

FACTORS THAT DETERMINE THE CAREER STABILITY OF ASSISTANT  
PRINCIPALS IN A LARGE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE SOUTHEAST

by

Danielle Felder Edwards

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Approved by:

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Dr. Corey Lock

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Dr. James Bird

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Dr. Gregory Wiggan

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Dr. Do Hong Kim

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## ABSTRACT

DANIELLE FELDER EDWARDS. Factors that determine the career stability of assistant principals in a large urban school district in the southeast. (Under the direction of DR. COREY LOCK)

This study examined the career stability (career choices assistant principals intend to make over the next five to ten years) in a large, urban school district in the southeastern region of the United States in order to identify factors significantly related to their career aspirations. The study invited a purposive sample (n=177) of assistant principals ( $N = 286$ , elementary, middle, and high) to respond to questions on the electronically administered Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified). The career stability selections were: become a principal, take another administrative position, remain in the position, return to the classroom, leave education altogether, or other (self-reported career alternatives). The researcher used logistic regression in order to predict a model of the respondent's career stability. The current study revealed 84.57% of the respondents possess upwardly mobile career stability: 77.4% of respondents showed interest in actively pursuing the principalship, 6.5% would take another administrative position, 2.4% preferred to remain in the assistant principalship, 0.0% would return to the classroom, 2.9% indicated leaving education completely and 13.7% indicated other career stability with retirement being the predominant response. Four variables yielded a statistically significant relationship to the prevailing career stability orientation of the sample (i.e., upwardly mobile). The fewer years an assistant principal served as an administrator, the more likely his/her career stability inclination was to be upwardly mobile. The fewer years an assistant principal has served in the school district, the more

likely his/her career stability inclination was to be upwardly mobile. The more an assistant principal agreed with the role conflict tenet "I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it" the greater his/her career stability inclination was to be upwardly mobile. Lastly, the more an assistant principal disagreed with the role conflict tenet "I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment" the greater his/her career stability inclination was to be upwardly mobile. No other variables met the .05 significance level.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my loving family. Dr. Daniel DeLeon Felder, Sr. and Lorraine Perry Felder created a nest so complete and comfortable that I never wanted to leave. Leona, Daniel Jr., Loretta, Jason, and Joseph flew before me, so I scarcely flew into resistance alone. Lisa flew right behind me, so I had to fly responsibly. When I crashed, Sheldon swooped in and joined me to create a new nest for Keith and finally Nina. My loving g-baby Darryne, in-laws Madeline and Frank Edwards, sisters-in-law (Monica and Angela), loveable brother-in-law (Walter), and brilliant nieces (Lisa, Lauren, Lindsey, Alexis, Perri, and Erica) have made the nest whole. I love each of you with all my heart.

Dad and Dan, your angel wings now inspire me to fly righteously....

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Now unto [God] that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory. (Ephesians 3:20-21).

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As the demand for high quality principals and assistant principals continues to rise, districts that want highly qualified school administrators will have to address the reasons for the current shortage (e.g., job dissatisfaction, stress, accountability, and budget cuts). Norton (2008) asserted, “if the school system is to develop an effective system of human resources, it must take measures to maintain personnel stability at all levels” (p. 189). Examination of career stability can be seen as a direct response to the nationwide call for sustainable school leadership and the shrinking pool of highly qualified principalship candidates. This study replicated the assistant principal study by Mary Lu MacCorkle (2004) and extended the research by examining additional variables related to assistant principal career stability. The MacCorkle (2004) research was selected for replication because it was designed to investigate factors that could influence assistant principals to remain in their current positions or to aspire to principalships. The prior study provided a framework for investigating career stability factors specific to incumbent assistant principals in the large urban school district in the southeast in order to identify potential principal aspirants or develop ways to keep assistant principal positions occupied by these qualified individuals.

Great emphasis has been placed on the importance of school leadership in the past 20 years, particularly as public schools nationwide have undertaken the restructuring process necessary for increased accountability and student achievement. In the preface of

her book *The Assistant Principal: Leadership Choices and Challenges*, Marshall (1992), an educational scholar who has published extensively about administrative career development, particularly regarding assistant principals, asserted, “The assistant principalship is the beginning of a career socialization process. Principals and superintendents are the outcome of this process” (p. viii). Moreover, “by focusing on the assistant, we can uncover problems and identify new solutions for reconceptualizing school leadership” (p. ix).

Several authors have commented on the growing problem of principal recruitment and administrative hiring shortfalls. DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) reported, “our nation will lose about half of its current school leaders to retirement within the next decade” (p. 43). According to Herrington and Wills (2005), “during the past few years, superintendents and district human resource officers have reported increasing difficulty in filling vacant school leadership positions” (p. 182). Several authors documented a leadership crisis characterized by falling numbers of applicants for school leadership positions (Capelluti & Nye, 2005; Hartle & Thomas, 2004; Zellner, Jinkins, Gideon, Doughty, & McNamara, 2002), which appears increasingly likely to diminish the available talent pool from which future leaders may be drawn. The ongoing challenge faced today by educational policymakers and key stakeholders is identifying and selecting the best educational leaders available for the head school leader position: the principalship. In order to have a readily available pool of highly qualified, certified principal aspirants, school districts must explore factors which encourage interest in administrative advancement for the traditional successor to the principalship: assistant principals. This study analyzed and reported career stability data collected from assistant

principals, which may inform district leadership on job enrichment needs, as well as professional development interests in order to create a pipeline of future educational leaders.

### **Background of the Study**

Nationally, school districts struggle with recruiting and retaining principals as well as filling other vacant administrative leadership positions. There are several factors that contribute to the principal shortage such as reluctance of qualified individuals to seek and accept these positions, lack of commensurate compensation with the immense responsibilities of the job, stress, and time demands inherent to the position and retirement of experienced principals. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008-2009), employment of elementary and secondary education administrators is expected to grow by eight percent between 2006 and 2016. In 2006 there were 226,000 elementary and secondary education administrators, the projected employment need for 2016 is 243,000 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008-2009). The data reveals an impending need for 17,000 elementary and secondary education administrators within the next seven years. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008-2009) cites the following reasons for this growth: increased enrollments of school aged children, more administrative responsibilities on each school related to student achievement and the large proportion of education administrators expected to retire over the next ten years. Education administrator employment opportunities are projected to increase in the south and western regions of the United States due to faster population growth, and in urban and rural areas where pay is generally lower than suburban counterparts (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008-2009). As a result, school districts will need new strategies to find pools

of qualified principal aspirants, hire quickly, and retrain staff if they are to keep their schools competitive.

North Carolina school districts, like other districts nationwide, report facing a huge and growing shortage of school-based administrators. The overarching perception is that the disequilibrium results from the paucity of qualified (i.e., certified) aspirants. Certification in the state of North Carolina is defined as “the licensing process, which establishes eligibility for individuals to perform specific professional services as a public school employee” (Certification Manual, 1989, p. 3). The state statutes specify “all professional employees of the public school shall hold appropriate certification for the subject, grade level, or professional assignment” (Certification Manual, 1989, p. 3). In the next five years, 50% of school administrators within the state will be eligible for retirement (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

In 2005, the North Carolina Principals’ Executive Program (PEP) conducted a study, which reported 51% of the current principals in the state were age 50 or older, 45% of the assistant principals were age 50 or older, and 51% of current principals had 25 or more years of experience. The school leadership in the 21st century report entitled “School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results” (Marzano et al., 2005) presented to the North Carolina State Board of Education in September 2006, found that 279 assistant principals were issued the provisional license in 2005-2006, as compared to 40 licenses issued in the initial year (1999-2000).

Additionally, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction licensure records indicated that there were 19,321 individuals holding administrative licenses in North Carolina. Only 6,017 of those individuals held current positions as assistant principals,

principals, and/or central office administrators. No other occupation has demonstrated such a drastic shortage after aspirants have worked so diligently in a preparation program (Lovely, 2004). The disproportion of practicing administrators to those holding administrative licenses in North Carolina makes recruiting and retaining school administrators a major priority. Investigation of factors, which determine the career stability of those who envisioned themselves as public school leaders, may provide data to inform on barriers and conditions that contribute to this disparity.

Considerable research illustrates that increased time demands, heightened accountability pressures, school violence, and the overall changed nature of the role of the principal compound the problem of finding individuals to fill principalships (Austin & Brown, 1970; Cusick, 2003; Farkas, Johnson, & Duffet, 2004; Glanz, 1994). Lovely (2004) concluded, “In study after study, a lethal mixture of the following deterrents has transcended every level and demographic group of principals: time and overload, increasing responsibilities, work-related stress, salary and institutional interference” (p. 3).

Conversely, PEP records indicated that North Carolina Principal Fellow application submissions over the past four years showed a dramatic decrease. In 2004, there were 128 applicants, and in 2007, only 72 applications were submitted (North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association [NCPAPA], 2008). These numbers may indicate a decrease in interest to become a North Carolina school leader, or reflect backlash to the program’s assertion that “In fact, fewer than 20% of the applicants are selected as Principal Fellows” (North Carolina Principal Fellows Program, 2009).

Gates et al. (2004) conducted research to further the understanding of careers of school administrators through an in-depth analysis of administrative data from the state of North Carolina. The report prepared for the Wallace Foundation, *Career Paths of School Administrators in North Carolina*, presented an approach for using administrative data for career path analysis. The report identified four research objectives: a descriptive overview of current and former North Carolina school administrators and their careers, characteristics of the individual and the school in which he or she works that relate to whether that individual transitions to a principalship or superintendency, characteristics associated with principal mobility and attrition, and how state administrative data might be used to help policymakers better understand the link between school administrators and student learning (p. xi).

The Gates et al. (2004) study revealed findings relevant to the intended respondents of the present study:

1. Between 1987 and 2001, the total number of school administrators grew by 61%, compared to 46% for teachers, but this growth was not distributed across administrative positions. Assistant principals increased by 71%, principals increased by 11%, and superintendents declined by 16% (p. xiii).
2. As of 2000, women made up a majority of other administrators, assistant principals, and first-time principals; they also comprised 29% of the superintendents in the state. In 1990, only 26% of North Carolina principals were female, but by 2000, nearly half (46.6%) were. Women principals were in the majority in elementary schools (58%) but were the minority (41%) in middle schools, 35% in combined-grade schools, and 24% in high schools (p. xiv).



