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How Workload Influences the Emotional Aspects of Principals' Work

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Abstract

Principals' work is more complex and time consuming than in the past. An expanding workload also heightens the emotional aspects of principals' work and can make it difficult for principals to manage their emotions. Using findings from interviews with 13 school principals, this study identifies how workload influences the emotional aspects of contemporary principals' work. Participating principals indicated three areas where workload influences the emotional aspects of their work. These three areas include how managing an intensifying and expanding workload can heighten emotions, as well as navigating the legal aspects of principals' work and being called out of the school building for meetings at the district office. This study concludes with a discussion of several implications for policy and practice, including a need to change the culture surrounding the principalship and a renewed focus on emotions in principal professional learning opportunities and preparation programs.

Keywords: principals' work; principal workload; principalship; emotional aspects of leadership; managing emotions; emotional regulation

Introduction

Contemporary principals' work is highly emotionally charged. Many of the tasks and activities principals engage in can result in an emotional output in themselves, their students, teachers, and other members of the school community (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 2004; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Kelchtermans, Piot, & Ballet, 2011). Further, the very nature of the principalship requires the effective management of one's emotions, and success in the role demands it. Several factors can influence principals' ability to effectively manage their emotions, including: gender-based power relations (Beatty & Brew, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 1996), embracing social justice approaches to leadership (Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Theoharis, 2008; Zembylas, 2010), the policy context in which principals work (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 1996, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004),

and any crises or tragedies that occur in the school community (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Fein & Issacson, 2009; Yamamoto, Gardiner, & Tenuto, 2014). Workload is another factor that influences principals' ability to manage their emotions as they are now responsible for more and more tasks and activities at the school-level (Alberta Teachers' Association [ATA], 2014; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015; Kokkinos, 2007; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Whitaker, 1996). While this study only considers the experiences of principals in one Canadian province, the nature of the findings and significance of the topic suggests that it has implications for the broader educational leadership community. For example, school-level leaders both engaging in increased emotional work and experiencing expanding workloads is an international phenomenon. School-level leaders in Australia (Riley, 2017, 2018), Ireland (Brennan & MacRuairc, 2011; Riley, 2015) and New Zealand (Riley, 2016) have all reported working too much to maintain a healthy lifestyle and that they engage in work that demands levels of emotional labor higher than those experienced in other professions. In the UK, secondary headteachers self-reported working an average of 63.3 hours per week (Department for Education, 2014), and several studies have described the intense emotional labor inherent in their work (Crawford, 2007, 2009). Finally, 75% of principals in the United States recently indicated that their job has become too complex (Metlife, 2013), continuing an international trend since the beginning of the 21st century (Begley, 2008; Leithwood & Day, 2007).

The Importance of Managing Emotions in Management and School Leadership

Managing emotions is a particularly important skill for managers in a variety of professions and sectors (Gooty, Connelly, Griffith & Gupta, 2010; Haver, Akerjordet & Furunes, 2013). Leithwood (2012) indicates that the ability to manage emotions (both their own and others) and acting in emotionally appropriate ways have long been associated with relationship building skills, which has long been cited as a fundamentally important skill for effective leadership. Several theories of management, including those found in education and the broader management literature, such as leader-member exchange theory and transformational leadership highlight the importance of building individualized relationships with followers based on their interests and capacities (Leithwood, 2012). There is evidence that hints at less effective leaders being less competent at managing emotions than their more successful colleagues (Leithwood, 2012).

In schools managing emotions and acting in emotionally appropriate ways is even more important than in other leadership contexts as, "schools typically experience a level of interpersonal intensity virtually unmatched in any other type of organization" (Leithwood, 2012, p. 48). Principals are often dealing with stakeholders who have competing (and sometimes overlapping) interests, which requires the principal to discern what people want, appreciating several different points of view, reaching a common understanding of an issue or solution, and ensuring that their decision-making fits within the school's shared vision or purpose. Further, every stakeholder associated with an individual

school (e.g., teachers, parent, trustees, district office staff, educational assistants and secretarial staff) all have the right to engage with the principal.

