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Perspectives on Transitioning to the Assistant Principalship among Peers: A Qualitative Study of Six New School Administrators

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Perspectives on Transitioning to the Assistant Principalship among Peers: A Qualitative
Study of Six New School Administrators

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Amy, and our two children, Elias and Avalie. Without their love, support, and understanding during my many hours locked away with computer and research, this would not have been possible.

My sincere gratitude and appreciation goes to Dr. Lynn Harrill for his support and unending belief in my abilities.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Michelle Bryan for her infinite knowledge of qualitative research and her invaluable advice along the way.

Additionally, I want to thank Dr. Dianne Harwell and Dr. Peter Moyi for their gracious efforts to improve the quality and readability of my work.

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Abstract

The role of the assistant principal in the public schools is under studied and undervalued. As the largest group of school administrators and as future principals in training, the assistant principals' socialization process begs understanding. This study questions the transition from teacher to assistant principal, accounting for the setting and context of the move into school administration. Through a qualitative, in-depth phenomenological interview study of six assistant principals in their first years as public school administrators, this study focuses on their lived experiences with the transition. The theoretical framework constructed to examine the lived experiences of these six recently transitioned assistant principals relied on a social constructivist world view, Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) Theory of Organizational Socialization and Bandura's (1977) Theory of Self-Efficacy, as well as the researcher's own experience and subjectivity.

The analysis uncovered three major themes, assistant principal duties, relationships with teachers, and changing leadership perspectives. Implications are made calling for less focus on the assistant principal as manager and allowing more time for the development of instructional leadership skills. Additionally, it was determined that social interactions may impede observation and evaluation of former teacher colleagues if the assistant principal is unable to overcome social entanglements. Lastly, it is recommended that assistant principals be provided opportunities to experience multiple leadership styles to aid in the formation of their leadership abilities.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

For the past four years, I have navigated the challenges of an assistant principal position in a large suburban elementary school. Reflecting on my first year, I realized I was only mildly aware of the career change I had made. I was prepared to move from the role of classroom teacher to assistant principal position. I was excited at the prospect of a change in schools and in my daily routine. I possessed the requisite educational requirements and state certifications. Unfortunately, the university courses I had recently completed focused on preparation for the principalship, not the role of assistant principal. There were courses on school law, school-community relations, school finance, and leadership. However, I quickly discovered that what I needed most in the first year as an assistant principal were courses on time management, negotiation, interrogation, and even tact. The practical knowledge and skills I sorely needed would be learned by trial and error.

As a new assistant principal, I missed daily classroom interaction with students. I would monitor the halls and find myself standing outside classroom doors to eavesdrop on social studies lessons. I would share war stories of my classroom days with teachers, in attempt to prove my worth. I wanted them to see me as one of them, not a staunch administrator seeking to catch them sitting at their desk or wasting instructional time. I had yet to understand that I was no longer a teacher. By Thanksgiving, I realized I did not

fit with the teacher group anymore. I was an outsider, a school administrator, an assistant principal.

Nevertheless, I learned I did not yet fit with the administrator group. If a desk was needed, a textbook was missing, or a student was not doing homework, I would be called to handle the problem. Administrative issues with curriculum, personnel, or irate parents bypassed me going directly to the building principal. If I was given opportunity to address these issues, my decision was viewed by teachers and parents as tentative, without the full authority of the principal. In the first year, it seemed my role was questioned daily by teachers, students and parents. It was difficult to tell exactly where I fit in the hierarchy of the school.

Despite this, I loved my new job. I enjoyed working at a level, which in my mind, would direct the course of the school in a positive way. I became responsible for more than one classroom of students. I was responsible, on some level, for the entire student body, their education, their safety and their success.

My transition to assistant principal was from outside of the school and the school district. The new position I entered was marked by the unknown. I was working with a principal and teachers with whom I had no previous working relationships. As a newcomer, I had license to reinvent myself as an assistant principal. It became apparent there was more to learn than just the rules and procedures of the school. I had to learn the culture of the school. I had to discover which persons made the school operate and whom I could trust to show me the ropes. As in any organization, there seemed to be a hidden culture within the school that I sought to understand.

In contrast to my experience, many teachers transition to assistant principal within the same school. In searching for participants for this study, the assistant superintendents of a large school district in the Upstate of South Carolina identified twenty-three current assistant principals who all transitioned to their current position in the same school where they had been teachers. They had the benefit of holding firsthand knowledge of the school climate and culture before they assumed the administrator role. They would understand the school in a way that an outsider would not.

In considering these two similar but differing entries into school administration, I wanted to understand how the context of the transition, meaning the site location, affected the assistant principal's socialization process. Is there an advantage in being an insider or does the outsider find it easier to assume a leadership role? This study will examine the transition experience from both points of view.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite longevity, the assistant principal position in a public school is not a well-defined position and has received little attention in academic research (Armstrong, 2009; Greenfield, 1985b; Marshall & Greenfield, 1985; Glanz, 1994; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). A review of the existing literature on assistant principals and the transition from teacher to assistant principal provides relatively few studies of the transition from teacher to administrator. Previous studies have examined the duties of the assistant principal, their longevity, professional preparation programs and the assistant principal's place in the school (Armstrong, 2004; Chan, Webb & Bowen, 2003; Glanz, 1994; Marshall, 1992a; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Mertz, 2006; Oleszewski, Soho, & Barnett, 2010; Reed & Himmler, 1985; Shumate, Munoz, & Winter, 2005). Despite this, no previous studies

have examined the transition from teacher to assistant principal in the context of the same school setting or specifically the assumption of authority among former peers.

The job of assistant principal in a public school is a demanding position (Calabrese, 1991). The new assistant principal is caught between the teacher's classroom he has chosen to leave and the administrator's office in which he aspires to reside. He has left behind the daily lesson planning and grading of student work to focus on discipline, buses, textbook orders, cafeteria duty, and numerous other important tasks. A new assistant principal must shift his focus from one classroom and the students assigned to it, to dozens of classrooms, hundreds of students, and the day-to-day management of faculty and staff. These duties come coupled with increased responsibilities and an increased workload. The addition of the potential for social and personal conflicts created by accepting a position of authority over one's former colleagues may exacerbate the stress related to the transition. It is this transition process, from teacher to assistant principal, which I will examine.

Marshall and Hooley (2006) asserted career decisions are made based on a variety of factors in one's life. One factor in deciding to pursue an administrative position is motivation. As Bandura (1995) argued, this increased motivation stems from perceived self-efficacy. Efficacy beliefs "determine the goals people set for themselves, how much effort they expend, how long they persevere in the face of difficulties, and their resilience to failures" (Bandura, 1995, p. 8). As Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) discovered, a principal's or assistant principal's efficacy beliefs "influence the level of effort and persistence they put forth in their daily work, as well as their resilience in the face of setbacks" (p. 582).

The context of the transition, the place where one first becomes an assistant principal, and where, in effect, one learns to be an administrator, has long-standing ramifications. Greenfield (1985a) cited context, meaning setting, as the “critical determinant” of what is learned before the transition into administration and the success of the adjustment to the new administrator position. In examining the transition from teacher to administrator, Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson (1994) concluded that the socialization experience is a significant element of the transition, and a successful transition is a benefit for the teachers, parents, students, and other building administrators.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this in-depth phenomenological interview study is to describe the lived experiences of two groups of transitioning assistant principals; group one, four assistant principals who transitioned into administration within the context of the same school, and group two, two assistant principals who transitioned to their administrative position from outside of the current school. By juxtaposing the lived experiences of these two similar, but differing groups, I have gained insight into the meaning these assistant principals made of their transition. This study provides a new perspective on the transition to assistant principal needed to understand the organizational socialization process and social issues present during the move from teacher to administrator.

1.3 Research Questions

The research question and sub-questions that guide this study are as follows.

In what ways does the experience of transitioning to assistant principal from within the same school differ from transitioning to assistant principal from outside of the school?

- a. In what ways are notions of self-efficacy present in the stories assistant principals tell about their transition from teacher to assistant principal?
- b. What meanings do these new assistant principals attach to the experience of transitioning from the role of classroom teacher?

1.4 Potential Significance

This study is significant because it examines the overlooked and under studied organizational transition of assistant principals in the public schools, while considering the social facets of assuming authority among peers. The transition from teacher to assistant principal is more common than the transition from assistant principal to building principal (Armstrong, 2004), but according to Marshall and Hooley (2006) the recruitment process in public schools is rarely focused on the assistant principal position. Mertz (2006) argued that "given the critical role the position plays as a gateway to the principalship, the growing shortage of candidates for the position, and the perceived need for a different principal construct, it is important to consider how and to what extent the position prepares the assistant principal to bring this new construct into a principal position" (p. 5). Previous studies have examined the teacher to administrator transition (Armstrong, 2009; Mertz, 2002, Marshall, 1992a, Greenfield, 1985a), but none has specifically considered the implications of moving into the role of an assistant principal within the same school.

Mertz (2006) reminded us that “fit and socialization are inextricably linked” (p. 7). Schools seek administrators who fit in with mission of the school organization and will work to improve the culture of the school. Mertz found assistant principals learn to “reproduce and perpetuate what is” (p. 39). They learn how to be an assistant principal through a combination of the coursework they complete for the position, the specific context of the school, and the onsite instructions given by the building principal. In carrying out those instructions, new assistant principals learn to replicate the current administrative climate of the school. There are career risks involved for an assistant principal who operates outside of the approval of the building principal (Marshall, 1985).

Therefore, Mertz (2006) and Armstrong (2004) both concluded that assistant principals exhibit a custodial response to their positions, meaning they perform their jobs according to how they were trained. Van Maanen & Schein (1979) asserted, "New members must be taught to see the organizational world as do their more experienced colleagues if the traditions of the organization are to survive" (p. 3). Thus, the organizational socialization process exerts pressure on newcomers to uphold the status quo as a means of fitting in and safeguarding the culture and climate of the school.

As a practical matter, I sought to understand how the context of moving from teacher to administrator in the same school differs from an assistant principal’s transition from outside of the school. Are the experiences by those hired from within the same building significantly different from those hired from the outside? Is there an insider or outsider effect? Do these new administrators feel more or less able to perform their jobs? Do they feel the transition is made easier by personal knowledge of their former colleagues, or is it easier to assume authority among strangers?

1.5 Delimitations

This study only includes participants who met the selection criteria established for the study. The criteria for selection of participant group one included assistant principals who have transitioned to their current administrative role within the context of the same school setting. The criteria for selection of participant group two included those assistant principals who assumed an administrative role in a school in which they had not previously worked as teachers. To ensure the transition experiences of my participants were timely and relevant, participants were included only if they were in their first through third years as an administrator. No participant has held previous administrative roles.

This study was conducted in the Upstate of South Carolina. As stated by Patton (2002), a typical sampling procedure is used to choose a study site that is typical, “not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual” (p. 236). The Upstate of South Carolina comprises numerous school districts and is representative of similar suburban areas in many parts of the United States. Many opportunities to study the transition to assistant principal were available in the Upstate, and the area provided a typical scenario for examining the transition into school administration. Site selection strategy is explained fully in Chapter Three.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

For the purposes of clarity, the following terms will be defined:

Assistant Principal - administrator who works with the building principal and whose duties are defined by the building principal.

Building Principal - the lead administrator of the school who reports to the district school superintendent and is the main decision maker for the school

Perceived Self-efficacy - "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994, p. 2)

Organizational Socialization - theory developed by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) that outlines the six socialization tactics that individuals face when moving into a new position or role within an organization.

Insider - in this study, a person who has special knowledge of the school obtained from experience.

Outsider - in this study, a person who has little knowledge of the school and is new to the school organization.

1.7 Theoretical Traditions

Creswell (2009) noted that the establishment of a theoretical lens puts the research in perspective. This study will use a social constructivist worldview, Organizational Socialization theory as described by Van Maanen and Schein (1979), and Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1977), as the theoretical lenses through which to view the experiences of teachers who transition to assistant principal positions. My own subjectivity and positionality will influence my interpretations and interaction with the phenomenon and my participants. I agree with Peshkin's acknowledgement that, "one's subjectivity is a garment that cannot be removed" (1988, p. 17). I have monitored my subjectivity, but I have an understanding that I cannot escape it. As a qualitative researcher, I am the data collection instrument. These three perspectives, a social

constructivist worldview, organizational socialization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), and perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995) were chosen purposefully as the theoretical lenses through which to examine the experiences of both an insider group of new assistant principals and an outsider group of assistant principals as they transition into their first administrative assignments.

Social Constructivists, as Creswell (2009) stated, "hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (p. 8). Meaning is subjective and the researcher must rely on the participants' point of view to reach an understanding of their experiences. Social constructivism works well in an in-depth phenomenological study where the researcher is interested in the meaning that participants' make of their experiences. Each participant is actively seeking to understand his experiences. By asking the participants to reflect on and talk about their experiences, I have come closer to understanding the transition experience.

Organizational Socialization theory was first developed by Van Maanen and Schein in 1979 and described the process of socialization that occurs when a person moves into a new job position or rank within an organization. For the purposes of this study, the new position is that of assistant principal and the organization is a public school. Organizational Socialization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) is defined as "the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role" (p. 3). When a teacher changes roles and moves to the role of assistant principal, he/she must learn the culture of the school administration, which may differ from the organizational culture experienced while in the classroom. The new assistant principal must learn and be taught "what behaviors and perspectives are

customary and desirable within the work setting as well as what ones are not" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 4). The learning of this new outlook in education, particularly the process of exchanging a teacher role for an assistant principal role whether in the same school setting or from outside the school, was the focus of this study.

Organizational Socialization provided a lens through which the transition was viewed.

In this study, two groups are considered. Group One is comprised of four assistant principals who have moved to the assistant principal role directly from holding a teaching position in the same school. Group Two is comprised of two assistant principals who accepted an administrative position in a school where they had not previously worked as a teacher. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) asserted the socialization process accompanies both transitions from outside and within an organization. Thus, the socializations process affects both groups in varying degrees.

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) put forth six possible tactics of socialization a person in transition may be subjected to: collective vs. individual, formal vs. informal, sequential vs. random, fixed vs. variable, serial vs. disjunctive, and investiture vs. divestiture. It is noted the list of possible tactics could be "infinite" due to the variations in organizations (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 37), but for the purposes of this study, the above-mentioned six tactics will be considered.

The collective socialization tactic is defined by treating all new assistant principals the same, such as exposure to an orientation experience or educational and certification process. An individual socialization tactic is conducted on a case-by-case basis and may involve an apprenticeship type of experience for the newcomer. The individual tactic is more time consuming and used less often. A formal socialization

tactic is characterized by the new hire being removed from the group and subjected to a specific set of experiences such as the coursework and education programs required to obtain assistant principal certification. Informal socialization tactics do not separate the new hire from the group of more experienced members. This tactic is characterized by on-the-job training experiences (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Sequential socialization tactics indicate the steps required to assume the role. In most instances, assistant principals must first receive training as classroom teachers, work in the classroom, and then obtain the coursework and credentials to transition into school administration. Education and years of experience requirements must be fulfilled. A random socialization tactic would provide no such prerequisites (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Fixed socialization processes are determined by a timetable of events. The transition to a new organizational role will be determined by the length of service or preset time limits. Assistant principal transitions follow a variable socialization process, and there are rarely established time constraints in moving from teacher to assistant principal to principal (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

A serial socialization process is marked by the presence of a mentor or role model to help with the socialization process and the transition. In the case of assistant principals, this may be the building principal or another assistant principal working in the school. A disjunctive process would mean there are no mentors or role models to assist the newcomer (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

An investiture socialization process involves building on the skills, personal traits, and attitudes the newcomer brings to the role. In this way, the assistant principal is hired

for the views he expresses as a teacher and the way he expresses ideas during the interview process. The school organization does not hire an assistant principal in an attempt to change his perspective regarding education. Contrary to this, a divestiture process hopes to break down the person and instill a new perspective that is aligned with the goals of the organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) described three likely responses by assistant principals to the six socialization tactics described above. The first, custodianship, is defined as accepting the status quo and not questioning the accepted norms of the position. The assistant principal performs the duties assigned to him and the expectations of the position. He does not attempt to deviate from the norms of the organization.

A second response to the socialization process is content innovation, whereby the person seeks new knowledge in hopes of improving an aspect of the workplace. The new assistant principal may not want to change his role radically, but he may find ways to work more efficiently and make small changes within his working environment. The assistant principal may bring new ideas and knowledge not held by his predecessors to the role. This knowledge is gathered and added to existing practices of the organization.

The third response, role innovation, is the most radical. Role innovation involves the individual working to redefine the position and its functions entirely. As a new administrator in an established public school, the assistant principal would not be in a position to affect change on the scale of role innovation.

In applying Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) ideas to the ways in which assistant principals are selected, trained, and socialized into school administration, the conclusion is made that a custodial response will almost certainly be the outcome (Armstrong, 2010;

Armstrong, 2009; Marshall, 1992b; Marshall & Greenfield, 1987). The assistant principal learns to be an assistant principal largely by fulfilling course requirements, completing internship hours, and once hired, following the lead of the building principal.

The third lens through which I viewed the experiences of my participants is Bandura's (1977) Theory of Self-Efficacy. Bandura (1995) defined perceived self-efficacy as "people's beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 2). Pajares (2002) credited a person's self-efficacy beliefs as the foundation for motivation, well being, and personal accomplishment (p. 4). Self-efficacy beliefs influence a person's motivation and therefore affect achievement (Bandura, 1995). As Bandura (1995) stated, "Those who have a strong belief in their capabilities exert greater effort when they fail to master a challenge" (p. 8). Phillips and Gully (1997) stressed the influence of both the individual and the environment as determinants of a person's degree of self-efficacy. Success in the role of assistant principal hinges on positive self-efficacy, as does success in any human endeavor. The assistant principal who believes he will be successful broadens his capacity for success.

In the chapters that follow are a review of the relevant literature regarding the assistant principal position in the public schools, the duties, the socialization to the role and a review of research on assistant principal self-efficacy. Chapter Three provides a detailed description of the methodology I utilized and the data reduction process I employed. In Chapter Four, I present the interview data collected from eighteen in-depth interviews with the six participants. My analysis and commentary on the data and the

stories of my participants are summarized in Chapter Five. Finally, conclusions, implications and recommendations for further research are outlined in Chapter Six.

From my analysis of the participants' stories, I concluded that assistant principals who transition within the same school setting do face social issues not experienced by those who enter the school as new faculty members. These social entanglements are difficult to overcome and may impede the participants' socialization to their role. Assistant principals need multiple leadership role models when learning to develop their own leadership style and perspective. Lastly, the assistant principal role should focus more on developing instructional leadership skills and less on the managerial aspects of the position in order for assistant principals to grow as school leaders.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This chapter reviews the relevant research on the assistant principal in the public school system. I begin by describing the history of the assistant principal position and giving an overview of the major facets of the role. I continue with a description of district efforts to produce a pool of qualified in-house administrative candidates. Next, I define the duties and tasks associated with the assistant principal position and the role of the building principal in determining this job description. Relevant to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter One and Chapter Three is a review of research on the assistant principal's socialization process, followed by a review of studies of assistant principal self-efficacy.

2.1 Introduction

The assistant principal is an important player in the daily operations of a school. The transition from teaching to administration involves a complex socialization process that has serious implications with regard to the new administrator's ability to be successful in the role. This transition has been studied by researchers aiming to identify the stages, tactics, and processes of socialization in hopes of preparing, and predicting the outcome of the transition. In addition, school districts must plan for administrator succession and consider succession with respect to the administrator's socialization to the role. The purpose of this in-depth phenomenological interview study is to describe the

lived experiences of two groups of transitioning assistant principals. Group One consists of four assistant principals who transitioned into administration within the context of the same school and Group Two is comprised of two assistant principals who transitioned to their administrative positions from outside of the current school. By juxtaposing the lived experiences of these two similar, but differing groups, I have gained insight into the meaning these assistant principals made of their transition. I have examined how the context of the transition, either from within the same school or as a new member of a school faculty bears on the participants' self-efficacy and the process of organizational socialization.

2.2 The Assistant Principal

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) first studied the role of the assistant principal in 1923. Beginning in the 1940's and 1950's the role of the assistant principal evolved from its previous designation as the general supervisor to the term assistant principal. These were teachers selected for their expertise, but who were given little formal authority (Glanz, 1994). Since the inception of the role of assistant principal, few of the duties of the assistant principal have changed; discipline, lunch duty, text books, attendance, staff development, and evaluation of teachers are among the duties listed by a 1992 study (cited in Glanz, 1994). Despite its longevity, the assistant principal position in a public school is not a well defined position and has received little attention in academic research (Armstrong, 2009; Greenfield, 1985b; Marshall & Greenfield, 1985; Glanz, 1994; Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

On the eve of the NAESP's 2008 10-year study, Protheroe (2008) summarized the findings of forty years of studies. Protheroe noted in 1958, 87% of principals reported

having no assistant principal to aid in the administration of their schools. Forty years later, 80% of principals still reported having no assistant principal. This absence of assistant principals may seem disturbing given the workloads of most school administrators and not surprisingly led Greenfield (2009) to write that there are “comparatively few helpful studies” on assistant principals. Armstrong (2009) agreed by adding, “Assistant principals are rarely (if ever) mentioned in leadership preparation curricula or policy document” (p. xii). Reed and Himmler (1985) concluded that the assistant principal’s work in relation to the school organization is unclear, and despite a good number of studies, it remains unclear. Greenfield (1985a) asserted that the assistant principal is the link to the building principal for most teachers but little is known with regard to the work, conditions, the substance, or the impact of the position. It is argued the position is crucial to the daily operations of a school but there is no agreed upon definition of the assistant principal’s role (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

The attainment of an assistant principal position is the first step into the world of administration from the classroom (Shumate, Munoz & Winter, 2005). In many instances, assistant principals are those teachers who have made the transition from the classroom to the administrator’s office by fulfilling the necessary coursework and proving themselves effective in the classroom. These new administrators have made it through a university certification program on their own or have been hand-picked by their district to complete a potential administrator’s academy to attain certification. They have the certifications and credentials they need to get the job. However, much research contends traditional college preparation for a school administrative position does not prepare a candidate nor is it a predictor of a principal’s or assistant principal’s success on

the job (Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1994; Hess, 1985; Jacobson, 1986; Marshall, 1992b; Michel, 1996). Blase (1987) asserted that university preparation programs for administrators place too much emphasis on knowledge and skills and neglect to focus on leadership qualities. It is not enough to know procedures, rules, laws, and educational theories. Marshall and Hooley (2006) supported this idea when they cited the completion of formal course work as an inadequate measure of a good educational leader. To remedy this, Blase suggested training in communication, conflict management, problem solving, team development, and interpersonal skills as preparation useful to new administrator. Hess (1985) made the argument that for the assistant principal post to be its most effective training should be site specific. Specific objectives should be designed in concrete terms and directly related to the day to day job responsibilities of the assistant principal.

Despite inadequate preparation, the assistant principal position is the ideal training ground for creating exceptional future building principals (Marshall, 1992a; Spady, 1985). This assertion is upheld, if the principal works closely with the assistant and acts as a mentor and sponsor. Retelle (2010) studied the factors involved in the promotion of assistants to the principalship and found sponsorship and self advocacy were the main determinants of promotion to principal, regardless of expertise. Sponsorship by a higher level administrator plays a significant role in the professional future of assistant principals.

2.3 What does an assistant principal do?

Though undervalued in research and practice, assistant principals are the largest group of school administrators (Armstrong, 2004). If no standard job description can be

defined for the assistant principal position, we must examine the duties the job entails in hopes of defining the role of the assistant principal. Many high schools have two or more assistants, larger schools as many as seven. The assistant principal maintains order, promotes the values of the school culture and is on the front line to encounter the daily dilemmas of children and society (Marshall, 1992a). Most often, the duties of the assistant principal are assigned and determined by the building principal (Harvey, 1994; Kelly, 1987, Marshall, 1985; Mertz, 2002; Michel, 1996; Weller & Weller, 2002).

Assistant principals are involved in all aspects of the school but are rarely given full control or responsibility for anything (Greenfield, 1985b). This leads to a variation of the duties of the assistant principal from school to school and district to district. Oleszewski, Soho, and Barnett (2010) presented the uncertainty of the job description; they found it is common for the assistant principal's role in the school to be subordinate to the principal.

Armstrong (2009) argued that many of the challenges encountered by new assistant principals stem from the ambiguity of the assistant principal's role in the school. The duties and work roles for new assistant principals can vary greatly leading to anxiety and confusion on the part of the applicant. When one accepts a teaching position the expectations are clear, but that may not be case for the assistant. Moore (2009) argued establishing uniformity around the expectations of the role of the assistant principal across school districts is necessary to lessen ambiguity and attract quality applicants. Johnson-Taylor and Martin (2007) countered Moore's argument by urging building principals to take a more active role in the assistant principal's mentoring process and warned against the lessening of the position. Taking away responsibilities from the assistant principal will negatively affect their building of instructional leadership skills. In

the same manner, Spady (1985) noted that teachers who become assistant principals are in many instances exceptional teachers with knowledge of proper instruction methods and are motivated to take on the position. He referred to them as adaptable survivors, who may not be fully prepared for the role but will find ways to manage the increased workload and responsibility. Calabrese (1991) argued that the demands of the job and the myriad duties the assistant principal must assume make it the most demanding of positions in the school system. Furthermore, the assistant principal is the person teachers look to on an everyday basis (Marshall & Greenfield, 1985). Whenever there is a problem, the assistant principal is first to be called.