3. The proportion of superintendents who were White declined from 87% to 81% from 1990-2000. The study revealed only slight changes in the proportion of white school administrators. In 1990, 22% of North Carolina principals were racial or ethnic minorities; by 2000, 24% were (p. xiv).
4. A gender gap is evident in North Carolina. Across the board, females in the North Carolina public school system are less likely than males to advance to administrative positions. The researchers found that men were still four times more likely than women to become principals directly (e.g., without serving as assistant principals), and over three times more likely to become assistant principals. It is interesting to note that the researchers found that women in middle and high schools were more likely than those in elementary schools to become principals or assistant principals (pp. xiv-xv).
5. Retention is lower for minority teachers. Educators in North Carolina who are African American are slightly more likely to leave the system than others. The researchers posited, “At a time when the proportion of students who are minority is increasing, the pool from which minority administrators are drawn may be declining” (p. xv).
6. Principal turnover is fairly high in North Carolina and is greater for schools serving high-minority student populations. After six years, 48% of first-time or new principals were still principals in North Carolina. The majority of these individuals had moved to other schools: 18% remained in the same school, 8% became principals in a different district, and 22% became principals in a different school in the same district. Fourteen percent of first-time principals had returned

to teaching six years later, 12% had assumed some other administrative position, and 26% had left the North Carolina public school system (p. xvi).

7. From 1987-2001, the researchers' multivariate analysis revealed turnover among all school principals, viewed as an individual school, was 18% per year. Only 2.4% of this turnover was due to principals leaving the system (p. xvi).
8. Lastly, administrators assigned to schools serving high proportions of minority students tend to have lower retention. However, the report found that a principal who is the same race or ethnicity as the largest racial or ethnic group in the school is less likely to switch schools or to leave the principalship to take another position in the school system (pp. xvi-xvii).

Gates et al. (2004) concluded the study denoting a "serious limitation" (p. xvii) of the authors' analyses:

Specifically, our research highlights the fact that administrative data provide little insight into the performance of school administrators. Ultimately, the issues of greatest interest to policymakers are whether the education system is promoting and retaining individuals who are effective administrators, and which individual characteristics (including career experiences) are associated with administrative effectiveness. (p. xvii)

The researchers' concluding statements illuminate the present study's purpose for investigating assistants' career stability factors. Analysis of assistant principal career path determinants found in the literature and their relationship with career stability may offer data to better address assistants' career expectations, promotion preparedness and leadership potential within the organization.

Gates et al. (2003) posited, “the career flow of school administrators is not unidirectional; individuals move in and out of positions for various reasons at various stages of their career” (p.5). Findings of this research may provide insight for building district leadership capacity as well as relevant contextualization of the role for performance symbiosis between the district and assistants in an ever-changing era of school reform.

### **Problem Statement**

With predictions of nationwide principal shortages (Capelluti & Nye, 2005; Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; Pounder & Crow, 2005), investigating the career stability of assistant principals is important because they are the primary source of candidates from which impending principal selections are made (Croft & Morton, 1977; Kealey, 2002; Mertz, 2000). To that end, Marshall and Hooley (2006) contended:

Policymakers do not pay attention to the assistant principal. They do not sponsor studies or even collect data on this position. As a result they miss rich opportunities to make a difference. The recruitment and retention issues for assistant principals are usually ignored because people focus on teachers and principals. Although these are truly integrated careers and positions, policymakers too quickly leap past the assistant principal in their deliberations. District policymakers should be concerned about the professional development of aspiring educational leaders and should direct attention to the assistant principalship. (p. 12)

According to Farmer (2009), North Carolina PEP Director:

School leadership is at a critical juncture in North Carolina. Though North Carolina has taken steps with the Principals' Fellows Program and PEP, we still lack an institutionalized, coordinated statewide effort that addresses the recruitment of future leaders, mentoring and coaching once in positions, ongoing professional improvement as well as alternative routes to the principalship (para. 2).

This challenge is specifically relevant to large, urban school districts. Roza (2003) reported prospective principals avoid some districts as well as schools within districts. The districts and schools with the fewest applicants are typically those with the most challenging working conditions, higher concentrations of poor and minority students, and lower salaries for principals. As illustrated by Roza, these factors generally separate the high need districts from the rest. It is widely known that there is a principal shortage throughout the nation and especially North Carolina; however, we do not know what factors may determine whether incumbent assistant principals aspire to move into principalship vacancies or remain in their current role providing long-term assistance to the principal. Roza acknowledges that some districts and locales are facing difficulty finding strong leaders, but the issue within urban areas is one of distribution not scarcity. Calabrese (1991) suggested that assistant principals are a neglected variable in the effective schools equation because they are dynamic, enthusiastic, creative, and caring. Simple observation of their fragmented daily activities reveals assistant principals' commitment and limitless contribution to achieving the school's mission (Koru, 1993; Marshall, 1993; May, 2001; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993). Glanz (2004) asserts,

“undervalued and often unacknowledged, the AP is the often unseen, yet cohesive element that contributes to an efficient and effective school” (p.2).

In 2003, at a briefing in Washington, D.C., the Wallace Foundation provided evidence that progress will only be made by focusing more on hiring practices, working conditions, and incentives. “The research findings point out that increasing the supply of certified principal candidates is not enough” (para. 2), asserted DeVita, then president of The Wallace Foundation. DeVita continued,

We need to create the right environment for success if we expect principals to meet tough new state and federal mandates and to effectively raise student achievement. Creating the right environment requires going beyond the pipeline, and examining the incentive structures, working conditions and job descriptions in order to attract and keep high-quality leaders in the schools that need them most. (Wallace Foundation, 2003, para. 2)

“What these studies make clear,” added Laine, then Director of Education Programs at The Wallace Foundation,

is that the “shortage” issue is actually a “conditions” issue. We need to balance our efforts of attracting and strengthening education leaders with changing the conditions and systems in which they work. State-level policies, district hiring practices and resource allocations need to be aligned so that they support efforts to attract effective leaders at the district and school levels.

(Wallace Foundation, 2003, para. 7)

### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the career stability of assistant principals in a large, urban school district in the southeast to offer data to better address assistants' career expectations, promotion preparedness and the future school leadership status of the district.

Despite researchers' focus on the principal shortage and recruitment, a paucity of empirical research on assistant principal career-decision making still exists. A review of educational leadership research reveals the preponderance of career studies focus on the principal. MacCorkle (2004), Miller (2008), Mizelle (1995), and Tripkin (2006) examined the assistant principal role in regard to influences on career decision-making. MacCorkle's (2004) study surveyed 605 secondary assistant principals, Miller (2008) surveyed 153 urban elementary assistant principals, Mizelle (1995) interviewed four principals, 12 assistant principals and 18 teachers, and Tripkin (2006) interviewed 5 secondary assistant principals in a suburban setting. Themes identified in the studies included role definition, age of respondent, ambiguity, and conflict; shared leadership; job satisfaction; and career goals. Further empirical research may provide additional information on obstacles and enablers that affect career paths of entry-level educational administrators as well as data to develop strategies to possibly quell school leadership crises in diverse settings. The assistant principal career path has been regarded as vital asset to the school community despite its lack of attention in comparison to the principal's career (Glanz, 2004; Marshall, 1992; Pellicer & Stevenson, 1991).

Pounder and Young (1996) called for more empirical research about administrator recruitment due to this gap in the literature. Empirical research on assistant principal

career stability is integral to addressing unknown barriers to principal recruitment and selection due to the position's traditional role as the steppingstone to the principalship. Given the emerging shortage of qualified applicants for principal positions, it appears urgent for school district leaders to provide positive interactions between the organization and assistant principals, specifically to hone leadership ability, as well as recognize opportunities for an individual's upward mobility.

In order to address school leadership shortfalls in North Carolina and the nation as a whole, it is essential that educational research studies focus on identifying factors which may increase the probability of accessing qualified, certified principal aspirants such as those identified by Mertz (2000), as well as refine traditionally ambiguous selection methods for administrative posts. Marshall and Hooley (2006) proposed,

By focusing on the assistant, policy makers could affect instructional leadership, innovation, and equity for women and minorities as well as recreate the position to be more than just a career steppingstone. In paying special attention to assistant principals' training and recruitment, policymakers could affect the supply and quality of future educational leadership. (p. 25)

The authors delineated the need to prepare and support entry-level administrators as they described the unique and changing nature of the role, and offered strategies on how to find and retain individuals for the position in an era of reform focused on site-based management, accountability, and teacher empowerment (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

The role of the assistant principal is one of the least researched and least discussed topics in educational leadership however; research indicates the importance of the

position in the day-to-day operation of the school site is growing every day (Gates et al., 2003; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002). According to Lynch (1983), “roles can be described as the expected patterns of behavior attached to particular organizations. Roles are significant because they differentiate behavior, facilitate prediction, and enhance stability” (p. 142). Educators who become assistant principals take on the responsibility of running the school, therefore, the leadership areas (i.e. duties and practices), school accountability, and district initiatives required of the role directly impact the incumbent and school community as a whole.

In the past, candidates with experience, usually in the education field, assumed formal leadership positions in public schooling but this is no longer the conventional succession. This begs the question of where the next public school leaders will emerge. Finding the right people for principalship vacancies is critical in order for schools to run efficiently and offer effective instructional programs. Rhodes and Brundett (2007) proposed, “one response schools may consider is to adopt a more proactive stance towards leadership talent identification, development, succession, and retention amongst existing staff” (p. 15). The traditional succession to the principalship has been from teacher to assistant principal to building principal. Young (2008) posited,

Indeed, far too many school districts have and continue to rely on “walk-ins” to staff vacant positions and have devoted little or no effort toward developing a formalized recruitment program to attract potential job candidates aligning their interests and their expertise with position requirements. (p. 92)

The theoretical framework for this study was drawn from administrative theory on the formation of career patterns of assistant principals and school administration studies.