The very nature of principals' work demands the effective management of emotions as they engage in many situations that produce an emotional response (Beatty, 2000; Beatty & Brew, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 2004; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010). For example, situations can become heated when parents/guardians wishes are not in concert with the school's policies and practices. Principals are also compelled to manage their emotions to avoid encountering discipline from the school district as the nature of their work demands that they ensure their emotions do not affect their ability to do their jobs effectively. It would not be socially or professional acceptable for principals to start scream back at teachers, students or parents who are yelling at them because they are frustrated or angry with the school. Decreased health outcomes, including stress, burnout and emotional exhaustion are associated with suppressing one's feelings and being inauthentic with one's emotions (Gooty et al., 2010; Haver et al., 2013).

Emotional Labor

Managing emotions in the workplace is a form of emotional labor. Emotional labor is often an unacknowledged or invisible job demand that occurs when supervisors monitor employees' emotions, when the position requires communicating with the public, and when individuals produce a state of mind in others (Hochschild, 1983). Principals engage in work that fulfills all of those requirements. Few (if any) job descriptions for the principalship acknowledge that principals must be able to manage their emotions effectively to be successful in the role. Hochschild (1983) argues individuals engage in emotional labor in the following two ways: surface acting and deep acting.

Surface acting is a phenomenon that occurs when there is a fundamental disconnect between the emotion someone shows to other people and what they are actually feeling (Hochschild, 1983; Maxwell & Riley, 2017). When engaged in surface acting, one is essentially faking an emotion. In many service-minded professions, such as education and healthcare, employees are encouraged to cover up "negative" emotions (i.e., anger, sadness, envy, etc.), in an effort to outwardly portray happiness, compassion, and other "positive" emotions to customers and/or other stakeholders. The literature indicates that school leaders around the world engage in surface acting as part of their work on a daily basis (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Crawford, 2007; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Rhodes & Greenway, 2010; Ryan & Tuters, 2015). Surface acting is an unhealthy practice that can lead to higher levels of work-related stress (Crawford, 2009; Hochschild, 1983; Milley, 2009). Deep acting occurs when an individual relies on prior experiences to reach a desired emotional state to actually experience the emotions that they show to others (customers, fellow staff, stakeholders, etc.) despite initially not feeling that particular emotion. Descriptions of principals engaging in deep acting is less prevalent in the literature, which could be a function of workload limiting ability to engage in reflective

practice. Engaging in emotional labor is difficult and can be a source of stress, burnout and lower levels of job satisfaction.

Workload and Management of Emotions

Principals' workload also influences whether they can manage their emotions effectively (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Kokkinos, 2007; Whitaker, 1996). Principals work long hours (ATA, 2014; Lee & Hallinger, 2012; Leithwood & Azah 2014; Metlife, 2013; Riley, 2018) and have reported experiencing emotions, such as fear, anxiety and sadness related to managing shrinking timelines and an expanding workload (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Kokkinos, 2007). For example, a recent large-scale survey found that 86.5% of Ontario principals feel they never have enough time to do their work and 29% self-medicate to cope with the emotional toll associated with the position (Pollock, 2014). Increased duties and responsibilities can lead some principals to suffer from physical and emotional stress, especially when they are asked to work in areas or oversee portfolios where they lack time, skills or experience (Armstrong, 2015; Hauseman, Pollock & Wang, 2017 Maxwell & Riley, 2017; Pollock, 2016; Pollock, Wang & Hauseman, 2015). Workload and tight timelines are associated with negative outcomes for principals, including burnout, stress, and emotional exhaustion (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Kokkinos, 2007; Riley, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018). For example, Berkovich and Eyal (2015) found that "Lack of a clear end of the workday contributed to principals' emotional exhaustion" (p. 140). It can be difficult for principals to manage their emotions effectively when shouldering the burden of a heavy workload with little time left in the day to engage in reflective practice or disconnect from work by relaxing or engaging in other activities. Legislation that implies that principals are legally accountable for everything that occurs at the school site further complicates concerns about principals' workload (see British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1996; Government of Manitoba, 2013; Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990).