The assistant principal can be the judge, jury, confidant, arbiter, and confessor. Austin (1972) cited a 1965 study that followed an assistant principal, who, in one day did everything from fixing a broken telephone, disciplining students, catching a bird, to helping to ease an angry secretary. At times, the assistant principal must assume the role of the police officer or even as Reed and Himmler (1985) noted “father confessor”. Though the job description and duties of the assistant principal are varied, the research has suggested that the majority of their day involves supervision and student discipline.

It is argued the existence of a position, such as the assistant principal who focuses almost solely on discipline, is evidence of serious problems within the school (Reed & Himmler, 1985). Iannaccone (1985) made the assertion that the assistant principalship exists because the school “is a dangerous place in which to live” (p. 121). While this hyperbole overstates the disciplinary role of the assistant principal, it emphasized the prominence of their dealings with student discipline on a daily basis.

The assistant principal focuses on supervision whenever students are not under the direct supervision of a classroom teacher. Oleszewski, Soho, and Barnett (2010) found student management, instructional leadership, and personnel management as the three major task areas of the assistant principal. Student management is stressed by most researchers as discipline and supervision duties, which compile much of the assistant principal's daily chores. Good (2008) noted that most assistant principals focus on books, behinds, and buses but have trouble finding time to become instructional leaders. Reed and Himmler (1985) listed patrolling the school grounds, handling discipline, and responding to a variety of problems as duties of most importance for an assistant principal to master.

Goodson (2000) summarized the role of assistant principal as accomplishing two objectives; facilitating the effective administration of the school and as a training ground for soon-to-be building principals. Marshall (1992a) contended that the main concern of the assistant principal is maintaining the stability of the organization with little time to focus on instructional leadership. Discipline, supervision, and the daily problems of the school can be overwhelming for the assistant principal, leaving little time for improving instruction or attending to curriculum. Iannaccone (1985) disagreed with claims the assistant principalship prepares building principals to lead. For him, the absence of instructional leadership opportunities does little to prepare one for the building principalship.

A 2003 study of assistant principal perceptions of their preparation for the principalship indicated student discipline, cafeteria supervision, meeting with parents, maintaining safe climate, and teacher observation/evaluation as the duties that consumed

most of their time (Chan, Webb & Bowen, 2003). Marshall and Hooley (2006) grouped the duties of the assistant principal into four categories; conferencing with parents and students, handling discipline of students, compiling the master schedule, supervising registration, attendance, and counseling students. Glanz (1994) surveyed 200 New York City assistant principals and found student discipline, lunch duty, substitutes, textbooks, parental conferences, and assemblies as the top, self reported duties.

Assistant principals do everything in the school no one else does. Oleszewski, Soho, and Barnett (2010) concurred when they cited Hartzell describing the assistant principal's job as a "mosaic of partial responsibilities". However, in almost every instance, discipline is listed as the first and major duty of the assistant principal (Greenfield, 1985a; Johnson-Taylor & Martin, 2007). With such a long list of duties and responsibilities, the assistant principal's position is regarded as the most difficult in the public school.

2.4 Socialization to the Role

The transition from teacher to administrator requires the development of a new perspective on schools and redefinition of one's self as an educator (Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1994). Assistant principals are caught between teachers and administrators and must deal with the inherent tensions (Michel, 1996). This initial transition from teacher to assistant principal may be more difficult than that of assistant principal to building principal. It is these experiences and the strain of time, work, and expectations that make the first years the most difficult.

Daresh (1986) examined the first years in administration and how districts provided support to first year administrators. Role clarification, technical expertise, and

socialization to the profession and system are the most noted struggles of new administrators. Not surprisingly, assistants do not stay on the job for long. Viadero (2010) reported the American Educational Research Association's findings that 60% of assistant principals had moved from the position after five years to other administrative roles and 30% had left school administration completely.

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) wrote extensively on the culture and organizational socialization process in organizations. They described socialization as the transference of an organization's culture to new members. Organizational culture consists of the rules, special language, ideologies, standards of acceptance, prejudices, etiquette, and demeanors of the organization. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) noted that once learned, these dispositions become the norm. Their study drove much of the later studies on organizational socialization and the process of becoming a member of the administrative group.

Successful socialization into administration during the first year is a deciding factor in the future success of an administrator. Marshall, Mitchell, Gross and Scott (1992) identified the assistant principal position as the position where one gains the experience and knowledge it takes to be a building principal. This is where the socialization to administration takes root and the mindset of future principals are formed. They identified six categories of orientation to the assistant principalship gleaned from their case studies. These are the upwardly mobile assistant, the career assistant, plateaued assistant, the "shafted" assistant, the assistant who considers leaving the profession, and the downwardly mobile administrator. Successful socialization invites sponsorship by either a principal or superintendent and is a vital element to moving out of the assistant

principal role and moving higher into school administration (Marshall, et al., 1992).

Having a sponsor in the system provides the protégé with advice, informal support, and training that builds careers.

Hartzell et al. (1994) described the socialization experience of a new administrator in his first year as a significant part of the transition and as having a profound effect on the administrator's career. The move from teaching to administering can be surprising for teachers who operate in the isolation of a classroom. Teachers rarely have opportunities to see the scope of the assistant principal position and first year assistants are seeing the school through different lenses. It is crucial the new administrator makes a smooth transition, not only for his own benefit, but for the benefit of the teachers, students, parents, and other administrators in the building.

Armstrong (2004) developed the Epicyclical Model of Transformational Trajectories to describe the socialization experience encountered by new assistant principals. Armstrong described four stages: entry-exit, immersion-emersion, disintegration-reintegration and transformation-restabilization. This model stressed the interaction of assistant principals with "their professional and organizational spheres" (Armstrong, 2004, p. 3). Armstrong also stressed the development of an assistant principal's "moral pathway" as he navigates the "challenges, tensions, and dilemmas new administrators' experience" (p. 3). These challenges take the form of legal responsibilities, loyalty to superiors, and conflicting values with which assistant principals are faced with on a daily basis.

In a continuation of earlier research, Armstrong (2009) asserted that research on the stages of organizational socialization supports four stages. They are: anticipatory

socialization, encounter, adjustment, and stabilization. Anticipatory socialization begins when a teacher takes interest in becoming an administrator, enrolls in college course work to gain certification, and begins to internalize the attitudes of the administrator. Encounter begins when a candidate takes on the position of assistant principal and faces the realities of the job. For many this is a time of excitement but also a time of shock as the reality of the position may differ from the expectation the new assistant principal held. In the adjustment stage the new assistant principal begins to settle into the role and develop a better sense of the realities of the job. The new hire begins to become an insider. In the final, stabilization stage the new assistant principal has become socialized into the organization. The assistant principal is competent and accepted and may begin to look forward to the principalship (Armstrong, 2009). Not all new administrators will experience these four stages.

Armstrong (2010) defined socialization as the process one undergoes to learn the values, norms and beliefs required to fulfill organizational roles such as the assistant principal position. As Armstrong pointed out, the definition of socialization is subject to the theorist's perspective concerning the amount of influence the newcomer exerts on the process. Assistant principals knowingly or unknowingly must navigate this process to move fully into the administrative group. Alvy and Robbins (1998) explained organizational socialization as occurring from the time a person is hired as an administrator through the person's acceptance into the organization. Van Maanen and Schein (1979), in a landmark study, defined organizational socialization as the process in which a person "learns the ropes" of his new position. One must learn what is acceptable and which behaviors will bring acceptance and which will not. This process can vary in

duration. Van Maanen and Schein put forth six tactics of socialization: collective vs. individual, formal vs. informal, sequential vs. random, fixed vs. variable, serial vs. disjunctive, and investiture vs. divestiture. These tactics form a comprehensive view of the socialization process and will be defined at length.

Context is key for the first two tactics of collective vs. individual and formal vs. informal. Baker (1995) explained that collective tactics expose new hires to similar learning experiences and produce custodial orientations to the job. A custodial orientation is one that upholds the status quo. Individual tactics provide new hires with unique job learning experiences and are more likely to produce an innovative orientation. Formal tactics are learned in isolation from incumbents and also produce custodial responses as the new hires accept the role as defined by the organization. Informal tactics are learned on the job and have the freedom to produce more innovative role orientations. Sequential vs. random and fixed vs. variable are tactics dealing with the content of information provided to new hires. Sequential processes provide specific information to new hires about the socialization process while random processes provide no information and create uncertainty. Sequential tactics result in custodial responses and random tactics promote innovation. Fixed tactics provide a time table of socialization events but variable does not. At this point, Baker (1995) noted a disagreement on the outcomes of fixed and variable tactics illustrated by the work of Van Maanen and Schein (1979) and Jones (1986). Van Maanen and Schein (1979) saw fixed tactics as creating an innovative response and variable tactics leading to a custodial response. Jones (1986) took an opposite viewpoint, seeing fixed tactics as forming a custodial response.

The last two socialization tactics are serial vs. disjunctive and investiture vs. divestiture. Serial and disjunctive tactics concern the use of role models in socialization. A serial tactic uses incumbents as role models to create a custodial response. Disjunctive tactics are void of role models and produce innovative responses. Investiture, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) argued, creates innovative responses from new hires due to positive social interaction from incumbents. Jones (1986) disagreed and cited investiture as fomenting self-fulfilling prophecies on the part of the new hire, thus producing a custodial response. Furthermore, Van Maanen and Schein saw divestiture tactics as a form of negative peer pressure from incumbents for new hires to conform, producing a custodial response. Jones (1986) argued that this pressure to conform in the divestiture process caused new hires to question authority and produced an innovative response. While these six tactics are not a complete list of all socialization tactics, they are present across many organizational structures. Many new administrators will experience these tactics of socialization, though not all will progress through all the identified six tactics.

Socialization can take on two forms; socialization to a new profession such as teaching or school administration and socialization to a new organization such as moving to a new school or district. Marshal (1985) noted that organizational socialization takes precedence over professional socialization. In the case of a new assistant principal, the new hire is subject to the demands placed on them by the principal, and less to the idea of what an assistant principal should be.

Greenfield (1985c) stated that moral socialization and technical socialization form the focus of organizational socialization. Moral socialization is defined as the process of internalizing the values and attitudes of the group, and technical socialization is the

knowledge of the skills and techniques needed to do the job. Moral socialization, in the field of education, has been studied by various groups since 1947; however it has been ignored by programs that prepare education administrators (Greenfield, 1985c).

Greenfield identified two concepts, perspective and anticipatory socialization, as forming the main processes in moral socialization,. Perspective socialization is situation and site specific with regard to the school context. It is shaped directly by the pressures and problems of the school site. Anticipatory socialization is the learning that occurs as an administrative candidate aspires to become an administrator and begins to orientate himself to the new group. Thus, moral socialization is dependent on the context, individuals, and the responsibilities of the job. This moral socialization process begins with an individual aspiring to become an administrator, and continues once the position is attained, as a manner of seeking advancement in the field (Greenfield, 1985c).

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) described three likely responses by assistant principals to socialization. The first, custodianship, is defined as accepting the status quo and not questioning the accepted norms of the position. A second response is content innovation, whereby the person seeks new knowledge in hopes of improving an aspect of the workplace. This knowledge is gathered and added to existing practices of the organization. The third response, role innovation, is the most radical. Role innovation involves the individual working to redefine the position and its functions entirely. In applying Van Maanen and Schein's views to the ways in which assistant principals are selected, trained, and socialized into administration, one can draw the conclusion that a custodial response will almost certainly be the outcome. They asserted a custodial response will most likely result from a socialization process that is sequential, variable,

and serial and involves divestiture processes. Sequential means the candidate moves through stages as from teacher to administrator. Variable means there is no set timetable for advancement. Serial, means specific requirements must be met for advancement and the re-organizing of one's values during the divestiture process will be necessary (Van Maanen & Schein).

Marshall and Greenfield (1985) also concluded that a custodial response results from the socialization of the new administrator and that it is unlikely that an innovative orientation to the role will develop. In examining Allen and Meyer's 1990 longitudinal study of socialization tactics, Baker (1995) described two latent factors, role certainty and incumbent interaction. Baker found incumbent interaction to have a positive impact on the organizational commitment of newly hired individuals. Thus, the more access new employees have to the veterans of the organization, the more they exhibit commitment to the organization. This effect, he noted, is strongest at six months and diminishes over time. Baker recommended that new members of an organization be given ample time to talk with incumbents, thus increasing commitment to the organization. However, he warned that increased incumbent interaction would result in a custodial response and diminish the likelihood of innovative thinking (Baker, 1995).

Armstrong (2010) summarized the socialization and enculturation tasks that new administrators face. Armstrong cited performing assigned duties, impressing superiors and developing trust, learning when and how to initiate action, engaging in limited risk taking to gain recognition, and learning how to use power as skills that must be mastered (p. 690). This process discouraged innovation and divergent thinking because it involved mimicking behavior, accepting the status quo, and not wanting to embarrass oneself in

front of superiors. Marshall (1992b) echoed this view in describing the process by which teachers are chosen for holding conservative views of education and with assistant principals chosen for being the more conservative from the ranks of teachers. To fit into the administrator role, new assistant principals must avoid value conflicts and divergent activities from their superiors. Therefore, organizational socialization processes most often produce custodial responses (Armstrong, 2010; Armstrong, 2009; Marshall, 1992b; Marshall & Greenfield, 1987; Mertz, 2006).

Marshall (1985) viewed the assistant principal position as the place for the formation of role orientation in school administration. Marshall (1985) analyzed eight case studies of new assistant principals and identified an enculturation process containing seven tasks assistant principals must navigate. Task one is deciding to leave teaching, beginning the process of anticipatory socialization. Task two is analyzing the selection process, meaning the person looks to see what types of teachers also aspire to administration and what determines who gets the job. Task three is maintaining a calm front in the face of culture shock; despite the difficulties that come with the job the new assistant principal must present a calm and controlled exterior. Task four is defining relationships with teachers. The new administrator must draw a line between teaching and administering; this is where Marshall (1985) argued that new assistant principals must use the rules and policies to help them create a distinction. Task five is learning the art of the street level bureaucrat. In this task, assistant principals must discern the importance of enforcing policy and addressing the practical problems of the school. Task six is assertively taking areas of responsibility to demonstrate job competence. Task seven is adjusting modes and attitudes for discipline management. The new assistant

principal must deal with a variety of discipline issues on a daily basis and must learn to manage students and teachers with regard to discipline (Marshall, 1985).

Greenfield (1985a) studied fourteen teachers moving into administration in a large school district. Greenfield suggested that the socialization process is characterized by six processes; individual, informal, random, variable, and serial and those involving divestiture and investiture. It was found that context is the key determinant of successful socialization and role learning in the administrative position. Context is how the new assistant principal negotiates the context of the position and what he views as problematic in his role that determines his success. If context matters so greatly, it is clear, that varying contexts will produce administrators with varying degrees of readiness and skills. This led Greenfield (1985a) to assess that principals “do what they do because that is what they have learned to do and have been rewarded for doing” (p. 51). Again, this typifies a custodial response.

In trying to identify what assistant principals must learn to do to be successful during their first years, Hartzell, et al. (1994) listed eleven activities or mindsets:

1. Be initiated to the actual tasks of the job; and master them;
2. Be initiated to the work group;
3. Define his own role within the group and in the accomplishment of the work unit’s task and build a role identity;
4. Learn the local language;
5. Build relationships both within and outside the immediate work group;
6. Learn who the important players are in the organization;

7. Learn to deal with intergroup role conflicts; that is, handling the conflicts between his work group and the demands of other groups in the organization;
8. Locate oneself in the work and social structure;
9. Develop a frame of reference to measure how and why things are done as they are
10. Assess how well the unit, of which he is now a part, is doing; and
11. Learn to manage conflicts between work and his or her outside life.

(Hartzell, et al., 1994)

Marshall and Mitchell (1991) developed the concept of the “assumptive worlds” of the assistant principal. They defined the assumptive world as a person’s “perceptions of expected behaviors, rituals, and feasible policy options that guides their behavior” (p. 397). Assistant principals are socialized to the micro-political assumptive world of the school and must learn how best to navigate within it. Marshall and Mitchell (1991) offered these suggestions for new assistant principals as ways to manage their new micro-political assumptive world: engage in limited risk-taking, you are expected to conform, avoid moral dilemmas, do not display divergent values, commitment to the job is required, avoid being labeled as a trouble maker, keep disputes private, and cover all your bases. These suggestions, pulled from the narratives of new assistant principals, reinforced Armstrong’s (2009) and Marshall’s (1992b) assertions that assistant principal socialization produces a custodial response in which innovation is limited. Mertz (2006) echoed this conclusion in a study of high school assistant principals. Mertz asserted that assistant principals are trained to uphold the organizational culture. Risk is involved in creating change; so, the socialization processes of assistant principals preserve the status quo. Mertz concluded by stating, "Thus it is not unreasonable to conclude that the way in

which assistant principals are socialized is highly unlikely to generate principals prepared to lead schools in fundamentally different ways, despite the calls for such leadership" (p. 42). Therefore, real change in education remains elusive.

2.5 Assistant Principal Self Efficacy

There is a dearth of studies that examine self-efficacy and perceived self-efficacy of public school assistant principals. Self-efficacy's effects on a person's actions can be explained as, "Those who have a strong belief in their capabilities redouble their effort to master the challenge" (Bandura, 1994, p. 120). A strong sense of self-efficacy allows a person to persevere and struggle on in the face of adversity. Most efficacy studies of school administrators focus on the principal and the teachers, mentioning the assistant principal almost as an afterthought. Despite this lack of research, studies that do exist reported assistant principal self-efficacy as high (Bell, 2011; Edison, 1992; Finley, 2013; Metcalf, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004; Versland, 2009).

One tool used by researchers is the School Administrator Self-Efficacy Scale (SAES). This self-reporting tool measures the school administrator's self-efficacy with respect to the Educational Leadership Constituency Council's standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership. Bell (2011) used the SAES to measure the self-efficacy of 87 high school assistant principals. Bell found the majority of assistant principals reported moderate levels of confidence in meeting the standards. Finley (2013) studied African American high school assistant principals in urban areas and concluded the majority possessed high levels of self-efficacy and wanted to move to the principalship. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) asserted that principals, and here I extend their statement to assistant principals, "must believe that they can successfully

meet the challenges of the task at hand (p. 582). Edison (1992) in looking at the efficaciousness of career and non-career assistant principals found their self-efficacy levels to be comparable. Edison reported the satisfaction levels of both career and non-career assistant principals to be equal. Metcalf (2012) cited high self-efficacy in principals and assistant principals as contributing to higher student achievement. Metcalf (2012) measured the self-efficacy of 42 school administrators, specifically looking at how mentoring experiences developed self-efficacy. Metcalf concluded self-efficacy could be strengthened when future and current administrators served as mentors, thus improving their own instructional leadership, their skills in developing the school climate, and their ability to develop a school vision. Versland (2009) found similar results in a study of self-efficacy development in aspiring principals and concluded that self-efficacy developed from relationship building experiences and collaborative learning.

2.6 Conclusion

The assistant principal in school administration is an important position to the functioning and daily operation of a school. Working in conjunction with the building principal, other assistant principals, teachers, and staff, the assistant principal upholds order and adds stability in the school organization. While a detailed job description and a definitive list of duties may remain elusive, the assistant principal's responsibilities prepare the practitioner for future administrative roles. Schools should evaluate the assistant principal position for clarity and effectiveness, thus ensuring successful socialization to the role and providing benefit to the school. The transition and organizational socialization process needs further scrutiny to ensure future school leaders adapt and do not fear to take risk and create positive change in our schools.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Chapter Three describes the research methodology I utilized to conduct an in-depth phenomenological interview study of six teachers transitioning to the assistant principal role in the Upstate of South Carolina. The research questions that guided this study are:

1. In what ways does the experience of transitioning to assistant principal from within the same school differ from transitioning to assistant principal from outside of the school?
 - a. In what ways are notions of self-efficacy present in the stories assistant principals tell about their transition from teacher to assistant principal?
 - b. What meanings do these new assistant principals attach to the experience of transitioning from the role of classroom teacher?

In the following sections, I have included justifications for selecting a in-depth phenomenological interview study, purposive participant and site selection rationales, and descriptions of my data collection methods and data analysis processes. I conclude with explanations of the steps taken to ensure credibility, my role as the researcher, and ethical considerations as related to this study.

3.1 Researcher as Instrument

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is a serious concern (Maxwell, 2005). It is argued by Maxwell (2005) that too many qualitative research proposals state bracketing,

member checks, and triangulation, among others, as ways to combat invalidity, but forgo specific statements of method to address validity threats. To accept Maxwell's advice, I speak specifically to the issue of trustworthiness with the hope of transparency in my methodology. I agree with Maxwell that "qualitative research is not primarily concerned with eliminating variance between researchers in the values and expectations they bring to the study, but with understanding how a particular researcher's values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study" (p. 108). The researcher in qualitative research is the lens through which the participants' experiences are viewed. Therefore, the stories I gathered through my interviews with the six assistant principals are reported as a product of my own experiences and the theoretical framework designed for this study.

As are my participants, I am currently an assistant principal in a South Carolina public school. After eight years as a classroom teacher, I completed an Educational Specialist program in school administration and began applying for administrative positions in the spring of 2009. I first applied and interviewed in the school where I was currently a 9th grade social studies teacher. I did not acquire the position, but this event piqued my interest in the topic of this study. Could I take on the role of administrator in the same school where I was formerly a teacher and observe, evaluate, and possibly reprimand my colleagues and friends? Would the friendships that I had made as a teacher become dissolved in the new role? After I accepted my current administrative position at an elementary school, one in which I had never worked as a teacher, I realized that for me this was an easier transition than if I had been hired at the school where I had been a social studies teacher. As a newcomer to the school faculty, I did not have to navigate the

personal and social situations that I feel would have plagued me when moving into administration in the same school.

I am aware that my personal transition experiences shape the ways in which I interpret and make sense of the transition experiences of my participants. As a guard against my prior experiences with this phenomenon preventing me from being able to explore the transition experiences of my participants, I have continually monitored and revisited my own biases and positionality, over the course of this study. I was aware, beginning with the first interview, that I believed a transition to a position of authority among peers, colleagues, and friends would be a difficult task. I created a list of what I believed at the time to be the pros and cons of the transition (see Appendix A). This list served as a warning against confirmation bias and an outline of my thoughts. During participant interviews, I made note of elements of their stories that were similar to my own experiences as well as those that ran counter to mine. I purposely scrutinized my thinking whenever I encountered participant comments and ideas I felt aligned too strongly with my perceptions or contradicted my expectations. These methods allowed me to keep my subjectivity in check throughout the process of analyzing the data I gathered.

The participants in this study are assistant principals who have moved from teaching to the assistant principalship both within the same school and as new faculty members. While I will have a common work background with my participants and hold a similar position, I have not used participants with whom I have an existing personal or professional relationship. It is my assumption that my participants have an understanding

of the teaching profession, and we will share similar work related duties as assistant principals.

I bring to my research my transition experience from the classroom to administration and all the self-doubt, determination, learning, and struggles I experienced. My move to school administration and the assistant principal's office was a mere four years ago. The veteran participant is a third year administrator; the newest two, are both in their first year. I can relate to their experiences, although I am careful not to project my experiences onto theirs.

3.2 Methodological Approach

This study is a qualitative in-depth phenomenological interview study of six assistant principals who are in their first three years of transitioning from teacher to administrator. An in-depth phenomenological interview was appropriate for this study because, as Seidman (2006) explained, "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). I was interested in understanding the differences of the experiences of assistant principals defined by the specific context of the move to school administration. Seidman asserted interviewing is the most appropriate method for understanding a person's behavior in context and to understanding their actions.

A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study, as the experiences of moving from the role of a teacher to the role of an assistant principal in a public school are difficult to quantify and are best presented by rich, thick descriptions of the experience. As a qualitative researcher I am interested in the meanings that my participants attach to their transition, what they think it means, and as Roberts (2010)

described, "open to whatever emerges" (p. 143). Furthermore, working within the field of qualitative research, I utilized Seidman's (2006) guidelines for in-depth interviewing, specifically a series of three interviews focusing on the participants' experiences with the transition to assistant principal. I examined the move from teacher to assistant principal in the context of the same school setting, and I examined the transition from teacher to assistant principal as experienced by someone hired from outside the school. Four of the six participants have transitioned to assistant principal in the school where they were teachers. Two moved to a new school to begin their work as school administrators. This dual approach sought to describe and make sense of the lived experiences of several individuals with regard to the transition to assistant principal.

As outlined in chapter one, the theoretical framework, the lens through which I have examined and interpreted the stories of these six recently transitioned assistant principals, was intentionally crafted in hopes of understanding their experiences with the transition. Social constructivism, organizational socialization (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979), perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), and my own subjectivity and positionality have guided this study. Using what Marshall and Rossman (2011) described as "Shiva's Circle of Constructivist Inquiry" (2011), a continual process of research design, data collection, interpretation/analysis, and experience, I considered my own experiences in relation to the phenomenon, the experiences of my participants as gathered from the interviews, and the theoretical framework I designed to interpret meaning.

