "others" -- or what Merton (1968) referred to as *role partners* -- have on individuals in terms of their time, resources, and energy. Some claims are non-negotiable. Therefore, commitment is the extent to which an individual's options are limited by constraints on their time and resources.

Attachment refers to subjective aspects of the role such as the sense of competence and self worth that the role brings to the individual. Thus, an individual is "attached" to a role because it resonates with her sense of self. Role *embracement* is evidenced by a strong attachment to a role, competency in performing the role, and an active engagement in the role. Tensions arise when commitment and attachment to roles do not match up, especially in light of what life course scholars describe as human beings fundamental need for continuity in their lives (Neugarten, 1969). For example, individuals who transition from teaching to administration may find that the commitments associated with administration (e.g., longer hours, more role partners with conflicting and competing interests, increased political and managerial responsibilities coupled with a decreased emphasis on instruction) are incongruent (or discontinuous) with their attachment to teaching (e.g., a strong identification with the tasks of teaching which encompasses intimate and sustained contact with students). The discontinuity between these two roles may manifest itself in role conflicts.

The idea of role conflict is underscored in Merton's writings (1957, 1968). Two types of role conflict are salient in the lives of adults in western society: *inter-* and *intra-role* conflict. *Inter-role conflict* refers to conflict that arises between different roles (e.g., being a principal and a mother). A major source of this conflict is the differing sets of expectations and images associated with different roles. For example, there are both internally and externally driven expectations of what it means to be a "good" mother and a "good" principal, yet these expectations may be conflicting. Being a "good" mother means being attentive, caring, and nurturing to the needs of her children. On the other hand, being a "good" principal is generally understood to mean being an effective manager and leader. Although some may argue that

"good" principals care about their students, in reality, because principals are responsible for large numbers of students, they cannot be effective if they try to provide individual attention to every student. Hence, principals cannot embrace the student as a "total child" in the same way that mothers (and even teachers) are able to.

In order to resolve inter-role conflict, individuals may use attachment as their guide. What role matters most? If something must be discarded, what must go? If certain roles are incompatible with an individual's values and expectations, yet there is strong commitment to the role, individuals may distance themselves from the role ("that person is really not me"), which Goffman (1961) referred to as *role distance*.

Intra-role conflict refers to conflict which arises within the role, for example, when different "others," or role partners, place conflicting or competing claims on the individual's time, resources, and energy. All role partners are not alike. There are some who have more influence over role occupants than do others. The differential status of role partners gives rise to power struggles, both between role partners, and between the role occupant and role partners. For example, in the transition from teaching to administration, the principal assumes new role partners e.g., superintendents and local school boards who have competing and conflicting claims on the principal's time, resources, and energy. These constituencies (as well as the principal) may have expectations for their newly acquired roles that are different and conflicting from those they had of their former role (e.g., teacher). Thus, when individuals occupy different roles across time, we must consider the temporal dimension of role conflict i.e., how *continuous* or *discontinuous* these roles are.

Some roles are more demanding than others because of the nature of their commitment. For example, some roles allow individuals more flexibility to make adjustments in time, energy, and resources, what Merton refers to as *prescription*. Other roles are more restrictive and allow individuals very little room (*proscription*) or virtually no room (*permission*) to maneuver. Hence, roles are rife with their own set of structural opportunities, constraints, and cultural expectations.

To alleviate intra-role conflict, the role occupant may make it obvious to certain role partners that their demands are conflicting with others thereby forcing them to resolve some of the conflict among themselves. But there are certain role partners to whom the role occupant must answer, particularly in roles which are more restrictive (e.g., principals are more directly accountable to their district superintendents than are teachers). Role occupants may also build alliances with others who share their status to alleviate conflict. For example, principals may create support networks with other principals or join associations, especially given that their former support networks (i.e., teachers) have been altered.

On Being a Teacher & Becoming an Administrator:

Continuous or Discontinuous Roles?

Surprisingly, there is very little discussion in the education literature about the relationship between women's prior experience as teachers and their role as administrators. Further, prior work on women's reluctance to leave the classroom (Grant, 1989; Polcynski, 1990; Sikes, 1985) has not been linked to discussions of the potential for role discontinuity in the transition from teaching to administration. We would expect role discontinuity to be especially

problematic for women given their historic barriers to administration and their long identification with the teaching role.

Women's barriers to administration are rooted in 19th century ideas about the teaching role as an extension of the domestic ideal (Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999). They did not make inroads into teaching and administration until the 19th century when they were recruited as cheap labor to replace the declining numbers of male teachers who were moving into industry and business (Grumet, 1988; Shakeshaft 1989, 1999). During this time, women were considered to be better suited for teaching than administration because teaching was viewed as an extension of the domestic ideal given its emphasis on the nurturance and education of children. Hence, the classroom was viewed as an extension of the home (Nelson, 1992; Weiler, 1989). However, because of the structure of schools in the 19th and early 20th centuries (i.e., one-room schoolhouses), women were often required to assume the roles of both teacher and administrator. The separation of teaching and administration came around 1918 with the emergence of larger, complex bureaucratic school structures which were modeled after cost-efficient businesses. During this time, there was also a movement toward the "scientific management" of schools, and it was believed that men were more capable of carrying out this newly defined role (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Consequently, a sex-segregated hierarchy was instituted, in which men were made administrators and women teachers.

There has been some debate about how continuous the roles of teaching and administration actually are. The roles of teaching and administration are viewed by some scholars as being more continuous than has been portrayed in the education literature because both roles share similar tasks i.e., instructional, managerial, and political (Cuban, 1988). Others

contend that these roles are quite divergent (Lortie, 1975; Lortie, Crow, & Prolman, 1983). The contention that the roles of teaching and administration are discontinuous is compelling when contrasts between the contexts, tasks, and functions of these two roles are considered.

The transition from being a teacher to being an administrator constitutes a movement from a private and relatively semi-professional role to a public and highly professionalized role. Although it usually involves some collaboration with teachers, administrators, and parents, "being a teacher" primarily entails working directly with students in the intimate space of the classroom. Teachers may also assume administrative and leadership tasks, especially if they have been appointed as "teacher leaders." But for the most part, they spend much of their time in the classroom working closely with students. The classroom has been likened to a home space because it lends itself to a social intimacy between teachers and students (Jackson, 1990).