Conceptual Framework

Taken together, the notion of work and Gross' (2010, 2013, 2014) Process Model for Emotional regulation inform the conceptual framework used to guide this study. I discuss the notion of work first, followed by a description of the process model.

"Work" is a contested term (Applebaum, 1992; Fineman, 2003, 2012). For the purposes of this study, work refers to all tasks, activities or actions that a principal performs that directly or indirectly influences that functioning of the school where he/she is employed (Applebaum, 1992; Fineman, 2003, 2012). Work can take place within or outside school operating hours (Applebaum, 1992; Fineman, 2012). The advent and widespread adoption of remote technologies has blurred the boundaries between work and home as principals are often compelled to engage in work activities whenever possible (ATA, 2017; Pollock & Hauseman, 2019b). Legislation, policies, programs, initiatives and other jurisdictional and district-level priorities also influence the types of work principals

engage in, as well as how those principals perform those tasks and activities. For example, one of the main intentions behind the development of the Ontario Leadership Framework was a desire to guide contemporary principals' work and prioritize the practices they engage in on a daily basis (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013; Leithwood, 2012).

This study is also guided by Gross' (2010, 2013, 2014) Process Model of Emotional Regulation. As this study considers factors that influence how principals manage their emotions, it seems appropriate that a theory that documents and considers the effectiveness of various emotional regulation strategies partially frames the study. The process model includes the following five families of strategies individuals use to manage their emotions: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change and response modulation (Gross, 2010, 2013, 2014; Moore, Zoellner & Mollenholt, 2008; Ochsner & Gross, 2005).

Situation selection involves individuals making conscious decisions to participate (or not participate) in situations or activities in an effort to change their feelings. For example, if a principal spends all morning dealing with an emotionally challenging situation, they may make efforts to avoid engaging in similar work activities for the rest of the day. The next family of emotional regulation in the process model is situation modification, which involves individuals using external factors to change their emotional state. The two main ways individuals engage in situation modification include using humor in social situations and soliciting the opinions of others (Gross, 2010, 2014). Asking others for their thoughts about an emotionally challenging situation can either reaffirm one's initial perceptions or help them see things from a different perspective (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Zembylas, 2010). The third family of emotional regulation, attentional deployment, focuses on emotional regulation strategies people use to avoid dealing with the root causes of their feelings. For example, distracting oneself to avoid thinking about a given emotion, ruminating about past events, worrying about the future and thought suppression are four key strategies for managing emotions associated with attentional deployment (Gross, 2010, 2014). Cognitive change is the fourth family of emotional regulation strategies. Reflecting on emotional challenging situations and reappraising their emotional impact is the main strategy for managing emotions nested within cognitive change. Other emotional regulation strategies associated with cognitive change include creating emotional and cognitive distance from emotional challenging situations and using a reflective process to find the humor in otherwise difficult situations (Gross, 2010, 2014). Response modulation is the fifth and final family of emotional regulation found in the process model. Strategies for managing emotions related to response modulation include engaging in exercise, making efforts to suppress one's emotions or mask their true feelings (Gross & John, 2003; Moore et al., 2008), and the use of drugs/alcohol to alter one's emotional state (Maxwell & Riley, 2017; Pollock, 2014).

Methodology

This study explores how workload influences principals' ability to manage their emotions effectively. I begin by describing the sample of principals that participated in this research and the procedures used to recruit participating principals. Then I provide a detailed description of the semistructured interviews utilized to gather the data. Finally, the methodology concludes with a description of the data analysis process.

Sampling. The goal of the participant recruitment process used in this study was to recruit a diverse sample that is representative of the broad range of different contexts in which Ontario's secondary school principals work on a daily basis. Purposive sampling was utilized to recruit participants and generate the sample (Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Springer, 2010). As such, I sought to interview Ontario secondary school principals with different levels of experience, a mix male and female principals, as well as individuals working in a variety of demographic settings.