3.3 Situating the Approach

Previous qualitative studies have examined the socialization of assistant principals (Mertz, 2006), the moral socialization of assistant principals (Armstrong, 2004), their

changing relationships with teachers (Marshall, 1985), and the emotional and social adjustments that assistant principals must make to do their job. The specific circumstances of the transition, as in, did they work in the school before they became administrators, has not been considered. Mertz employed case study research design with eight assistant principals and found they replicated the leadership style they experienced on the job, effectively preserving the status quo. Armstrong (2004) interviewed eight secondary vice-principals and discovered they were ill prepared for their roles and at times unable to manage the social and emotional stresses of the transition. Revisiting her eight secondary vice-principals, Armstrong (2009) found lack of support for new vice-principals, and marked a series of epicycles that accompany the administrative transition. These are termed, entry-exit, immersion-immersion, disintegration-reintegration, and transformation-restabilization. Armstrong (2009) concluded a custodial response was the most common outcome of an administrators socialization, but argued for what she termed a virtuous cycle that promotes individual growth for new administrators. Marshall reported analysis of twenty five case studies that examined the career socialization and site specific factors such as sponsorship, task-learning, incentives, mobility, community pressure, and policy priorities of assistant principals. She found the enculturation process of assistant principals filters out those who do not conform to the norms of district level administrators and principal.

For this study, I wanted to hear my participants' stories and understand their experiences, in their own words, surrounding the move to an assistant principal's position, with a focus on the social interactions between the participant and their former teaching peers. I have utilized in-depth phenomenological interview techniques with my

participants to capture the experience of becoming an assistant principal. This personal and professional transition is best understood through narrative storytelling, in the words of those who have experienced the phenomenon and in-depth interviewing was an ideal approach to hear their voices.

To understand the phenomenon of transitioning to school administration among former teacher peers, I employed a participant group of four assistant principals who moved into administrative roles in the same school where they had previously been teachers and two assistant principals who transitioned to new administrative roles in school settings that were new to them. By contrasting the two similar, but situationally different transitions, I was able to capture two perspectives of the move to school administration. This focus on the social and professional context, meaning the physical location of the transition, was paramount to this study, as I sought to understand my participants' lived experiences with assuming a leadership role among their former peers. It was my assumption that moving into a role of authority over colleagues and friends held special challenges and social struggles not present in the transition experience of someone assuming a leadership role among strangers.

3.4 Participants

I utilized purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) to select participants for this study. As Creswell (2007) noted, "phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (p. 57). Participant stories surrounding their transition experience to assistant principal provided the focus of all interviews in this study. The six participants were chosen for their experiences in the transition to assistant principal, either as assistants who transitioned in the same school

where they previously worked as teachers or who accepted a position at a school new to them. Study criteria were established as assistant principals who had transitioned to their current administrative roles within the last three years. The time frame for the transition was limited to three years or fewer based on previous research by Sigford (1998) who found that after three years the participants had accepted their new role and become self-assured in their positions. Furthermore, by limiting my participants to three years of administrative experience, I hoped their stories would reflect details that had not been forgotten with time. Limiting the participant selection criteria to gender, race, age, or ethnicity constraints would have established parameters too narrow to remain useful for this study.

To answer the research question: In what ways does the experience of transitioning to assistant principal from within the same school differ from transitioning to assistant principal from outside of the school?, I hoped to have two even groups of participants: three who transitioned to administration in the same school and three who transitioned as new members of a school faculty. The realities of finding assistant principals who met the criteria and were willing to participate proved difficult. My sample is comprised of four assistant principals who transitioned in the same school and two assistants who are new to their current schools. The sixth participant, Lynn, has been included from a pilot study that I conducted which focused on the same phenomenon of this study.

The pilot study, conducted in November of 2012 focused on the same phenomenon as this larger study. I followed the same interview protocols, utilizing Seidman's (2006) series of three in-depth phenomenological interviews. My interviewing

skills improved from the experiences I had during the pilot study and the questions I asked of the five later participants became more thoughtful and deliberate. For this reason, and to provide another element of trustworthiness, I contacted Lynn again in May of 2013 and asked a series of follow-up questions aligning with those asked of the other five participants (see Appendix B).

Table 3.1 outlines the relevant demographics of each participant included in this study.

Table 3.1 Participant Demographics

Name	Gender/Race	Years teaching	Years as Assistant Principal	Same school or transitioned into a new school	Level	School Name
David	Male/ white	8	3	Same school	High School	Caldwell
Lynn	Female/African American	9	2	Same school	High School	Jefferson
Monica	Female/African American	8	2	New School	High School	Caldwell
Susan	Female/White	11	1	Same School	High School	Mountainside
Nicole	Female/White	13	1	New School	Elementary	Williams
Jennifer	Female/African American	11	1	Same School	Elementary	Parkview

3.5 Context

I chose to situate this study in the public schools of the upstate of South Carolina. The Upstate area, specifically Greenville and Spartanburg counties, a typical site sample, as described by Patton (2002) is "specifically selected because it is not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual" (p. 236). The rationale for this site selection strategy is as follows.

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 236,100 school principals in the United States in 2010 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). There were no statistics listed for assistant principals. If, as Armstrong (2004) reported, assistant principals outnumber building principals and form the largest group of school administrators, it makes sense there are many opportunities to work as an assistant principal in all areas of the United States. Furthermore, assistant principals and principals are required to possess teaching certificates and have classroom teaching experience in addition to administrator certification (Education Portal, 2013). The path to the principalship becomes teacher, assistant principal, and principal, respectively. It is assumed, noting the need for assistant principals in the United States, the availability of opportunities for teacher promotion to assistant principal occurs often in all areas.

The Upstate of South Carolina is similar to many small urban areas with regard to population and public school programs across the United States and, therefore, provides a typical site for this study. A survey of schools in Greenville and Spartanburg counties provides over one hundred public schools from elementary through high school level from which to draw participants. It is assumed that within these public schools there are

teachers who are promoted to assistant principal either in their current school or in a school that is new to them.

For this study, the site selection criterion was driven by the availability of participants who met the study criteria. Meaning once the Upstate of South Carolina was selected as the site of my study, I had to locate assistant principals who met the participant selection criteria and go to them. I could not choose a school in advance because I did not know if there were participants meeting the criteria and willing to participate. The process of finding qualified participants was lengthy.

As a researcher, I contacted the human resource officer of a large public school district in the Upstate for permission to seek out and interview assistant principals. I was granted permission by the superintendent to interview participants from among the assistant principals currently working in the district. I was provided a list of possible employees who might meet my criteria by the Human Resources Department, and the employees were notified that I would contact them by email. I sent introductory emails (see Appendix C) to twenty-one possible participants. I received eleven responses from assistant principals who were willing to participate. I followed the introduction emails with a phone contact with each person. Of the eleven, five administrators fit the criteria for the study. As previously addressed, the sixth participant has been included from a pilot study conducted in November of 2012.

3.6 Methods of Data Collection

Data collecting was conducted through one to one in-depth interviews with the six participants following Seidman's (2006) three-interview series. I wanted to capture the stories that my participants could tell about their transition to the assistant principalship

because "telling stories is a meaning making experience (Seidman, 2006, p. 7). Seidman argued strongly that interviewing is the most effective means of understanding the meaning that people make of their experiences. Since the goal of this study was to understand what it is like to transition from teacher to assistant principal, interviewing those who have had this experience was imperative. Previous qualitative inquiries of assistant principals (Armstrong, 2009; Armstrong, 2004; Marshall, 1985; Mertz, 2006) have used interviewing as their primary data collection method and have demonstrated that interviews are the most effective instrument to capture the individual stories and experiences of working assistant principals.

Using interviews as the primary means of data collection may pose problems if trustworthiness and credibility are not safeguarded. Seidman (2006) argued that using the three interview series "incorporates features that enhance the accomplishment of validity" (p. 24). Asking participants to talk about their experience in context, over a three week period, promotes what Seidman called "internal consistency" or internal validity. By recognizing internal consistency, meaning the participants stay true to their narrative and are not contradictory in their statements, Seidman concluded that the researcher can gauge the honesty of the participants' words.

I conducted three individual interviews with each of my six participants. The first, following Seidman's (2006) recommendation, was a focused life history interview. In this interview, my goal was to build rapport with the participants and allow them to describe their journey to the assistant principal post they currently hold. The purpose of the second interview was to "concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience" (Seidman, 2006, p. 18) as a transitioning assistant principal. It is in the

second interview that the phenomenon of transitioning from the teacher role to an administrative role was addressed. The third interview focused on asking the participants to reflect upon the meaning they make of their transition from teacher to assistant principal. In this way, Seidman explained that participants will bring the past and present together in their stories creating an ideal moment of reflection and meaning making. This reflection and meaning making bring the participants and researcher to the essence of the experience. Here participants were asked to describe how they understand the transition experience and the ongoing process of meaning making in their new administrative role. Interviews with all but one participant were conducted in April and May of 2013. The first interview I conducted was with Susan on April 19, 2013 and my last interview was with Jennifer on May 28, 2013. All interviews with Lynn were conducted over a three-week period in November of 2012, with a follow up interview in May of 2013.

An invitation letter (see Appendix D) that introduced the research study and the interview process was sent to each participant. The participants and I spoke over the telephone and conversed through email to make our initial introductions. I asked basic questions about their work experience and availability to participate in the study. I also shared with them my position as assistant principal, my current work situation, and my academic goals in conducting this research. I wanted the participants to feel at ease talking to me and to understand the interview process.

Each participant and I worked together to establish an interview timeline with which they were comfortable and which fit within their busy schedules. I adhered to the agreed upon interview schedule as closely as possible, though Monica, Susan, and David each cancelled their second interview due to family and work responsibilities. Cancelled

interviews were rescheduled as closely to the original date as possible. For all eighteen interviews, I met the participants at their school and we spoke either in their offices or in a school conference room. I felt that meeting them on their turf, so to speak, made them feel more comfortable than meeting elsewhere would.

In our first face-to-face meeting, I asked each participant to place the experiences leading up to becoming an assistant principal in the context of their professional life stories. Seidman (2006) suggested the interviewer ask "how" and not "why" questions to promote the building of a life narrative leading up to the phenomenon in question. Participants were asked to describe the "myriad details" of their experience. In the interview process, I was inspired by Seidman's (2006) statement that "we do not ask for opinions but rather the details of their experience, upon which their opinions may be built" (p. 18). With this in mind, I tried to gather as much of their life experiences as they were willing to share in the 90-minute interview period.

During the first interview, I specifically asked them, "Describe how you came to be an assistant principal, beginning with your earliest interest in working in the education field, your teaching experiences and the events that led to your transition into school administration." In asking participants to describe their journey to the assistant principalship, I hoped to create a narrative account of their professional life. My first research sub-question focused on participant self-efficacy. So, I asked participants to describe their motivation for becoming teachers and later school administrators. Participants were encouraged to provide as much detail as they felt necessary, and I asked for clarification or explanations when appropriate.

The second interview focused on the transition experience and the changing relationships with the teaching faculty and principal. For those participants who transitioned in the same school in which they had previously worked as a teacher, I asked them to provide examples of teacher interactions and to describe the changing nature, if any, of their relationships with colleagues. I asked participants to reconstruct the events of a day as a school administrator and to share stories of success and failure on the job. I was careful not to direct or interrupt as they spoke and conveyed their experiences to me. I allowed them to speak freely and asked follow up questions only to clarify possible misunderstandings.

The third interview focused on the meaning that participants drew from their experiences. Meaning, in this context, is expressed as “the intellectual and emotional connections between the participant’s work and life” (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). The third interview directly addressed the second sub-question of this study: What meanings do these new assistant principals attach to the experience of transitioning from the role of classroom teacher?

Throughout the first and second interviews, the participants shared their professional life story and the stories of their transition to school administration. For the third interview, I asked, “Given the stories and details you have shared about your education career and move into school administration, what does it mean to you to be an assistant principal?” To provide structure to their answers and help them verbalize their personal meaning making, I followed with questions about their leadership style and their future professional goals. I ended the interview by asking participants to reflect on the unique context of their transitions and to explore the circumstances of their transition.

Lastly, I gave the participants opportunity to clarify any comments they had made, to ask questions of me, and to add any additional information they felt I should know.

With permission of all six participants, all eighteen interviews were audio recorded using a voice recorder app for iPad. My phone, using a voice memo app, was used as a secondary back up recorder. I used a transcription service, www.transcriptiondivas.com to transcribe all recorded material. I chose not to transcribe the interviews myself. This saved time and allowed me to return the transcript of each interview to the participant for review before our next scheduled interview.

3.7 Data Analysis

In this section, I will describe in detail the process in which I organized, analyzed, coded, and searched for themes from the data collected during the eighteen interviews. The explanation of the process of reducing the volumes of data collected in interviews is critical to understanding the findings of this study. Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested seven phases of the analysis process. They are organizing the data, immersion in the data, generating codes and themes, coding the data, offering interpretations through analytic memos, searching for alternative understandings, and writing the report (p. 209).

Once the interviews were transcribed, my first step was to revisit the audio of each interview while reading the text of the interviews. I did this to check the transcription and to familiarize myself with the content of each interview. This was an ongoing process, which was conducted between each interview and not all at once at the end. I found it valuable to my understanding and to facilitate future interviews if I was well versed in what was said during the previous one. For example, I made an effort to

listen to the participant's last interview on the way to meet for their next interview. This prepared me to ask better questions and feel more attuned to the participant's thinking.

Having revisited and corrected errors in the transcription, I began the coding process. My original plan was to code the interviews in a traditional manner using sticky notes, a highlighter, memo writing, and a word processor. I quickly found this process too slow and unorganized for my needs. I coded my first interview with Susan and then in a search for a better process, I purchased the qualitative software, NVIVO. I found my efforts in the traditional manner and my efforts in the software to be almost identical. Thus, all future coding was conducted inside the software program.

Smagorinsky (2008) argued, "Coding establishes the researcher's subjectivity in relation to the data and the framework through which data are interpreted" (p. 399). I began the coding process by developing a set of initial descriptive codes based on my research questions and my familiarity with the content of the interviews. Saldana (2009) recommended researchers start with a generic approach to coding and remain open to change throughout the process. With this in mind, my first approach was holistic.

Holistic coding provided a method for grouping the many vignettes found in the interviews into categories that could later be put to more scrutiny. Saldana (2009) noted it is helpful to "simply read and re-read the corpus to see the bigger picture" (p. 120). I divided the participant stories into segments on their education, teacher work history, completion of degree programs, descriptions of duties at work, relationships with teachers, and on-the-job learning.

I created twenty preliminary descriptive codes. They were as follows, in order of frequency of code: duties, teacher relationships, self-efficacy, leadership, ambition,

transition in same school, transition neutral, mentors, transition positive, teaching, lessons learned, education degrees, discipline, transition negative, student relationships, comments on other APs, advice, social issues, success, and meaning making. These twenty initial codes guided me through the first pass of coding for all eighteen interviews. During this process, I found data that did not fall into my established codes; so, I added codes as needed. I had thirty-eight separate codes in total. To be certain that I did not miss data by creating new codes, any time a new code was created, I circled back to the beginning of the coding process and revisited each transcript searching for instances of the newly created codes. This was a lengthy process and led to multiple passes through the data.

My second coding pass through the data utilized versus coding. Many of my participants focused on their relationships with teachers, students, parents, mentors, and principals, many times describing relationships at odds with one another. I created four versus codes: principal vs. teachers, assistant principal vs. teacher, assistant principal vs. former colleagues, and duty vs. friendships. These four versus codes defined the relationships and change present in the transition to assistant principal.

To remain consistent with the narrative forms through which the participants related the stories of their transition to the assistant principalship both in the same school and as a newcomer to the school, I used In Vivo coding for the next coding method. In Vivo coding "draws from the participant's own language for codes" (Saldana, 2009, p. 66). In Vivo coding allowed me to organize the interviews in the words of my participants, as Saldana rightfully stated, "Sometimes the participant says it best" (p. 76).

Collections from the In Vivo coding process developed into the participant narratives that are presented in Chapter Four.

Throughout the coding process, I wrote analytical memos regarding all aspects of the interview corpus to further my thinking and reflection of the analysis process. Marshall and Rossman (2011) described the process of writing analytical memos this way, "The researcher writes his thoughts about how the data are coming together in clusters or patterns or themes he sees as the data accumulate (p. 213). The process of interpreting the data developed from analytical memo writing. The memos were attached to the interviews through the NVIVO software and allowed me to off load my thinking as I went. My memos consisted of thoughts on the amount of data gathered during the interviews and questioned if the gender of my participants affected my interview technique. David, the one male participant, talked openly and at length in answering any question I posed. Memos on the effects of race and gender were written. I considered the possibility that my being a white male caused the females and especially Jennifer and Monica, both African-American females, to answer as though I were interviewing them for an administrative position.

I agree with Maxwell (2005) that "memos not only capture your analytic thinking about your data, but also facilitate such thinking, stimulating analytic insights" (p. 96). The focus of many memos was the struggles that those participants who transitioned in the same school found in reprimanding or evaluating their former teacher colleagues, especially if they were close friends. These memos helped me to think through the creation of themes and see my coding from a new perspective.

Throughout multiple readings of the interview transcripts, coding the data and the memo writing process, I was mindful of the research questions that drove this study. In seeking to discover the ways in which the experience of transitioning to assistant principal from within the same school differs from transitioning to assistant principal from outside of the school, I searched for statements corresponding with Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) theory of organizational socialization and how the participants' words spoke to the ways in which they were socialized into their new assistant principal positions. I looked for positive or negative expressions of participant perceived self-efficacy in the words of my participants. Themes were identified by considering the coded data, the topics of the analytical memos, reflection upon the participants' stories and multiple readings of all the data.

Themes are the major categories or findings of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2009). Creswell asserted that themes should "display multiple perspectives from individuals and be supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence" (p. 189). Saldana (2009) defines a theme as "a phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and/or what it means" (p. 139). The themes that developed from the data analysis process were, Perspectives on Leadership, Duties, and Relationships with Teachers.

Searching for alternative understandings is part of the process of building validity in the study. The researcher must guard against finding exactly what they thought they would find. To facilitate this process I challenged my interpretations of my participants' experiences, revisited my theoretical framework, and scrutinized my own understanding through memo writing. As Marshall and Rossman (2011) asserted, "alternate

explanations always exist, and the researcher must identify and describe them and then demonstrate how the explanation that he offers is the most plausible" (p. 221).

3.8 Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness in my study, I employed several methods used by previous qualitative researchers. Utilizing Seidman's (2006) in-depth, three interview series preserved the trustworthiness of my participants' views and allowed me to compare their statements for consistency over the course of all three interviews. As a product of our many contacts, I built rapport with my participants before the interview process began. We spoke over the phone in informal conversations, and I made several contacts with them between interviews via email.

I used member checking, described by Glesne (2011) as the sharing of interview transcripts with participants to make certain I portrayed their thoughts and ideas accurately in my research. After each interview, I quickly sent the audio for transcribing. Transcription was a three-day process. Once I received the transcripts and checked them against the audio recordings, I emailed the transcripts to the participants for review. At our next meeting, the participants had the opportunity to correct or restate any comments they had made during a previous interview. All participants stated they read their interview transcripts, but none took issue or asked for corrections to be made.

Another way to ensure validity or trustworthiness is writing rich, thick descriptions so that the reader is pulled into the experiences of my participants (Glesne, 2011). These descriptions are laid out in Chapters Four and Five. In Chapter Four, I have presented the interview data in the words of the six participants, organized by subject. Participant narratives have been presented in their own words, with clarification added as

needed. This format provided a primary source account of what was said during the interviews, as is relevant to this study.

As a fourth check on my research trustworthiness, I have constantly monitored my own biases with regard to the transition to assistant principal. Through memos and reflection, I have recounted my own transition to assistant principal as a means of keeping my personal biases and experiences in check. I have been ever aware of ways in which my experiences may be projected onto the stories of my participants. As stated previously, I have been careful to seek divergent views and examine the data that appear discrepant and not in line with my basic assumptions of the transition to assistant principal.

3.9 Role of the Researcher, Ethics, Reciprocity

My role as a qualitative researcher has been to interpret the lived experiences of my participants while identifying my subjectivity/positionality in relation to the phenomenon in question. As Maxwell (2005) stated, "A crucial issue in addressing validity is demonstrating that you will allow for the examination of competing explanations and discrepant data" (p. 126). Therefore, as a qualitative researcher, I understand that the experiences of my participants may differ greatly from my assumptions and my theoretical framework. I was open to whatever the data presented.

In an effort to conduct ethical research, participants were made aware of my research goals and their anonymity has been protected using pseudonyms. Permission to interview and conduct research within the public schools of the Upstate of South Carolina was sought from superintendents and principals before beginning any interviewing. With regard to reciprocity, participants were not paid to participate in the interviews. I am

grateful to all six of the participants for their time and consideration during this process. The multiple phone calls, emails, and the three in-depth interviews constituted a huge time commitment on their behalf. I have worked in earnest to honor their stories and present their narratives in a respectful manner.

3.10 Methodological Considerations

The qualitative researcher is the data collection instrument, and it is understood that all interpretations of the data that have been collected are subject to my biases. I am a 38-year-old white middle class male, currently working as an assistant principal in a suburban elementary school. I have assumed that my participants will see a “person like me” as similar to themselves. We have similar roles in education and possess the same education credentials. My participants and I, in the future, may both aspire to be principals and have all transitioned out of the classroom and into school administration. I am hopeful that my having experienced the transition to administration and holding the same position as my participants have encouraged them to speak openly and honestly with me. I feel there is a collegiality among administrators because each understands what it is like to be a public school administrator and to have the day-to-day challenges of students, teachers, and parents. For me, this was both a strength and weakness. During the interview process, I understood the language of administration and the acculturation to the position but at the same time, I remained wary that my participants, in knowing my background, did not assume so much as to leave out valuable details from their stories. I cannot assume that other assistant principals have been socialized to the position in the same ways as I. My gender and ethnicity may also be a weakness in my study, because I

cannot know what it is like for a woman or a minority person to move into administration in this context.

As a middle class white male, my experiences in becoming a school administrator may have been different from those participants who are female, of a different race/ethnic group, or both. Smagorinsky (2008) noted that during the interview process women are treated more friendly than males and members of the same racial group often speak more freely to each other. If I was seen as an ambitious white male or someone with whom they may compete for a future principalship, my “outsider” status may have increased. As a white man delving into the socialization experience of a minority or female assistant principal, some nuances of the process may have been beyond my understanding.

3.11 Conclusion

The goal of this study was to describe the lived experience of the transition from teacher to assistant principal. By considering the transition within the same school and as a newcomer to the school, the hope was to understand the organizational and social pressures that come with leadership. The limitations lie in the openness of the participants to speak freely with me and to share their views. A move to a leadership role can have deep personal meaning for individuals. Some participants may have been reluctant to share personal thoughts with a researcher. Hopefully, I built trust during the short time I worked with these participants that they felt they could speak freely with me.

During the data collection process, I did not observe my participants while they worked, but relied on their stories alone. I also did not interview their colleagues or the teachers who work for them. I addressed these issues in recommendations for further research in Chapter Five. Much of the truth I sought to find was dependent on the

strategies I employed during the interview process and the rapport I built with the participants. This study does not favor or recommend one transition experience over another, nor does it seek to place judgment on the motives of the transitioning assistant principals. Individual stories are unique and varied, though participants may have shared similar trajectories. I believe the stories and findings presented here to be transferable but not generalizable to all transition experiences.

Chapter 4

Interview Data

In this chapter, I present the data collected from eighteen in-depth interviews (three per the six study participants). Each section begins with my description of the participant's work history, interests in education as a career, and the events leading to the current assistant principal position. Following this synopsis, each participant's words are organized beginning with their telling of the events that brought them to their current administrative role. They address their duties and experiences with student discipline and continue to describe their relationships with teachers and their principal. Next, each participant describes his or her leadership perspectives and thoughts on the meaning of the transition from teacher to administrator. I have presented the interview data without discussion, except for clarification or introduction, in hopes of remaining true to the voices of the participants. It is in their words the experience is best shared.

4.1 Group One Participants

David

David is a third year assistant principal in the Upstate of South Carolina at a large high school. He is one of six assistant principals in the building. His early ambitions were to be a teacher and a coach at the high school level. After completing his teaching degree in another state he moved to SC and was hired to teach 9th grade social studies and to coach. During his fourth year as a teacher, he entered a master's program in educational administration. He remarks that he did this while his daughter was young and for the pay

increase. He continued to teach during his graduate studies and for two more years after finishing his degree. After a surprise announcement that two of the assistant principals at his school were leaving to pursue principal positions, David was approached by his principal and asked to serve as interim assistant principal three days before the start of the school year. He served as interim for one year and officially accepted the assistant principal position for the next year. When I first met David, he was completing his third year as an assistant principal in the same high school where he had spent the whole of his teaching career.

Entry to Education as a Career

Actually, the one reason I wanted to go into education was I wanted to coach, I decided I wanted to be a teacher back when I was little so I was lucky I knew what I wanted to do and do it. And 9th grade was probably my best year of school, a lot of things, fun year had great teachers, was a lot of good things going on so I really enjoyed the middle school 9th grade area so when I got the job I was very lucky to get to teach 9th grade, that's all I taught was 9th grade, for 8 years.

My principal when he called me in, "I have confidence in you to do this, I don't want to go out and look for people I don't know." I had worked with administration the previous 2 years whenever I had the chance or opportunity, if there was an administrator out, there was a lot of them out one day, he would get a sub or I would get class coverage and I would be the one at the top which was cool for me at that point because it was something different. So he gave me confidence to be able to do that job because I wasn't sure if I was ready for that job.