In contrast, "becoming a principal" marks a distinct, and often, abrupt change in perspective, expected behavior, and relationships (Lortie, 1975; Lortie et al., 1983; Wolcott, 1973). This transition typically results in divestiture from the former role of teacher in order to adopt the new role (Crow & Glascock, 1995b). Becoming a principal entails adopting a broader perspective, shifting work tasks, and readjusting relationships with role partners (e.g., students and teachers). It may also involve having to answer to new role partners.

The principal must be concerned with the school as a whole rather than just her classroom. Further, because the principal is considered to be the school's "official" representative, this role typically extends beyond the school. Principals must interact more with parents, superintendents, central administration, and the local school community than do

teachers. Principals also lose the autonomy and privacy that they had in the classroom, trading this for the more public space of the "main office."

Lortie (1975) observed that the transition to the role of principal marks an abrupt shift in work tasks. Teachers primarily teach. However, principals must assume multifaceted work tasks which derive from the multiple functions incumbent on the position, described by Cuban (1988) as leadership, managerial, and political. The leadership function involves influencing others to action to achieve desirable goals. On the other hand, the managerial function involves maintaining current organizational arrangements e.g., tasks related to keeping the school running on a daily basis. Principals spend a considerable amount of time on managerial tasks such as paperwork, budgeting, and dealing with their central administration (Wolcott, 1973). Some studies have documented principals' feelings that they spend too much time on managerial tasks at the expense of leadership tasks (e.g., instructional leadership, professional development) (Consortium on Chicago School Research, 1992; Wolcott, 1973). The political function requires principals to manage the competing and conflicting demands of constituencies such as the local school community and the general public. This function involves work tasks such as attending local community meetings and appearing at press conferences, especially for high-profile situations that impact their schools.

Becoming a principal also marks an abrupt shift in existing relationships. Principals are no longer viewed by their colleagues as being teachers because they have assumed authority over them (Lortie et al., 1983; Strong, Barrett, & Bloom, 2002). Thus, principals are middle managers who are both subordinate to bosses and superordinate to teachers (Lortie et al., 1983). Their relationship with students also changes dramatically. Principals spend considerably less time

with students than they did as teachers and the nature of their interactions are markedly different. Further, the quality of their relationships with students may decline because they are charged with disciplining students. Reforms may also change principals' existing relationships with their role partners. One striking example is the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act which gave parents and local community residents the authority to hire and fire principals and to partner with them on school planning and budgeting (Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow, Easton, 1998).

As addressed earlier, Lortie (1975) suggested that the sharp contrast between teaching and administration would detract women teachers from becoming principals, especially, given their presumed attraction to the intrinsic and ancillary rewards of the profession. However, Lortie offered this proposition nearly 30 years ago, yet very little examination has been done on this issue since then. Further, investigators have not explored the strategies women employ to achieve continuity between these divergent roles. Some research suggests that women administrators attempt to adopt leadership styles that are more consistent with their values and perspectives (see Smulyan, 2000). For example, because of their strong orientations to the teaching role, women principals pay more attention to curriculum, interact more frequently with students and teachers, and are more egalitarian in their leadership approach than are men (Andrews & Basom, 1990; Eagly, Karua, & Johnson, 1992; Schmuck, Charters, & Carlson, 1981; Shakeshaft, 1989). Yet few studies have addressed the intra- and inter-role conflicts that women face when they become administrators and the strategies they employ to manage this conflict. One exception is Meier's (1985) personal account of her first year experience as a principal where she focused her efforts on retaining her perspective as a teacher. She discussed

how her attempts to keep her teaching perspective, for example, viewing the school as "a larger classroom" and her teachers as colleague, were challenged by the nature of her administrative role. In a study of teacher leaders who aspire to the principalship, Chen (1991) found that these teachers were confronted with the dilemma of trying to maintain "dual loyalty" between their colleagues and their principal.

Findings from these studies suggest that prior experience and knowledge are important in understanding the ways in which women administrators attempt to resolve intra-role conflict. The salience of prior experience and knowledge in understanding *teachers*' perceptions of their work roles and practice has been written about extensively (Britzman, 1986; Carter & Doyle, 1999; Goodson, 1992; Drake, Spillane, Hufferd, 2001; Lortie, 1975; Spillane, 2000); however, the experiences of administrators have largely been ignored in this research. Given the striking contrasts between these roles, we cannot presume that teachers and administrators conceptualize their roles in the same way. The present study attempts to address this gap in our knowledge and understanding of women administrators' transition experiences.

The Research Project & Method

Study Design & Participants

This research is part of a broader study of generational and cultural differences among women administrators born pre- and post-Civil Rights and women's movements. The sample included 31 administrators: 21 African Americans and 10 Caucasians. African American administrators were over-sampled given the study's focus on cultural differences. The older cohorts were born between 1931 and 1948, and the younger cohorts were born between 1960 and 1972. For brevity, the following symbols will be used to identify participants, along with a

pseudonym: older Black (OB); older White (OW); younger Black (YB); and younger White (YW).

The study was configured as a 2 (Black and White) X 2 (50 years old and older & 40 years old & younger) factorial design yielding four cells, each containing a minimum of 5 participants. Given the sparse numbers of principals under age 40 in the public school system (less than 3% in Chicago Public Schools in 2000), the younger cohorts included a varied group of administrators (i.e., principals, assistant or associate principals). The entire sample included administrators at various stages in their careers (e.g., pre-service, beginning, mid-career, retirement, and post-retirement), providing a broad spectrum of administrative careers. Seventy-four percent are principals and 26% are in other administrative roles. Because of the varied sample, I use two terms to distinguish the groups: (1) "Administrators" refers collectively to all women in the sample or, in some instances, to women who have not yet become principals; and (2) "Principal" refers to those women who officially held this position at the time of interview.

Interview data was collected by the author in the spring and summer of 2001. At the time of interview, the participants worked either in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) (75%) or suburban public schools (25%). CPS administrators served a predominantly minority and poor or working class student population whereas suburban administrators served a mostly White and middle-class student population. Given the small sample size, and its location within a single metropolitan area, findings in this study cannot necessarily be generalized to other women administrators.

Procedure

Two forms of data collection techniques were used: intensive, semi-structured, open-ended interviews and surveys designed to collect information on key professional and family transitions. Only the interview data is reported here.