The six career orientation categories and themes from “A Typology of the Assistant Principalship: A Model of Orientation to the Administrative Career” developed by Marshall, Mitchell, and Gross (1990) and Marshall’s (1992) assistant principal career socialization theory were used as a framework for conceptualizing this study’s career stability categories. The career orientation categories developed by Marshall, Mitchell and Gross (1990) were based on in-depth analysis of the data from their qualitative study of 20 assistant principals. Themes derived from the participants’ career-related interviews during the Marshall, Mitchell and Gross (1990) study were: perception of upward mobility, passing the loyalty test, sponsorship, resigning to remain in the role, and gender as a factor in treatment. The researchers theorized “assistant principals develop orientations in response to the opportunity structures and the task activities they experience during their time in the position” (p. 28).

Career orientation categories to the assistant principalship are as follows (Marshall, Mitchell, & Gross, 1990):

- The upwardly mobile assistant principal. Individual has cultivated useful professional networks including a sponsor who assists with career goals, actively seeks promotion, demonstrates a willingness to take risks, and values loyalty to superiors (pp. 19-20).
- The career assistant principal. Individual does not wish to be a principal, has created an agreeable working environment with preferred task assignments, rapport with higher administrators, and sufficient authority to perceive role with pride (pp. 21-22).

- The plateaued assistant principal. Individual desires advancement, has applied several times without success, lacks relationship skills and mentor assistance, and no opportunity has really existed for advancement (pp. 22-24).
- The shafted assistant principal. Individual has fulfilled criteria for the upwardly mobile but remains without a chance for promotion exists, has lost a sponsor's help, and may have lost out due to inappropriate placement or district changes (pp. 25-26).
- The assistant principal who considers leaving. Individual is young enough to develop alternative career, may have been in a management position outside education (pp. 26-27).
- The downwardly mobile administrator. Reverse career trend, which may be voluntary or involuntary due to budget, demotion, or request to return to a job with tasks they preferred (pp. 27-28).

It is unlikely that survey respondents would perceive themselves as plateaued, shafted or downwardly mobile, therefore the present study categorized career stability using the following five survey item selections: assistant principals who intend to become a principal, assistant principals who intend to advance to another administrative position, assistant principals who intend to remain as an assistant, assistant principals who intend to leave education altogether and other, for alternative write-in responses.

The work of Scoggins and Bishop (1993) indicated the preponderance of assistant principals studied perceive themselves as career stable. Mertz (2000) studied eight assistant principals through observation and in-depth interviews. The study found that while some of the administrators will likely end their careers in this position, all of them

wanted to become principals; this included assistant principals who had been in the position for 10 years or more. According to Mertz, “they may become career assistant principals, as described by Marshall (1993), but they do not or did not seek to be such” (p. 2). The author’s intent was to describe how respondents view and think about their work; the study findings hypothesize that assistant principals enter the position with a socialized disposition to the position (Mertz, 2000). Accordingly, incumbents are aware of the organizational norms and preferences, which advance colleagues who are deemed to best fit the perception of who the district wants in school leadership positions.

### **Research Questions**

This study surveyed assistant principals in a large, urban school district in the southeast region of the United States concerning specified factors that may determine their career stability. A logistic regression analysis was performed to examine the variables team management and leadership training, mentor exposure, role conflict, role ambiguity, number of years teaching prior to becoming an administrator, years served as an administrator, years served in the school district and administrative team participation as well as other demographic indicators to assess their relationship to respondents’ career stability (career choices assistant principals intend to make over the next five to ten years). All practicing assistant principals in the large, urban school district were invited to participate in the survey. Two questions were posed for this study:

1. What is the relationship of team management and leadership training, mentor exposure, role conflict, role ambiguity, classroom experience, years served as an administrator, years in the district, and administrative team participation to the career stability of assistant principals?

2. Within the broader categories of demographics (e.g. age, race, gender) and career-related influences (e.g. principal's leadership style, role conflict with teachers where they previously taught, etc...) which specific factors are related to the career stability of assistant principals?

### **Significance of the Study**

The position of assistant principal has been perceived as a means to accomplish two vital organizational purposes: (a) to facilitate the effective administration of the school and (b) to provide training opportunities for future school principals (Goodson, 2000). As the school-based administrator gap has been researched and studied, educators currently serving as assistant principals are strongly considered the frontrunners to fill the principal vacancies occurring in North Carolina's public school districts. It is widely recognized that the definite and assured route to entering the principalship was through the assistant principalship (Chan, Webb, & Bowen, 2003; Croft & Morton, 1977; Kersten & Kersten, 2006; Michel & Robert, 1993; Winter & Partenheimer, 2002).

Based on a review of the school administrator literature, there exists a dearth of information on the career stability of assistant principals. A need remains for better identification of factors that determine their career stability. The present research is an elaboration of MacCorkle's (2004) study, which surveyed members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in order to investigate factors that impact assistant principals' career stability. MacCorkle's study examined recurring factors found in the literature on assistant principals that influenced their career stability: participation in an administrative team, role ambiguity, role conflict, and participation in a mentoring program of some sort. The present study offered MacCorkle's

recommendation to research additional factors beyond her study that may impact assistants' career stability including: an urban setting, team management and leadership training, years served as an administrator, years served in the school district and years taught in the classroom before becoming an administrator in an effort to make the survey more robust.

Although many variables have been investigated in studies of assistant principal career decision-making, little research has been done comparing the relative importance of factors from multiple categories. Therefore, the factors that may predict career stability remain unclear. The present study collected self-reported data from local school district assistants to inform policymakers, human resource administrators, and key stakeholders on trend data for principalship aspirants (upwardly mobile) as well as those unwilling to fill a principal vacancy (non-upwardly mobile). The present study seeks to present a conceptual structure for understanding the career stability of the surveyed school administrators. Examination of the survey data on factors that determine career stability may provide insight into the respondents' leadership aspirations, career challenges, and role contentment. Data on upwardly mobile assistant principal career stability may inform the survey district of a pool of qualified candidates willing to assume important administrative positions as they arise due to retirements, promotions and resignations. District training, recruitment and retention programs, including the re-recruitment of personnel may also be developed or adapted to address the respondents' expressed concerns and career stability.

Norton (2008) posited,

Ongoing assessments of the intentions of employees concerning job satisfaction, assignment interests, career development aspirations, and other related factors must be administered both formally and informally. Current employee intentions and interests provide clues to the current employees' attitudes about work assignments and career aspirations. (p. 182)

Creating and implementing a well defined, best practice model for selecting qualified candidates to fill vacancies in schools is an ongoing challenge in most districts. More comprehensive information about barriers to assistant principals' ascension to current and impending vacancies may increase the probability that these candidates are identified, prepared and open to administrative leadership advancement.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*Career*: a life-long sequence of related jobs and experiences (Gordon, 2002)

*Career Stability*: career choices assistant principals intend to make over the next five to ten years (MacCorkle, 2004). Selections provided were:

1. Become a principal
2. Take another administrative position
3. Remain an assistant
4. Return to the classroom
5. Leave education altogether
6. Other

Career Orientation terms (Marshall et al., 1990) were used to categorize participant career stability responses:

*Upwardly mobile assistant principal:* Vertical movement in the organization, which affords greater influence and responsibility. Individual has cultivated useful professional networks including a sponsor who assists with career goals, actively seeks promotion, demonstrates a willingness to take risks, and values loyalty to superiors (p. 19-20).

*Non-upwardly mobile assistant principal:* Horizontal or downward mobility. Individual who intends to remain in the assistant principal position, considers leaving, or is (voluntarily or involuntarily) downwardly mobile (pp. 27-28).

### **Assumptions**

The following assumptions laid the foundation for this study:

1. The questions contained in the instrument were clear and easy to comprehend.
2. Respondents answered the survey items sincerely and honestly.
3. Respondents willingly participated in the study and returned it by the designated timeline.
4. At least 60% of the respondents would return the survey.
5. Respondents' responses to the survey were determined by their past and present personal experiences as assistant principals.
6. The instrument provided a reliable and valid measure of respondents' expression of personal assessment.

### **Delimitations**

The present study chose to survey only practicing assistant principals in the large, urban school district in the southeast. The surveyed district utilizes individuals in school leadership roles such as Academic Facilitators and Discipline Coordinators to fulfill

duties traditionally associated with the assistant principal position. However, some of these incumbents may possess an administrative license and others may not, primarily because their assignment to the position is left to the discretion of their supervisor, the building principal. Therefore, the district human resource office was petitioned for the email addresses of only those designated by state licensure classification to officially hold the title of assistant principal and currently practicing in the role for study participation.

### **Limitations**

Results of this study depended upon the self-reported responses provided by the sample of assistant principals within this large, urban district in the southeast region of the United States. The limited population for the study warranted care and concern with the interpretation or generalizations of the findings. Available information was limited to the participants who chose to respond. Only the Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict scales have been subjected to rigorous testing over a number of years to provide reliability and validity. A second limitation of this study was reliance on self-reported information. Respondents to the study may have given socially acceptable answers (i.e., they may have responded to demand characteristics) rather than objective responses to the survey items. The present study acknowledges that multiple factors in combination with one another may influence career stability of respondents. Due to the quasi-experimental nature of the study, the researcher was not able to control for all confounding variables, which impact reliability (both internal and external) and validity (particularly construct). Respondents bring with them variables that the present study was unable to control (e.g., gender, age, and tenure).

It is important to note that ten days prior to survey dissemination a notification



of Reduction-in-Force (RIF) was sent to all acting assistant principals in the district. The RIF informed 39 assistants of their contract non-renewal for the next school year. It is possible that the generalizability of the present study's career stability findings may have limitations because these 39 samples remained in the pool from which the data were collected. Unless the respondents identified themselves as being part of this group of 39, it was impossible to determine how many of the 39 actually returned the survey instrument.