Assistant Principal Duties

I get here at 7:45, get my computer started, do a few things I need to, go down to the commons area, where the kids are, that's my morning duty. At 8:35 the bell rings, I leave a few minutes before they do so I can get down the hallway and I am down at the other side here where the freshmen main traffic area. When the bell rings the kids go in class and I either go, I usually try and walk, I was doing pretty good at the beginning, once March hit my IEP's (Individual Education Plans) up and killed, I don't have time to do anything. If I have a parent meeting, I tell them 9 o'clock that way I can get the kids in the classroom by 8:45, 15 minutes to handle anything I got to handle before parent comes in, or if I have a meeting with the principal and a parent. Usually second period, I do my discipline. I really don't have a lot of referrals, the teachers are doing an awesome job, they manage classrooms well. Between the classes, I go to the hallway, which is where I am usually.

At lunch, we go down to the cafeteria, monitor the cafeteria, we make sure the kids throw away their trash and plate, at the beginning of the year sometimes they don't but if you stick at them we basically have 1-2 tables that does it the most and we just have to watch them. After lunch, I walk them down, 4th period, walk the halls a little bit, see what is going on.

I try to walk by all the classrooms to pop my head in and say hi, make sure the teachers see me and then I do my observations, I stay on top of that as much as I can because I feel that is the most important thing we do as administrators. Then, I do bus duty after school, which gets done usually 5 after 4:00.

We have 4 grade levels, one AA who is basically an AP, and one curriculum and then the principal. We have two AD's, between the 9 of us, we don't have a lot of sports. This spring I was in charge of 2 events.

Being a freshman academy, we do a lot of extra stuff, I have to go to 8th grade schools and not necessarily recruiting but go over stuff about what we offer in 9th grade. I have to go to the, the gifted and talented school, and talk to the kids who are in our geo code about coming to our school.

I got to call the parents, and sometimes if I get backed up especially at the beginning of the year it gets hectic and I live about 5 miles away, I will go home at least an hour, dinner with the family, give them baths, put them to bed, my girls go to bed early enough that I could come back here 8 o'clock. I will work until whenever and I can get 10 times more work done. I would rather come in the morning and do it but I don't mind doing it at night.

I'm big on discipline, without discipline I just don't think there could be any learning going on. And we ... I try to hand out my discipline right away and sternly, because at the beginning of the year, I was busy, but you know, I knew that they would get the picture and boy, after about the first nine weeks, my discipline went down big time.

One of the reasons I haven't had a huge issue with discipline and teachers upset about discipline is I try to follow the handbook as much as I can so there is no argument from the kid, the parent or the teacher. If the teacher doesn't like it I am going to say look, this is what the handbook calls for, I can't give a more difficult or more discipline than what the handbook actually calls for but the other thing that I have done which I feel

has helped was obviously tardies or cutting class, is cut and dry, we have a system in place for that.

I want to make sure that you know I'm supporting them, because you know they say that the biggest morale booster is support from administration. And so, if a teacher writes a referral, no matter how minute it is that the student will get ... get some type of discipline.

Relationships with Teachers

I always try to keep in mind that the teachers have the most important job in the school. they're in the trenches every day, we're not ...So, you know ... And when they're in there with 25/26 other kids and they do something, you know you have to support them.

I talked to a teacher about some things today. I have never had to use my authority towards a teacher as far as getting on them about doing the right thing. I hear them out, that's tough though because like I said I was a teacher here, these are my friends, I know I wasn't perfect as a teacher and I am sure they are going to say you do, and I say you may be right, but I tried. But then they also, not that I have had to do a lot of favors, but it is like, some of my buddies, more with discipline, if they got a problem with a kid, they may call me and say hey, I need this kid removed for a period or something like that, that's not a big deal.

I will tell you an example, I had a teacher who I think very highly of, is a great person, but she was struggling with a class and she was berating the kids and some of the kids made some comments and so I had to discipline those kids but when I heard their side of the story and I went and talked to her and she kind of explained yeah, that is what it was, I had to tell her you can't do that. And this is a veteran. And she snapped back at

me, she was pissed, I'll be honest. I was like, it is probably not the right time because she was all upset about it, it was right after the class, class just ended, she was very upset, I went down there and I didn't attack her but I kind of told her you can't do that, you can't attack the class and put them down and expect them not to say anything. In hindsight I should have come in, talked to her, maybe the next day or at the end of the day when she had time to relax because I felt, after I evaluated, I felt like I kind of maybe attacked her from her point of view and I didn't want that because I do think highly of her. But, there again I think part of it was because she was somebody I knew as a teacher when I was a teacher so that made it difficult.

My best buddy here, he is not calling this parent back, he is not dealing with this parent, it has been a hassle, he has missed a couple IEP meetings he didn't come to. I was there and it was embarrassing, the parents were there, we had to get a ESOL translator there and he missed it, that's a hassle. This parent, she has called for 3 weeks, she was nice at first and he was never calling her back and never giving her answers, finally she called me and said either I want to meet with the principal or I am calling the district office, I am like oh my god a simple phone call would have solved all that. So I talked to him and told him, just call the lady, all she wants to do, you know your subject better than I do, just call her and explain to her what you guys are doing, and be done, she just needs to have some answers. I think that's it, they know me, they wouldn't do it to some of the administrators that are new here, that they don't know well

When I do observations, and this is a tough part, and I have got to get, I don't like to put anything negative on those things because I don't like to so I make notes on my ipad, I

have a notes part, and I would go over it with them on that. I didn't give any raving reviews on it or anything but I just, I didn't put a lot of negative stuff on there.

There's a couple of teachers that I would like to move out of the freshman academy because they are not team players as much as they should be. I can think of one teacher in particular who I have worked very closely with when I was a teacher, who I feel like needs to probably go upstairs and teach at the upper levels and bring somebody down who will be more of a team player. I just can't pull the trigger, I really can't. It's not like she is hurting us to the point where we need, if it was hurting us bad enough we would move her upstairs. But that is one thing I am going to do at the end of the year is have a long talk with her about that and about what she needs to do to stay. It is going to be an interesting talk.

Obviously you don't want them teaching something they don't want to teach because you don't want them to be a miserable employee, but I don't know, I am actually kind of looking forward to it just because, I was telling one of the AP's today when I saw him, I said "With me not disciplining her, the other teachers are complaining about me, or they have the chance to because I am not keep her in line or whatever. She is tardy to school sometimes or she is on her own schedule as far as what she is doing lesson plan wise. I need to do a better job of telling her to get on board". This is someone I partnered, worked with on my team, we were very close, does a great job, and the reason I know she doesn't want to move is we had to move one teacher last year and because she had taught there the longest we gave her the choice if she wanted to move upstairs or not, she said not. So I know she doesn't want to move.

I don't eat lunch with those teachers, I get along with them all but it would be weird, I don't think they would want me in there, I think they need their time alone to away from me so I eat with the administrators. I like to be around people, I like to talk, look around, there is times I eat in here when I get a chance, this stinks, I want to eat with people. It is funny; the higher up you go the less friends you have almost. Because you can't be going out drinking with the boys anymore.

My principal basically told me when I got the job, he said "You are no longer a teacher, you are an administrator, and you can't be talking about some of the stuff that we talk about behind closed doors and you can't talk about personal issues that we are talking about as an admin team", and he said "If you do, I will find out".

And sometimes they pry and I say, guys, I am sorry, there's some things I can't talk about. They are fine, I don't get that anymore, they respect that part of this and they know I am in a different position. But, the freshman academy where I was, we have had some turnover, there's been some new teachers, they don't see me as a teacher with them, they only know me as an administrator, which is good. My biggest problem I think is dealing with confrontation, I don't deal with it very well. And again I think part of it has to do with being here and being with people who are my friends or people I have worked with and I have actually thought about moving on to another school in the next couple of years.

Leadership

Well I look ... When I look at my job, you know when you talk about different type of leadership styles, I mean I totally believe in the servant leadership, you know I feel like I'm ... that's what I'm there for ... I'm there ... I'm not ... I definitely don't wanna be an

authoritarian ... I don't need to be, most teachers do a great job, but anything I can do to help and you know we talked about ... The last time we talked, some of the things I expected to do, you know I try to do just because I want them to understand I'm not just telling em what to do, I'm also doing it. I feel like that whole servant leadership aspect is important.

We all cover classes when needed just to give them a break I'm always in the hallways between classes, cause I expect them to be ... I tell them to all make phone calls if you need to for absences, cause I know that we expect them to, so ... So, I think that's important for the teachers to know that you know we're not just sitting around with our feet kicked up, we're working, just like they are for the same thing, so ... You know one of the things that I think you gotta do is and like I said before, I definitely do not view myself as an authoritarian ... You have to have good working relationships with everybody in your building and one of the ways to do that is by doing it yourself, being more of plow horse than a show horse ...

Again, if you, my opinion is if you start getting on them and yelling at a teacher, degrade them or be mean, whatever you want to say, you are not going to get anything from them when you need them. I feel like if I put forth the effort with my discipline and support them as a teacher with their discipline, if I show them I am working, a lot of times I will cover classes when teachers need it because I want them to see hey, I am not asking you to cover classes, I am covering them too. And I need favors done, if I need a class covered or if I need, we did an assembly in there and I need teachers on planning period to come help out, I hope they won't hesitate knowing I have supported them and I treat them within a team respect, I don't degrade or yell at them. And I think that's the

tough part, I got to remember or, I remember as a teacher, I know how some teachers are. You don't want to upset some teachers to the point where they are going, there is a lot of gossipers, you know how gossipers are, I don't want to be trashed because I am doing what I am supposed to do.

Transitioning

If I went to another school I am not saying I would have, I hope I wouldn't have, but maybe the power would have gone to my head a little more, I had no one to keep me in check.

I would like to venture out and try another school, another leadership style, and also deal with other teachers than people I have known for the last 8 years. I kind of want to pick where I go, so I could pick ... just learning from a ... And my principal is great, I love my principal. I think if I could categorize myself in a style, it would not be his, just cause I think he's more laid back and I'd be more of a ... more of a ... And I don't want to say hands-on, but more strict ...and so I'm kind hoping that ... That's another reason I kind of want to move, is just to kind of pick a ... A leader that's more closely related to what I am or something like that, so ...

Well I mean I guess ... I got a lot to learn before I become a principal, I know I'm not a smart man, I'm just smart enough to know that. And so kinda what I'm doing is I'm trying to take in ... Every opportunity that I can I wanna ... I don't wanna just be a manager, I wanna be able to do curriculum, I wanna be able to look at the schedule and I'm trying to just you know any chance I get I'm gonna step in and you know observe or get involved in with different things and again I know that I have ... I know that I got ... When I analyze myself and what I've done this year, there's some things I gotta work

out. You know I'm not good with confrontation, I'm not good with You know and part of that's being that I've known these teachers a long time and when they do something wrong ... When I gotta deal with a situation where the teachers did something wrong, its hard and I don't like doing that stuff, but I've gotta get better at it.

So this has been actually, I thought this was going to be more difficult because I worked with these guys so much closer, I think it's been easier being in this position, not easy, but easier. I thought it was going to be a lot more difficult coming to this position over them than it would be going to my 10th 11th grade.

But the more I get into it the more I don't care as much, I just got to do what's right and whatever they argue and say is oh well and I use the analogy with my principal, we met last year and I told the teachers this, I said I am trying to see it through all your points of view, and different subject areas because I honestly when I first started I always looked at it through social studies, I said when you guys see things happening you don't really see it through your, small vision, when I see it I have to see big picture, I have to see it with the parents, student you guys myself, and if you guys don't agree with what the principal does, you got to remember he is seeing it through this point of view, he is seeing all us. You got to remember that. It was interesting, that, I explained that to them, I think they realized the decisions I make they may not agree with all the decisions I make, but I am doing what I think is the best decision in the whole aspect.

You know it's funny I've been here ... See when I was in high school, we had a lot of teachers that were there for you know their whole career and they were just icons, everybody had them and I thought that was awesome, I kinda wanted to be there, you know if I could be, but you know I hope I had done a good job and I want em to ... You

know I loved this school right away, so I could see myself being here forever. And then I thought that when I got this job, people said yeah you know it's good to move around, it's good to see different schools, different styles and I was like no way I want to stay here forever, you know I love it, but I can see myself moving.

Lynn

Lynn is a second year assistant principal in the Upstate of South Carolina. She moved to SC from California with her husband in 2000, leaving behind a business career as regional manager in the food service industry. While looking for a new managerial position in the Upstate, Lynn worked as a substitute teacher and developed a love for teaching and education. After discussions with her husband and daughter, she applied for a position teaching computer applications and business courses at a nearby high school. Her background and subject area allowed her to pursue a teaching certificate through South Carolina's Program of Alternative Certification (PACE). She began teaching in January of 2001. Having worked in upper management previously, Lynn quickly began to work towards earning an Educational Specialist's degree in school administration. After teaching 9 ½ years she accepted an assistant principal position at her current school. When I interviewed Lynn, she was at the end of her second year as an assistant principal in the school where she was previously a teacher.

Entry to Education as a Career

I had a business background, so I had my resumes and I was sending them out. In the meantime, I decided I'd do some substitute teaching while I was looking. I applied in the district, and I ended up subbing at two schools. Everyone thought I was a teacher looking for a teaching position, and asked, different ones would ask me about it, I'd say,

“no, I’m not a teacher, I’m in business”, and they said, “Well, you ought to be a teacher, do you have a degree?” and I would answer, “Yes, I have a business degree from Loyola Marymount University out in California” and, they said, “Well, they have a program called PACE,” and explained what that was, the alternative certification program, and about the critical subject areas. So, I, in the meantime, every day when I’d come home from work at dinner with my daughter and my husband, I’d talk about my day, and I’d tell some anecdotes, and my husband said, “you know, I think they’re right, maybe you ought to go on and look into the teaching, because it sounds like you really enjoy it.” I was subbing. Now, the good thing about that, what was so good about it, I was in an elementary school and a high school. I very quickly could see I preferred being with the high school student, I did a good job with the elementary kids, but I couldn’t see me involved in that, and I, and I’m convinced I made the right choice to go to high school. Because at first, I was just kind of blowing it off. But, I did look into it, and I entered the PACE program. As part of PACE, you can, you can secure a position and go through your classes at the same time, and the principal here, hired me and I started in January of 2001 here at this school, while I was completing the PACE program. Teaching computer applications, keyboarding, business courses, because it turned out my business administration degree was in a critical subject for business.

I was a really good teacher, I thought I was a really good teacher. What was real good about it, teaching business, I’ve been in the business world, so I wasn’t just talking, you know, book information, because included, even though that’s a computer hands-on type class, I could relate things to the real world to the students. They enjoyed stories I could tell them related to what we were doing. I used a lot of humor in my teaching. I was

no nonsense, disciplinarian, I am a parent, I have four children, two boys, two girls, I've had, I always talk about one daughter was valedictorian of her class, and I have a son who was a challenge all the way in his adolescent years, so I've had it, the gamut.

Now, I should also say that, when I, from my, my previous work experience, I've, I was in management, and so, getting into teaching, at first it was like, "Oh, this is fun, you know, and I can work a few hours a day, Monday through Friday, weekends off, holidays off, the long summers, this is great," because I had been in restaurant management, fast food management some years back, and, you didn't know what a holiday was, or a weekend, or, you know, that kind of thing, and, so, this was, this was just easy. The pay I thought wasn't the greatest, but fortunately, you know, I'm married and we have a good income, so I, I used to always tell the students, "I'm not here for the money, you know," I truly enjoyed what I was doing, and I got paid for it.

I think that they also looked up to me and respected me. Another benefit, I had was that this was a second or third career for me, getting into education, so I had previous work experience in working with people, all ages. If, if there was something that they had an issue with the principal about, or didn't agree about something, or certainly about another teacher, about how to handle a situation with a student, they came to me, and they knew that whatever they said to me was in confidence, without their telling me that. They knew that I had the good sense to know that this is between us, and, that makes a big difference, I think. But, yes, they came to me, I thought that they looked up to me and respected me, and, and we got along, well, now.

Assistant Principal Duties

Okay, and, so, a lot of the functions, the faculty handbook, the student handbook, a lot of things to do with power school and grade books and summer school and all that, I handle. We all, you know, handle lunch duty. I have morning bus duty, while the other AP's handle hall duty and then I handle car riders at the end of the building. I handle teacher grades, and you know, the interims and report cards, those kind of things. I also am in charge of calling the subs, so like, when a teacher needs to be out, they have to call me. Other duties, like textbooks, staff development, registration, Safe T evaluations, and those kind of things. It's busy.

Well, you know, we're divided into three sets of alphabet, and we try to balance that out. Of course, you have some overlap, some female issues, they'll have more so with me than with others, but, yeah, I'd, I'd say 250 or so. And, so, from, from dealing with 75 students a semester to 250 a year, I just think that I have a lot to offer and I can, for all students, and I can affect that better in this role than in one classroom.

I was a disciplinarian in the classroom, I, I ran a tight ship, and, but my kids learned, and we had fun in there, and, I think, that's how I am now with these, with the population. You don't get to know them all by name, but I try, you know, near as I can.

Relationships with Teachers

I never got into the little issues, personality issues, things like that, that come up between people, like, you're in the lunchroom, the teachers' lunchroom, and some of the conversations, if they weren't the type that I felt I should be, I didn't want to be in the company of, as a Christian I didn't want to be in them, and then also in terms of the work environment, I didn't think they were healthy. So, things that were going on like that, I

didn't buy into, I wasn't part of. So much so that, when I needed to just eat in my own room, I did, and I did it quite often.

And, and, yeah, as an administrator, well, I mean, it makes a difference, some people are single, they have nobody else to talk to, or, you know, something like that, so this is their place with adults to converse or whatever, and like-minded because you're in the same building, but I just think that you should not do that.

As a first year teacher, I wasn't the 20 year old, 22 year old whatever, so, I mean, whatever, we had that in common, we were first year teachers, but, after that, then you got kids, you got kids my age, okay, you can have that in common.

Now, as a, as a AP, we eat lunch together because you got the certain lunch, we sit together, we eat, we kind of talk about what's going on, what happened this morning, and what we're gonna do about that, and then, and then the sports, what's in the news, it's maybe something with the family, you know. I, I don't have a teacher here that I spend, I was thinking about that the other day, I don't think I have a teacher I spend any more time with than another. I try to touch base where I can when I can, as schedule permits, just, "how's the kids," or, "what's going on with that," or, like I call subs this year, so, if you know, I mean, they confided in you that they're seeing the doctor for a certain ailment, I mean, you, you can comment about it. I mean, you know, with that person. I don't say it to anybody else.

By the same token, we're connected, and they see me as a part of it. They know how I've always been involved in that contest, behind the feathers, and the whole thing. The fact that I've been here and I know the history of it (the school) and some of the little quirks we've had with it. I was in the media center with the library assistant and she was

asking, "Who was it last year, and what about the year before that", because we have the pictures out. Then we went to the yearbook and we put them all in line. Then we could talk about the stories that went with each one, and the fun it was or whatever; but the other two AP's, they can't.

I mean, this happened just recently, too, where a teacher was talking about a student and something that was going on. She said to me, "Well, you know, you remember how you had such and such experience with a student when you were teaching."

Then, she even went on to say, sort of the-, "Well, you've only been in AP a couple of years", which is also a very big part, I think, of being an assistant, that you're not so far removed from the classroom that you lose the sensitivity to what the teachers deal with on a daily basis.

This person had knowledge of my practices in the classroom, and my successes or whatever. So I mean, they had that already. I'm not trying to prove anything to them or whatever; aside from that as an assistant principal, listen to the teachers, try to give them what they want, in terms of resolution of a problem.

If it's removing a student, if it's the discipline for something that has occurred with that student, it goes a long way with the teachers to keep them on your side. It really does come down to you giving them as much support as you can.

My caveat is always how I dealt with them as peers, as teacher-to-teacher. I mean, I was friendly; you know, you're-, what's the word-, the camaraderie was there, but it was still professional. I think that makes a difference.

If you were one of the hell-raisers, one of the gossipers, one of the naysayers, the negative nannies that was working in that school as a teacher, and then you become an

assistant principal, they don't forget that; just like, I think, they don't forget the positives about you.

Leadership

My leadership style, well, is transformational. You have to have the input of the faculty, teachers, and, but you know, the responsibility for organizational leaders falls on the school leader, the admin team.

It has become very evident that the more I show students and teachers that I care about them and their success, the more they care about their role. I've learned now that management and educational leadership are not the same, okay, but, but even in the business world, because my husband is still in the business world, they, that mindset has come around too. It's not so much of managing, telling people what to do, and, and leading, as it is coaching and getting people to buy in and come alongside you and work together for a common goal. Because you can't try to wield power in, in this type of setting.

I mean, there's overlap in there, and, and that the leadership skills that I had in business are transferrable here, and again haven't, having the experience of working with people throughout my careers, I've managed people younger than me, the same age as me, older than me, and, you've got the same thing in this position.

One is that I've been in management before, and I've had to have conversations with, with my employees, and then the other thing as far as I've been in leadership roles already with them, and, and, telling them like it is kind of thing. But, no, I don't have a problem with telling them what I have to tell them. Even when we're talking about teachers that I used to work with.

I'm, I'm very direct. Although my husband says I beat around the bush, I know I'm very diplomatic too, and I, and I will do that. One of the things that as an administrator, whether I've been at this school or any other school, teachers are their own breed of person, and I don't know exactly how to describe them. But I think they do constantly need to be validated and appreciated, and, and administration has to make sure that we massage that.

Transitioning

And, and when I, when I started in, in teaching, I don't know, I already had in my mind I wanted to be an administrator because, that's my mindset. When I finished my ED leadership degree, and my husband said, "Okay, now you know you've got to leave District 6." I said, "Yeah, I know." I've kind of lamented that for a minute, but I knew. I mean, I didn't want to just sit here with an ED leadership degree and still be in the classroom, but I did like where I was.

Well, the first thing my husband said was, "now, you know, you gotta leave District, this district," I said, "oh, yeah, I know, I'm willing", and I did, I, I did send this last round, I did send my resumes, everything, to different schools. But, we both know, my husband and I both know that just like in business, you know, you've got the powers that be moving the chess pieces around. They're looking down the pipe, who's in the schools, who looks good, they, they, I mean, any good manager is gonna, they should be asking their principals, "Who do you have in your building that looks good," and, "What degree does that one have," you know, etc., and, I think the same happens in every one of these districts. so, I'm here, I'm visible, my superintendent was aware of me, my principal was aware of me, so, that part is good.

Now, the other aspect is, I like this school, and I love the concept of a ninth grade academy; I think it is, I think it's brilliant. I think it is so necessary, and I think it's worthwhile and I think it's, it's successful, it is really successful. I've done some research on it for here, and I have compared numbers in the past, and that type of thing.

That's why I was willing to leave, yeah, but now, I live in the neighboring district, so, yes, I applied there, I applied at all over. My preference would, would have been to be at a ninth grade school, but, I would have gone high school.

I knew everyone and they knew me, they knew what kind of teacher I was and that I handled my business. I mean, I taught on B wing for seven years and had the reputation for being a good disciplinarian and funny enough, tough with the dress code.

So it travels fast. Perfunctory or not? I got the congrats, I got emails, I had phone calls here and there, heard the news, that kind of thing, because, in the interview, let's see, we had, there were three teachers, three faculty members in the interview, outgoing AP, current principal and the guidance counselor. So, you're talking three teachers and the guidance counselor, I mean, there wasn't like it was some big secret that I had interviewed, so, and, and we do have Facebook. "I read it on Facebook, congratulations," you know, that kind of stuff, so, so yes, I got the congrats from everybody, like I said, perfunctory or not. Now, I think the next thing became, the general sense I got is, great, now we have somebody who's a teacher like us here, who's like-minded maybe, knows a lot of the things we're concerned about, and you'll help do some building for us kind of thing. What kind of stuff were they, they seeming seemed the most concerned about, a weird one was dress code.

There are two teachers that I felt, I don't know, I don't think it was so much that I was not qualified for it, but maybe that, that they would have liked to have had it. But, they don't have the degrees, they never applied for a position like that, so it isn't like they were vying for the same spot or anything like that. I, the vibe I'm always get from them is, "I'm smart, I'm on top of it," and its like, Yeah, nobody said, no one ever said you weren't," But I just think, maybe they think that they needed some validation from me or something. I don't know, let's say, I really feel it's more from their side, it's not something about me that I said or did or whatever, but just that, so, yeah, maybe it's just more a part of their personalities.

So, you know, coming in new, I didn't have to learn the rules, the policies, the school climate and stuff like that, I already knew all that stuff. It was, I knew most of the teachers and I knew how the day went. I have worked, worked with the teachers here for nine years, I knew what was up. What I had to see was the behind the scenes workings of the school, you know, the things that teachers don't see.

And, again, a lot of it did kind of come naturally, some of them did. Yeah, I, I had teachers that come to me. There was a teacher once who was suspended, I guess you could say, for three days and whatever, he was kind of upset about it, and I said, "well, you did this, this and this. He's right, you know, and I know you don't like it, but, he was right about that. Now, what should you have done?" And we kind of talked through some things, I've talked a couple off the ledge, they were gonna quit, I, I talked, you know, I talked them off the ledge about that, you know, because, again, they can kind of like little prima donnas, male and female. And, I've done that, and, I've gone on my planning

period, I've gone in and sat in teachers' classes, observed them, and then critiqued them with them about their teaching

And this was as a teacher, nobody told me to do it or whatever. Now, I did, I have, I've had three teachers ask me, "can I come in and watch you, because I have Johnny Brown in my class, and he's doing this, this and this, and I can't get anything out him. But in your class, he's got this, this and this and you don't ever have any problems out of him – what are you doing, I wanna, you know learn," and so we, we had that where I would let them come, "yeah, come on in, observe me,". I will come observe them, and say stuff, and, again, it was just between us, they could take it or leave it. The principal didn't know, nobody else knew, it was just between us. And, that builds you some cred right there, you know.