I developed a series of open ended questions, which were supplemented by probe questions in a semi-structured format. The questions were designed broadly to elicit more free-flowing conversation between me and the women (Reissman, 1993). The questions covered four broad areas which included early socialization, work and schooling transitions and experiences, school and local school community, and personal reflections. Questions were developed to assess perceived structural constraints and opportunities that women confronted on their way to becoming principals, as well as their subjective perspectives of their roles as both teachers and administrators. Interview questions were further developed after initial piloting.

A short survey was administered at the beginning of the interview to gather data on women's professional and personal background. This survey was derived from an earlier draft of the interview and was designed to help me ascertain the "facts" of the women's lives (e.g., dates of employment, education, etc.), without getting too bogged down with these details in the interview. Each participant was issued a $25 bookstore gift certificate at the end of the interview.

All interviews were tape recorded by the author and transcribed by a professional transcriber. Prior to receiving transcriptions, I reviewed each tape and developed summary memos and possible follow-up questions (Huberman & Miles, 1994). After receiving the typed transcriptions, I reviewed the tapes again and edited each transcript. To maintain the agreement

of anonymity, each participant was assigned an ID number and a pseudonym. All personal and institutional identifications have been assigned fictitious names.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing, open-ended, and inductive. Data analysis was guided by coherence criterion outlined in Riessman (1993), particularly global and themal coherence. For example, I paid attention to the overall goals that I believed the participants were trying to accomplish (global coherence). I also paid careful attention to themes that figured importantly and repeatedly in the text (themal coherence). First, I began analyzing themes within each group to identify commonalities and differences. I then examined commonalities and differences between and across the four cohorts and crafted a composite picture of women administrators' life trajectories utilizing personal accounts and survey data (Singer & Ryff, 2001).

The data presented in this paper address themes that cut across all four cohorts given their common gender and professional statuses; therefore, cohort and race differences are deemphasized in this paper compared to other components of this study addressed in other manuscripts and conferences. I would describe my analysis of role discontinuity between teaching and administration as emergent and exploratory. Some questions that I posed, such as "Tell me about your transition to administration" elicited some common responses, but many were quite varied. Questions such as "Do you still consider yourself to be a teacher?" also elicited common themes, but they were varied in their focus. For example, some women talked more about teaching teachers while others focused on staying connected to students. I refer to these responses broadly as "retaining a teacher's perspective" because they point to some of the participants' attempts to integrate their former role as teachers with their existing role as

administrators. Overall, in my analysis of role discontinuity, I was guided more by themal

coherence i.e., the extent to which some themes were prominent in particular subsets of women's

texts. However, I believe these data offer important insights and direction for future research.

Key Findings

In this section, I examine the intra- and inter-role conflicts that women confronted in their

roles as administrators and principals. I begin with a discussion of the intra-role conflict that

arose from the discontinuity between the roles of teacher and administrator. For women in this

study, the transition from teaching to administration marked a passage from a relatively private,

semi-professional role to a more public and highly professionalized one. As teachers, these

women worked primarily with students in the intimate and private domain of the classroom

which allowed them to foster close relationships. They often used maternal and communal

metaphors to describe their role as teachers. However, their transition to administration marked

an abrupt shift in their work domains, responsibilities, role partners, and relationships with

existing and new role partners. Moreover, this transition gave rise to new expectations and

demands about how they should carry out their roles as administrators. The expectations

associated with being a "good" teacher generally did not mesh with the expectations for being a

"good" administrator or principal.

Adjusting to Shifting Domains & Responsibilities

The transition to the principalship required women to expand their purview from the

intimate and private domain of the classroom to the larger and public domain of the school. As

teachers, their world of work revolved around the classroom. The small, relatively private space

of the classroom allowed women to foster close relationships with their students.   In the

classroom, they had considerable autonomy in how they worked with students, organized their

classroom space, and presented their lesson plans. They were also allowed to shut their

classrooms off from the hustle and bustle in the hallways. Becoming an administrator, however,

opened up a whole new world beyond the classroom. As Annette (YB) explained, one of the

biggest adjustments she had to make as an administrator was to broaden their purview of the

work domain.

> As a teacher in the classroom, you're pretty much just familiar with
>
> what's taking place in your classroom. You're not aware of what's
>
> taking place on the outside, in the office, and so forth in terms of daily
>
> operations of the school. So that was quite a big step for me in terms of
>
> the transition.

Some women indicated that they assumed managerial and leadership functions when they

were teachers; yet even with this experience, they learned that they were still naïve about how

schools were run. For example, Marsha (YW) thought she had a good handle on how schools

operated because as a teacher, she served as a team leader and had responsibilities that extended

beyond her classroom. However, when she became an administrator, she was surprised to learn

that she really did not "have a clue" about how schools operated. She noted that the becoming a

principal required her to look at the "big picture."

> I think your eyes open up to kind of the big picture. I thought I had a
>
> really good sense of how schools ran. I'd been in schools for years and
>
> I felt like I was pretty active and involved in how things went, and was
>
> pretty understanding about what it was like to be an administrator. But I

had no clue, no clue. You all of a sudden have this big picture.

Becoming a principal also resulted in an abrupt shift in work tasks and responsibilities. All of the principals in the study spent time in intermediate administrative roles before becoming principals. Intermediate roles like assistant principal helped to prepare them for tasks they would be responsible for as principals such as scheduling, ordering supplies, and paperwork. Yet even prior administrative experience could not prepare women for some of the responsibilities and demands associated with the principal's role. As principals, they assumed additional managerial tasks such as budgeting, bringing in additional resources, and managing building facilities. The demands of existing work tasks also increased, namely paperwork. Their focus on managerial tasks often hindered them from concentrating on instructional issues, one of the few aspects of their administrative role that was consistent with their former role as teachers. As Marsha (YW) explained, principals are sometimes so inundated with managerial tasks that instructional issues get put on the back burner.

> The juggling act is really hard because as an administrator, you've gotta
> be able to take care of the day to day stuff. You gotta talk to people, you
> know you gotta get the heat on, you gotta get the air conditioning on, you
> gotta get the window fixed, you gotta take care of all those things. You've
> got to make sure the building is running well. But then there's this
> instructional leadership piece that can easily get shoved to the side -- if
> it's not as pressing and in your face -- thankfully. If it is, then you're in
> trouble.

Marsha's description of her daily tasks characterized the daily experiences of principals in this study. Likewise, many principals voiced similar concerns about the competing and conflicting demands between the managerial and instructional functions of their roles. Principals generally spent their work days putting out fires and seldom had uninterrupted time during school hours. One of the most frustrating and time-consuming tasks of the principalship was managing paperwork. For example, Joan (OB), who has been a principal for five years, admitted that she still has not gotten a handle on how to manage paperwork.