While principals navigating an intensified and heightened emotional workload is an international phenomenon, I chose to situate this study in Ontario, Canada for two key reasons. First, Ontario covers a large geographic area (over 1 million square kilometres or 415,000 square miles) (Government of Ontario, 2019). This large geographic area is home to principals with a different skills and personal characteristics, working at schools located in a variety of urban suburban, rural and remote population centres (Pollock & Hauseman, 2015, 2019a). Conducting the study in Ontario easily allowed me to determine whether many contextual factors (e.g., years of experience, gender, level of education, size of community surrounding the school, etc.) influenced participant responses.

Second, in addition to the changes discussed in the introduction, Ontario's Ministry of Education recently introduced two policies that have the potential to heighten the emotional aspects of principals' work. The first policy mandates "collaborative professionalism", which compels principals to engage in increased consultation, collaboration and communication with all stakeholders (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). The second policy aims to support student learning at home and at school by extending school-based supports to parents and increasing parental engagement in Ontario schools by expanding opportunities for schools to engage in outreach and communication with parents and guardians (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). While these policies may be well intentioned, they have the potential to increase the customer service aspects of the principalship and the emotional labor tied the role.

There are several reasons why this study focuses on secondary school principals rather than those employed in elementary contexts or a mixture of both levels of school leadership. First, there are fewer secondary school principals available to participate in research, which could explain why we know little about the work secondary school principals engage in on a daily basis (Levin, 2011). For example, only 16.4% of participants in Pollock's (2014) large-scale survey of Ontario's public school principals indicated they are employed in the secondary panel. Second, the literature indicates that secondary school principals engage in work that is quite different from that performed by their peers in elementary schools (Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Leithwood &

Montgomery, 1982; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010). Secondary school principals also describe not having enough time to engage in instructional leadership activities, and are more likely to delegate these activities to other staff members (Louis et al., 2010). Finally, when compared to elementary school principals, secondary school principals spend more time interacting with several different stakeholders, potentially heightening the emotional aspects of their work when compared to their peers in elementary schools. A recent study found that secondary school principals are involved in managing an average of 6.9 school-community partnerships at their schools compared to 3.9 for their elementary peers (Hauseman et al., 2017; Pollock, 2014). All of these contextual factors point to the secondary context placing high emotional demands on principals, which led me to focus this study on how secondary school principals manage their emotions.

The main strategy used to recruit participants involved liaising with the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), which is the professional association representing Ontario's public school administrators, to see if they would allow me to conduct interviews with their members. The OPC determined the most effective method for informing their membership about the study would be to send attach a recruitment notice to their weekly e-newsletter. The recruitment notice asked anyone who was interested in participating to contact me via e-mail. After receiving an e-mail from an interested principal, I responded by providing them with additional information about the study, the consent form and a list of interview questions. While 15 principals responded to the recruitment notice and expressed interest in participating, the final sample included 13 secondary school principals. Two potential participants initially thought the study focused on how they manage the emotions of others in the school and declined to participate upon learning that the purpose of the study was to explore their own emotional regulation efforts.

Description of the sample. The sample included 13 secondary school principals from 10 different school districts located across Ontario. Nearly all participating principals have been in the role for over five years. The average amount of experience across the sample is 8.85 years as a school principal. The most experienced principal in the sample has been in the role for 21 years, while the least experienced has only been a principal for three years. A total of five participants self-identified as female, while eight self-identified as male. In terms of demographics, nine principals described working in urban schools, three indicated they are employed in rural schools, and one participant defined their school context as suburban in nature. This means that 69.23% of participants are urban principals and 23.08% work in rural schools. Only 7.69% of participating principals indicated that they are employed in suburban school settings. It is also important to mention that while the sample is representative of Ontario's larger principal population (Pollock, 2014), the sample lacked visible diversity as only one participant who self-identified as non-Caucasian participated in the study.

Interviews. When conducting the interviews, I gave participants the option of choosing the location and format that made them most comfortable. A total of six participants (46.15%) chose to conduct the interview in-person, while the remaining seven principals

(54.85%) elected to participate in a telephone interview. All of the in-person interviews occurred in the participating principal's school office. I am unable to specify where all participants were located during the telephone interviews, but can confirm that some of them preferred to conduct the interview in the evening hours from their home office.