Now, the other two AP's, I won't, I won't call their names, they are, well, they talk and carry on with the teachers more than I ever did. I mean, they are professional, but they are, I think, now this is just me, too friendly with them. I think, it would be harder for them to separate that as an administrator.

Susan

Susan is a first year assistant principal at a medium sized high school in the Upstate of South Carolina. Susan's interest in teaching developed through her love of coaching. She was a college athlete and later a college coach and junior Olympic team coach. Susan's first college degree was in biology and she hoped to go on to become a physical therapist. After college, she began work for her family's steel manufacturing and production company as a salesperson. She coached at two local colleges and took courses to earn a master's degree in education. Susan decided that she could not make enough

money on a single teacher's salary, so she continued to work in the family business after she finished her degree. She married and moved to the Upstate of South Carolina in 2001 and applied for a teaching position at a nearby middle school. She taught science and coached high school sports, eventually moving to the high school to teach and coach for six years. In 2008, she was named school athletic director and served in that role for 4 years. During her time as athletic director, Susan completed a second master's degree in school administration. She accepted the assistant principalship at her high school in 2012.

Entry to Education

My interest in students came through sports, I wanted to coach and that was a passion of mine. I went on my very first interview at Malcolm Middle and was hired on the spot and so I spent one year there and that was in 2001. The parents here at Blake knew me through coaching, they were having a transition of coaches so they went to him and said, she teaches science, we've done our research, she teaches science, she's new to the area, we want her to coach. I loved teaching seventh grade, but I also loved high school, because again, the competition part of it. So I started teaching full time here as a biology teacher in 2002 and I have been here ever since.

The first three years that Mr. Caldwell (the principal) assigned me the athletic director. In this county, you're labeled as a teacher and the AD is just a supplement like it would be a generic coaching supplement. So it's designed that AD's are supposed to be actively in the classroom. Mr. Caldwell had the availability to use me in small capacities, duties more than anything else, I was lunchroom duty, I was hall duty, I was parking lot duty, so I did a lot of the junk menial task that administration don't like, but I had the availability to do it, plus I knew a lot of the kids through the athletics, cause we have

about 800 kids who participate in sports. So that helped and that's a different connection that the kids have, I'm not a strict disciplinary because I was kind of in that middle role, so I could get a lot of things accomplished without being the heavy, it used me very well to that degree.

My last year we had a change over in the leadership program and our student council needed a sponsor and that actually was a first period class is the way it's designed. So he asked me to join forces and be that leadership sponsor, which meant I taught that class.

Assistant Principal Duties

I have a lot more responsibility as AP. So all of us roll in between 7:30 and 7:45 and every administrator is on hall duty. Once that first period bell starts at 8:15 and the kids have, somewhat free range, they could be in the cafeteria having breakfast or hanging out, or they can actually hang out in the team hall and talk to their friends. That's an hour of a holding pattern.

So we are supervisory, that includes the buses coming in, that includes, you know, anybody who needs to talk to an administrator about a phone being taken the day before, any of that kind of comes down to that first hour. So we are not really allowed to schedule meetings or do anything because we need to be a visible presence.

And then at that point, second period, I normally we get everybody, everybody's in the building by 9:15 and started their day, so my office is up on the third floor, we each have a floor where we are kind of home based, that's normally when I go through my first business of the day is e-mails and referrals from the day before, because I normally tap

into referrals twice a day. I'll hit them in the morning and I'll hit them after lunch and that way I don't get such a bad stack.

Tenth graders I don't have as many, probably it's like my senior cohort because she's dealing with seat time recovery, graduation, a lot more skipping because their driving, those kinds of things, I have more tardies and, you know, being ugly to teachers, or can't keep your hands off each other and that sort of thing. So I'll go through all of that, answering my phone calls, answer e-mails and also get my discipline squared away and then our principal requires us to go to the classrooms to talk about discipline unless it is something that requires a student/parent conversation. He doesn't want to interrupt instructional time and so we don't call the kids to our office, we go find them. Between second and third period that 9 to 10:30 hour, that's what I'm doing. I'm roaming the halls doing discipline, catching up with teachers if they've got any issues we need to deal with. By that point, I'll swing by guidance and make sure that I don't have any conferences with my 10th grade guidance counselor or discuss any issues.

Fourth period, which is right before lunch, that's when I'm normally hitting the gym, go down and talk to the coaches, make sure that everything is squared away with them.

So it's just conversation and just communication, that's a big thing with me especially in the mornings, and then lunch, lunch shifts are fun, we have three lunch shifts, we start at 12:25 and they end almost at two. All of us either have to be again, in the team hall duty, or in the cafeteria visible during all three-lunch shifts.

The principal likes the administration to be seen and visible through the building so we are constantly moving and monitoring. So then sixth period is roughly two, that's

when I actually get to sit, so I normally take that hour to do whatever cleanup I have to do. If I have, we have conference period meetings for all the teachers, he likes for us to be in there, so I'll pop in during that hour if those are assigned, if not it's another catch up on e-mails or answer phone calls.

I'm the last one to come down the stairs from administration, because I am up on the third floor, so I do clean sweeps and kick them out. We kick them out to the two doors, half go to the student parking lot, half go to the bus lot and then we have bus duty until the last bus leaves and then you're either assigned to stay or you get to go. Normally I'm out of here around 4:15.

Worse part is bus duty, I hate bus duty, I just can't stand it. They're done for the day, everybody's tired and then if the busses are late they're frustrated and that kind of stuff, that's probably the worst duty part of the job.

My first month, we had a spree of three fights in one day. It was like, it was hour after hour, after hour, so we still hadn't gotten rid of the kids from the first fight from when we were called to the second fight. Because that lag time of contact parents, get the statements, get the parents to pick the kids up and all that, so we were backing up and backing up and I'm one that I won't shy away from that kind of stuff. I'll get in there and I'll physically pull them apart because I can, so why not.

Probably another thing is the teachers that don't see the big picture or don't care to see the big picture. They want you to, you know, discipline the kid, hang them from a noose because again, they crinkled up their paper to loudly or, you know, why didn't you kick them out of school because they were so disruptive. They don't see that we have to give chances, we have to do this or I can't send them home, there's nobody there. I mean

I've had kids have to sit in my office for a cooling down period because they cannot go back to that teacher, but I really need them to finish their last two periods because they're struggling anyway.

Relationships with Teachers

As AD, I dealt with half the school and now I am in charge of 10th grade and a third of ninth. So I roughly only have 400 kids and parents and discipline issues. So even though they are repeat offenders, quite a few of them, that reduced my discipline or my parent contact in half.

I think also my interest in still knowing a lot of the kids has helped me too. If I had come straight out of the classroom and gone straight into AP you would have gone from 150 to 1,500 and not knowing those kids, not knowing those faces would be very overwhelming and I was very fortunate with all of my additional ties with the school that I knew those faces. I knew their names and they knew me. They already knew that I was loud in the halls, they already knew that I could punish them in the halls, things like that, so I already had that respect to start off. I didn't have to earn it, I had already earned it.

One of the things that I hate the most about my particular situation is I have good friends in the building that I can't talk to as personal friends on some topics because there is a line with things of knowledge. Some things I know that I'm supposed to know as an AP, and administration and a district employee, not a Blake High School family member so to speak.

I'm very fortunate that the ladies that I do have close bonds with understand that line and if I'm quiet they know that I'm not being rude, I just can't participate, so they

don't push the issue. But, I've had to design it that way, because some wanted to use that influence to try and draw information and you have to separate from that.

So that has definitely been a difficult challenge and it continues because it even goes into the teacher realm too. If I had a good rapport with a teacher as a fellow teacher, he or she thinks that they can send me their problems and I'll fix them as a personal favor, instead of going through possibly the proper channels, which could be another person in the building.

So that's been ... I've been fortunate that I've got a nice core group of men and women that understand that kind of respect level and how you can separate and then there's another group that get offended, because they've asked a favor and if you don't do it right off or do it the way they want, then they take personal offence and so they give you a little cold shoulder.

And it took about six/seven months for those to really come really into play, and here this last spring they're starting to really kind of spread their heads up a little bit more at the beginning. I think they all knew I was a newbie and were gonna leave me alone for a while and now its ... Anything goes and here it comes all at once.

And that was hard and I seemed to have a closer group of core friends when the ladies are older than myself ... The ladies that are my age or a little bit younger, there's tension there and I don't know why, but they have a harder time separating my job and some of the things that I can't disclose because of my job with our friendship. They want to use the friendship to get information. The older ladies just have a conversation and can really care about myself and my family and not ... We don't have to talk at school . The younger ones, it always loops back around about a student in the building or a

meeting that we've had or something like that. So, I unfortunately have had to distance and stop a lot of outside communication with some of them.

Because I think that's using me and that upsets me, because I have never thought of myself as being someone that does that anyway and then when they get angry about it, it really does ... Yeah I mean its hurtful. But in the same sense I have to kinda go on with it and nine times out of ten I just kind of blow it off and that tenth day there's a beautiful track out back and I'll go take a walk and get my head back straight and come back in and go on with life.

One of the other challenges was, we are assigned by our principal who to do teacher evaluations with. They have to be impromptu observations. So even though I'm giving my ... I've been given my list the week prior, I can't pre-warn that I'll walk in. And one of the ladies that I walked in, she was like oh heavens no not today and I was like just ignore more, we're good you know and she did just fine, she was a veteran teacher, she's fantastic in the way she approaches our kids. Everything went well, but she was very nervous, because I was the one in there and she said she did fine with everybody else, but when I walked in there, just for some reason, she felt extra nervous and I said well good, so did and we both survived, so we're okay. So we definitely had a conversation afterwards. Most of the first round that I did, a lot of them were good close friends and that ... You gotta jump in and do it ...

But I did look at their schedules and make sure that their classes weren't completely full ... You know I didn't want to walk in on a class of 35 and then have to sit at their desk. To me that's intimidating enough and then who knows what's there. I never liked that as a teacher, so those kinds of things I try not to do to other people. So ... But

that's okay ... Again I write down a lot of examples, I do a lot of explanations of my decisions, so I've got a lot to back up complaints

Leadership

I do have the ability to see a larger picture than just an inside classroom. I still got a long way to go, I still don't see it all and I still don't necessarily have every stakeholder's opinion in my repertoire during my decision making, I may be missing somebody and then I have to go back and you know reassess, but yes I think that I'm here for a reason and I think I was pulled out of the classroom for a reason and I think what I do is valuable. And if I had been in a classroom, some of the things that I've been able to bring forth to the table to make Blake better, would not have happened.

I still got a lot to learn about who to trust, when to say things, when not to say things and to curb the emotion. I mean it's a daily trial and most days I win that battle, but I still ... I don't know if its female or if it's just me, but emotion can get to me and I've got to have a cool head if I want to be able to be running things.

I think my ultimate plan would be I would like to run a middle school. I know that sounds strange because I've not been in a middle school other than one year. But the middle school is time for my family and my house, not for my career. My husband is in the medical field and he's looking at switching over to second shift, can't do that with small children and me be late hours, and also with them getting older, I'd like to watch them, I'd like them to do more things outside of school hours. So that's probably where I'm kind of headed, now that may change, I don't know. The District likes to be in AP for at least three years unless you switch over, me stay here for those three years, there again, I don't know. I'm spoiled, Blake is a great school, there's not a lot of yucky

horrible disciplines. My days are not physically and emotionally so draining that I want to leave. So I'm very blessed where I am, so for me to make a change it would have to be the right circumstances and it probably will involve my personal family if I do move.

Transitioning

Absolutely, it's been much harder. The transition from teacher to AD was not difficult at all, because I was dealing with adults for the most part outside of the building. It was parents of our athletes and then I was still mainly dealing with children and only children. And it was procedural things, it was scheduling, it was making sure they were on time, they had uniforms, I was ... Again all of my conversations and decisions dealt with a lot of outside of the building issues and then coverage of games and that type of stuff, making sure that my coaches were doing the right thing, following up, and being visible. This transition has been making sure that everything that I'm in charge of and my responsibilities are within line of parameters of not only our school, but our principal. So absolutely, the transition has definitely been different and I have definitely needed guidance.

Well there's several transitions that have been not necessarily difficult to overcome, but things that you have to be aware of. The first one certainly is the reputation between a classroom of students and then the whole student body, because when I was a teacher rapport with a 150 kids. And I dealt with just them and their parents and their issues and they knew I was a strict teacher, they either liked me or didn't like me, but there were rules, but it stayed within those four walls. Then when I got out of the classroom, I was given partial administrative duties, but not completely, so I still didn't have that power or even that knowledge of kids.

I didn't know what happened when it left the building, especially a disciplinary action if you were talking an expulsion type a situation or situations like that, so that has been a tough transition of mine to know who to call when. My principal is a great resource, but unfortunately he's not here in the building or available all the time. And that's one of the things that I don't ever want to diminish is what he's accomplished in this building. So his pride in my work has really vamped up, because he's given me so much authority that I don't want to make mistakes that can lose face in his eyes.

Yes in my first month yeah, it was that, so that's when you call, the husband was like, what did I do, why did I make this choice, you know, for once I feel like I need to take my heels off and walk barefoot kind of thing. But you have some really cool things, we had grades this week and my low level kids are coming and showing me their report cards. That's an achievement, and so that makes it worth it even though they're just, you know, they can get to you and you just are so frustrated and you repeat yourself 18,000 times and they're not your own flesh and blood, and they're not six, they're 16, it's worth it at the end of the day.

There are people in this building that you can generate laughter with every day, and it may not be the same one, but you have enough in place that if you really need that, it's here, and so the mix of the family atmosphere is very beneficial and the integrity, they respect me, I feel that they respect me, I don't have to show it, they know what I'm doing is right, we're all doing the same thing and so that's probably the best part is, I don't have to prove myself, I'm okay, I can do that.

Jennifer

Jennifer is a first year assistant principal at a small elementary magnet school in the Upstate of South Carolina. As the daughter of an educator, Jennifer originally pursued a medical degree after high school but soon changed her degree to early childhood education. After graduation, she secured a position teaching 2nd grade and later 3rd grade. After eight successful years at her first school, she was invited to join the faculty of a new magnet elementary school in her district, teaching 2nd grade and later 3rd grade. During this time, Jennifer began work on her administration degree. In the summer of 2012, an administrative position came open at her current school and she applied. Though she was still in the process of completing her administrative degree, she was offered and accepted the position. When I interviewed Jennifer, she was completing her first year in administration.

Entry to Education

My mom is a teacher assistant so I've always been in and out of schools my entire career and just seeing her work with children even though it's from a teacher assistant standpoint, still being involved in helping her do bulletin boards, set up her classroom, and just her passion for working with kids I think kind of got passed on. That's what we sometimes said in this profession is that sometimes it's a family tradition almost. I started my first job as a teacher for a school in Caldwell County as second grade teacher. My principal saw a lot of potential in me and moved me to third grade, So I taught at that school for eight years and eight very, very successful school years. I was named teacher of the year twice there. I had a very good track record for student achievement and reaching students who came from underprivileged backgrounds. It was

a Title I school, we have two in our state at that point that were considered to be 100% free in reduced lunch, poverty. One was in the lower part and one was at the school that I started at for eight years. And from there I was contacted in 2010 to come teach at this school. This school is of course a brand new school and the principal was recruiting what he refers to as, "The best of the best." So based on my reputation in the district, based on my test scores, I was invited to come teach here.

But when I got to this school we have a phenomenal principal who I consider to be a transformational leader, and that is seeing ability and potential in people and kind a pushing and encouraging them to move forward and to pursue things that they may not pursue on their own. And she definitely played a tremendous role in me wanting to go into administration.

So 2010, I started working here as a second grade teacher. The demographics of this school are similar to the other school but it is a little bit different. This is a choice school so we are basically serving students within the intended zone which is very small, it's only a mile and a half radius, and students in the attendance zone 90% or more of the students are free and reduced lunch.

I taught second grade for one year. The first year we were open we were K through two, so each year we added on a grade. So last year we added on third grade, no the year before last we added on third grade. Last year we added on fourth, and this year we will add on fifth. So after teaching my second year, I mean my first year here I looped up to third grade to teach third grade with pretty much the same class that I came in with the first year. And test scores came back, I had 100% of my students pass the ELA writing. I had 98% to pass the math. I mean everyone in my class basically passed except

for maybe one or two people. And they weren't passing with just met they were passing with exemplary 5 scores. I mean our entire grade level did well but my principal tells me, she's like, "You have the highest test scores."

So this position came open in July and the principal basically said, "I know you're in this program I'm not sure what direction you want to go in if you want to go IC route, instructional coach, or if you would be interested in applying for this position because I would be honored to have you as my assistant principal"

Assistant Principal Duties

My day starts at 7 o'clock at the latest. One of my responsibilities is buses. So I, along with two other staff members, greet the students, get them off the bus. Typically the way with one bus driver in particular, we have at least a couple of disciplinarian referrals that happen. I get the students off the bus, I chat with the bus drivers to update me about any concerns they have. Then I walk the students to the cafeteria and they have breakfast and I am in there mainly as a presence to monitor behavior, to trouble shoot any problems that may be occurring in there.

After breakfast is over, it just depends. Like each day is very, very, different and I think that's one of the main differences between being in a classroom and a role in administration. In the classroom, even though we say every day is different, in the classroom it is different in I think a different regard. In the classroom you still have some sense of structure, you still have a sense of well, at least I know I am going to teach reading at 9 o'clock, I'm going to teach math, we go to lunch, we go to recess, my day is over. Administration is not like that.

So typically, it would be after I leave the cafeteria I would go to my office, I would check emails. Very quickly, I would run through my calendar to just kind of give me a snap shot of what I have planned, so I can plan for the unplanned things. Then once a week with the admin team on Mondays, we meet as an admin team to go over any concerns the principal may have and then for other members of the team to put on the table any concerns that we may have as well.

During the day classroom observations take place. My principal assigned me to Third Grade and K5 to complete their observations. I have two teachers who are going through formal evaluation and so I go in and do the formal observations for them. At the beginning of year, I was also responsible for making the schedules for lunch, related arts, those two. So, at the beginning of the year I spent a lot of my time in the cafeteria to make sure that what I had in place was running effectively and efficiently.

During the day just being very visible to the teachers, to the students and making sure that I am a presence and just building those relationships and rapports within the community with parents is really important. So that you are seen as an approachable leader and someone that they would feel comfortable with if and when they do have problems.

Then lunch, and after that, it just depends when the teachers have problems with discipline they call me. On Wednesday's we have faculty meetings at 2:45 until whatever time we get finished. And then every day I am also responsible for afternoon dismissal. This year I was playing a really huge part in basically changing our previous dismissal system over to a much more efficient system that uses a Smartphone. I key in the numbers, the numbers come up, they go directly to each teacher's classes, and we cut our

dismissal time like in half, I mean literally by fifty percent. So every day I go out at 2:20ish and do the car line and come back, and any issues that come up with parents or the buses and all of that I try to address.

At the drop of a hat, anything can take place and you have to be able to respond to those things, and respond in a very effective manner. It has been very, very overwhelming and I did a really good job in holding it together and staying calm. And no matter how much craziness is going on around me, I just stay calm.

So referrals are huge here. And there are a couple teachers who take advantage of that system and I know they take advantage of it. And I do feel like, there's one teacher in particular, I do feel like she's out to get this particular little girl, she doesn't like her. She's like, "Okay this is her third referral," so she can't come back next year. I mean it is like, "No that's not the case tell me what happened?" Or I try to get the story upfront about what happened and then see if it's a valid referral. And most referrals because I'm still pretty new, I don't want to rattle too many boats, most referrals I go ahead and process, not necessarily a suspension but at least a parent conference. Some teachers really do feel empowered because they feel like it's gonna be an automatic suspension.

And I think going back to, I used to work with these people as teachers and now in situations like that. I guess going back to how teachers perceive me, sometimes I'm not quite sure if they really, I think they respect me but sometimes people kind of test you and see what they can do and kind a feel you out by doing situations.

Relationships with Teachers

The teachers came to me as if I had been doing this job for 20 or 30 years. And that was a little intimidating, because you do at the beginning want to build your credibility as someone that knows what they are doing, they know the job. But at the same time I didn't know the job, I didn't know what I was doing. I learned very early that, "Let me check on that, I will get back to you," is a very good response so I don't tie myself to something that I am not sure of, so I learned that very early on.

Over all it has been a very, very positive growing experience and there have been some growing pains on the way. I think just the demands of trying to get everything done has been intimidating. I feel like people expect you to know everything. Going into IEP meetings can be a little intimidating because you are the administrator so everyone looks at you to be that source of the final answer, the right answer and knowing it all. So having that pressure can be very overbearing sometimes, and then-

At the beginning, I felt safe, using that part, "Well I am new at this, help me out principal." Even then, I didn't want to go to my principal too much because I didn't want her to lose faith and confidence in my decision-making ability. So I had to just do what's right and make decisions that were clear and logical and go with what I know.

And I really have dreaded going into the formal observations because if I do find something that's wrong it's like do I as a former friend and colleague do I say, "Okay you need to fix this before I come in. Or do I just go in and do it the way that I would for any other teacher?" And I'm on two ADEPT teams and I know how to do outside of this school, do I just go in and do it the right way, or do I give her a chance to make it right?

On one hand I'm like, "If I do it the right way and there is something wrong or an issue that I find then will she go and talk to other teacher friends?" And then, her reputation for me is being the mean administrator who came in and did this awkward observation, and then that affects kind of indirectly, it affects my relationship with other teachers. Or do I give her a heads up and say, "I'm coming in make sure everything right." So that part has been one of the most parts that I've dreaded, probably the most. But there really has been days that it has been very stressful and very overwhelming and I just want to go home and go to sleep and not deal with it. Now that part is intimidating, I would have to say.

And then just knowing that my principals gonna see the observation and what it my perspective about a teacher is a little different than hers, and writing something up that's not inline of what she already believes about the teacher, but just that fear of doing something that she doesn't agree with or causing any, not disappointments, but just.

I haven't went to observe her yet, like I really am avoiding it. I really do not want to go in. I already know there is one issue that needs to be fixed. It's a simple issue it's her website. There are eight standards that we have for formal evaluation and one is communication. So part of communication is keeping your website current, and her website isn't current. So it's like do I just tell her, "Update your website," or just send a general email out to the staff. Just those type of questions go through your head on how to deal with it fairly. But then I wouldn't want my principal to find out that I gave her a heads up. I'm probably reading way too much into it.

Leadership

I am definitely a team player, I don't believe that leadership is about one person, I definitely approach it from a shared commitment, shared responsibility approach ... I definitely perform my best when I'm surrounded by other people who share a common vision and a common goal for whatever the project is, whether it's supporting the overall build of our school or in smaller projects and initiatives that we have and I don't approach leadership as you know do what I say ... Do what I say, but more let's sit down together, let's talk, let's bring all of our experiences together and let's come up with the best solution, the best implementation that's really gonna work for our students. So I definitely lead from a team approach and I also lead by example.

I really think it's important that you set the example, set the tone, if you want your teachers to work hard; you have to model working hard. So that's probably a second component of my leadership style is just really leading by example and being that example, because you have so many eyes looking at you all the time and they really do pick up on not only what you say in emails and what you say in faculty meetings, but they're watching what you do and it really sends a strong message when you are modeling what you're asking them to do.

Transitioning

I do think the advantage with moving within the same school outweighs the disadvantages by far. Yeah, definitely moving within the same school. The benefits of that is I think the transition within the job itself is a challenge and just going from classroom to admin is completely ... Can be very overwhelming at times. And not having to worry about getting to know the staff, getting to know the students, getting to know the parents, getting to know my principal, all of those relationships were already established.

So my primary focus was to maintain and to continue to develop those relationships, but my primary focus was doing the job and not having to worry about building those relationships, I think that would be clearly it's doable, because most people do take that route

I still feel a sense of isolation sometimes. I heard someone say that it is lonely at the top, but you are outnumbered. So I definitely do feel that sense of not isolation sense, but I don't feel that people would come to me with gossiping, or just these sort of conversations that I heard last year about other teachers. It just doesn't happen. Or if it does happen, it is in more of a formal setting. But yes, definitely there is some of that.

My perspective, like I was really, really nervous actually. It was almost uncomfortable because now I am their administrator now. Particularly when the team I worked with, we had a four-member team, they all had administration jobs. One actually applied for the job and didn't get it. She transferred to another school though. But for me it was just weird, it was a little awkward that now I am their administrator.

I have just always kept a professional attitude, very positive, and not "getting the big head." But just from my perspective knowing that we are in this for the children, this is not about you, this is not about me. And not verbalizing that of course, but just going in with that type of attitude that what we are here for, what I am here for, I am here for the children. But when you move to that next level, you no longer can be involved in those conversations and they are not going to talk to you about administration.

So it is hard for me to really say how they feel about me moving into this position. But I can say that I really think it is one of respect. I think they respected me as a teacher and I think that respect is carried over as an administrator. And I think that I really was

able to portray myself in the interview and kind of let them in on the type of person and teacher I am in the interview, because when you are in the classroom you don't necessarily get to see behind the scenes of what type of teacher I was, the type of professional I was, or am. But during the interview I was able to really paint my picture. And I think-, they had a vote, they voted for the top two and I made it to the top two. And I don't think if they really did not respect me and think that I couldn't do the job wanted me to do it. I don't think they would have voted me in. So knowing that and just having a representative from each team to go back and talk, you know they do talk. So I think it is one of respect. I think there is mutual respect there. Again, I'll never know! I'll never know what they say behind closed doors.