> Joan: Most days I'm here until 5 or 6. And sometimes 7. And that's largely because one thing I still haven't gotten a handle on is how to manage the paperwork. You don't get any uninterrupted time. Like all this stuff needs to be read and have something done about…But the book says you need to spend the day in the classroom and in the hall.
>
> Tondra: The principal's manual?
>
> Joan: Yeah. And you do. You need to be out there, you need to be in classrooms, you need to be helping teachers. And if that's the case then all this stuff has to be done at night. And this stuff keeps coming. The paper just keeps stacking.

Joan's account illustrates the conflict that principals face in attempting to reconcile the formally recognized expectations of their role ("what the book says") and what really happens in their daily work lives.

As principals, women assumed political responsibilities such as targeting external resources for their schools, especially those principals who worked in low-resourced schools.

These resources included after-school programs, student internships, and incentives used for game prizes. Targeting additional resources for the school required principals to become adept at developing relationships with local businesses, organizations, and community residents.

Darlene (OW) explained that raising money is a big part of her job because she desired to provide lots of resources for her students. However, when she was a teacher, she viewed her former principal with derision because he was so focused on doing public relations to raise money for the school. Darlene admitted that when she became a principal, she began to emulate her former principal because she learned that schools are operated under very tight budget constraints. She also pointed out that an inequity in resources across schools requires some principals to assume responsibilities which other principals do not have to take on.

> [My former principal] really outreached for resources for the school. He brought the school very much into the 21st century. He was very much involved with the money. And at the time I thought, 'Oh he's just so money hungry.' You know what? I'm the same way. Today, I am the same. I'm the first one to speak of that need, 'Where is our piece of the pie?' And I do have a reputation of being just very focused on money. I have to say, you know my name is synonymous with that. But it's because I know the dollars and cents for the school. You can't have an after school program if you don't have money. And when they start doling out the money, there are 250 students in my school, and if they use a formula which is just a certain dollar amount per student, I'm gonna lose compared to Lang which has 400 to 500 students.

Across the board, principals talked a lot about their managerial and political responsibilities. Some indicated that these two functions kept them from focusing on other tasks that both they and others (e.g., local school district) deemed important, such as instructional leadership.   They also confronted conflicts between "formally" and "informally" recognized aspects of their role.

Shifting Role Partners: Taking on New Constituencies & "Bosses"

One of the most dramatic and stressful changes for principals was the shift in the number of constituencies and bosses to whom they had to answer. As teachers, they were primarily accountable to their students and principal, although they also interacted with other teachers and parents. As principals, they were accountable to multiple constituencies, many of whom had the authority to define what their roles should be. In prior administrative roles, they were generally sheltered from many of these constituencies. For example, some women pointed out that the stress they encountered as assistant principals paled to what they experienced as principals. As Freda (OB) concluded, the "buck stops" with the principal.

New relationships with constituencies required principals to become adept at managing public relations. As Gloria (OB) acknowledged, the role of the principal is multifaceted and requires a broad knowledge of many arenas.

> The role of principal is very diverse and complex in that you have to be
> all things to all people and you have to know a little bit about something –
> a little bit about everything. And when I say a little bit at least a working
> knowledge of many, many facets -- the educational arena, the business
> arena, as well as the PR [public relations] or school climate arena.

In some school districts like the Chicago Public Schools, principals had multiple bosses to whom they had to be accountable. For example, Harriet (OB) admitted that she preferred the role of assistant principal because she had more room to be creative than she did as a principal because of all the bosses to whom she had to answer.

Tondra: When you became a teacher did you have a desire at some point to become a principal?

Harriet: You know I did. I still think [assistant principal] is my favorite job. I went into administration and supervision -- not with the idea of becoming a principal -- but an assistant principal. My uncle was an assistant principal at my high school where I graduated. And that's what I really wanted. And that's my favorite position in the school, the assistant principal.

Tondra: Why?

Harriet: Because you can make and break jobs, that's just it. You can come out with the rules and, you can make it. And you got to have insight and be creative. But you can really work.

Tondra: Now how is that different from being a principal?

Harriet: You don't get a chance to be creative. You know you're being dictated to.

Tondra: By whom?

Harriet: Well, everybody. You got so many bosses. You got the regional, you got the Chicago public schools, then you got the LSC, you

got the PTA, so you got so many. So they fight for you. You can't

hardly think. But that's one thing I don't like.

Harriet's account provides additional insight into why some older women may have been

reluctant to become principals. She indicated that she pursued her certification not to become a

principal but to stay in the mezzanine where she felt she had more autonomy, flexibility, and

freedom to do her job. Using her uncle as a model, and her own observations of her principal,

Harriet became shrewdly aware that the assistant principal was buffered from a lot of the intra-

role conflict associated with being accountable to multiple role partners.

Karla's (OB) account provides some historical context for understanding how CPS

principals have been impacted by changing power dynamics with role partners. In Chicago, the

1988 school reform granted parents and local residents unprecedented authority to hire and fire

principals. Thus, principals had to relate to parents and residents in strikingly different ways;

parents and local residents had become their "bosses." Karla recalled that prior to reform, CPS

principals had considerably more authority to "run their schools." She acknowledged that

authority and autonomy of CPS principals have been severely limited by new constituencies,

along with increased accessibility ushered in by new technology. Karla's account provides a

telling assessment of how the principal's role is impacted by forces at both the macro and micro

levels.

Back before reform, the principal ran the school. Now you have to answer to the

community. You have to answer to the public. Now you are bombarded with

technology. You have e-mails, faxes, and computers. You have paper coming at

you from all directions. You have to write grants. So there's so much more

involved. It used to be that the principal was like the CEO of the school and

had a lot of control. But it's changed.

Principals who inherited troubled schools experienced a considerable amount of strain in

managing multiple constituencies and bosses. For example, Annette (YB) was assigned by

Central Office to a school where the former and beloved principal of 15 years had recently died.

In addition, the school had low test scores and had been put on probation, an action that was a

part of recent reforms instituted by the chief executive officer of CPS. Upon her arrival, she

encountered factions both inside and outside of the school.