I asked participating principals to complete the consent form prior to commencing the interview. Participants were asked 11 open-ended questions about the emotional aspects of their work, including conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations, strategies used to effectively manage their emotions and any factors that influence their ability to manage emotions. Some examples of the interview questions are included below:

- Can you talk about the emotional aspects of the contemporary principalship?

- Can you describe situations in your work which incite positive and/or negative emotions, or when a situation where you had to change a situation to suit your feelings when dealing with:

    o   teachers;

    o   students;

    o   parents/guardians; and

    o   your superintendent and/or district leadership.

- Do you ever face challenges in managing your emotions at work? If so, how do you go about maintaining your composure and getting on with your work day?

- What factors help or hinder how you manage your emotions at work?

Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and lasted between 22 and 43 minutes. All transcripts and recordings were stored in a password protected electronic database. Pseudonyms are used in place of participants' real names to protect the anonymity of all secondary school principals who participated in this study.

Data Analysis. Data analysis involved two distinct phases. I engaged in open coding during the first phase of the data analysis process by forming initial categories while reviewing the interview data (Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016). The second stage of the analysis process involved analytical coding (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016). The analytical coding involved linking together and making conclusions based on the categories that emerged during the open coding phase. The next section focuses on the findings for each of the research questions that guided this study.

Findings

Before moving forward, it is important to note that every one of the secondary school principals who participated in this study indicated that emotions and emotional regulation are key aspects of the contemporary principalship. Similar to prior research, participating principals were also much more likely to discuss negative emotional experiences in their work, rather than the feelings joy, hope, happiness and other positive emotions associated with the contemporary principalship (Brennan & MacRuairc, 2011; Ryan & Tuters, 2015).

The findings from this study provide insight into how workload influences principals' ability to manage their emotions effectively. The principals in this study indicated three distinct themes related to how the nature and volume of their workload can make it difficult to effectively manage their emotions. Participating principals pointed to the sheer volume and complexity of their workload, the legal facets of their workload, and the amount of time they are out of the school for meetings at the district office as factors that can make it difficult to manage their emotions effectively. Each of these themes are discussed in detail below.

Complexity and volume of principals' workload. The participants in this study indicated that the increased volume and complexity of their workload has heightened the emotional intensity of their work. For example, Liam stated that he plays many different roles each school day due to competing demands from a variety of different stakeholders:

I think this place is so busy. I wear a thousand hats a day. I'm the parent, I'm the social worker, I'm the principal and the vice principal, I'm the secretary, I'm the psychologist, I'm the special education teacher… I think because of the pace in this building and the multiple demands, it really is important to manage the emotions, because you want people to feel like they're going to be able to come and talk to you without you blowing up.

Liam described how the pace of his work and occupying several different roles at the school-level highlights the importance of managing his emotions. The volume of principals' work has also created a situation where many principals in this study indicated they would feel guilty only working 40 hours per week, or engaging in a more traditional work schedule. For example, Danielle stated:

If I left at 5 o'clock I would kind of feel guilty, but I am trying to get used to that. It's not uncommon that I am here until 6, so I think 8-6 every day. Then I answer my email at night, preparing for anything we need the next day. I always have my blackberry on all weekend just because.

Danielle highlights how her school provided phone is always on, and that she often works late into the evening to keep up with her workload. A perception that additional

tasks and responsibilities are being downloaded onto principals is another way that workload can influence how principals manage their emotions and heighten the emotional aspects of their work. Further, participating principals described how demonstrating the capacity to complete additional tasks and activities often compels the school district or other stakeholders to further increase workload. For example, Stephanie discussed how her workload often influences her emotions because she does not feel effective as a principal if she does not complete all of the tasks and activities assigned to her:

Then there's a workload piece. There's a bit of philosophy, too, as principals that you're going to do it no matter what, so it doesn't matter what they give you. Because of the nature of who we are, we just get it done and make it work, which I don't think in the long run is healthy because your workload then becomes quadrupled.