And I think as an administrator I have a widened influence to do that, I feel like I was kind of limited in my role as a classroom teacher, but as an administrator now, I do have more decision making power and influence than I did before. So it allows me to influence a greater ... A greater amount of people than just my grade level and just the teachers ... The teachers from my grade level and the teachers from my grade level.

4.2 Group Two Participants

Monica

Monica is a first year assistant principal at a large high school in the Upstate of South Carolina. As a product of a family of educators, Monica majored in Health and Exercise Science at Erskine College, not wanting to follow her family as an educator. Financial problems stemming from a serious automotive accident in which her father was injured, delayed her start to medical school. Changing directions, Monica enrolled in a Master of Teaching program and began work as a 4th grade teacher. Unfortunately, after

one year as a fourth grade teacher, Monica lost her job due to budget cuts. She went to work in the private sector for a credit company. Unexpectedly, at her high school's homecoming football game, a teacher friend suggested she apply for an open special education position. Monica met with the principal who offered the open position, if she would take the five courses to add the special education certification to her elementary certificate. She enrolled in five classes for the spring semester. Monica worked for six years as a high school special education teacher while also working on an Educational Specialist degree in school administration. When I interviewed Monica, she was finishing her second year as an assistant principal.

Entry to Education

My grandfather was a professor at Clemson. And my grandmother-, both of them taught public education. He used to always tell me to soar like the eagle 'cause the eagle soars above the rest. And so that's kind o' where I got my or developed my passion for education. And so my mother was a teacher, and me, I tried to run away from teaching, was gonna be somethin' else, but I landed back in education, and it almost is a natural, it's just a natural thing for me is to work with kids and to try to bring out the best in them, and so, what I did was I went back to school, and I became certified in elementary education because my desire at the time was to teach middle school science. I got a job as a fourth grade teacher.

And I taught there for half of a year. Well, during my student teaching experience, No Child Left Behind act came along, and so you saw this huge shift of teachers moving from middle school down to elementary because they didn't want to get the middle school certification. And so, at that particular time, there was a massive layoff. Reduction

enforced, and I was one o' the 200-and-some-odd teachers that lost their job. So I went to work for Ford Credit and got into their management training program, which could've been very lucrative, but you had to agree to move wherever they told you to move at the drop of a dime. So I decided to come back to education, I went back to education as a high school special ed. teacher.

He says (the principal), "Well, you need these five classes." And that's what came through the state department. And I said, "Oh my goodness," well, I knew that, if I took my time to take those five classes, the requirements that the state department had may change after, ya know, so I said, "Okay, no, I'm gonna get these five classes over with in a semester, so--" From January through May, I took five classes.

As a teacher, I was able to start taking on tasks like seat time recovery, I mean, just working' with an assistant principal with her discipline, I mean, they started asking' me questions about things, and I was like, "Well, this is what I think you should do," ya know.

So, when I started realizing' that I had the gift of looking' at things from a larger scale, a bigger picture. And seeing how my decisions and the direction would impact the rest of the building, even though, at the time, I was in the classroom, I thought at that particular time it was time for me to look at becoming' an assistant principal. So that's when I started to make the move.

Assistant Principal Duties

Here, I come in. Sometimes I have students at my door when I get here, or I just come in. I cut on my light. I usually cut on the lamp to let students know that I'm in the building, and I usually leave the lights off if I'm this early in the morning or if I'm in a

classroom. I'll cut the lights off and just leave the light on. And then I just, you know, stand in the hallway or say, "Hey," to, you know, everyone as I walk by and step outside for a bus holding or a bus or the buses as they pull up.

My responsibilities are special education administrator. I coordinate the detentions for the entire student body, 20-, 48 now. I look at-, I distribute lockers for all of the students. I handle all of the bus issues, so transportation issues. I make sure that, as far as transportation, the transportation forms off campus, I monitor those, as well as the SIC or the liaison between the school and the career centers.

I make sure that I get all of my information from the teachers, as far as nominations for Student of the Month, Business Partner of the Month and Teacher of the Month. And I make sure that that stuff is posted on the website. I do freshman curriculum monitoring where I look at the teachers' plans and make sure that they're within two to three days of teaching material within that particular subject area.

I also look at the-, their failure rates, and I monitor my repeat freshmen because I go in the freshman academies to make sure that we improve our retention rate. I was working out. But now I've been so busy, I haven't been able to work out. Now I just try not to let it get to me. And so when it-, when it looks like it's getting out of hand-, like, my detentions right now, I have a bunch of students that I need to suspend right now still on my list-, six, eight, nine, ten. I still have ten on my list that I need to suspend, plus, they went to detention today, so I'm sure I'll have some more.

When I'm done, my rule is-, "Okay, Monica, just walk away. Okay. Just let it go." And I'll come back again tomorrow. I've taken this home for the past two nights, and I did not touch it, and it's back on my desk. I try very hard not to. And the reason that it is-,

that it's so easy for me not to is, at one point, the district had it where we had access to, like, our incident management system our system where we are able to do discipline or some of our other programs.

And from talking to the principal as a mentor, and talking to another principal that I know as a mentor, you know you just start to form-, and then of course your colleagues, your-, the other Assistant Principals-, you start to come-, or form your own basis, as far as how you should handle discipline. Now, in some schools, they have the discipline rubric, where so many days you get so many-, you know, if you do this, you get so many days. We don't really have a discipline rubric. There are some things that are, you know, you get five days. You get this, you get, you know, there are some things that are-, we pretty much know-, refusal to obey, you get three days.

And so that's been kind of the discipline-, I mean, how I've been able to handle this one. It's just based on talking to mentors and then your colleagues, the other principals. And then, you know, and then investigating. If it's something-, like, I have my detention list. So they know that every-, they miss one detention, then it's automatically assigned for the next session. So these are automatics.

Relationships with Teachers

This schools a little bit different because it's got-, really have a laid-back environment. I mean, it's not a real pressured environment. And so, sometimes with a laid-back environment and especially when you're working with-, in that particular case-, teachers that are special needs that work with students with IEPs, they sometimes forget that we're looking at the global picture of how we're handling things, and they just have again that tunnel vision.

So, in dealing with that, you have to be respectful and build relationships and talk to them. But, at the same time, you have to remain in authority and explain, "No. This is not acceptable, and this is what I need." But in a respectful manner and respectful tone, you know. I mean, just like you would with any other person, you know.

So here, when I come and I approach teachers, it can't be that I'm just telling you this, this, this and this because in the laid back-, in a laid back environment, the teachers may be resistant or rebellious to you saying, "I need, this, this-," "I mean, that's just too much work I'm not gonna do it." or "Why should I-," you know, and so you have to do more to meet, in my opinion, you have to do more to try to create buy-in versus verse in a strict environment when you don't have to do as much because, you know, it is this, this, this and this, and this is--

So, for example, when I came in, I wanted to do a whole change with Seat Time Recovery. Why? Because, from my understanding, they didn't have a good understanding as to how Seat Time Recovery-, who was gonna be accountable for what. So the teachers were, like, "I don't know." So I gave them a good working basis and outline. But I also told them I needed them to do this, this, this and this. And I got resistance.

Now, I think a better way to do it was to go to faculty council first and then go to this, you know, go to small group, little bit larger group and then to the big shebang. But I didn't. I just went straight to the big shebang, you know.

Yeah, because it's usually this, this, this and this, and this is what we need, and this is why, and we keep on moving. So I got resistance. And so that's been another way. I've had to call in a few teachers and talk to them one-on-one to say, you know, "Well-,"

and it was stated to me, "Well, in the past-," I said, "Well, no, you can't hold me accountable for the past. You can only hold me accountable from now until the future. So there, again, you know, so I'm more laid back now. You develop-, you know, you start to-, it's just like a relationship-, you start to take on some of, you know, the characteristics of your building. So, I mean, you know, so I think I'm-, after two years, I've scaled back a lot.

You gotta go build relationships. I mean, that's the-, and I'm bad about that, meaning I'm good at speaking to people, you know, good at "da, da," and I think I'm friendly, very easy to talk to. But sometimes I forget to purposely go and walk down the hallway and build that relationship. You know, I'm out in the hallway, and I speak to you, "Hey, how are you doing?" Or, you know, I walk around the corner and-, or if I see a teacher who looks upset, "Hey, is everything all right?" You know. But that is building a relationship in one set, but to purposely walk to the classroom or purposely walk around, you know, and make sure that everything's okay, that's a different case scenario.

Leadership

So, in essence, the school I came from, when leadership would tell you, you know, "I need this, this, this. This has gotta happen. This is why," and there was really not a big push of questions. It's just how it happened. Why?, because we need to make those substantial gains. Why?, because this principal is extremely strict. If not, I'll be in his office with a "Come to Jesus" meeting. You know, here it's laid back. It's not a lot of pressure.

So here, when I come and I approach teachers, it can't be that I'm just telling you this, this, this and this because in a laid back environment, the teachers may be resistant

or rebellious to you saying, "I need, this, this-," "I mean, that's just too much work I'm not gonna do it." or "Why should I-," you know, So you have to do more to meet, in my opinion, you have to do more to try to create buy-in versus in a strict environment when you don't have to do as much.

My leadership style is very laid back, I believe in buy-in, I believe in listening to others and trying to hear their voice and embedding their voice into my initiative. But I think I'm more of a ... Almost like a teacher that's a constructivist. That's the kind of the approach that I take also.

Your way is not always the best way and sometimes it's best to listen ... Its better to listen to others, because in listening to others, you can take some of the best advice and mesh it together to create something fresh, new and effective. So listening to others is always ... I mean in everything, as far as making schedule changes, as far as discipline, as far as ... You know sometimes people get caught in a well it's my way or this way or ... But sometimes when you listen to others, its ... And you get that buy-in, you build trust in the relationship, it makes things better. Now I'm not saying that you can't be authoritative when you need to be, because sometimes that's what it takes when you have the person that wants to buck authority. But overall I think when it comes to embedding its new initiatives, embedding different ideas, getting everybody onboard, it's always good to listen to others ... Get buy-in.

It's taken me two years to really understand what it is that I'm supposed to be doing and why I'm supposed to be doing it. A lot of times people go into administration, and all they think of is managerial, managerial. You know, just do your tasks, do your discipline and get it over with. But, we really sometimes forget about being instructional

leaders in the classroom or in the building and really promoting and pushing for academic achievement. Sometimes we forget about the data and how we can use the data to drive our school.

I think that is the most difficult thing about this job because you are no longer in this classroom setting of 30 students per class with a few parents. I am looking at 2,000 students, with administrators, with 100 and something teachers, with I don't know how many custodians-, custodial staff members. You know, I mean, so-, and then if you need to-, at that point, because you're making change for a building, there's sometimes you may have to communicate with the district office about your change. You know, so, I mean, I think that's the hardest part about this job is bringing about change.

Transitioning

I think they all have their pros and their cons. Because if you stay in the same school, you've created that peer relationship. And, now, all of a sudden, you're over them, and I think that makes you a little bit leery. It may be easier for you to build relationships, but it's also more difficult for you to-, they may not respect you as an authority figure when you were once their friend, maybe going to the movies with them or, you know, or talking to them on the phone or going to the football game with them, on that same level.

Now you're their authority figure, and they may not respect you. You know, they still see that friendship vs.-, and some people have a difficult time separating the two. But here, you've got to learn a lot-, when you switch, you gotta learn a lot of different pieces. But, these people don't see you as they were-, we were once on the same level.

Well, me coming-, transitioning from there to here, I think that was, in itself, a cultural shock for me. So, not only was I coming from teacher to administrator, I was coming from strict to laid-back. I was coming from lower socioeconomic to middle class. I was coming from urban to rural, so I didn't have-, like, where I came from had gangs or some gangs, and I don't have that here.

I think it made it better because I didn't have to deal with relationships that I'd already built as far as peer ... Peer relationships. And so with me already being somewhat their ... superior, it was easier ... Its easier I think. And that's just my opinion.

It means a lot to me, because I know that I ... I get to impact the lives of these students and I try to like for example today, I had one parent who was ready to withdraw her child, because he's not graduating and because he's a special needs student, she's ready to give up and just see if he can get a job and I'm thinking well he hadn't gotten a job here so ... And we have someone who works very closely with job placement, so how do you ... Why is it that you feel like you would be more successful ... You know and so honestly I was able to talk her off of a ledge to keep the child here, which I think is a better placement, because you know even if he may have to stay and additional year, we may be able to get him into a job placement next year that might be suitable for him. And in the long run, keep him employed as long as possible, just so he can get those job skills. So those type of things you know I really like those types of impacts that I get to make on ... You know not only but you know their futures

And so you ask me what does this mean to me. And I have to say that it means a lot because now I'm not-, now I really understand. When people say, you know, you want the global picture. You want to be able to put your hands around more. You want to be

able to impact more by pushing the curriculum, by pushing your data, by pushing, you know, your instruction, by, you know, just building new programs, you're able to really put your hands around more. Whereas, in that little classroom, you just had your little set of kids, and you're pushing that. So I'm appreciative because I'm able to see now. And so then, for me, when I look at the AP position or Assistant Principal position and what it is that I'm doing and then where do I want to go as a principal-, and so now I'm over these principals that are doing all of these things that are pushing these teachers, that's powerful. So I don't know. I'm just-, it just-, it means a lot because I'm able to really make change.

Nicole

Nicole is a first year assistant principal at a medium sized elementary school in the Upstate of South Carolina. Her interest in education was fostered through her high school's teacher cadet program. As a Teacher Cadet, she worked with elementary students and made the decision to pursue a teaching degree in college. During her undergraduate and graduate degrees, Nicole worked as a swim team coach for all ages, but felt elementary was her calling in education. After finishing her master's degree in elementary education, she accepted a position teaching 4th grade at a nearby elementary school and worked there for the next 13 years. During this time, she began work on a second master's degree in school administration and starting applying for assistant principal positions in the area. She began her current assistant principal position in 2012.

Entry to Education

I knew I wanted to work with kids, I was thinking either educator or pediatrician. My summers during undergraduate and my summers during graduate school, I coached

swim team. So I worked with the county's summer swim program. So, I coached a hundred and eighty, 200 kids ages-, as young as three up to 18. Really, through that program, and the teacher cadet program, that kind of solidified my choice that I wanted to go into education. I enjoyed working with middle and high, but I thought my calling was to elementary. I originally thought I wanted to teach second grade. 'Cause I student taught in Ohio in a first/second multi-age school, it was actually non-graded, too, so very not traditional. I think from that experience, I learned that I wanted to be in a school that was graded and maybe not necessarily multi-age. I ended up taking a fourth grade position and just loved it, and I ended up staying 13 years in fourth grade.

After my first probably four or five years there, started doing small things like grade level rep and then more in charge of committees, and my administration started giving me more opportunities. That became an interest to me. As I took on new roles, I asked them to give me more things to do.

Assistant Principal Duties

I don't think there is a typical day. I am usually here by 10 'til 7. Buses come about-, I let kids in, like, a couple minutes before 7:15. So I'm getting them off the buses to get them inside, starting at 7:15.

I'm on breakfast bus duty bringing kids in from the back and monitoring the cafeteria. That's 'til quarter 'til 8, and then, after I get kids out of the cafeteria, I also have a couple teachers in there every week that are helping me, assisting and they're on duty starting at 7:15 with me. So, if I'm going out to get buses, they're holding down the fort inside in the cafeteria and getting the kids up for breakfast.

When I finish duty at 7:45 in the morning, then I head outside 'cause I'm in charge of patrols. So they have already gone out on duty with the lead teacher out front. In the mornings at 7:30 and then I get out there at 7:45. In the morning and the afternoon, so I go out there from quarter 'til, 7:45 to 8:00 and help unload kids from out there and bring 'em in. From there, we go straight in. I go in with my principal to do morning news program. That happens every day. You know, after that, there's not much routine, if there's stuff that I have to get done, referrals to process, I try to get those from the bus as quickly as possible, got one sitting right there. To get those processed and talk to the kids, whether that's gonna involve an investigation or talking, and then talking to parents. I think those are some of my lengthy days, for the few major behavior things we've had, I think investigating things, you know, I didn't realize-, that was one thing at my old school, I didn't really have that part of dealing with my other admins when it came to discipline, obviously, for privacy issues and never, in my 13 years, only wrote one referral.

Lunch for me is usually, if I'm up here eating and working, I'm multitasking, you know, our cafeteria's set up kind of strange, we don't have rectangle tables, we have circle tables, so only eight kids can sit at a table, which is crazy. I'd love to get rectangle tables 'cause you gotta separate classes.

And that's the one thing I knew going into this, I'm organized, and I've gotten that from both my parents, you know, in the classroom when I was a teacher, you know, you had that schedule, you stick to it, you know, as you can, routine and consistency. Everybody kept telling me that, when you go into administration, you know, it's just, you might have your list of things that you want to get accomplished, and you might get one

or two. Some days, you might get all of 'em, some days, you might not get any of 'em, and that's, I think, something that I have learned to roll with, I wasn't sure how that was gonna affect me because I do like a schedule, and I do like routine. But I think I've adjusted well.

I know that sometimes you just can't expect to, I might have to go to one of those ED self-contained classes, or I might get a call from a parent, that happened during pictures, I had a parent show up with a bus issue that we had kind of dealt with this morning, but she didn't know that yet, 'cause bus driver had already told me about it. So, I mean, things pop up, and you have to be, I think, flexibility is key, and it's interesting, I see that, it's different when you're a classroom teacher, when you're a classroom teacher, you're looking at it and how it's affecting you and your class and that's it.

In my classroom, it had to be serious for me to get a administrator involved, I handled things, and that's just how I approach things in my classroom, I knew that I could handle things with my students. you know, and that was one thing I set up with expectations here with our teachers are what things warrant you referring or bringing a student to me for issues, so that was something we went over at the beginning of the year. You know, and, like I said, I get stopped, they'll ask me questions, the teacher will ask me questions about how to handle things. I had a teacher calling me on the way out, wanting to get my opinion on how she should deal with something. So I think, you know, I feel like, I hope, at least, that I think they respect my opinion. I think a lot of that, I guess, is in part to me being straight out of the classroom.

Most of my referrals come from the emotionally disabled self-contained classes. But I think the most important thing that I did from the beginning is being visible,

especially in those two classrooms, daily. Getting to know those kids, getting to know how they tick, I wanted them to know who I was and get to know me. And feel comfortable with me. I can tell when those kids get off the bus, I mean, even with my other kids, too, who had a bad morning, or who's getting ready to lose it. I think that-, I just wasn't confident that I knew what to do. I went through the training. I've learned a lot from the teachers that are in there and the aids, and I think now I do have that confidence that I know that I can deal with whatever-, I've gotten kicked, you know, they've tried to bite us, you know, spitting, I mean, it's a different realm of what I dealt with in the classroom, but those teachers have to be supported.

Relationships with Teachers

I was nervous for sure. I was very nervous. I think one thing I tried to do 'cause, as any good teachers, you know, is gonna be here before that first official day, so one thing I tried to do, I tried to get unpacked and stuff in here so I could be, when I was not doing textbooks, I can be out meeting people and introducing myself to people.

This is, you know, obviously your first impression of this person, so, you know, apparently, the word spread that I had been up here two, two and a half weeks before 'cause, when teachers started trickling back in, they're like, "We've heard you've been up here." "We've heard that everybody's been seeing you up here." "Thank you," and, you know, they were appreciative that I was there and doing things that needed to be done. Knowing that, you know, I wasn't getting paid for what I was--

I knew at that point I was not gonna learn everybody's name. There was no way that that was gonna happen, but I know that I could start recognizing faces. But it was

really helpful to me to be there and to meet 'em 'cause a lot of the same people were here the days I was here so then I did kind of start to put a name with a face to know, going into that first meeting, I knew a lot of faces. I might not have known everybody's name, but they knew me, obviously one of me compared with many of them.

When we had our first teacher workdays, you know, I'm used to getting in the car, going with my grade level, going down to go get lunch somewhere. And that first teacher workday, I'm like, I mean, they do eat lunch . And I think it wasn't 'til then that it hit me, and I'm like, wow.

I've had teachers say, "Oh, come out to dinner with us," or, "We're gonna do this." And, even though that's something that I know as a teacher would be a good thing, I know kind of as an administrator you kind of have to draw that line a little bit.

I think the best thing, and I think I mentioned this. The most positive comment that I've heard from everybody that I've dealt with from behavior to buses to really anything, textbooks, is that the comment across the board is, "We're so glad that you've come straight out of the classroom." "We can tell that you've been in the classroom a long time," it's not, you know, been in the classroom five years or four years, even though I've been in one grade level, I think that's kind of a selling point. That was something I tried to talk about in the interview because I think really for anybody to become an administrator, you need to have those years.

And I go back, you know, this is the girl that was in my interview, how do I know, or she asked me, you know, "How do I know you're gonna be there to support me?" And, you know, she and I just talked about that the other day, I said, "Ya know," I try to touch base with them, "What do I need to do for y'all?" you know, "Is everything, you know-,

would you have handled that differently?" We try to talk these things through because I know that they know these kids.

Leadership

I think definitely hands on, I think definitely looking at getting people's opinions, you know more heads are better than one and I think that's one thing you know, you're coming into a new school, you're learning how they do things. My principal is very good about asking if I had other suggestions or if we did things differently, you know those are things that we've applied this year. If I've made suggestions and we alter or you know do things differently or do it their same way, but do ... You know add in something a little different. I appreciate that ...

That makes you a team player and I think being a good listener, I think as a teacher you have to listen to your students and your parents and the same thing follows through into administration, you know you're gonna be ... These parents you know we are here watching their babies and when they come in and they're upset, you first gotta listen.

But that balance of being there, and I think, also, even though it was frustrating that I had to wait three years to get a job, I think by me not having that job for three years, those gave me also better leadership-, I had more leadership opportunities 'cause I kept going, "Gimme more," I kept going to my principal and my APs and saying, "Utilize me, I wanna know what y'all are doing." And, I mean, a lot of the things that I attribute that I did there, I brought over here. 'Cause that's my learning base because I was still in that teacher role, but I was also doing things they knew, leadership roles, working closely with the admin, giving them suggestions or them asking for my input,

from a teacher's perspective, but looking at it in kind of an administrative way, which is tough.

But I think in my opinion I think to be ... Administrators need to have ... You know I would say more than five years of experience in a classroom. I think if you've got a good solid ten years ... Eight to ten years, I think the more you can get, the better. I mean it's just there's so many different things that you're exposed to each year in your classroom, with the types of kids you have to situations you have to deal with, to parents, to ... You know I think about ... I look back at my teaching career at all the different kinda special ... What I learned from my special ed kids and there's just ... There's such a multitude of wealth of knowledge that if I'd only been in the classroom only five years, I know that it wouldn't have prepared me as well to be where I am today.

Well I definitely think my leadership style is definitely getting in there and doing ... Just like, I wouldn't ask when I was a teacher anything that I was asking my students to do, I would be doing right along with them. So I mean, you model and that you lead by example, so I think that's ... That's kinda my approach, with administration the same thing.

If I'm asking the teachers to do something, I'm right there with them doing it, because I mean I think that that ... That sends a message and I think it's an important message, especially when you're coming in new and people don't know who you are and you know that ... You learn by watching and ...

Transitioning

You know I think that's another advantage with not staying within my same setting, because I'm now being exposed to you know a different leadership way, a

different ... Different ideas, different ... You know all I knew was how we did things there and you know that doesn't ... Does it make them right, no but that's just how things were carried out there. Most of my administrators at my former school, I mean we were all ... I don't wanna say ... It wasn't type A, but that school was huge, you were over a 1,000 students, I mean it had to be run shipshape, I mean it had to be from lunch to recess, I mean it was as big as you know high school. I think that's what I found refreshing about being here, is being smaller, you know going to half that size.

I really, I think, while I was teaching, I thought that it would have been perfect. That I could handle it (being an administrator in the same school). I think now that I'm here, I'm realizing that I could've handled it, but I'm realizing that it's better that I'm in a different school.

You know, I knew that it was gonna be different, and I think that's when it hit me that those relationships that I have there are different than the relationships I have here. 'Cause it's a different professional level. you know, my buds, my companions there, I think I probably could've transitioned okay, being an administrator, but I think it was a good thing it to be here. As this year's progressed, I've thought about that. 'Cause I've had teachers say, "Gosh, I wish you were here, I wish you were here," but I'm realizing I still have those relationships there. So, yes, could've done it. But I'm glad I'm where I am. It's a good thing.

Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents a review of the purpose and research questions as well as methodology that have guided this study. The data gathered from interviews with six assistant principals will be discussed with regard to the theoretical framework designed to examine the transition of teachers to assistant principal, both in the same school setting and within a new setting. A general comparison will be made of the similarities presented in the participants' stories as well as differences generated by the context of the transition. The three themes of duties, teacher relationships, and leadership perspectives will also be addressed. Section one contains discussion of the first research question in relation to the two groups of participants and their interview data presented in Chapter 4. Section two will address the study's two sub-questions and examine participant self-efficacy and the ways in which the participants have found meaning in their work as assistant principals. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings, implications for action, recommendations for future research and concluding remarks.