### **Summary**

This study is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1 presented an overview of the research problem. The chapter introduced the topic of the study with the problem statement, purpose of the study, background information, research questions, significance of the study, assumptions, definitions of key terms and limitations. Chapter 2 reviews literature relating to the principal shortage, assistant principal career studies, the assistant principal role, and concludes with factors found in the literature that may determine career stability (e.g., training in management and leadership, mentor exposure, role conflict, role ambiguity, prior classroom experience, years served as an administrator, years served in the school district, and administrative team participation). Chapter 3 elaborates on the method of this study, which includes the research design. The sample, instrument, procedures, and data analyses are also discussed. Chapter 4 reports the findings and results of this study. This chapter discusses the data collection process and treatment of the data. Finally, chapter 5 discusses the summary, conclusions, compares the present study's results with those of the prior MacCorkle (2004) study, and provides implications and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As schools have undergone dramatic reforms in the last decade such as school-based management, high stakes testing, intensified accountability, and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, considerable research efforts have focused on the impact of those changes on the principalship. However, the assistant principal—the other key administrative or leadership position within schools—has not been researched to any significant degree. The role and attitudes of public school assistant principals change as they become involved in the operations of the school (Michel, 1996). The present study undertook this elaboration of MacCorkle's (2004) assistant principal career research in order to better understand the dynamics of assistant principal career socialization, and potentially provide data that may inform on leadership preparation needs within the survey district.

The following chapter presents a literature review on the various perspectives related to factors found in the literature that may determine the career stability of the assistant principals surveyed in a large, urban setting in the southeastern region of the United States. The first section of this chapter includes an overview of the principal shortage and specific issues relating to North Carolina administrators. The second section provides a review of the research on assistant principal career socialization. The third section describes the role and responsibilities of the position. The fourth section

concludes this chapter with a review of specific factors that may influence assistant principal career stability.

### **Principal Shortage**

Researchers have advanced several theories to explain the nature of the shortage of candidates for school principalships. Policymakers, educators, superintendents, and researchers have been inclined to agree that the problem is significant in the vast majority of states, including North Carolina (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffet, 2004; Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; McMinn, Van Meter, & Quintero, 2000; Nakamura & Samuels, 2000; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005).

The direction of educational leadership research over the last decade has focused on identifying how leadership matters in increasing student achievement, what characteristics describe those who lead successfully, and, foremost, how to encourage qualified applicants to assume and remain in essential school based leadership positions (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Farkas et al., 2001; Hinton & Kastner, 2000; Rhodes & Brundett, 2005; Winter & Partenheimer, 2002; Zellner, Jinkins, Gideon, Doughty, & McNamara, 2002). As retirement statistics, federal and state mandates for high stakes accountability based on test scores, and pressure to turn around low-performing schools increase, strategies for recruiting, hiring and retaining effective school leaders have become more important than ever (Hartle & Thomas, 2004; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Lovely, 2004; May, 2001; Marzano et al., 2005).

The literature is robust with evidence supporting the notion that the nationwide principal shortage is primarily a result of too few applicants for vacant positions (Chan et

al., 2003; Hinton & Kastner, 2000; Kersten & Kersten, 2006; Kosch, 2007; NASSP, 1998; PEP, 2005). DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) cautioned that these trends will worsen as the principal position becomes less attractive. Several research studies refute the claim of a principal shortage and label the condition misleading. Two issues predominate these studies: those hiring argue the issue is one of quality not quantity and other studies found qualified candidates were reluctant or not applying to the principalship because of the external and internal accountability pressures exerted on the position (Farkas et al, 2001; Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Chung & Ross, 2003, Gates, Guarino, Santibanez, Brown, Ghosh-Dastidar, & Chung, 2004, Roza, 2003). Roza, (2003) suggests that current efforts to bolster applicant pools and training programs ignore the reality of the shortage revealed by the data.

Research conducted by Gates et al. (2004) on the career path of administrators in the state of North Carolina suggested that the supply of nominally qualified (i.e., certified) individuals available to serve as school administrators is indeed adequate, but that the practices of human resources departments in schools and districts may be preventing schools from selecting the best candidates. The study illuminated the importance of using empirical data where possible to monitor and better understand the labor market for school administrators.

In the report *Better Leaders for America's Schools: A Manifesto* sponsored by The Broad Foundation and Thomas B. Ford Institute (2003), researchers found that although states may report a surplus of certified administrator candidates, the shortage of available school leadership applicants is a result of licenses being obtained by educators who have little or no interest in serving as principals or superintendents. The researchers

further suggested that these educators often lack the leadership qualities needed by today's schools. The traditional methods for training and certifying public school administrators were found to be the causes for the poor quality of leadership development. The report alleged, "Our public-education system confronts a leadership famine amidst a feast of 'certified' leaders" (p. 14).

A similar study by Chan et al. (2003) studied perceptions of 130 (elementary, middle, high) assistant principals on their preparedness for the principalship in order to answer questions related to the principal shortage. The researchers found that not all assistant principals aspire to the principalship. Most of those who aspired to be principals were male and in the beginning years of their assistant principalship. Many of the assistants described themselves as not experienced enough to be principals. The findings revealed insufficient on-the-job training and a lack of professional sponsorship necessary for principalship preparation (Chan et al., 2003).

Research predicting the impending shortage of school administrators, particularly principals, began in the 1970's and has been followed by subsequent studies which, examine school leader responsibilities, principal preparation practices, and administrator recruitment and retention practices. Kersten and Kersten (2006) studied administrative staffing conditions and concluded the sharp increase in administrative job responsibilities, highly visible accountability pressures related to NCLB, and lack of substantial increase in compensation to entice some teachers into careers as school administrators were ironic enhancements to administrative position prospects. The researchers posited, "the current market for school administrators is one of the most promising in the past 30 years and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future" (p.

121). A contributing factor in the study's findings was the projected 4% increase in elementary student enrollment by 2014 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

The NASSP (1998) conducted an exploratory study to investigate if there were too few candidates to assume principal vacancies. A random sample of 403 superintendents of systems with enrollments above 300 and a minimum of one principal vacancy were invited to participate. Approximately 50% of the invited superintendents participated and findings revealed that a shortage of qualified candidates for principal vacancies in the United States existed among all grade levels and kinds of schools. A shortage of qualified applicants for principalship vacancies were reported in 52% of rural districts, 47% of urban districts, and 45% of suburban districts.

The following studies have reported that geographic location was not a protective factor in averting the principal shortage. Barker (1996) conducted research on market trends in school administration in Washington State and concluded that the trend toward diminishing interest in school leadership roles in the state was "alarming" (p. 3). According to Hinton and Kastner (2000), Vermont faced the shortage and actively searched for applicants for school leadership vacancies (as cited in Maryland, 2000). McMinn et al. (2000) examined the principal shortage in Mississippi and found that one half of Mississippi superintendents surveyed reported trouble filling high school principal openings, more than one-third and 40% respectively; similar difficulties with middle and elementary schools were also reported. Administrators' decisions to return to the classroom or to seek central office positions were cited as factors contributing to the difficulty of filling these high school principal vacancies (Nakamura & Samuels, 2000). As illustrated in the work of Lovely (2004), "nearly 40 percent of all public school

principals will retire or leave the position before 2010. Considering there are roughly 93,000 principalships nationwide, the vacancy rate could soar exponentially” (p. 1).

As the above reviews indicate, school districts have experienced difficulty filling important administrative positions, which opened due to retirements, resignations, and promotions. However, administrator shortages have been found to be relative to factors such as geographic location (urban, suburban, rural), avoidance due to role responsibilities and compensation, hiring practices, as well as school population and district size (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Farkas & Duffet, 2004; Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; Gates et al., 2004; Roza, 2003).

The implications of these studies warrant further study on career stability of the traditional successor to the principalship, the assistant principal. Therefore, the focus of the present study was to query practicing administrators to identify factors that relate to career stability toward or against upward mobility. Identifying assistant principals who seek career advancement may allow district sponsored principalship preparation to initiate as soon as possible in their career socialization process. Upwardly mobile assistant principals must be ready to hit the ground running upon appointment as they will be immediately accountable for instructional leadership, district mandates, community relations, professional development, performance reviews, and, foremost, student achievement (Daresh & Playko, 2005; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Drake & Roe, 2003; Hartle & Thomas, 2004; Johnson, 2004; Richard, 2000; Wright, 1994). More than seven out of ten superintendents reported they would prefer to promote from within than hire veteran administrators from outside their district (Farkas et. al, 2001). Superintendents and principals must take notice of and develop the capabilities of the

entry-level administrators (i.e. assistant principals) within their scope of responsibility in order to create the quality of leadership they expect.

In 2005, the North Carolina State Board of Education established an ad hoc committee to consider alternative preparation programs for school administrators due to the reported impending shortage of school administrators (PEP, 2005). The state board reported that North Carolina not only had a widely acknowledged teacher shortage, but also a looming shortage of school administrators with no systematic plan in place to address it. An analysis conducted by the PEP (2005) revealed that increased time demands, heightened accountability pressures, and increased violence in public schools has compounded the problem of finding individuals to fill principalships.

The early 1980s brought about the push for accountability standards and the perception of the role of principal as being the key to student achievement or failure. Leithwood et al. (2004) described leadership as second only to teaching in their study on factors which impact student learning. Kosch (2007) suggested that current educational struggles have negatively influenced the decision making of those who may aspire to the principalship. The author proposed that NCLB mandate pressures have made not only administrators and principal aspirants leery of the principalship, but also educators such as teachers and counselors with administrative credentials; they feel reluctant to move into the high accountability role of school leader. The aforementioned expectations of leadership are not unreasonable as they have good intentions, however more challenging assignments to problem-plagued schools are daunting and often unappealing to seasoned administrators.

Several findings from the recently published *North Carolina State Board of*



*Education Study of National Board Certification for Principals and Assistant Principals* (North Carolina Association of Educators, 2008) had direct relevance for this proposed study. This study found close to one half (45%) of the current school administrators in that state were age 50 or older. Close to two thirds (62%) of current school administrators were age 45 or older. More than one half (55%) had 20 or more years of experience. Further evidence documented that over the last five years, the demand for new principals in North Carolina increased 15% while over the same time period there was only a slight increase (3%) in the number of new assistant principals hired. In an effort to address the shortage of school-based administrators, the North Carolina State Board of Education convened a study group of educational experts and practitioners to identify core principles of the principal's job, develop performance standards, and define highly accomplished practice. The report *State Board of Education Study of North Carolina Board Certification for Principals and Assistant Principals* (2008), detailed their guiding principles as follows:

1. School leadership is critical to student achievement. Today's 21st century schools require 21st century leaders who are skilled in strategic leadership instructional leadership, cultural leadership, human resource leadership, managerial leadership, external development leadership, and micropolitical leadership, if all students are to leave school prepared for their successful participation in the 21st century economy (p. 5).
2. North Carolina must act to build the foundation and increase the pool of qualified candidates for school leadership positions. North Carolina must also act to support and retain qualified school leaders. In doing so, the state should create

incentives for qualified educators to pursue and remain in principal role.