Stephanie finds that her performance-oriented mentality is an effective strategy for managing workload and the emotional aspects of her work in the short-term, but worries that this approach may negatively affect her health and well-being in the long run. Similarly, several principals in this study described how workload can often have a negative influence on their emotions, making them feel tired, angry, anxious, and burned out. For example, Doris stated:

I just think that everyone is managing, and I would talk to my colleagues. They're managing, but I would say that most of them if you ask them don't feel they're doing it well because they're so pulled in so many different directions. It becomes frustrating. When you go back to the emotions, it's frustrating, it's exhausting, it's tiring.

Doris indicates that workload expansion and intensification has a negative impact on her emotional state, and makes it difficult for her to feel like she is doing their job effectively. The legal facets of principals' workload are another way that workload influences the emotional aspects of their work.

Legal facets of contemporary principals' workload. Another way that workload influences the emotional aspects of principals' work is through the legal accountabilities tied to position. For example, Doris described the heavy emotional toll associated with being legally liable and accountable for everything that occurs at the school-level:

I'm the middle person. Anything that goes wrong in a building no matter who does it or   what happens, it all falls on me. That to me is high stress and high anxiety, so every time I'm making a decision or trying to think about stuff through, on the back of my mind I'm always trying to think of, "Okay, we've got to make sure we don't get into trouble when we do this, or what's the liability around it?

The litigious facets of principals' work can make Doris feel highly anxious as she is scared of being the target of a lawsuit or other legal action. Further, as discussed above, legislation in Ontario deems principals legally responsible for everything that happens at the school, even though they may lack expertise in a given portfolio,

including occupational health and safety. For example, Heidi described feeling negative emotions, such as anxiety and frustration when discussing her role and liabilities related to the Ministry of Labor's occupational health and safety regulations (Ontario Ministry of Labour, 1990), such as the condition of the school's physical plant:

I guess what I'm thinking, way back when it didn't seem like everything was on the principal's shoulders as much as Ministry of Labor now is, human rights. It seems like it doesn't matter where the problem lies. It all rests on our shoulders.

Being legally liable for maintaining working conditions they have little control over can lead to principals experiencing anxiety and emotional distress as they navigate pressure to avoid mistakes. Principals' workload also involves being called out of the school building for meetings and other activities, which can create challenges in managing workload and fulfilling their legal accountabilities to students, teachers, the school district and other stakeholders.

Being called out of the building. Participating principals described how participating in meetings and engaging in other activities that occur away from the school site can both heighten the emotional intensity of their work and influence their ability to effectively manage emotions. For example, Danielle feels frustrated with how often the school district compels her, and members of her administrative team, to conduct work outside of their school:

The number of times that we're called out for mandatory meetings or mandatory training, which is either, a) a waste of time, or b) a repeat of something we have done multiple times, like yesterday they tacked one on at the end of the day. I have done that particular session I think at least at least 8 or 10 times, and it was mandatory. Our whole admin team had to go and we looked at each other and went, seriously?!

Danielle indicated that it can be challenging to effectively manage her emotions when she is asked to attend ineffective meetings or superfluous professional learning opportunities at the district office. Further, Charles highlights the emotional tension he experiences when asked to work away from the school as he wants to be at the school working with staff and students rather than attending meetings or engaging in other work at the district office

I don't like being out of the school. I think if you had talked about maybe a disagreement with the board, I'm the type of person, and that's not a question of the integrity of other administrators, I'm not the type to be at the board office frequently. I like being in the school with the staff and students, and being here on a daily basis."

Being called out of the building heightens the emotional aspects of Charles' work as he prefers to be at the school, and loathes being called out of the school as it limits his ability to deal with any issues or concerns in the moment. Principals also have to catch up on anything they missed while gone, which can limit opportunities to engage in instructional leadership and other primary duties and responsibilities attached to their

role. Those principals with a master's degree described being called out of the building for meetings or committees at the district office more often than their colleagues with bachelor's degrees, indicating that their superiors may want to leverage skills and abilities gained during graduate study.