> Needless to say, when I got here…there was a lot of tension. I was not received
>
> very well. I kind of knew going in that I'd be walking into flames pretty much.
>
> There were groups that had formed here -- a faction who was going to support me
>
> and a faction who was not going to support me. On top of that I had an assistant
>
> principal, who from what I understand wanted the position, and she had served in
>
> leadership for awhile…We had a group of staff members who were not pleased
>
> with the fact that another new person was coming in. You had a group that
>
> supported the assistant principal and wanted her to be in place…So a lot of
>
> tension was going on. The school was on probation. So that's pressure…I have
>
> Central Office telling me what needs to be done, suggestions as to what needs to
>
> be done in order for things to improve. I have a probation manager who's pretty
>
> much been involved with the school through all of the transitions with the various
>
> people coming in and out of the building. I have an LSC who's upset because the
>
> Board sent somebody here that they did not select. So they're not going to be

cooperative. Just a whole lot of stuff going on…I mean you have parents and

community who are somewhat upset because I was brought in by the Board.

Annette's account illustrates the enormous degree to which principals' autonomy over

decisionmaking is constrained. She recounted a number of constituencies to whom she had to

answer, all of whom had varying degrees of influence. In some instances, it was not clear which

constituencies had the most claims on her role. For example, the probation officer represented

the interest of the central office, and had considerable influence to make recommendations about

whether her school was improving. Annette also had to answer to a local school council who had

authority to fire her. Intra-role conflict can become especially intense when the demands of

constituencies cannot be readily prioritized by the principal.

Ironically, many younger women were motivated to become principals because they

desired to make a bigger difference in their schools. But as Harriet observed, principals do not

have as much wiggle room to be creative and implement new initiatives. In fact, Annette said

that mentors of hers who had been principals for a number of years advised her that it takes five

years before a principal can establish enough stability and credibility in her school to begin

making changes.

Unfamiliar Relationships with Familiar Role Partners: Students & Teachers

Relationships with Students

Becoming a principal marked a dramatic shift in relationships with familiar role partners

(e.g., students and teachers). This shift was especially difficult for women who enjoyed the

intimacy of the classroom which allowed them to get to know their students personally. In

contrast, becoming a principal distanced women from and changed the nature of their

relationships with students. As principals, their relationships with students became more compartmentalized, especially because they were increasingly responsible for discipline. Indeed, the proverbial fear of being "sent to the principal's office" reminds us of how the principals' relationships with students may change.

Charlene (YW) said that she missed the relationships she used to have with her students in the classroom. When she became an assistant principal, she saw her students less frequently and interacted with them in limited ways.

> [As principal] you miss the kids because you see children either because you're giving them a certificate because they've done something fantastic, or you're talking to them because they've misbehaved. Or you see them on playground duty or that kind of stuff. But you really don't get the interaction that you do in the classroom.

Joenetta (YB) said that becoming an administrator was very difficult because she was close to her students and considered herself to be their friend. But as an assistant principal, she found it difficult to maintain close relationships without compromising her authority. Her account indicates that unlike in the classroom, the public domain of the school does not lend itself to fostering close relationships with students.

> It's more difficult with children for me because I'm used to being their friend. As a teacher, you know, I was their friend and it's not so hard [in the classroom]. They know, 'Okay, Ms. Reed is serious now,' so then they do what their supposed to do. It's easier to do that with a classroom of 30 than it is with a whole school, you know, because [the other students] don't know you as well as the 30 knew

you. You know, they can't always tell, 'Oh, okay, she's serious now.'…It's a

difficult thing to balance because of the relationship area. Children either see you

as the assistant principal or they see you as a teacher. Sometimes they have a

difficult time meshing the two. As do I sometimes. It's kind of hard. It was hard

for me this year.

Clearly, the commitment of being an administrator, especially a principal, undercut one

of the most rewarding aspects of their previous roles as teachers: working closely with students

and getting to know them as "total" individuals.

Relationships with Teachers

Some women reported that their relationships with teachers also changed when they

became administrators. When they became principals, women were no longer viewed as

colleagues or friends, but as "bosses" who were responsible for hiring, firing, and evaluating

teachers. Consequently, some women were viewed antagonistically when they crossed over "to

the other side."

I found out that your colleagues look at you differently -- as a freed individual

more so in the administrative area. You weren't a part of them anymore -- you

were on the other side. (Annette, YB)

It was especially difficult for women to become a principal in the same school where they

taught and had established long standing relationships with other teachers. This problem was

unique to women who became predecessors to retiring principals. Thus, for many women,

becoming a principal meant re-evaluating and changing the nature of their relationships with

teachers. For example, Samantha (OW) became a principal at her school after teaching for 25

years and serving four years as the assistant principal. She was initially reluctant to take the

post but her outgoing principal -- an older White woman who had become her mentor -- tapped

Samantha to be her predecessor. Samantha recalled that the most difficult adjustment she had to

make was in how her former colleagues began to view her.

> I think that's a difficult transition, you know, stepping over that line from teacher
> to administrator, even as assistant principal, people look at you differently. Not
> that they look at you as the enemy but (laughs) a lot of times you can be the
> enemy in their eyes. And I think it was difficult for people here because we were
> friends and I still wanted to be friends, but now I'm your supervisor so we have to
> draw the line. And most people were wonderful about it but there were a few
> people that it was very difficult to handle. And it did strain some relationships.

Marsha (YW) said that she felt like she was being "pushed outside" when she became

principal. This was especially difficult for her because she had been considered a teacher leader

in her school and had good success with getting teachers to support her ideas. But she sensed that

the collegial atmosphere changed when she became a principal.

> The first time I walked through the teacher's lounge and it got quiet I was like,
> 'This is so weird.' And I thought, 'Oh, I know what this is. I used to be the
> teacher sitting in the lounge and the principal would walk in and we wouldn't
> even be necessarily talking about the principal, but just by the fact that he came in
> the lounge, it'd get kind of quiet. Or I'd show up at a door, kind of peek in a
> classroom, and the teacher will say, 'Well, what do you need?' And I thought
> 'I'm just looking.' It's a very different role.

As Marsha's account illustrates, the principal's role as evaluator may strain relationships with former colleagues or friends. The role of principal is very isolating. For some principals in this study, the only "colleagues" they had were their assistant principals. Some principals reached out to other principals in their district for supports. However, even with support from other administrators, as Annette (YB) lamented, it is lonely at the top.