5.1 Overview of the problem

The transition from teacher to school administrator has been considered in previous research (Armstrong, 2009; Hartzell, Williams & Nelson, 1994; Marshall, 1992b; Marshall & Greenfield, 1985 ; Mertz, 2006), but none of the studies have looked specifically at the difference in being a former colleague or newcomer to the school as

assistant principal. The context of an assistant principal's transition from the classroom to the administrator's office and the socialization to the role is the predictor of future administrative success. In most instances, the path to principal begins with the role of classroom teacher. Teachers who pursue school administration complete the coursework and examinations to receive their school administrator's license look to apply for positions as assistant principals. This impetus for growth in their career is nurtured by mentors, personal ambition, or dissatisfaction with their role in the classroom. When aspiring to become an assistant principal, two scenarios are possible. The candidate can secure a position, if available in his current school or apply elsewhere for a position in a different school. This study addressed both courses of action.

5.2 Purpose statement and research questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the transition to assistant principal in the context of the school environment. Organizational Socialization theory (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) suggested that individuals learn the ropes of a new role on the job. Although in most cases a degree in school administration is a prerequisite for being hired as an assistant principal, Marshall and Hooley (2006) asserted that formal course work is inadequate in producing exceptional educational leaders. The real learning begins after the assistant principal is hired and the school year begins.

With this in mind, I wanted to examine how the details of the position, meaning how the context and social ramifications of being a leader among peers would come to bear on a new assistant principal's role. To do this, I purposely selected new assistant principals who exemplified both of the aforementioned transition scenarios. The main research questions that guided this study were:

In what ways does the experience of transitioning to assistant principal from within the same school differ from transitioning to assistant principal from outside of the school?

- a. In what ways are notions of self-efficacy present in the stories assistant principals tell about their transition from teacher to assistant principal?
- b. In addition, what meanings do these new assistant principals attach to the experience of transitioning from the role of classroom teacher?

5.3 Review of the methodology

The study used qualitative methods and phenomenological interview techniques to examine the transition from teacher to assistant principal. Two groups were studied, the first being former teachers who moved to assistant principal positions in the same school where they taught and the second group being assistant principals who were new to the school where they currently serve as administrators. Data collection relied on a series of three in-depth interviews with each participant, following Seidman's (2006) recommendations, for eighteen separate interviews. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for review. To ensure trustworthiness, all interview transcripts were reviewed by the study participants who were given the opportunity to correct any statements that they had made during the interviews.

All interview transcripts were analyzed and coded utilizing NVIVO qualitative research software. Using this software enabled me to be organized and methodical in my approach to data reduction and in my searching for relevant themes in the data. Multiple readings, the use of analytical memo writing, and member checks worked to ensure

trustworthiness. Through extensive analysis, themes in the data were identified as: duties, teacher relationships and leadership perspectives.

5.4 Research Question One: In what ways does the experience of transitioning to assistant principal from within the same school differ from transitioning to assistant principal from outside of the school?

Two groups of assistant principals comprised the study, four who became administrators in the school where they had previously taught and two who entered administration as a new member of the school faculty. David, Lynn, Susan, and Jennifer are collectively identified as Group One. Monica and Nicole are Group Two. Previous research has provided evidence that assistant principals are socialized to their roles based on the context of their transition (Greenfield, 1985b), meaning much of their learning is site specific. This is evident when Lynn said, “Coming in new, I didn’t have to learn the rules, the policies, the school climate and stuff like that, I already knew all that stuff.” Lynn knows her school; it is where she has always worked as an educator. The move to administration in the same building felt natural to her.

In hiring school administrators, the idea of “fit” is thrown around as an elusive measure of how well a person will be able to work within the environment of a certain school, thus how appropriately they match the context of the school (Duke & Iwanicki, 1992). District leaders want and need administrators whose philosophies of education align with the mission statements, philosophy, and feeling of the school community. “Fit” becomes important for assistant principals since many regard this post as a stepping-stone to the principalship (Goodson, 2000; Marshall, Mitchell, Gross & Scott, 1992). A perception of being the right “fit” pervaded the stories of the participants in Group One.

They felt they belonged to the school as a whole and their transition was natural. David stated, “I loved this school right away: so, I could see myself being here forever.”

Relationships with Teachers, Group One

For David, Lynn, Jennifer, and Susan, the members of group One, the changing relationship with the teaching faculty in their schools was marked by a loss of social connection. All four participants had stories of losing friends, having difficult conversations, experiencing awkward moments, and even feeling reluctance to carry out their assigned duties when it involved a former colleague. The changing role forced these four participants to evaluate their friendships and tested their professionalism. It became clear during our interviews that overcoming the reluctance to evaluate former peers was essential to the participant’s future administrative success.

All four members of Group One anticipated problems and successes in the process of becoming an administrator among their former peers. They each spoke of instances where they were asked for favors or privileged information from their former colleagues. The expectation was that David would show favoritism to his friends and at times circumvent regular protocols for handling discipline. David was astute enough to realize the problems with this approach. He reflected, “With a kid with disciplinary problems once in a while I can handle, but it is not fair to the teachers who don’t know me or who I am not friends with.”

In another instance, David had to reprimand a teacher who, he felt, was “berating” her students. In his words, “she snapped back at me, she was pissed,” and though the situation was corrected, David felt she took it harder because they had worked alongside each other as teachers. He reflected on this event by saying, “I think part of it was

because she was somebody I knew as a teacher when I was a teacher so that made it difficult.” For David the problem was worse with his close friends. In a similar event, David had to confront his “best buddy” regarding an issue with parent communication. The teacher was neglecting to return a parent phone call and trying to avoid the situation. David talked with the teacher but again felt it was his position as a friend and former colleague that contributed to the problem. The same issue arises with teacher evaluations. David is reluctant to give a negative evaluation of a teacher’s performance, especially one he knows. He avoids this by not writing notes but by talking to the teacher afterwards. It was also clear that talking about the evaluations was uncomfortable for him.

As head of the Freshman Academy at his high school, David also makes decisions on which teachers will work in 9th grade department. He talked about having a teacher whom he wants to move out of 9th grade to make the Freshman Academy program stronger. The difficulty is the teacher he needs to move is a friend, and he knows that she does not want to move up to 10th grade. He has delayed taking action because of their friendship.

Similar issues that stem from being a former colleague are the loss of conversation with friends. David is aware that he can no longer pal around with his friends at work. David admitted, “It is funny; the higher up you go the less friends you have almost.” Lastly, David laments the loss of friendships at work because of his administrator position. He admits that he does not like confrontation, especially with friends or former colleagues.

Lynn entered teaching and school administration as a second career. As a former manager, her desire to move quickly from teaching to administration and back into

management is evident in her story and in the speed at which she pursued her administrator license. Lynn stated, “When I started in, in teaching, I don’t know, I already had in my mind I wanted to be an administrator because, that’s my mindset.” Her relationships with teachers differed from the other participants in group one and have prevented many of the scenarios that the other three group one members described. Lynn purposely avoided the social entanglements of the workplace. She stated, “I never got into the little issues, personality issues, things like that, that come up between people.” Despite this outlook, Lynn is not against teachers being friends with each other at school and does not disparage others for their social ties. For her the workplace is a separate entity from home and social life. She remarked, “I try to touch base where I can when I can, as schedule permits.” For Lynn, knowing the school faculty and having a grasp of the history of the school and administration were beneficial to her transition. She believes these give her an advantage over the rest of the administrative team. She said, “We could talk about the stories that went with each one, and the fun it was or whatever; but the other two AP’s, they can’t.” This connection to the faculty and the reputation she developed as a teacher transferred to her role as assistant principal. She felt those that knew her and respected her as a teacher still respected her as an administrator.

Lynn defined her role as a professional and credits her professionalism as a key factor in her move to administration as well as in her ability to perform her job. In this respect, Lynn’s narrative differs from the others in group one. Her ambition and desire to move quickly to the administrator’s role and her previous management experience helped her focus on her goals. She understood the line between supervisor and employee and kept her social entanglements to a minimum.

Susan has worked in the same high school for all but her first year as a science teacher at the middle school level. Her move to administration was interrupted by four years as her school's athletic director. However, this position was not considered an administrative position and she had no authority over the teachers in the building. Susan did gain valuable supervision experience during this time covering bus duty, car duty and hall supervision by request from the principal. For Susan, being the athletic director first and later becoming an assistant principal provided her with experiences and insight she would not have had coming straight from the classroom. She believes her reputation as a disciplinarian and authority figure transferred to the new role, intact.

Just as David lamented the loss of friendship when he became an administrator, Susan shared similar experiences when she stated, "One of the things that I hate the most about my particular situation is I have good friends in the building that I can't talk to as personal friends on some topics." Like David's story, Susan also has friends ask her to use her authority for favors. She noted, "If I had a good rapport with a teacher as a fellow teacher, he or she thinks that they can send me their problems and I'll fix them as a personal favor." Susan noted that her peers in the athletic department may have seen her transition as an avenue to the principal's ear. She has to deal with their efforts to have her convey their problems to the principal and with their becoming upset when she refuses. She said, "They (the coaching staff) feel like they can use that relationship I had to be the complaint department about something that our principal has done."

Susan also expressed reservations with observing and evaluating her former colleagues. She worried that her evaluations would be seen as weak or unwarranted; so, she was careful to provide what she termed "logical explanations" to make her case. She

noted, “I write down a lot of examples, I do a lot of explanations of my decisions, so I’ve got a lot to back up complaints.” Her fear is that her former colleagues will not respect her decisions if she does not provide ample explanations.

Overall, Susan spoke favorably of her transition to administration in the same school. She feels part of the community and school family and has respect for the principal and her colleagues. She feels the support of her school family, those she has known as teacher and administrator. For Susan, this atmosphere is one of respect. She ended our interview by stating, “I feel that they respect me, they know what I’m doing is right, we’re all doing the same thing and so that’s probably the best part is, I don’t have to prove myself.”

Jennifer worked as a teacher at her current school for two years before becoming the current assistant principal. Her classroom success led her to be handpicked for the role of teacher at her current school and provided her a positive reputation, leading to her selection as an administrator. Like the other participants from group one, her relationships with the teachers at her school changed when she assumed her current role. When considering discipline, Jennifer feels that some teachers take advantage of their friendship and the school’s “strict three referral and you are out” policy. She believes that some teachers feel she will show favoritism due to this.

Being an authority figure can be lonely; David recounted eating alone and not being able to hang out with his teacher friends outside of school. Susan lamented having to cut ties with the younger teachers who would not avoid talking about school in social situations. Jennifer feels the stress of no longer being a teacher but also being the only assistant principal in her school. She said, “I definitely do feel that sense of isolation

since, but I don't feel that people would come to me with gossiping, or just these sort of conversations that I heard last year about other teachers.”

As David and Susan expressed, Jennifer too found it difficult to observe and evaluate her former colleagues. She worried about discovering teaching or management issues with her former colleagues and if so, about how to approach them with her concerns. In one case, she avoided the teacher’s classroom for the entire year, even though she knew there was an issue. She stated it this way, “I haven’t gone to observe her yet, like I really am avoiding it. I really do not want to go. I already know there is one issue that needs to be fixed. It’s a simple issue it’s her website.” Jennifer also worries if she writes an unfavorable report about one teacher it may affect her status with the rest of the faculty. She said, “So that part has been one of the parts that I’ve dreaded, probably the most.”

Reflecting on her transition, Jennifer believes that the respect she garnered as a teacher followed her to administration. She commented, “I think they respected me as a teacher and I think that respect is carried over as an administrator.” Knowing she has the respect of the teachers boosts Jennifer’s confidence in her own abilities and authority.

Relationships with Teachers, Group Two

The two teachers from group two began their administrative careers as first year assistant principals in new environments. Neither had worked in their current school before, nor did they have ties to the principal or faculty. They came to the school as outsiders. Their stories focused on learning the school culture and on their efforts to connect as a leader. Social entanglements are minimal, while making a good impression becomes paramount to success. While the members of Group One told stories of losing

friends and avoiding hurt feelings, Nicole and Monica focused on building relationships with teachers.

Monica moved to her current school as a new administrator. She did not know the faculty and staff of the new school and had to build new relationships. As a teacher, Monica worked in a low socio-economic area and dealt with students who were streetwise and came from tough homes. Her current school is a suburban, middle class high school with few discipline problems and greater parental support. She described her new work place by stating, “It’s got a really laid-back environment. I mean, it's not a real pressured environment.” Monica became aware of this contrast in her approach with the teachers. Her first initiative was to bolster the school’s Seat Time Recovery program, a program to help truant students gain their missing class credits. She developed a plan of action, called the teachers in and told them what they needed to do. In her words, “I got resistance.” The teachers resented being told what to do without being allowed to give input. Monica, in reflecting on this experience, realized her approach was not the right approach for this new, laid-back school environment. She was emulating the leadership styles she had witnessed as a teacher, in a stricter and more controlled environment. Her current faculty was accustomed to a more democratic leadership style and did not respond to her tactics.

Monica spoke directly to the issue of transitioning to administrator in the same school versus moving to a new school to be assistant principal. For her, moving to a new school was better; she stated, “I think it made it better because I didn’t have to deal with relationships that I’d already built as far as peer, peer relationships. It’s easier I think.”

Like Monica, Nicole accepted an administrative position in a school where she had never worked as a teacher. She had no ties to the new faculty but early on saw the importance of building relationships with her new faculty. She purposely came to work early, before the paid teacher workdays, to work and to meet the teachers who were preparing for the upcoming year. She made a point to be seen at the school working and to be approachable to the teachers she met on those first days.

Nicole wanted to make her first impression as a hard worker and as someone who cared about the school and the students. This approach worked and made the impression she was hoping to make. Teachers came to her and thanked her for just being there. Nicole described her thoughts by saying, “I’m like, wow, you know, they noticed, they realized that, even though I didn’t know any of them yet, I was already caring about the school and wanting to get involved and get my hands on.”

Nicole, like David and Susan, struggled with the loss of friends and changing relationships with teachers as a new administrator. She had worked in the same elementary school as a teacher for thirteen years and developed strong friendships with her peers. Moving to a new school in a new authority role changed the ways in which she could relate to the teaching staff. Nicole was surprised that she was not asked to join the teachers for lunch during the first teacher workdays. This event made her realize she was no longer a member of the teacher group. Since then, Nicole has received invitations to dinner with teachers but has tried to keep her work relationships professional. Though she would like to go, she stated, “I know kind of as an administrator you kind of have to draw that line a little bit.” Nicole is careful to avoid social situations that she sees as potentially harmful to her working relationship with the teachers.

Nicole felt the school where she was a teacher was the best fit for her as an administrator. She knew the culture, the faculty, the procedures, and the students. This sentiment is similar to the participants of group one who felt where they were was the best fit for them. Interestingly enough, after working in a new school and reflecting on her move, Nicole changed her mind. She stated, "I'm realizing that it's better that I'm in a different school."

Summary

Education is a people centered business and this is evident in the stories of these six participants. All six were faced with decisions about in whom to confide, whom to trust, and whom to avoid. As organizational barriers are crossed, relationships must be respected by those on both sides. David, Susan and Jennifer, as evidenced in their stories, all struggled with the loss of the relationships they had as teachers. Lynn, who remained goal oriented and came to teaching possessing management experience, avoided strong social ties as a teacher and found this aspect of the transition easier. Group two members, Nicole and Monica, who moved to their current schools as new administrators, found themselves building relationships. They became focused on forming new relationships based on their new role as administrators.

All six participants from Groups One and Two exhibited varying degrees of socialization to their new role. Socialization, as defined by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) is the transference of culture to new members of the organization. The school culture may encompass the rules, lingo, ideology, etiquette, demeanors, guidelines for relating to colleagues, and ways to conduct oneself as a member of the organization. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) identified six socialization tactics that may be present in an

organization and may affect a person's transition to a new role. It is noted that not everyone will be socialized in the same ways.

Group One and Group Two participants all enrolled in university programs in educational administration and completed them. They all had to meet similar requirements and pass the required Praxis exams to obtain a public school administrator's license in the state of South Carolina. In this way, all were subjected to collective socialization, the first of Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) socialization tactics. Similar to collective socialization, sequential socialization tactics denote the steps required of participants to assume their new roles. Four participants, David, Nicole, Monica, and Jennifer, all followed similar educational paths. They each earned teaching degrees, worked as classroom teachers, and sought positions as assistant principals after completing course requirements. Susan earned her teaching certification, worked as a classroom teacher, moved to the position of athletic director, and most recently began her role as assistant principal. Lynn's path differed. She entered education through an alternate program and with a career change and moved quickly through the process of becoming an assistant principal. Despite the differences, all participants were required to become teachers before moving into administration. Both collective and sequential socialization tactics suggest that participants will develop a custodial response to their new roles.

The third set of socialization tactics presented by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) is fixed versus variable. All six assistant principals in this study were subject to a variable socialization experience, meaning each worked in their teacher roles for varying amounts of time before becoming assistant principals. David and Monica were both classroom

teachers for eight years, the shortest amount of time for the six participants. Nicole taught for thirteen years, the longest time spent in the classroom among the participants.

The fifth set of socialization tactics, serial versus disjunctive, relates to the role of mentors. Serial socialization is marked by the presence of mentors and role models that assist the newcomer in their socialization. David, Nicole, Susan and Jennifer spoke of specific principals and assistant principals who served as mentors during their transition. For David, his current principal took on the role of mentor. Nicole's mentors were the principal and assistant principals with whom she worked as a teacher. Susan benefitted from her relationship with her current administrative colleagues and previous principal. Jennifer was also supported and bolstered by mentors. She described her principal as "phenomenal" and felt supported through "a lot of handholding, a lot of modeling."

The last of Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) socialization tactics involves the development of the newcomer's perspective towards the organization, referred to as investiture versus divestiture. Investiture processes build on the qualities and abilities the newcomer possesses. A divestiture approach rebuilds the newcomer's views to align with the organization. All six assistant principals in this study experienced an investiture socialization process. They all met the requirements and possessed the qualities deemed sufficient for hire and they all were chosen over other candidates to serve in their roles. It is impossible to know the mindset of those responsible for hiring each of the six participants, but it is assumed they hired the person who best fit their organization. As an element of the investiture process, it can be assumed group one participants held a positive perspective towards their schools before they were hired as assistant principals. Thus, their investiture process was shorter. Throughout the interviews, no participant

spoke with ill regard towards a school or a school administrator. New hires would experience a longer investiture process.

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) suggested three responses to the socialization tactics they described; custodianship, content innovation, and role innovation. It has been previously noted by Armstrong (2010), Marshall (1992b), and Marshall and Greenfield (1987) that most assistant principals exhibit a custodial response to their roles, meaning they follow their principal's instructions and uphold the norms of the organization. Content innovation is defined as bringing new ideas to the role or working to improve the organization through their role. Role innovation is described as a redefining of the role of assistant principal completely. While all six participants worked to complete the job to their best ability, only Monica, a member of the group two assistants, related an effort to establish a new program or change the role of the assistant principal. She brought with her a program to improve her school's Seat Time Recovery efforts, a program to help truant and tardy high school students regain their missed academic credits. She stated, "I got resistance." Monica credits the resistance to her approach and lack of knowing the school culture and faculty. This "resistance" can be attributed to Monica's not being fully invested in the culture of the school. The five remaining participants in describing their roles and duties each exhibited a custodial response. This finding agrees with Armstrong (2004) and Mertz (2006) who found a custodial response to be the most common result of an assistant principal's socialization to the position. They upheld the status quo and followed the lead of the building principal.

5.5 Research Sub-Question 1A: Self-Efficacy

In what ways are notions of self-efficacy present in the stories assistant principals tell about their transition from teacher to assistant principal?

Bandura (1995) defines perceived self-efficacy as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (p. 2). Over the course of three interviews with each of the six participants, it became clear that each assistant principal was a highly motivated and dedicated professional educator. Each participant told stories of success, trepidation, and persistence. Taking the initiative to enroll and complete the required coursework to become certified in school administration is the first step towards the assistant principalship, and all six participants completed this step early in their careers. David, Jennifer, Nicole, and Susan all began the path to school administration through conversations with mentors and peers. Lynn stated, "When I started in, in teaching, I already had in my mind I wanted to be an administrator." Monica described her decision to pursue administration as the result of her wish to widen her influence in the school.

Over the course of our interviews, each participant spoke in varying degrees to Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) identified four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and psychological responses. All the assistant principals in this study were aware of colleagues and peers who had transitioned to administrative roles. Therefore, each was familiar with the process and had a model or vicarious experience of success available to them. Talking to other assistant principals, mentors, and colleagues who have transitioned

to administrative roles about their experiences and drawing encouragement from them provide what Bandura (1997) termed verbal persuasion.

All six participants sought administrative experiences while they were teachers. These experiences are required for degree completion but also serve to give the future administrator a taste for the job. Finishing the required coursework, completing an administrative internship and obtaining an assistant principal position exemplify a mastery experience. All six participants experienced this mastery experience. Success in applying and securing their current assistant principal positions acted as positive reinforcement to their self-efficacy.

Psychological responses refer to a person's attitude in the face of setbacks or difficulties. The stories participants told evidenced the difficulties of their new roles and the professional and social pressures they faced. Each remains in school administration despite the difficulties, which indicate each participant holds a high level of self-efficacy. They are able to overcome adversity.

David was hired as assistant principal in a quick turn of events and did not interview for the position. He never thought he would be able to interview well enough to be hired as an administrator. However, his self-efficacy was boosted by his principal's confidence in his abilities. He reported, "So he gave me confidence to be able to do that job because I wasn't sure if I was ready for that job."

Lynn displayed a great sense of self-efficacy. She stated, "I was a really good teacher, I thought I was a really good teacher." Her classroom successes and personal motivation led her to pursue administration. She earned the certification for administration and quickly applied for a position. She stated, "I applied all over." She

was confident she would get an administrative job. Lynn's business background provided a sense of efficacy not present in the stories of other participants. She stated, "The leadership skills that I had in business are transferrable here, and again haven't, having the experience of working with people throughout my careers, I've managed people younger than me, the same age as me, older than me."

Nicole was a successful classroom teacher. Her confidence in the classroom and her experiences helping with administrative duties at her previous school strengthened her self-efficacy. Nicole waited three years before applying for an assistant principal position and during this time, she volunteered for any administrative experiences her former principal would give her. These mastery experiences gave her more confidence when she accepted her current assistant principal role.

During our first interview, Monica explained how her interest in school administration developed. She was working as a high school special education teacher at the time and began to take on leadership roles in her department. She had already proven she was willing to do what was needed to get a job by taking five classes in one semester while working to become certified in special education. Monica's past successes and ambition pushed her to enter school administration. Her self-efficacy as related to the assistant principalship was clearly established. She was confident in her abilities.

Jennifer's self-efficacy stemmed from her successes and notoriety as an amazing classroom teacher. In her interviews, she articulated the process of building her self-efficacy. She was handpicked to work at a new magnet school in her district and stated, "I taught at that school for eight years and eight very, very successful school years. I was named teacher of the year twice there." She doubted herself at first, she said, "And I

thought that I didn't have that type A, wow personality to really go into administration.” However, as Bandura's (1977) concept of vicarious experiences suggests, Jennifer observed her colleagues and commented, “If they can do it I can do it too.” She continued to address her experiences with her internship as a powerful impetus for her future success. She felt “validated as a leader.” Jennifer clearly has had mastery experiences that have given her a strong sense of self-efficacy.

Susan's transition differed from the other participants in Group One due to her four years as athletic director at her high school. It was during this time that her self-efficacy towards administration grew. Her principal provided her with multiple opportunities to gain experience through supervision and management assignments. These mastery experiences led to her pursuing her administrative degree. Verbal persuasion also contributed to Susan's pursuit of her administrative degree through the help of mentors. She stated, “The principal over at Malcolm Middle, he was the assistant here and he is the one who actually convinced me to do administration, he was a great mentor throughout the whole USC process.” Her experiences and the urging of her colleagues bolstered her efficacy and gave her the confidence to pursue her current position.

Summary

Overall, all six participants displayed great levels of self-efficacy in their work lives. They established their goals and worked diligently towards them. This positive sense of self-efficacy enabled them to complete the coursework to earn their degrees and secure the administrative positions they sought. Mastery and vicarious experiences through internships, formal and informal mentoring, success as teachers, and success in

obtaining an assistant principal position all contributed to the building of their self-efficacy. Their continued efficaciousness builds their confidence and allows them to see future administrative goals and grow as school leaders.

5.6 Research Sub-Question 1B: Meaning

What meanings do these new assistant principals attach to the experience of transitioning from the role of classroom teacher?

Making meaning from a series of events takes time and reflection. Seidman (2006) described the meaning making process as a culmination of experiences interacting with the events of the present to help make sense of our lives. The six assistant principals I interviewed for this study are all busy people with full work and home schedules. They come to work early and stay late, often taking work home or coming back to work after hours to catch up. There seems to be little time to reflect. Over the course of three interviews, these assistant principals described their lives in education, their transition to administration and their thoughts on leadership.

In asking them to describe what they learned about themselves and about leadership, I received a variety of answers. Respect was the most often aspect of leadership reported by participants. Each felt they were respected by their peers and colleagues and had earned the respect they received.

David focused on himself and his internal struggles with confrontation. Lynn noted her changing views of leadership and management. Monica discussed school culture, leadership, and finding the right fit for her. Susan spoke personally about her school's family atmosphere and learning whom to trust and respect. Nicole focused on her teaching experience, building relationships, and developing her leadership style.

Jennifer spoke of respect and leadership as teamwork. Their views hold important lessons for future and current administrators.