Discussion

This study and its findings contribute to emergent lines of inquiry exploring the nature of principals' work (ATA, 2014; Grissom et al., 2015; Lee & Hallinger, 2012; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Metlife, 2013; Pollock, 2016) and the emotional aspects of school leadership (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 2004; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Theoharis, 2008; Zembylas, 2010). The findings of this study point to the emotional aspects of principals' work being heavily influenced by workload. The emotional toll associated with the position may be partially responsible for generating the complex work environments in which contemporary principals work. For example, the emotional aspects of principals' work can be heightened when they are asked to manage a growing and complex workload, engage in tasks and activities where lack expertise or training. Further, principals reported that it can be frustrating to be legally responsible and accountable for everything that occurs at the school site, especially when they are called out of the building for meetings and other work demands.

There are several practical implications to emerge from this study. First, current and aspiring principals need to be provided with professional learning opportunities that allow them to develop the skills, knowledge and abilities to perform all aspects of their work effectively. Despite managing emotions being a fundamental job demand for the principals in this study and the heavy emotional labor involved in contemporary school leadership, several scholars have identified a lack of emotional content in principals' preparation and professional learning (Bolton & English, 2010; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010). Such a focus on the emotional aspects of principals' work can promote effective and healthier coping strategies when principals face emotionally challenging or emotionally draining situations.

While this professional learning could be focused on managing the emotional aspects of the principalship, the principals in this study indicated they have been trained to be effective teachers and instructional leaders, and often have little experience engaging in the more technical elements associated with the role, such as occupational health and safety. With principals' work and workload intensifying (Department for Education, 2014; Grissom et al., 2015; Lee & Hallinger, 2012; Metlife, 2013; Pollock, 2016), it may be impossible for principals to feel like they can complete all of the tasks and responsibilities associated with their role. Perhaps legislation needs to change so that principals can delegate both responsibility and accountability for tasks and activities where they lack skill and/or expertise.

This study also has implications for the culture surrounding the contemporary principalship. Principals have a responsibility to model healthy coping strategies and

leadership practices for their staff, students and other stakeholders. Modeling those behaviors may prove difficult for principals as they are working in a context where workload is expanding and the emotional aspects of the position are heightened (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 2004; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Kelchtermans et al., 2011). Further, the long hours and high level of emotional labor tied to the position may encourage current and aspiring principals to change their career trajectory and pursue other opportunities. It may be difficult to attract the most qualified and appropriate candidates to the principalship unless it they view it as an attractive and sustainable career path. To keep perceptions of the role manageable and support principals' ability to effectively regulate their emotions, school districts may want to consider how often they are pulling principals out of schools for meetings and other tasks at the district office.

Prospective principals could use the findings of this study to influence their decision to pursue a career in school leadership by becoming better informed about the nature of the contemporary principalship. Prospective principals need to understand that they are entering a profession with an overwhelming workload (Armstrong, 2015; Hauseman et al., 2017; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Pollock, 2016; Pollock et al., 2015), potential legal liabilities, and long work hours that can exceed 55 hours per week (ATA, 2014; Department for Education, 2014; Metlife, 2013; Pollock, 2014). All of these challenges have heightened the emotional aspects of principals' work. Armed with this information, individuals who lack the strategies to manage their emotions effectively may be discouraged from pursuing a career trajectory that involves school leadership.

Conclusion

The principals who participated in this research cited workload as a key factor that influences the emotional aspects of their work. Participating principals indicated that the volume and complexity of their work has heightened the emotional aspects of their work as it feels like they are always on call, asked to fill multiple roles at the school-level and accountable for everything that occurs at the school site. Further, a lack of job specific training has created a situation where principals could face a lawsuit for negligence as they may lack the skills, knowledge or abilities to do all aspects of their job effectively. Being called out of the school for meetings or other district-mandated activities only exacerbates many of the issues mentioned above, as principals are expected to catch up on all events that occurred at the school while they were off-site. In addition to influencing the emotional aspects of principals' work, an expanding and growing workload can impact the attractiveness and sustainability of the position for both prospective principals, as well as staff, students and other stakeholders. Unless the workload demands and emotional expectations of contemporary principals change, it may be difficult to recruit the best candidates for the position.

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