> Most principals will tell you, you know, you're alone. I mean really you're pretty much alone. You could call your fellow colleagues, you know, to bounce things off of them about, 'What would you do if you had this situation?' If you have an assistant principal who is, you know, very much on your side and going to be there no matter what, of course you have that support...But you're pretty much, you know, on your own.

Strategies for Managing Role Discontinuity: Retaining a Teacher's Perspective

Becoming a principal resulted in dramatic changes in women's professional lives. The role required them to assume new role partners who had varying, and at times, indistinguishable degrees of influence on their roles. As teachers, they had both internally and externally driven expectations to be attentive to their students and to relate to them as "whole persons." However, as principals they were more distant from students. These changes were especially difficult for women in this study who generally used maternal metaphors to describe their relationships. In order to alleviate inter-role conflict, women attempted to "retain a teacher's perspective" (phrase borrowed from Meier, 1985). This strategy included viewing their schools as "classrooms," reclaiming their teaching practice, staying connected to students, and espousing an egalitarian leadership approach.

Turning Schools into Classrooms

As discussed earlier, becoming a principal required women to broaden their purview of

their workplace. They could no longer focus on what was going on within the four walls of their

classrooms. Some women managed to retain a teacher's perspective by shifting their perceptions

so that, as Marsha (YW) described, the school became an expansive version of the classroom

where they could continue to assume the role of teachers.

> I see myself as a teacher to a bigger classroom and the ages have expanded. I
>
> have not only 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. I have adults who are anywhere from you
>
> know 21 to 65, or even some of them older than that in terms of different life
>
> stages.

Marsha's account illustrates that the role of the administrator encompasses the

supervision and guidance of adult staff.   Some women were able to retain a teacher's

perspective by viewing their teachers as "older" students. For example, Sandra (YB) had

a lot of anxiety when she became an assistant principal because she felt the value and rewards of

her work derived from teaching students. Sandra was motivated to become an administrator

because she believed she could effect change on a broader scale than she could do as a teacher.

But when she became an assistant principal, Sandra realized that she had been socialized to view

teaching students as the only way to make a real difference in her profession. This view was

reinforced by her colleagues who often questioned her decision to leave the classroom. In order

to make her work "matter," Sandra began to view herself as a teacher of teachers, who in turn,

benefited students.

> I didn't understand how what I was doing in my office benefited the children.

It didn't seem to be benefiting the children as much as I thought it would. I felt, at that time, I needed to be teaching math. I needed to be teaching science. I needed to be teaching in order to make a difference. By the time January came around through the end of the school year I really understood how what I did actually made a difference. It's me who makes sure the classroom teachers have materials and the resources that they need in order for the children to be successful. You know, it's me who guides the teachers to go out and be involved in staff development and graduate level classes so that they remain current and effective, and again, will benefit the children. It's me who gives teachers sensitivity training to different issues such as children who are poverty stricken and how that affects them when they come to school on a daily basis. It's me who motivates the teacher who's been teaching for 20 years who's burned out but still has ten years left.

For some women, retaining their teacher's perspective meant maintaining their focus on the classroom. This was especially important to women like Freda (OB), who had spent over 30 years as a teacher before becoming an administrator. Freda suggested that it is more important for administrators to think like "teachers," rather than like administrators, by staying attuned to teachers needs.

I haven't forgotten the classroom or what the needs are there and what you're confronted with... When you have a challenge in a classroom with some particular student sometimes you just need somebody to take that child out to give you a little relief. Because we're all human...There's sometimes some children

can just wear you thin, and sometimes you just need to get that child out of

your room for one moment....It's not any reflection on that teacher….[but] you

need to get that child away from the class so you can go on with your other

students…I haven't forgotten what it's like to be a teacher in a classroom. And I

think that [principals] shouldn't forget what it's like being a teacher in a

classroom.

Reclaiming the Teaching Practice

Some principals attempted to maintain continuity between their teaching and

administrative roles by returning to the classroom. For example, before she decided to

become a principal, Valerie (YB) consulted her current principal about how she could stay

connected to the classroom.

I had a lot of talks with my current principal at that time. I said, 'Mark, you know

I love teaching. How did you decide to make the move from classroom to

administration? How do you handle the urge to be in the classroom with the kids

and making a difference?' He said, 'You become a principal that's always in the

classroom.' And I said, 'Okay. I'll do it.'

Some principals found creative ways to stay connected to the classroom. For example,

Liza (OB) decided to take a risk and try her hand at teaching again after being away from the

classroom for 20 years. She decided to learn how to teach a new reading program so that she

would have more credibility with her staff. To her chagrin, she learned that a principal can be

evaluated unfavorably if she does not stay abreast of her teaching practice. Hence,

administrators who have been away from the classroom for a while take a great risk in terms

of their credibility when they decide to teach again.

> When I had to learn [the reading program] the consultants wrote up 3 pages
>
> telling me I didn't know what I was doing. But that was all right. I taught it to
>
> 2nd grade group for 6 months, just trying to get a handle on it. And I thought,
>
> 'well, now how can I ask the teachers to teach if I can't teach it?' So I had to
>
> learn it…I hadn't been in the classroom in 20 years (laughs) and then [there I am]
>
> trying to teach a classroom…I mean I couldn't very well see monitoring the
>
> teachers if I didn't know anything about their program. You've got to be willing
>
> to take a chance, you know? And learn with your staff, there's nothing wrong
>
> with that, especially if a new program is coming in. Teachers lose respect if you
>
> try to tell them something and you don't know what you're talking about.

To her delight, Ronda (OW) learned that her teachers were happy to have her teach them

about new technology. But she learned that up until this time, her teachers and students did not

see her as being a teacher because she no longer taught in the classroom.

> After I did the first in-service a teacher came to me and said, 'You can tell you
>
> were an excellent teacher and still are because of what you did in that in-service
>
> was to make sure everybody knew what they were doing, but you didn't hold
>
> back the ones who did know.' So they saw me as a teacher…Teachers are finding
>
> reasons [to come to in-service]. That was the first time they actually saw me
>
> teach. It was almost like they were finding reasons to come down to see me
>
> teach. I took a second grade room and after it was all over, the kids looked at

me and said, 'Boy, you really do know how to teach don't you?' I said, 'Well,

I hope so. I hope I can teach. Been doing it for a while.'

Retaining a teacher's perspective required principals to make both internal and external

adjustments in their roles. This involved viewing the school as a classroom where both students

and teachers became their "pupils." It also involved "thinking like a teacher" in order to remain

empathic to teachers' needs. Finally, retaining a teacher's perspective entailed reclaiming their

teaching practice.