Teachers who pursue roles as school leaders should not be financially disadvantaged (p. 5).

3. National Board Certification for teachers has a positive impact on student achievement, teacher retention, and professional development. Similarly, National Board Certification for principals should enhance school leadership skills and positively impact schools (p. 5).

North Carolina's proactive stance to mitigate the impending shortage of administrators produced the aforementioned framework to encourage qualified personnel to become school principals. A recent study of eight exemplary leadership preparation programs found that state-adopted national standards are part of the program approval process in seven of the states studied (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

In order to abate principal shortages, school districts are becoming proactive in identifying and grooming potential leaders through implementation of mentor, leadership development and support programs for assistant principals as well as new principals. Recognition of principal aspirants, encouraging qualified educators to prepare and apply for the assistant principalship, and attempting to decrease the disparity between those who receive an administrative licenses and those who assume administrative positions, are necessary steps in solving administrator shortages.

### **Assistant Principal Career Studies**

Noted management theorists on careers suggest that organizations are dependent on people to perform jobs, and people are dependent on organizations to provide jobs and career opportunities (Greenhaus, 1999; Kreitner, 1995). Gordon (2002) suggested a more

straightforward definition of career: a life-long sequence of related jobs and experiences (p. 553). Kreitner (1995) defined a career in terms of multiple perspectives. He posited that to some a career means upward mobility, making more money, having more responsibility, and acquiring more status and power. Others view a career as a specific line of work or a profession. Still others believe that a career is more than movement in an organization or a specific line of work. To these individuals, a career means psychological involvement in one's work regardless of the salary, responsibility, or status (Kreitner, 1995). Marshall (1992) described the assistant principalship as the beginning of a career socialization process and superintendents as the outcome.

Marshall's (1992) often-cited work on the special nature of the assistant principalship, *The Assistant Principal: Leadership Choices and Challenges*, described the rewards, daily work responsibilities, and frustrations of role socialization. The present study utilized the career socialization concepts for participant response analysis. Marshall (1992) described the theory concepts as follows: (a) sponsorship or mentoring was a key component when considering moving higher on the career ladder, (b) the assistant principalship was seen as a transitional position where one could hone his or her administrative skills, (c) loyalty and support must be evident to all involved, especially the principal the assistant serves, (d) disinterest in pursuing the principalship exhibits the attitude of not wanting to be part of the district politics in order to move to the next level, (e) gender is a major factor in successfully pursuing and acquiring the principalship, (f) the present experiences of the assistant principal are the key indicator of where that assistant principal will make attempts to move forward, go backwards, or remain in the

assistant principalship, and (g) time commitment and family responsibilities were deterrents to some individuals in moving on to the principalship.

Marshall, Mitchell, and Gross' (1990) career orientation typology conceptualized the assistant principalship from novice to principal aspirant based upon the individual's professional socialization experiences. The researchers reasoned that novice assistant principals move along the continuum of organizational acceptance to promotion based upon their choice to learn the acceptable values and behaviors of the prevailing school culture. The school hierarchy responsible for the assistant's socialization, namely the principal and higher level administrators, observes and elects to assume (i.e. sponsor) or pass on responsibility for his/her professional development and success. Marshall (1992) described the assistant principalship as "an assessment position through which formal and informal district and professional processes are used to decide who should move into high positions of administration" (p.viii).

The career socialization experiences of assistant principals are situational and may limit or expand the assistant's opportunities for advancement in the school organization (Glanz, 2004; Golanda, 1991; Koru, 1993; Marshall, 1992,1993). Assistant principals who assume strong conviction for district goals, utilize personal empowerment, and a willingness to seek out learning experiences exemplify an upwardly mobile career orientation. These individuals do not conform to the narrowing limits of the job, take limited risks, develop supportive networks and create noticeable performance opportunities to demonstrate their desire for administrative advancement. The upwardly mobile assistant principal comprehends that complacency in the role is counterproductive to career advancement (Marshall et al., 1990).

Weller and Weller (2002) proposed:

Assistant principals must plan and implement strategies to develop leadership skills and the knowledge of current trends and research to guide their actions.

They can't afford to fall into routines that rob them of the ability to change. The position of assistant principal affords them plenty of opportunities to do so.

Assistant principals must become proactive and spend time shaping ideas, changing attitudes, challenging others to do their best, creating high expectations and maximizing the talents of others. (p. 50)

Tripken (2006) examined the perceptions of five new secondary assistant principals from and surrounding New York City. The five respondents (4 males, 1 female) participated in interviews related to several career themes: classroom teachers prior to becoming assistant principals, the understanding that an assistant principalship was the next step to acquiring a principalship, and the recognition that politics played a significant role in upward mobility. The male respondents were interested in a principalship, but the female respondent was not. In addition, the respondents related that the administrative degree did not prepare them for the assistant principalship, nor was the internship for the position was productive.

The work of Bates (2003) explored the career orientations of 192 high school assistant principals in Florida. These findings indicated that 50% were upwardly mobile, 26.6% considered themselves career assistant principals, 9.4% were plateaued assistant principals (i.e., had applied and been rebuffed), and 8.3% shafted assistant principals (i.e., remained stable without a chance of promotion). Of the remainder, 2.1% were considering leaving the field of education and 3.6% were downwardly mobile (p. ii).

Among those seriously interested in pursuing a principalship, the author discovered a correlation between being upwardly mobile and having a mentor to assist in meeting his or her career goals. The respondents not interested in seeking a principalship cited the following explanations for not wanting to pursue the higher profession: (a) unfair practices within the school district, (b) nonsupport of current principals, (c) illness of family members, (d) personal health issues, (e) lack of adequate salary, (f) limited time with family, and (g) excessive pressure (Bastes, 2003).

Individuals who are unsuccessful in the career socialization process may have experienced discord with district goals, interpersonal conflict with superiors, lack of sponsorship or made a professional error that negatively portrayed his/her suitability for advancement in the prevailing school culture. These individuals typify a plateaued, or downwardly mobile assistant principal career orientation (Marshall et al., 1990).

Assistant principals who feel dissatisfied, undervalued and overqualified for the role, often resulting from a lack of sponsorship, mediocre performance appraisal, and a lack of recognition develop the assistant principal who considers leaving career orientation (Marshall et al., 1990). Austin and Brown (1970) conducted a study that found many assistant principal respondents were dissatisfied with their positions. The respondents felt dissatisfied due to delegation of low-satisfaction job tasks (student discipline and attendance) and the lack of a high level of discretionary action in the majority of their assigned tasks. The findings concluded that assistant principals left the role for better salaries and higher status.

Studies on the perception of incumbent assistant principals concerning their career orientation vary; some view it as a steppingstone to the principalship, while others

perceive it as a career in its own right. Assistant principals who may choose not to align with the prevailing norms for district advancement, experience high satisfaction and positive school based networks, and elect to remain in the position typify the career assistant principal orientation (Marshall et al., 1990).

Croft and Morton (1977) studied data from 94 urban (Houston, Texas) and rural (Kansas) assistant principals on the relationship between perceived job satisfaction and career stability and compared their results with the earlier findings of Austin and Brown (1970). Results of the Croft and Morton study (1977) revealed considerably greater satisfaction and perceived career stability among assistant principals than in the Austin and Brown (1970) study. The Houston, Texas respondents were less inclined to remain in the assistant principal positions than the Kansas respondents. The Croft and Morton study provided evidence that satisfaction occurred in the performance of duties that required a higher degree of expertise and administrative ability than those of a clerical nature. The researchers concluded that among assistant principals, there is a relationship between job satisfaction and career stability such that the higher the professional skill and perceived ability, the greater the job satisfaction, which accompanied the performance of the duty or responsibility.

Research by Pellicer and Stevenson (1991) found similar results. Findings revealed the majority of the principal and assistant principal respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with most aspects of their job. Assistant principals rated their jobs high in terms of job security, self-fulfillment, opportunity to help others, and prestige.

MacCorkle (2004) researched the career stability of assistant principals nationwide. A sample of 394 respondents, all members of the NASSP, participated in the study. The

author revealed that: 57.4% of respondents showed interested in actively pursuing the principalship, 20.3 % preferred to remain in the assistant principalship, 3.6% would remain in education but vacate their administrative position, and 9.1% indicated leaving education completely, and 9.4% related other factors, with retirement being the predominant response (MacCorkle, 2004).

Researchers have also examined gender and race as factors in administrator career socialization (Gates et al., 2004; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Huscusson, 2001; Marshall, 1992). Huscusson (2001) surveyed and reported findings on career orientation in regard to gender of 165 assistant principals in Western North Carolina. An equal number of male and female respondents (46%) expressed interest in moving up into the principalship. The remaining 8% expressed interest in assuming the role of superintendent or associate superintendent, central office staff personnel, or returning to the classroom. The study findings implied that career mobile and career stable status were not related to the respondents' gender. Perspectives on gender related barriers to career mobility of respondents noted by females included physical characteristics, and having to work harder than males to be noticed and promoted. Male respondents cited reverse discrimination based on gender and race. Hiring practices to achieve gender balance on administrative teams as well as past duties and experiences were also perceived as factors in promotion decisions within the region. All of the study respondents suggested that sponsorship and networks were invaluable to career advancement of assistant principals.

Studies focused on the career stability of women in education administration report that historically, women have had to contend with not only external barriers but also with internal barriers to upward mobility as well. Tyack and Hansot (1982) conducted archival



research, which reported that cultural norms exposed in the early 1900's ensured that women teachers would leave work when married and enacted policies to enforce the banning of married women from educational employment.