The role of the school administrator affects and influences the entire student population. The assistant principal, as discussed previously, is the training ground for future school principals and superintendents (Mertz, 2006; Shumate, Munoz & Winter, 2005; Marshall, 1992a; Spady, 1985). It was during my third interview with each participant that I asked them, “Given what you have told me about your time as a teacher and your transition to assistant principal, how do you understand your transition and your role in school leadership? What have you learned, and what’s next?”

David seemed aware of his abilities and aware of his shortcomings. He talked frankly about his strengths and weaknesses and his desire to improve. David addressed his hesitation to reprimand his former teaching colleagues and his desire to get past this apprehension. He addressed his transition in the same school, his apprehension at the beginning, and his changing attitude towards his leadership style. David stated, “I thought this was going to be more difficult because I worked with these guys so much closer, I think it’s been easier being in this position, not easy, but easier.” David’s attitude towards his leadership style is in the process of changing and he realizes it must change for him to be successful. He has had the opportunity to talk with some of his former teacher colleagues and address his difficulty in using his authority. He reflected on this by stating, “I think they realized the decisions I make, they may not agree with all the decisions I make, but I am doing what I think is the best decision in the whole aspect.” It is clear that David constantly reflects on his role and his part in the school. It is evident from his statements that he enjoys his work and has gained a better understanding of his

role. As a student he idolized his teachers and coaches, calling those who worked in the same school their whole career “icons”, he wanted to be like them. His idealized views of his career as an educator are changing, and he sees the importance of leadership and the importance of cultivating his own growth as a leader.

Lynn reflected on her time in business as compared to her role as a school administrator. Throughout our interviews, she stressed her business background and management experience as her strength, though she has begun to develop a new perspective on her role. Lynn described her leadership style as transformational. She admitted that school leaders are responsible for the functioning of the school but that the input of the faculty should be sought. Speaking to her transition in the same school, Lynn remarked that she is not troubled by being in a role of authority over her former peers. She said, “I don’t have a problem with telling them what I have to tell them, even when we’re talking about teachers that I used to work with.” Lastly, the shift in Lynn’s views of management versus educational leadership were made clearer when she said, “It has become very evident that the more I show students and teachers that I care about them and their success, the more they care about their role.”

Monica moved from a school with what she described as a “strict” leadership style to the current more “laid back” style of leadership. This change in leadership style affected Monica’s attitude towards leadership. She wants a school environment that fits her attitudes and one in which she feels comfortable. Describing her next move, she focused on school culture and finding a school that fits her leadership preference.

Nearing the end of her second year as an administrator, Monica feels more confident in her role. She asserted, “It’s taken me two years to really understand what it is

that I'm supposed to be doing and why I'm supposed to be doing it.” Monica celebrated the successes she has had working with students in her current role and her influence on their lives.

Respect is important to Susan. She has a deep respect for her principal and her school. This idea of respect seemed to permeate my conversations with Susan. As a former athlete and coach being a team player and showing respect is a source of pride for Susan. It is important to her that this respect is reciprocal and she enjoys the family atmosphere of her school. Susan referred to her school as having a “family atmosphere” and a place to “generate laughter.” This connection provides meaning for her and she finds comfort by stating, “We're all doing the same thing and so that's probably the best part is I don't have to prove myself.”

Nicole, completing her first year in administration, focused on teaching and leadership. She stressed the importance of administrators’ having multiple years of experience in the classroom. She feels the knowledge gained from working in the classroom is crucial. Nicole stated, “There’s such a multitude of wealth of knowledge that if I’d only been in the classroom only five years, I know that it wouldn’t have prepared me as well to be where I am today.” Relationships with teachers are important to Nicole, and she shows this in her professed leadership style. She was a firm believer in not asking the teacher to perform a task that she was not willing to do herself. Nicole’s hands-on approach has worked for her and helped her build respect among a new faculty and staff.

Reflecting on her first year, Jennifer feels it was a “positive growing experience.” She welcomes the responsibility of her new role and the opportunity it provides to create

change. This authority and opportunity are important to Jennifer. She described herself as a team player and views leadership as a “shared commitment.” She stated, “I definitely lead from a team approach and I also lead by example.” Like Nicole, Jennifer believes the respect and reputation she garnered as a teacher have followed her to the assistant principal role, and she hopes to build upon them.

5.7 Theme One: Duties of the Assistant Principal

The assistant principals interviewed in this study are busy people. During our second round of interviews, they spoke at length about the duties and responsibilities that consume their days. All but one participant recounted an hour-by-hour synopsis of their daily schedule. They lived by the bell and by a tightly framed supervision schedule. The four high school assistants began their days around 7:45 but had the added extracurricular duties to occupy their evenings. The two elementary assistants, Jennifer and Nicole, began their days much earlier at 7:00 but often stay much later to catch up on their work. Duty assignments were dictated by the principal and were varied based on the school level and size. This finding is supported in the literature by numerous studies, which cited the irregular job description of the assistant principal as being most dependent upon the building principal (Harvey, 1994; Kelly, 1987; Marshall, 1985; Mertz, 2006; Michel, 1996; Weller and Weller, 2002). Table 5.1 is a representation of the duties as reported by the six participants.

Table 5.1 Assistant Principal Duties as Reported by Participants

Assistant Principal/ School Level	Discipline Duties	Morning/Afternoon	Lunch	Other	Extracurricular Activities
David High School	9th grade discipline process referrals, Parent phone calls	7:45 - Monitor commons area, Monitor halls between classes, Bus duty until 4:05	Monitor all 3 lunches	Special education, Individualized Education Plans , Teacher evaluations	Evening sports (2 events), Visits middle schools for scheduling
Susan High School	10th grade discipline, tardies, phones, detentions	7:30 - 8:15 hall duty, In halls between all classes, Bus duty until 4:15	12:25-2:00 Supervise all three lunches	Teacher evaluations, Observations	Prom supervision, All football games, Homecoming events
Monica High School	Detention coordinator, Special ed. administrator, Bus discipline	Hall monitor, Bus loading supervision		Distribute lockers, School Improvement Council chair, Career Center liaison, 9th grade curriculum, Lesson plans	Sports
Lynn High School	1/3 student body by alphabet, Powerschool management	Morning bus supervision, Monitor halls at class changes, Car loading dismissal until 4:00	Supervise all 3 lunches	Textbooks, Scheduling, Summer school, Staff development, Student registration, Substitutes, Safe-T teacher evaluations	Supervision at school sporting events
Jennifer Elementary	School wide discipline, bus referrals	Arrives at 6:50, Bus duty at 7:15, Breakfast supervision, 7:45 Car patrols, Morning news show	Monitor at lunch	Special education liaison, Teacher evaluations, Monitor halls,	
Nicole Elementary	School wide discipline for all grades	7:00 Bus duty, Breakfast monitor, Afternoon bus and car dismissal	Monitor at lunch	3rd grade and K5 classroom observations, Scheduling of classes and fine arts.	After school events.

Table 5.1 provides evidence that much of each assistant principal's day is spent supervising students on arrival, in the hallways, at lunch, and at dismissal. For the high school assistants, this supervision carries over into the evenings supervising the many extracurricular events. There seems to be little time to do their other assigned duties of calling parents, supervising teachers, and completing documentation that accompanies student discipline referrals. It is understandable that David, Susan, and Monica all spoke of coming back to school after hours in order to catch up on the paperwork and phone calls. Jennifer stated, "I stay as late as 7:00, 8:00 or 9:00 sometimes." David stated "I will go home, at least an hour, have dinner with the family, give them baths, my girls go to bed early enough that I could come back here at 8 o'clock."

The participant's extreme schedules were evident in the process of setting up interview times. We spoke frequently on the phone to re-schedule and interviews with David, Monica and Susan always began late due to unexpected bus or discipline situations that they had to deal with before they had time to sit and talk with me. Jennifer captured this idea when she stated, "At the drop of a hat, anything can take place and you have to be able to respond to those things, and respond in a very effective manner".

Maintaining student discipline is a major component of the assistant principal job description. Reed and Himmler (1985) listed patrolling the school grounds, handling discipline, and responding to a variety of problems as duties that are the most important for an assistant principal to master. It was no surprise that the participants all regarded responding to student discipline situations as a big part of their day. Greenfield (1985b) and Johnson-Taylor and Martin (2007) cited discipline as the first and major duty of the assistant principal. Over the course of 18 interviews, discipline was mentioned by

participants 515 times. Their experiences aligned with a 1994 survey of 200 New York assistant principals who noted discipline, lunch duty, scheduling substitutes, ordering textbooks, parent conferences, and supervising assemblies as their major duties (Glanz, 1994). Each assistant principal dealt with discipline differently and each school created a unique setting for applying discipline procedures. Ultimately, the assistants found an approach that worked, and each is working towards developing his or her own discipline style.

David tried to apply discipline evenly and support all parties involved. He noted, “I try to follow the handbook as much as I can so there is not an argument from the kid, parent, or the teacher.” Monica leaned on the experience of veterans. She said, “We don’t really have a discipline rubric, it’s just based on talking to mentors, and then your colleagues, the other principals, and then you know, investigating.” For Lynn, her discipline role carried over from the classroom to the administrator’s office. “I was a disciplinarian in the classroom, I, I ran a tight ship, and, but my kids learned, and we had fun in there, and, I think, that’s how I am now with these, the population.” Susan expressed her frustration with teachers and sought to be fair to the students. She commented, “The teachers that don’t see the big picture or don’t care to. They don’t see that we have to give chances.” Jennifer also felt like her role was to support the teacher but be fair to the students. She spoke about teachers who, she felt, “targeted” students and how she struggled to balance fairness for both teachers and students. For Nicole, her new role was widely different from her classroom experiences. She had not dealt with many discipline issues as a teacher, but in her new role, she stated, “I’ve gotten kicked, you know, they’ve tried to bite us, you know, spitting, I mean, it’s a different realm of what I

dealt with in the classroom.” Regardless of the context of the transition, my interviews with these six assistant principal participants suggested that student discipline continues to be a priority for assistant principals.

5.8 Leadership Perspectives

Developing a leadership style and building leadership skills were a concern for all six participants. All six aspire to be building principals or district level administrators. David, Monica, and Nicole all expressed a desire to experience more than a single leadership style. They placed value on differing perspectives and hoped to encounter new leadership models on which to base their learning. Lynn, Jennifer, and Susan touted the expertise of their principals but did not express a similar need for a fresh leadership perspective.

For me, it was interesting that Monica and Nicole, both of whom had worked under multiple principals as teachers and administrators, made this observation. Transitioning to new schools as assistant principals and working under new leadership provided insight on leadership I feel is overlooked by the participants in Group One. The exception here is David.

David has the most administrator experience of the six participants and was the only member of Group One to express a desire to see a new leadership style. This assertion does not mean he dislikes his current principal’s style but it suggests his experience working under the same principal has impeded his ability to form his own leadership style. He is seeking a model to study other than that of his current principal’s.

For David, experiencing new leadership would mean moving to a new school. Having always worked in the same school and for the same principal, David’s firsthand

experience is limited. Monica, as a newcomer to her school was able to compare the differing leadership styles of the principals and begin to create her own style. Nicole, too, was able to compare the leadership styles of her past principal to that of her current principal. Previous research on the socialization of assistant principals suggests the new assistant principal learns to lead based on the leadership style he or she experiences (Armstrong, 2009; Marshall, 1992b; Mertz, 2006). Assistant principals become perpetuators of the leadership they experience.

For assistant principals, essentially principals in training, developing a competent and practical leadership style takes drawing on all one's experiences in education. Teachers emulate the teachers they admired and principals follow in the footsteps of their mentors and role models. The greater the variety of leadership experiences and opportunities the greater the possibilities for cultivating a leadership style of one's own.

Here I have presented my analysis of the 18 participant interviews with regard to the research questions and the theoretical framework of this study. In the chapter that follows, I present my conclusions, implications for actions, and recommendations for further research. I conclude with a return to my own experiences as a new assistant principal. Finally, I express my gratitude to my six participants.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Social constructivists posit that people create meaning for themselves through their interactions with the world and others (Kim, 2001). In their efforts to create meaning, in relation to their working lives, the participants have drawn on their educational experiences, work history, and social interactions with peers as they transition to the role of assistant principal. I have tried, as Creswell (2009) explained to, “focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work, in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (p. 8). The context here is described as the nature of the transition to assistant principal, meaning among peers or among strangers. My participants actively defined and constructed their realities as they were socialized to their new roles. My focus as a researcher was to seek the participants’ point of view regarding their transition and compare it to others who experienced similar events.

6.1 Making Connections

I am currently in my fifth year as assistant principal at a large suburban elementary school. I came to my position as a newcomer to the school and to school administration. As stated in Chapter One, my experiences with my own transition to administration became the impetus for this study. I completed my administration degree and began applying for assistant principal positions in the spring of 2009. Like the

participants of group one, I thought staying at my current school where I knew the culture, faculty, and administration would be perfect. I was apprehensive at the idea of moving as an authority figure to a building of strangers when I did not yet know how to be an assistant principal. Unfortunately, I was not given the opportunity to become an assistant principal in this school.

The next Spring I was offered my current role at an elementary school. As I interviewed Nicole and Monica, members of Group Two, I found I could relate to their stories. As I did, they came to their roles as new assistants in a new school and had to learn the ropes of a new organization. However, in interviewing David, Lynn, Susan, and Jennifer I was able to empathize with the challenges they faced by assuming a role of authority among their peers.

Comments from Group One suggest that overcoming social issues with colleagues, especially those one holds power over, becomes the responsibility of that person as well as one's colleagues. Jennifer shared that she felt she was picked by her peers to be one of the school leaders. This approval by her peers was a boost to her efficacy and showed their confidence in her. Lynn stated, "If you were one of the hell-raisers, one of the gossipers, one of the naysayers, the negative nannies that were working in that school as a teacher, and then you become an assistant principal, they don't forget that; just like, I think, they don't forget the positives about you." The point being, the type of person Lynn is describing does not become an administrator in the same building.

Does the age of the administrator matter? Susan noted that her older teacher colleagues had no problem keeping the line between teacher and administrator clear, but

teachers her age and younger became angry with her when she tried to keep their relationships professional. She explained:

I seemed to have a closer group of core friends when the ladies are older than myself. The younger ones, it always loops back around about a student in the building or a meeting that we've had or something like that. So, I unfortunately have had to distance and stop a lot of outside communication with some of them. This is unfortunate but may be a generational effect and the product of the less formal relationships between those of the same age group. In my current role, my relationships with teachers of my generation are different from my relationships with older teachers. I sympathize with Susan's statement and have found it more difficult to keep a professional distance with friends. The more experienced teachers in my building seem to understand the limits of professional conversation and respect the process. Younger teachers appear to regard fewer topics as taboo and will inquire innocently about details that I cannot share. Despite age, it is and should be possible to maintain a professional working relationship.

Jennifer, David and Susan all related their apprehension at observing and evaluating their former teacher colleagues. Jennifer avoided visited her former teaching partner for the entire year even though she knew of issues that needed to be addressed. David was reluctant to move a teacher friend to a new grade level even though it was best for the school. He also tried to avoid making any negative comments on formal teacher observations, preferring to speak in private with the teacher. Susan purposely checked teacher schedules to avoid sitting at the teacher's desk and struggled with giving or not giving teachers warning of her visits, even though they were to be impromptu

observations. The entanglements of professional responsibility versus friendships are difficult to navigate.

In my own experience, I find it more difficult to reprimand and evaluate teachers who, I feel, are my friends. When I conduct a formal observation of a teacher with whom I have a friendly or informal relationship, I do feel pressure to address only the positive aspects. Does this mean I allow poor teaching to exist to save feelings and friendships? No; the implication here is that, we all struggle with social and professional entanglements. Recognizing bias and partiality in our relationships, as we do in conducting qualitative research, is a safeguard against the negative influences those biases may exert on our lives.

How is this entanglement prevented? If we all aspire to do our jobs in the best manner possible, promote student achievement, and keep the school focused on our students, the problem disappears. Professional educators should be single minded when it comes to student achievement. The administrative team should promote a school culture that is participatory, collegial, and dedicated to student success. Sergiovanni (2007) asserted schools should be communities of learners and the principal a steward of servant leadership. The concept of servant leadership places the principal and assistant principals on equal footing with teachers, all working toward common goals. Sergiovanni stated, “When one places leadership practice in service to ideas, and to others who also seek to serve these ideas, issues of leadership role and of leadership style become far less important” (p. 53). Admittedly, this process has become easier with time and I found I could relate to David’s statement during our last interview. He said, “But the more I get into it the more I don’t care as much, I just got to do what’s right.”

During the eighteen interviews with the six participants, I was struck by the quantity of assigned duties they each reported. They were all busy with supervising students in the mornings, at lunch and dismissal, during extracurricular activities and with parent meetings, discipline referrals, bus issues, and special education meetings. As an elementary assistant principal, I have many duties that fill my days and reach into my evenings. Though my days are not planned, there is always a task to complete. I found comfort in the stories the participants told and felt connected to them. We are busy people, and I could relate.

Missing from their descriptions of their daily routine was time for instructional leadership. Here, my own experiences as assistant principal are worth noting. As a first year administrator, I had learned from coursework that instructional leadership was important, but I had no idea what instructional leadership was supposed to look like in action. Once in the position there seemed to be little time for instructional matters in my day. David lamented, “I don’t want to just be a manager, I want to be able to do curriculum.” He knew curriculum and instruction were important, but did not have the opportunities to develop his skills. Monica mentioned curriculum once in three interviews. She stated, “We really sometimes forget about being instructional leaders in the classroom or in the building and really promoting and pushing for academic achievement”. Here again, she knows it is important but wonders where the time is to learn. Lynn, Susan, Jennifer, and Nicole mentioned curriculum and instruction only briefly amidst their long litanies of assigned duties. Instructional leadership was an idea for which they to aspired, but there was not time in their days to pursue it. If principals are to be strong instructional leaders and the assistant principal post is a stepping stone to

the principalship (Goodson, 2000) time should be made for instructional leadership. The experiences of the six participants in this study align with Marshall's (1992a) contention that assistant principals do not have the time to learn instructional leadership. Likewise, Iannaccone (1985) completely disagreed that the assistant principal position is preparation for the principalship, due to the lack of instructional leadership opportunities. Here we have not an indictment of the assistant principal role but an opportunity to address a system currently focused on management and less on leadership.

When I became an assistant principal, I believed my current situation, where I worked and the people with whom I worked, to be ideal. This was the only reality I knew, and I was content. At the time, I had worked for five different principals with varying leadership styles and abilities; however, until I entered school administration I had given little thought to my own leadership preferences or leadership style. I now understand that there are benefits to working under multiple leadership styles.

Monica noted the differing leadership styles she had experienced and found herself developing her own style. Having worked for a strict and demanding principal and now being under a current relaxed leadership style, Monica found herself on a continuum between the two extremes. Lynn seemed confident in her ability and recognized the difference between managing people and leading people. She came to the role with prior leadership experience and molded this experience to her needs in education. Nicole and Jennifer described their leadership styles as hands-on and participatory. As first year assistants, it will be interesting to see if their leadership views change with experience. If, as Crotty (1998) assumed, meaning is derived from social interaction, a new environment producing new social interactions may create new views on leadership. Following this

assumption, all the participants' views on leadership are subject to change as their social environments change.

6.2 Implications for Action

As stated in Chapter One, this study sought to understand the transition to assistant principal by comparing the experiences of those teachers who move to administration among their peers and those who transition to administration as new members of a school faculty. The findings presented here are useful to principals and superintendents seeking to promote teachers to assistant principal positions in their districts. These findings would also be useful to aspiring assistant principals when considering where to apply for administrative positions. Lastly, principals and university preparation programs for school administrators can benefit by recognizing the need for instructional leadership opportunities available to assistant principals and the importance of exposure to multiple leadership styles. Suggestions are as follows:

1. When selecting candidates for assistant principal positions from among the pool of qualified teachers in a district, school leaders should take into account the culture and leadership styles of the candidate's current school and seek available positions that best fit the candidate's previous experiences.
2. Assistant principals should be afforded time during the workday to develop instructional leadership skills.
3. Assistant principals need exposure to multiple leadership styles and perspectives to empower them in developing their own leadership style.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Further research of the socialization processes and self-efficacy of assistant principals is needed to understand fully the realities of this entry-level school administrator role. A qualitative study of the assistant principal role that includes school principals and teachers would add a valuable perspective to this research topic. To interview the teachers who worked alongside these new assistant principals and to focus on their view of the transition would add a layer of depth to our understanding of the transition. It would be interesting to know if the teachers feel nervous and apprehensive about being observed and evaluated by their former teaching colleagues. It would also be interesting to interview principals who have chosen to hire teachers from their school to fill vacant assistant principal positions and examine their attitudes and justifications for doing so.

Participants in this study sought to experience differing leadership styles in an effort to form their own leadership skills. It would be useful to examine the process by which new school administrators cultivate their own leadership styles and how this formation is influenced by their work history. This could be done by interviewing future administrative candidates over the course of their university preparation programs, during their time as assistant principals, and finally during their time as school principals. Lastly, with the focus on the myriad duties assigned to assistant principals and the lack of instructional leadership opportunities, it would be interesting to examine the ways in which principals learn to be instructional leaders and where this learning occurs.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

When I began this study, I had worked nine years as a teacher and I was in my fourth year as an assistant principal. This was a position that I would never have imagined myself in when I was a first-year teacher. I struggled with doubt and a lack of focus. Frustrated, I periodically scanned the classifieds for job opportunities outside of education. That first year was tough, but through trial and many errors, I became more adept in the classroom. I became serious in my pursuit of becoming a great teacher. I am inquisitive by nature and was able to put that aspect of my personality to work for my students and me. I loved teaching but wanted to do more. I completed an Education Specialist degree and became an elementary assistant principal. My teaching experience, having all been at the middle and high school levels, made this transition to elementary school seem like a career change. Here I was again with much to learn. I hope that over the last four years I have proven myself a capable and dedicated school leader.

I am amazed by the dedication and perseverance I discovered during my interviews with the six assistant principals in this study. They are all dedicated professionals who are serious about the role they play in the education of children. They sincerely love their jobs, despite the heavy workload and long hours. Some days I was jealous of their enthusiasm; other days I empathized with their problems. I learned as much or more about myself in this process as I have about them. Like them, I felt overwhelmed at the responsibilities of the assistant principal role. Like them, I am working to define myself as a leader and develop a leadership style.

I am confident that each of these six assistant principals will continue to make a positive impact in education. I hope that I have been able to portray them with fairness

and without bias. Without their dedication to this process, it would not have been possible.

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Appendix A

The pros and cons of transitioning to assistant principal in the same school versus a different school

Pros (same school)

1. Already know the faculty
2. Understand the rules of the school
3. Know the students
4. Know the parents
5. Understand the school culture, mission statement
6. Know who to trust
7. Know the principal and his expectations
8. Know the way bus duty, car duty, lunch duty looks and operates
9. The teachers know me

Cons (same school)

1. Observe and evaluate teachers I know
2. Discipline referrals for teachers I know have bad classroom management.
3. Expectations of colleagues
4. Could I do this?

Pros (new school)

1. No one knows me, able to make a first impression
2. Not worried about losing friends
3. Fresh start
4. New outlook on the profession

Cons (new school)

1. Have to learn everything
2. Don't know names of students or teachers.
3. Whom do you trust?
4. Friends? Isolation?

Appendix B

Follow up questions for Lynn

Describe your duties as an assistant principal, your daily routines, and ways you manage your tasks.

Describe your leadership style. Have your thoughts on leadership changed from your time as a teacher?

During our previous interviews, you talked a lot about the move into administration, working with former colleagues, current AP's, and working with the principal. Reflect on that for a moment, what does that mean to you? How does that shape your view of this school and the people you work with?

Would this have been different in a different context, another school?

In looking at your background and education, you came from a business perspective and once you took on the teacher role you moved pretty quickly through the education requirements to administration. Was that always the goal?

Were there problems that you anticipated that never happened?

What is the best advice you have received in this role or even as a teacher?

Appendix C

Email correspondence to potential participants

Mr. (insert name),

I am Everette Workman, assistant principal at Woodruff Elementary School and doctoral student at the University of South Carolina. My research involves assistant principals and the experience of transitioning from teacher to administrator. I am interested in the successes and the struggles that teachers face when they leave the classroom and enter administration as an assistant principal. I am looking for assistant principals who are in their first three years of administration. I have received permission from the Greenville County Schools to contact you.

I am in my fourth year as an assistant principal and my days now are nothing like my days as a teacher. I would appreciate the opportunity to sit down with you in an interview and hear about your move into administration.

Thank you for your time, I know you are busy this time of year. I can be reached at this email address or at 864-909-2937, or at school 864-476-3123.

Thank you,

Everette Workman

Appendix D
IRB Invitation Letter



Study Title: Teacher Transition to Assistant Principal

Dear _____,

My name is Everette H. Workman and I am a doctoral candidate in the Education Department at the University of South Carolina. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Education Administration, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying the experiences of teachers who have made the transition into the assistant principalship within the same school setting and those that have made the transition as a newcomer to the school. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for interviews concerning your transition from teacher to assistant principal. These meetings will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 60-90 minutes each. There will be no more than three interviews. The interviews will be audio recorded so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. These recordings will only be reviewed by me and then they will be deleted.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the University of South Carolina. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

You may contact me at 864-909-2937 or everettehix@gmail.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Lynn Harrill at 830-777-3091 or lharrill@sc.edu if you have any study related questions or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at the University of South Carolina at 803-777-7095.

Thank you for your consideration.

With kind regards,

Everette H Workman
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Woodruff SC 29388
864-909-2937
everettehix@gmail.com