Staying Connected to Students

       Spending time with kids.

Some principals made efforts to connect with students which extended beyond the

classroom. Some women, like Ronda (OW), actively sought out creative and fun ways to stay

connected to students.

> I do lunch with the principal with the kids. Every room earns it. They get tickets
>
> for good behavior. So the primary room with the most tickets and the
>
> intermediate room with most tickets wins lunch with me. And the PTA supports
>
> it. They pay for the ice cream. And once we did pizza…Well, I guarantee
>
> everybody's going to win lunch with the principal.

In order to stay connected to students, Valerie (YB) made it a priority to greet them each

morning when they arrived at school.

> I spend a lot of time [with students] in the mornings. I go out for bus duty, so
>
> long as someone hasn't caught me in my office and (laughs) got me in there
>
> answering questions or something like that. But I go outside. We have about 6

to 8 buses that come -- again because we draw from different parts of the

district. And so you know I have to go outside for bus duty and greet the

children.

Some younger administrators felt that it was important to stay connected to popular youth

culture in order to better relate to their students. For example, Joenetta (YB) admitted that she

sometimes used popular slang to remind her students that she is

still a "real person." She also noted that others do not view administrators as being "real" people.

You know it's a funny thing. But I think [speaking slang] makes me more of a

person for them. And that's an experience that administrators haven't had in the

past. I think this is more of the new thing, you know, to be a person and also be an

administrator. And it's a balancing act and I'm not sure I've reached the balance

yet…It's certainly a learning experience.

Doing what's good for kids.

As has been discussed, principals were constantly bombarded with the competing and

conflicting demands of multiple role partners. In the hierarchy of role partners, students arguably

have the least influence relative to many other role partners. Notably, women were generally

reluctant to consider the likelihood that they could not always make their students a top priority.

When they were confronted with the dilemma of placing the needs of others above their needs of

their students, a common mantra for these women was that they were "doing what's good for

kids."

Ronda (OW) said her teachers often approached her with requests which she believed served their own best interests rather than those of the students. When confronted with this issue, she attempted to ground her decisions in what she felt was good for kids.

> We're here for one reason and that's what's good for the kids. And if it's good for kids, then I'm going to do it. I'll support it 100%, if it's good or kids. If I have any doubt about it being good for kids, I'm not going to do it. Because the bottom line is what's good for the kids. The teachers know that.

Annette (YB) worked hard to achieve consensus among her staff, especially given their resentment of her appointment by the Board over another candidate whom they wanted (i.e., the assistant principal). During her first year, Annette confronted a lot of infighting among her staff while she was under pressure from the Board to raise her school's test scores. Annette surmised that the best way to rally her staff around improving test scores was to get them to focus on students' needs. This proved to be a critical strategy because, as she admitted, principals cannot improve achievement by themselves.

> [I told them] let's work towards that common goal which is to make sure that these children excel and are prepared to deal with day-to-day life in the society…Within that process, many of them began to see that I stood for right, and my only focus was to make sure that these children excel and that I needed help. I could not do it alone. I needed them to assist and join hands with me and cooperate with me to make sure that it happened.

Karla (OB) felt that it was especially important for principals in Chicago Public

Schools to stay focused on their students given the increasingly politicized role of the principal.

She also emphasized the importance of demonstrating maternal attributes in her role as principal.

> Regardless of what happens on the political level in the community with LSC's – because they do select principals in Chicago -- your actions and your decisions have to be in the best interest of children, and not in the interest of whether or not I'll have another contract for 4 years. So you have to make hard decisions. You have to stand by your words, you have to be your word. And your children have to know, unconditionally, that you love 'em and that you expect the best of them.

Gerri (OB) said that her first order of business as a principal was to get rid of the

sprawling number of school reform programs at her school. She believed that many local

reformers were looking out for their own best interests rather than those of her students.

> [Agencies] were allowed to come into the school without structure and just run their programs through. I have a problem with how [agencies] were serving inner city youth. And because it is the belief that this particular clientele, this population -- that anything is good enough for them. And anything was NOT good enough for my children. I needed a program that had substance to it, I needed something that was results driven. And if you could not prove that to me that you have been in this building for 4 or 5 years and the results were the same, then you aren't doing anything either except receiving money.

Notably, principals were under a lot of pressure from constituencies who wielded far

more power and influence than did students.   Arguably, students are a constituency

whom principals could easily prioritize last given their lack of authority and influence on decisionmaking. However, it appears that principals' efforts to ground their decisions in what they perceived as being "good for kids" -- and more importantly, their conveyance to others about their motivation -- gave them a certain moral authority with which to leverage the conflicting demands of their constituencies. After all, who – particularly in the education arena -- wants to be accused of not doing what's in the best interest of children.

Espousing an Egalitarian Leadership Approach

As I discussed previously, becoming an administrator changed women's relationships with their teachers. They were no longer colleagues but rather their boss. Some women talked about how they were impacted emotionally when their former colleagues – some of whom they considered to be friends – perceived them as crossing over to the other side, or worst yet, as an enemy. These altered relationships put principals in a very isolated and vulnerable position. However, this is not merely a personal matter but also a serious professional concern. Principals are charged with the enormous, and sometimes daunting, task of trying to get their teachers on board to support their (or most often, their superintendents') vision for the school. If they do not establish a sense of solidarity with their staff, they cannot do their jobs effectively. As Marsha (YW) observed, some teachers resent the idea of taking directives from former colleagues whom they no longer see as being on the same team.

> When I was a teacher, I was a leader in my building, and I could say, 'Hey let's go and do this,' and you were one of the people [who did it]. And so it was like, 'Oh. Okay. We'll go and do this *with* you.' When you're the administrator, and you say, 'Hey let's go and do this,' they look at you like, 'Yeah, But the reality

is you're not gonna be the one that's doing it, you want us to do it.'

In order to mobilize teachers to support their vision, it was important for principals to convey a sense of solidarity with their staff. Thus, principals generally espoused an egalitarian approach to leadership. They often talked about the importance of making decisions collaboratively and emphasized that they could not do their jobs alone. Although some principals said that they did not shy away from using their positional power, they generally espoused an egalitarian approach to leadership.

Harriet (OB) viewed her role as a servant leader who was religiously inspired. She suggested that a servant leadership approach is necessary to enlist the support of her teachers.