Hoff and Mitchell (2008) found both women and men believe that a "Good Ol' Boy" system still exists, which culturally marginalizes many administrators, especially women (45.71% of men and 73.72% of women). Men indicated more support, with 85% indicating they have either (or both) a formal or informal network of support. Women reported they have no formal network (97%) and 40% said they have no network at all, formal or informal. Shakeshaft (1993) identified three conceptual models used to explain gender disparities in educational leadership. The Women's Place Model assumes that women belong in the kitchen and not the boardroom. The Discrimination Model assumes that men conspire to keep women out of management positions. The Meritocracy Model assumes that only men have the unique blend of skills and competence needed to succeed in administration (p. 87).

Marshall's (1996) research illuminated the "culturally defined" women's role as conforming to a feminine identity of being attractive, passive, modest, and pleasant as well as wife, mother and community involved (p. 48). The research studied 25 female educators and found that culturally defined norms of female identity clashed with the perceived demands of the administrative role.

Brunner's (2000) research found that women comprised 43% of the principal population (52% elementary and 26% secondary), and 12% of the superintendent population. Brunner highlighted the imbalance of female overrepresentation in teaching and the elementary principalship in relation to their underrepresentation in the secondary

principalship and the superintendency (2000, p. xi). The author interviewed twelve female superintendents and reported their perspectives in a cultural context on how to attain and be successful in the superintendent position. Themes from the study described personality traits of successful female superintendents such as possessing the ability to laugh, exhibit patience and improvise as situations dictate. The narratives detailed the diverse career socialization settings and their outcomes for the respondents.

Brown and Irby's (1998) study on gender in educational leadership found both men and women worked approximately 55 hours per week, although the women in their study earned substantially less than the men. The authors suggested that although women have the same career ambitions as men, they do not have the same opportunities. The findings further suggested that women are denied access to the administration hierarchy, not because of lack of aspirations, but "the perception or mind-set of employers that women do not have the skills needed to perform leadership roles" (p. 46). Based on the current status of women in educational administration, males continue to dominate all facets of this domain, except in elementary school principalships, supervisors and instruction specialists. These positions, primarily, have represented the highest levels some women achieve in education (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Marshall (1992) offered a rationale for these irrational differences, "Something in the culture of school administration locks out most women and minorities" (p. 112). The author referred to the propensity of those in power to strive to maintain the power differential, sexist assumptions that men should not have to be subject to female authority, and that women should not receive equal pay for equal work. In regard to

minorities, only a chosen few will attain administrative positions and yet remain marginalized in the administrative culture.

Vocational researchers who examined the career development of women and minorities suggested that perceived opportunities and barriers greatly impact the individual's career decision-making process (Astin, 1984; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Lent et al. (1994) asserted that perceived barriers mediate the relationship between career orientation and career pursuits. The study suggested that gender and ethnic differences in interest-goal congruence are rooted in gender and ethnic differences in perceived barriers, as well as differences in opportunity structures, support systems, and socialization practices (p. 108). The researchers hypothesized when differences in barriers are equalized (as well as differences in opportunity exposure, support networks, and socialization practices), gender and ethnic differences in career orientation and career pursuit congruence will disappear. Few studies have examined perceived barriers in the context of career orientation or attainment.

Even fewer studies report minority school leadership career data. Ortiz and Marshall (1998) reported "women, especially minority women, but even minority men, continue to occupy the lowest positions in the administrative hierarchy, white males the higher and more powerful positions" (p. 127). A common theme found in the research focusing on women and minorities is sponsorship, which is a noted mechanism for successful career socialization and subsequent upward mobility (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Marshall, 1992; Marshall et al., 1990). Veteran administrators sponsor prospective principal candidates thereby providing insider guidance and recognition opportunities. Both women and minorities have historically been less likely to be

sponsored than white males (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Minority males are relatively well represented in the assistant principalship, but minority women are not (Marshall, 1992). Burney (2007) investigated career orientation to upward mobility among highly qualified minority teachers and found they needed a good network, mentoring, an actual upward mobility plan, and targeted recruitment strategies in order to obtain leadership positions in education. In a qualitative study on the experiences of six African American public school administrators conducted by Flumo (2006), participants reported a lack of optimism concerning race relations in public education as well as expanded leadership roles of African Americans. The study also noted that participants felt they have had to deal with inequities tantamount to unfairness, advocate for fairness of all students particularly other African Americans, and conform to societal pressure to maintain a positive public persona.

It would appear that women and minorities have the deck stacked against them when it comes to acquiring positions in educational leadership. However, it is indeed possible for women and minorities to develop supportive networks, provide sponsorship through collective action, network, and obtain local and national professional administrator association membership to achieve their career orientation goals. Policymakers must adopt recruitment and promotion practices that promote equity at the assistant principal level in order to diversify the upward mobility opportunities that result in the superintendency.

### **The Role of the Assistant Principal**

The United States Department of Labor (DOL) described the role of the assistant principal as “aiding the principal in the overall administration of the school” (p. 9). The

DOL also noted that some of these individuals are assistant principals for a few years while preparing to become principals, while others remain as assistant principals for the rest of their careers (Association for Career and Technical Education, 2008).

Kelly (1987) reported the assistant principal's role was originally developed to aid principals in meeting the increasing demands of the job. The assistant principal's division of labor was attending to administrative and management details—those activities that were essential but could be carried out by someone other than the principal. Glanz (1994) suggested the assistant principal role emerged from two teacher supervisory roles. During the 1920s, in larger school districts, the principal designated a supervisor from among the teachers to assist less experienced teachers. This designee was most often female. This role had little independent authority and did not evaluate faculty. The next role emerged, wherein, most often a male called the “general supervisor” (p. 4) assisted the principal with logistical operations of the school (Glanz, 1994). By the 1930s, the authority given to the general supervisor made the special designee role obsolete. The literature eventually reflected this role with the title of assistant principal (Glanz, 1994).

Scoggins and Bishop (1993) identified 16 duties common to the assistant principal role. The duties included discipline, attendance, student activities, community agencies, athletics, principal substitute, budget schedule, building operations report, lockers, transportation, curriculum, communications, cafeteria, and the school calendar. The researchers concluded that it was impossible for one person to perform all of these duties. The study also found while many viewed the assistant principalship as preparation for a principalship, it could also be considered a career position.

Drake and Roe (2003) posited:

Part of the rationale for an assistant principal position is that the experience that can be gained by the person so appointed is valuable to his or her preparation for a principalship. Is it really necessary for a person who holds, or is working for, an advanced degree or certificate to spend several years dealing with the support tasks to learn how best to effect instructional/learning improvement and exert transformational leadership? (p. 186)

The assistant principal carries out the duties assigned by his/her direct supervisor, the principal (Kelly, 1987; Marshall, Mitchell, & Gross, 1990). As high accountability standards for demonstrating effective school leadership have impacted the principal role, assistant principals are also expected to adapt to increased demands and responsibilities delegated by the principal in order to promote academic growth for all students. Often, the assistant principal is the mediator between the principal and the teachers and does not have the authority to declare meaningful resolutions to issues. Also, as district initiatives are implemented the principal may assign duties to the assistant selectively, leaving the assistant principal typecast with limited opportunities. Individuals who desire upward mobility may attempt limited risks in order to grow professionally and gain visibility, while others may not (Marshall, 1992). These unfavorable conditions impact the career orientation of assistant principals as they make choices in order to achieve satisfaction and success. The assistant principal is the traditional successor to future school leadership, therefore the responsibilities, training, and political relationships of the assistant principals influence their career stability for upwardly mobile, remaining an assistant or leaving education altogether.

Wright (1994) examined the principal's perceptions of assistant principal's roles and responsibilities. The researcher asserted that instructional leadership was the most important training for assistant principals to be principals, as opposed to the duties and responsibilities that many were accountable for that did not directly impact student learning. May (2001) conducted a similar study and concluded that assistant principals did not perform their roles effectively. It must be noted that the assistants' ineffectiveness was not caused by failure to perform their roles as their job descriptions outlined, but due to being given assignments not related to their job description.

Further evidence that this lack of preparation and role dissatisfaction may be primarily attributed to the duties and responsibilities assigned to assistant principals has been well documented (Kelly, 1987; Koru, 1993; Pietro, 1999; Richard, 2000). According to Golanda (1991), leadership traits are necessary for an assistant principal to move successfully into the principalship.

Historically, due to the significant and parallel nature of the role, the assistant principalship was and remains the key position for assuming the principalship. However, the literature chronicles that the role evolved into routine tasks, discipline as a primary duty, and exclusion from meaningful instructional interaction (Austin & Brown, 1970; Glanz, 1994; Marshall, 1992; Mertz, 2000). Considerable research suggests that leadership preparation for educators cannot end with a certificate or degree; it must be ongoing and provide continuous support and opportunities for ameliorating deficiencies (Joyce & Showers, 1982; Tripken, 2006; Zellner & Erlandson, 1997; Zellner, Skrla, & Erlandson, 2001). Preparing future principals is vital to maintaining the momentum of a viable learning community. Factors that may impede or contribute to the reluctance of

assistant principals who have interest in assuming a principalship must be identified and addressed in order to circumvent the numerous predicted principal vacancies.

### **Factors Associated with Career Stability**

According to the literature, various factors seem to determine assistant principal career stability, including those involving: the assistant principal's team management participation, leadership and mentor exposure, personal career interests, role stressors, and prior teaching experience (Croft & Morton, 1977; Johnson, 2004; MacCorkle, 2004; Mertz, 2000; Sutter, 1994; Tripken, 2006). Education research conducted since the 1970's to the present detail how these factors interact in a complicated manner, influencing one another and subsequently influencing assistant principal career stability.

#### **Team Management and Leadership.**

Team management is a critical aspect in the restructuring of schools of the future. It is improbable that an assistant principal has enough time to do everything he or she desires to meet the needs of students and staff on a daily basis. Therefore, school administrators must simplify their daily task lists, prioritize the important from immediate tasks, and delegate (Glanz, 2004; Johnson, 2004; Marshall, 1993; Stokes, 1973).

