

The Multiple Roles of Women Pursuing Doctoral Studies

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Abstract

Increases in the employment of women in administrative and managerial careers have drawn attention to a need for research that examines the interdependency of work and family roles, a need that is particularly crucial in the area of educational administration. *The Multiple Roles of Women Pursuing Doctoral Studies* was a qualitative study of the strategies and support systems women educational administrators used to deal with the multiple roles they performed in life and work while pursuing doctoral studies.

Forty-five women educational administrators enrolled in Virginia Tech's fall 1996 dissertation seminar were selected to participate in a telephone interview. Each participant's responses were recorded and transcribed. Data were sorted using a variable-oriented format. Matrices were used to categorize and analyze data, not emerging patterns of strategies and support systems, and compare and contrast.

The women in this study cited time as the common factor in most role conflicts occurring during their years of doctoral study. Strategies that focused on time management (prioritize, delegate, compartmentalize) were used to deal with their multiple roles. Feelings of guilt, stress, exhaustion, and isolation were common. The women depended on positive and affective support systems that included family, friends, co-workers, and cohort members to deal with responsibilities of home, work, and doctoral study. A strong sense of commitment, determination, and spiritual faith was credited most often as the one thing that kept these women going as they responded to the problems, issues, concerns, and challenges of performing multiple roles in life and work.

A repeat of this study was conducted in an online survey with 20 women, who were enrolled in the 2007-2008 and the 2008-2009 Internship Seminar at North Carolina Central University – Master of School Administration Degree Program. The selected participants were full-time assistant principal interns in elementary, middle, and high schools throughout Central North Carolina. This paper will present the results of this study and compare it to the original study, outlining the strategies and support systems women school administrators used to successfully complete an advanced degree program and balance family and work. It is expected that the paper will document the continued relevance of research examining the interdependency of work and family roles.