> I say leadership [means] you just never get too big. Like Jesus, I think He said He came to serve. And that's what we are, servants. But most [principals] want to be on a pedestal. And you cannot do that. Because you see, you need so much help with this type of job.

Like Harriet, Donna (OW) also realized the importance of enlisting the support of others, which for her, included staff, students, parents, and the local community. Donna viewed her role as the coach of a team where she allowed the team to come up with their own ideas and "fly with them." She acknowledged that she formerly used the analogy of "family" to create a sense of unity among her staff. She, however, abandoned this analogy because she learned that it carried negative connotations for some of her staff.

> I really see the job of principal as being one as a coach of a team. When I first came here I used the analogy of a family. And many people use the analogy of a family when they look at my school and my staff. But a couple of staff

members who did not have very happy childhoods sort of reacted against that

analogy. So I find it far better to see the role of the principal as being the coach,

and the staff as being the team members, and the students as being the team

members, the parents as being the team members, and bringing out the best in

everyone. There are many ideas that have come up that I let fly. I rarely say no to

anything. But the individual who brings up the idea or the good teachers or the

parents that bring up the idea, they are responsible for making it happen. And I'm

there to support them and really coach them on.

Later in her account, Donna acknowledged that she had no problem "using the positional

power" of her position. But overall, she espoused an egalitarian leadership approach in an

attempt to get her staff on board to support her vision for the school.

The egalitarian approach was evident in the work tasks in which some principals chose to

engage. Some principals believed that it was important to demonstrate to their staff that they

were willing to do their fair share of mundane tasks. Their willingness to perform mundane task

conveyed a sense of belonging to the same family or team. For example, Freda (OB) took pride

in her strong work ethic and worked hard to demonstrate to her staff that she is no stranger to

hard work.

You know I've always been accustomed to hard work. I told you that before. You

know the speed of the leader is the speed of the group. That let's me know that

it's hard. I don't ask anybody to do anything that I wouldn't do. I'll clean a

toilet. See I have a hard problem with a title and 'that's not my job description.' I

have a problem with that. Because I think we're here – this is a unit as a

family. We do whatever it takes to get the job done. I don't mind going

upstairs to sweep up the lunchroom. Take a mop and mop up the milk. Those are

our children there.

Thus, administrators employed a number of strategies to maintain continuity between their teaching and administrative roles which included staying connected to their practice, to students, and to teachers. Their effort to retain a teacher's perspective is indicative of their strong attachment to the teaching role. However, they encountered conflicts in trying to integrate former and exiting roles especially due to others perceptions that they were no longer teachers.

Conclusion

In this paper, I addressed role discontinuity as a potential barrier that women educators encounter in their transition from to teaching to administration. The transition from teaching to administration marks a movement from a relatively private, semi-professional role to a public, highly professionalized, political role. These roles were strikingly different in terms of work domains, work tasks and responsibilities, role partners, and expectations. Many aspects of the administrative role were inconsistent with women's familial and maternal role perceptions. To alleviate this conflict, administrators employed various strategies to achieve continuity between these two roles. These strategies involved retaining a teacher's perspective, which suggests that women were strongly attached to the teaching role. However, theses strategies were difficult for women to employ due to the demands of the administrative role, and the perceptions of "others" that they were no longer teachers. The issues addressed in this section cut across all four groups which points to the compelling effect of the micro-level context.

Findings from this study challenge education scholars to revisit the question of whether the roles of teacher and principal are continuous or discontinuous. Unlike Lortie (1975) and his colleagues (1983), Cuban (1988) has argued that these two roles are more similar than dissimilar because they share the same origin (i.e., the role of administrator evolved from the role of teacher) and core functions (i.e., instructional, managerial, and political). However, findings from the present study indicate that commonalities between teaching and administration are not as straightforward as Cuban has portrayed. Although the women in this study viewed the roles of teacher and administrator as continuous, the competing and conflicting images, expectations, and demands associated with these roles made it difficult for women to integrate them.

Clearly, an assessment of role continuity must be considered from the subjective perspectives of administrators. This study clearly shows that we cannot begin to understand the dilemma of role discontinuity without first examining individuals' pathways to and experiences in *both* teaching and administration. The typical starting place for investigating women's barriers to the principalship is aspirants' first attempts to become administrators. This study shows that the journey to the principalship begins long before this point. By beginning with their pathway into teaching, I was able compare women's attachment and commitment to teaching and administration, which in turn, allowed me to assess the dilemmas they confronted with role discontinuity. All of the women in this study spent more years as teachers than as administrators. Their socialization and training was clearly grounded in teaching. Across the board, women demonstrated a strong attachment to teaching which was evidenced by their perceptions that they were still teachers, and their efforts to integrate the roles of teaching and administration.

This study's findings support Lortie's proposition that role discontinuity is salient for women administrators. All four groups confronted role conflict in their transition from teaching to administration which impacted both their professional and personal lives. Specifically, this conflict emerged from their movement from the relatively private, intimate domain of the classroom where they focused on instruction and on students, to the public domain of the school where they focused on political and managerial tasks, and confronted power dynamics with adults both inside and outside of the school. As teachers, they were able to develop close relationships with their students and to relate to them as whole persons. However, as principals they had limited interaction with students and when they did interact with them it was typically for disciplinary reasons. Furthermore, when they became principals, their responsibilities shifted from working closely with students to working with adults (e.g., teachers, parents, community residents). In their role as administrators, they could no longer act like "mothers" who could wield autonomy and control over students in the classroom. Rather, they were faced with the new challenge of negotiating with adults who had varying degrees of influence and authority over them. Further, the participants and their role partners held conflicting images and expectations about the "appropriate" role of administrators. When they became administrators, some women found that teachers and students no longer saw them as teachers, largely because they were not directly involved in instruction or working with students. However, women administrators continued to see themselves as teachers.

Given the potential for role discontinuity in the transition from teaching to administration, we would expect administrators to make efforts to achieve continuity between these two roles. However, women administrators' strategies to alleviate the problems associated

with role discontinuity have been largely unexplored in the literature. Prior work on women

administrators' perceptions of their roles as "teachers" (Chen, 1991; Meier, 1985) has not been

linked to discussions of role discontinuity. Findings from this study suggest that these role

perceptions represent women's attempts to achieve continuity and consistency between roles to

which they are strongly (e.g., teacher) and weakly (e.g., administrator) attached.

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