Team management is a process by which the assistant principal also has the potential to change the school. If the assistant principal has the proper combination of group skills, he or she can coalesce the school around common goals so the school will succeed. Team management in the 21st century will create a new hero of the assistant principal, deemphasize the role of the principal, and make the assistant principal into the leader of a teacher team (Reich, 1987).



The work of Hackett and Hortman (2008) employed a corporate model to assess the dispositions of educational leaders. Their research examined the relationship among the 21 emotional competencies measured by the Emotional Competencies Inventory-University Edition (ECI-U), based on the work of Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee (1999), and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Avolio and Bass (2004). The study surveyed 46 assistant principals (24 males and 22 females) from a southern urban school system. The researchers sought to discover how the competencies that define emotional intelligence are related to the behaviors and attributes of a transformational leader. The findings indicated that the social awareness domain and the relationship management domain had the most competencies, which correlated positively with being a transformational leader. In particular, the competencies involved with serving others' needs appeared to be most important for the transformational leader. These competencies were defined as: Service Orientation (e.g., mentoring, coaching, and helping others improve); Change Catalyst (e.g., developing others), and Conflict Management (e.g., working through disagreement to lead people toward positive outcomes) (Hackett & Hortman, 2008, p. 106).

A significant part of the development of an assistant principal's career often lies within the auspices of the principal under whom he or she serves. Assistant principals work closely with the building principal on tasks assigned and defined by his/her direct supervisor, the principal (Daresh, 2001; Koru, 1973; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Drake and Roe (2003) provided further evidence of the impact of this relationship on an individual's career, "taking a position as an assistant principal may provide added dimensions to the induction process; however, the role could be a limiting experience

depending on the assignments and the principal in charge” (p. 39). Burgess (1973) asserted that building principals have a professional obligation to train the assistant principal and to give him or her opportunities to broaden educational experiences in all aspects of leadership.

According to Michel (1996), “traditionally, management is where the manager procures, conserves, and distributes. Leadership is traditionally where the leader changes goals, policies, and shares the mission of the school” (p. 3). Conceptions of management and leadership become the answer to the question posed by Michel (1996): “What can the assistant principal do to help the principal to make all the people in the school work toward the same school objectives?” (p. 3). The author reviewed research that examined the assistant principal’s role. Michel posited that going forward, assistant principals will be expected to take on the new roles of team management and public relations, which will require acquisition of effective group communication and shared decision-making skills. Proposed strategies for improving assistant principals’ skills included in-service education and leadership academies (Michel, 1996).

It is widely recognized that most assistant principals are expected to learn on the job (Calabrese, 1991; Glanz, 2004; Marshall, 1993; Winter & Partenheimer, 2002). Few researchers oppose this method of induction. The NASSP (2000) addressed “hands on [*sic*] training” in its statement on “Leadership Development for School Administrators:”

Resolved by the NASSP that... [school] districts provide funding and opportunities to engage principals and assistant principals in ongoing, sustained, job embedded leadership development that focuses on knowledge, skills, and

dispositions that will improve a principal's or assistant principal's ability to lead and manage middle level and high school in an optimal fashion. (para. 10)

Wheeler and Agruso (1996) also proposed that assistant principals' training should be hands-on and simulate as closely as possible actual problems faced on the job.

Lovely (1999) reported on an innovative assistant principal training model within her California school district. The Leadership development model in the Capistrano Unified school district focused on developing its teachers to ascend the career ladder in order to develop leaders from within the system. The model had four interrelated components: teaching assistant principal, assistant principalships, mentoring for new principals, and outreach for experienced principals. The assistant principal participants were exposed to realistic experiences and responsibilities through collaboration with qualified principals who closely supervised and monitored their progress.

The Institute for Educational Leadership report, *Leadership for Student Learning: Reinventing the Principalship* (2000), described traditional principal preparation programs as non-relevant to the challenges of today's complex school environments. This report further posited, "principal training is seldom anchored in hands-on-leadership experience in real schools, where principals-in-training might learn valuable lessons in shaping instructional practice, sharing and delegating authority, nurturing leadership ability among school faculty and staff, and exercising community and visionary leadership" (p. 9). The shortage of interested qualified applicants for the principalship support these findings to overhaul leadership education and training modalities in graduate and district professional development programs. Initiatives to encourage

teachers to take the next career step to assistant principalship and assistants to assume principalships must also equip them to be strong 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders.

The aforementioned report (Institute, 2000) touted North Carolina as a state “getting serious about supporting the principal profession” (p. 14). The PEP, created in 1984 by the North Carolina General Assembly, has patterned its professional development program for school leaders after Harvard University’s renowned leadership training program for business executives. The PEP of the University of North Carolina’s Center for School Leadership Development provided a unique array of professional development supports for principals, assistant principals and other leadership personnel from all grade levels in the state’s public schools (Institute, 2000).

According to National Center of Education Statistics’ Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) 2003-04 data, 68% of all public school principals surveyed reported holding the position of assistant principal or program director prior to becoming a principal. This data was also categorized by community type: central city, 78%; urban fringe-large town, 71.9%; and rural-small town, 51.6% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

Although every individual who participates in leadership programs or management training activities is not necessarily guaranteed immediate placement in a principalship, these experiences create a pool of individuals whose leadership skills have been refined in ways consistent with the demands placed on contemporary school principals.

## **Mentor Exposure**

It has been well documented that sponsorship or mentoring is a key component for assistant principals considering moving higher on the career ladder (Bates, 2003; Daresh, 2001; Marshall, 1993; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Zellner et. al, 2002). Vann (1991), an eight-year principal, wrote that the values of his mentor experience were:

Occasions to observe how a seasoned principal handles the touchiest and most delicate issues are truly experiences not to be missed...Although we (colleagues) may disagree with some specific mentor practices, none of us would deny the value of those few years spent as assistant principals. That is when we learned how to be administrators, how to deal with the myriad functions we would later perform on our own as principals, and how to recover from snafus and setbacks that were in many cases our own doing...Further an on-the-job relationship with a mentor principal can fill in all but the smallest of the remaining gaps. Under the watchful caring eyes of a mentor, the potential for mistakes due to inexperience or ignorance is greatly reduced and, conversely, the potential for success is greatly enhanced. (p. 85)

Considerable research illustrates the value of mentoring relationships as a way to enhance the quality of professional development opportunities available for school practitioners (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Lovely, 2004; Marshall, 1992). A study conducted by Daresh and Playko (1995) examined effective mentoring relationships, specifically the responsibilities of those being mentored. The authors reported that mentoring as part of the preservice preparation of educational administrators is accepted as a desirable part of preservice programming.

The study was conducted over a two-year period and consisted of telephone and onsite interviews with 45 experienced administrators who had been serving as mentors in principal preparation programs at universities across the United States. The knowledge base identified as most important for protégés to bring to mentoring relationships included basic understandings of teaching processes and the nature of leadership in general, good listening skills, an ability to articulate personal values and beliefs, openness to learning from colleagues, willingness to admit a lack of knowledge, and a desire to work with peers. Additionally, an individual must comprehend the value the potential of learning through a mentoring relationship if he or she was to be successful. Lastly, the ability to serve as an effective protégés was greatly enhanced through focused training and development (Daresh & Playko, 1995, p. 4-7).

Historically, women who have held leadership positions have been helped by mentors or sponsors to attain and succeed in those positions (Brown & Irby, 1998; Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Korcheck & Reese, 2002). “Mentors have the special capacity to help women to garner the political support that they need from others, by sharing the inside information about the organization” (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000, p.27). Researchers who studied the careers of graduates of Stanford University law school wrote, “The mentoring relationship has a significant influence on the career decision-making and perhaps even on the success of women in business” (Tucker & Niedzielko, 1994, p. 29).

Hopkins-Thompson (2000) suggested a strong mentoring program for assistant principals as the best way to prepare them for the principalship. This report found school administrators should have the opportunity to step into an assistant principalship in which

they can work closely for a year with a school administration team in order to gain insight and knowledge about their chosen field.

Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) found that the internship experiences and work with mentors “serve as effective professional development not only for aspiring and novice principals but also for veteran principals” (p. 471). This study further indicated that mentoring during clinical practices promotes acculturation to accepted practices within the district and opportunities for building leadership capacity through the reciprocal process of sharing facilitated between prospective and practicing leaders.

The work of Spreier, Fountain, and Malloy (2006) concluded that effective mentoring and coaching is directly related to effective leadership and, specifically, one’s leadership style. Ineffective mentor leaders focus on the pressure to produce and often personalize power, which is not conducive to long-term mentee development. Effective mentors are those leaders who are visionary, affiliate, and participative, and they believe strongly in the coaching and long-term development of mentees (Spreier et. al, 2006). They focus on increasing the capability of the school organization by increasing the competence of the staff and by preparing the next generation of leaders (Spreier et al., 2006).

Cunningham and Sherman (2008) researched educational leadership preparation and found most definitions of the internship-mentorship process focus on the development and advancement of a mentee by someone in a position of authority within the professional context. The authors reported that the practice is essentially one of socialization, with the assumption that the process ultimately will be beneficial to all parties concerned. Sherman (2005) found the mismatch between leadership styles of

practicing and future administrators is often reported as problematic in mentoring types of relationships. Despite all concerns that surround mentoring, the authors concluded “in general, research suggests that it is an overwhelmingly positive learning experience for mentors, mentees and school districts” (p. 314). Mentoring is a type of teaching-learning activity and may not fit the learning styles and needs of all individuals (Daresh & Playko, 1995). A review of the literature indicated repeatedly that mentoring has become an accepted and desirable factor for leadership skill acquisition and career advancement for administrators (Burney, 2007; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Daresh & Playko, 1995; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Marshall, 1992).

### **Role Conflict**

Marshall and Hooley (2006) posited,

With so many tasks to perform, assistant principals find that their roles are at cross-purpose with each other. Assistant principals experience role conflict when the immediate demands of the school interfere with doing the work they value as an expression of their professionalism. Role conflict and overload occur when job responsibilities demand so much time, energy, and emotion that little is left for the assistant principal’s personal life or professional development. Finally, assistant principals also experience role conflict and overload when it is not possible to perform adequately in all of their assigned roles. (pp. 7-8)

The authors pointed out the negative consequences for assistant principals which result from attempting to meet the immediate needs of their personal lives and demanding work role. This role conflict affects the psychological wellness, job performance and job



satisfaction of the assistants, and ultimately may influence whether they remain or leave the position.

Getzels and Guba (1957) described the school district, a school, and a classroom as a social system, the term that Homans (1950) coined to refer to activities and interactions of group members brought together for a common purpose. Getzels (1958) suggested role conflict as one of the sources of potential conflicts in understanding the administrative process within the educational social system. Role conflicts refer to situations where a role player is required to conform simultaneously to expectations that are contradictory or inconsistent. Adjustment to one set of expectations makes adjustment to the other difficult or impossible. For example, an assistant principal may attempt to be a devoted mother and simultaneously a successful career woman.

Fulfilling multiple roles creates a risk of role conflict. Greenwald (2007), author of *Organizations: Management Without Control*, recalled an example of role conflict based on an assistant principal's response to his daughter's use of lipstick:

In his work role he had just reprimanded a girl of his daughter's age for wearing it. In his role as a father, he decides to overlook the behavior. The assistant principal is fully aware that his daughter is heading to school, and that her school has the same rules as his, "Let the assistant principal at her school take care of it," he reasons. (p. 87)

Greenwald (2007) concluded not all individuals are as capable of separating their multiple roles as the aforementioned assistant principal. Role conflict is defined as perceived inconsistency in role expectations. Further evidence of this concept was coined the spillover effect from family roles into organizational roles (Greenwald, 2007).

Onyemah (2008) conducted research on the traditional view of the relationship between role stressors (role conflict and role ambiguity) and performance. The business management scholar surveyed 1,290 salespeople and found that an inverted U relationship is plausible. The inverted U relationship posits that X goes up for a certain period of time, levels out for a period of time, and eventually declines. The study concluded that role stressor literature suggests that organizational tenure moderates the relationship between role stressors and job performance. Thus, compared to new hires, long-tenured salespeople are more likely to withstand high levels of role stressors. “Furthermore, long-tenured salespeople know better that is expected of them, have longer exposure to company practices, and possess a richer repertoire of knowledge and survival tactics. This relationship appeared to be moderated by organizational tenure and proactive tendencies” (Onyemah, 2008, p. 301).

The work of Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) defined role conflict in terms of dimensions of congruency-incongruency or compatibility-incompatibility in the requirements of the work role, where congruency or compatibility is judged relative to a set of standard or conditions that impinge upon role performance. The research was rooted in classical organizational theory, which posits there should be a consistent chain of command and unity of command. The authors defined role conflict as a condition when employees have incompatible roles defined by supervisors or other members of an organization. Role ambiguity was defined as a lack of necessary information regarding role expectation for a given organizational position (Rizzo et al., 1970).

**Role Ambiguity**

Marshall and Hooley (2006) explained, “role ambiguity occurs because the assistant principal’s roles and duties include many ‘gray areas’—ill-defined, inconsistent, and at times incoherent responsibilities and roles. For example, assistant principals’ responsibilities may not include employing substitutes but may include handling the problems that ensue when substitutes are not screened” (p.7). Austin and Brown’s (1970) prior study addressed the authors’ assertion that a clear lack of job description is a hindrance to the assistant principal role. Kalla (1983) maintained a definitive job description in relation to district organizational roles would dispel the belief that the assistant principal’s primary responsibility is to respond to crises.

Gilboa, Shirom, Fried and Cooper (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of work-demand stressors and job performance. The researchers integrated 169 samples to analyze the relationship of seven work-related stressors with job performance. As they hypothesized, role ambiguity and situational constraints were most strongly negatively related to performance, relative to the other work-related stressors. The researchers posited that an employee’s perception of their lack of knowledge of what is expected might threaten their ability to follow established procedures, and therefore negatively affect job performance.

Kalla (1983) surveyed 171 assistant principals in Kentucky to explore their perception of job satisfaction, importance, and position responsibilities. This study found a lack of clarity in established role and job description, as well as a minimal scope of authority, all of which hampered their effective completion of assigned tasks. The researcher suggested that ambiguity around the assistant principal role went beyond a lack of information regarding task definition. The role ambiguity extended to eliciting

concern about how others might perceive him or her, as well as the consequences that might occur as tasks were completed and goals were achieved (Kalla, 1983). This study found 97% of the respondents had shared or maintained full responsibility for discipline in their school. Conversely, although 79% indicated that curriculum was of major importance, only 50% indicated that they made minimal or no contribution to curriculum development and implementation in their school (Kalla, 1983). The work of Panyako and Rorie (1987) reported that it is possible for ordinary assistant principals to go weeks buried in peripheral tasks, “to the exclusion of meaningful interaction with teachers and students in a classroom setting” (p. 6). The study characterized the fragmented and poorly defined tasks assigned to the role and reported the incumbents’ concerns over minimal inclusion in instructional leadership and other district focused imperatives. The authors advocated for shared leadership duties and restructuring the position to enhance individual skill development. The study is consistent with Koru’s (1993) argument that day-to-day duties and the degree of job satisfaction associated with them promote or thwart upward mobility for assistant principals. While some researchers contend the role does not prepare assistant principals for the principalship, Marshall (1992) further concluded that work-role duties and training opportunities ultimately determine their orientation to educational leadership.

In 1984, Marshall (1993) surveyed NASSP assistant principals to determine their awareness of any programs or policy designed to improve the assistant principalship. Only 29% of the 42 respondents answered affirmatively. Additionally, the survey results indicated a number of areas in which the respondents felt that assistant principals should receive training. Recommendations were that training is needed to support the assistant

principal to: (a) handle discipline, (b) cope with vulnerability and ambiguity of the position, (c) shape one's career path, (d) facilitate his or her development, (e) reduce burnout caused by low rewards, and (f) deal with the lack of opportunities for advancement (Marshall, 1993).

Koru (1993) directly addressed this quandary in her article, "The Assistant Principal: Crisis Manager, Custodian, or Visionary?" The busy role of the assistant principal, according to the author, "centers on clerical tasks, custodial duties and discipline" (p. 70). Glanz followed this research with a 1994 study that described the primary duties of the assistant principal, including: discipline, parental complaints, and administrative paperwork. The present study indicated that a lack of involvement in curriculum, training of teachers, and staff development contributed to job dissatisfaction. The respondents described the position as "thankless" and that morale was low (p. xi).

A prevalent theme among the respondents in a study by Austin and Brown (1970) of assistant principals was lack of clear job description. The researchers concluded that the assistant principal position held little satisfaction, especially compared to respondents' perception of satisfaction in teaching assignments. The research acknowledged the necessity of the assistant principal position, but challenged whether the position adequately prepared the incumbents for future assignments as principals. Their survey initiated the argument that if the position of assistant principal is to attract and hold capable individuals with talent and energy, then the nature of the position must be redefined in such a manner that it has its own meaning and value and does not exist primarily because someone else had more than he or she can do and needed assistance

(Austin and Brown, 1970). Koru's (1993) study reported the vast majority of the assistant principals surveyed intended to assume a principal position in the near future.

The career focus in Austin and Brown's (1970) study demonstrated that the assistant principalship has afforded a degree of mobility. According to the data gathered, 46% of the respondents had been assistant principals for less than three years compared to only 14% who had held the position for 10 years or more. The data indicated that 40-50% elevated to other positions, generally a principalship, within eight years. The chances for advancement at that time were more likely in their own districts. Sutter's (1994) study of the assistant principal position found no significant relationship between experience and job satisfaction. One of the realities of school administration is the need to manage multiple priorities and react to unpredictable events within the ebb and flow of the daily culture. Successful administrators are often motivated by an environment characterized by ambiguity, competing stakeholder demands, and political pressures from both within and outside the organization (Marzano et al., 2005).

It is widely recognized that the principal and assistant principal should have clear job descriptions and know exactly what is expected of one another. While the principal is the undisputed administrator in charge, some duties that require similar authority and accountability should be carried out by the assistant principal. Exactly what these duties are should depend upon the talents and experience of both the principal and assistant principal.

### **Classroom Experience**

During the 1980's a prominent educational report called for excellence in education (National Commission, 1983). This study suggested that American schools

suffered from a myriad of issues and a primary resolution was in order for schools to improve, principals would have to become effective instructional leaders. Much of the current emphasis on resolving the public school leadership shortage has focused on more comprehensive professional development for teachers and assistant principals. The typical public school principal has spent an average of 12.8 years teaching prior to becoming an administrator and essentially none have been promoted to the position without K-12 teaching experience (Meyer & Feistritzer, 2003). The accepted rationale found in the literature for requiring administrators to have prior teaching experience is their primary responsibility to act as the school's instructional leader (Daresh, 2001; Drake & Roe, 2003; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Loder & Spillane, 2005; Zepeda, 2003). Many professionals within education perceive that leaders from outside public education are not capable of effectively leading schools (Meyer & Feistritzer, 2003; Lovely, 1999; Pounder & Crow, 2005). Studies, which propose hiring school leaders from other professions who may lack classroom experience, suggest distributed leadership as a process to delegate these duties to other members of the administrative team who may possess instructional expertise (Meyer & Feistritzer, 2003; Farkas et al., 2004).

As local school districts continue to grow and more experienced school principals retire, North Carolina and other systems across the country must recruit, prepare, and retain capable educational leaders. According to Capasso and Daresh (2001),

People must be prepared to serve as school administrators. Even more importantly, talented educators must be convinced even to think about careers

likely to be filled with stress, frustration, and demands made to ensure that schools effectively serve the needs of all students. (p. 2-3)

Traditionally, assistant principals and principals were drawn from the ranks of teachers. This practice provided the principalship with a pool of candidates experienced at the classroom level and afforded teachers the opportunity to move into the ranks of administrators. The National Center for Education Statistics (2004) conducted research to determine what work experience principals bring to their positions. The 1990-91 SASS addressed what percentage of respondents held teaching positions before becoming principals and for how many years, as well as other administrative, non-teaching and non-administrative jobs. This survey data indicated that the practice continues. Virtually all of the principals in the 1990-91 school year (98.7%) reported that they were teachers before becoming principals. Those who taught averaged about 10 and one half years of experience. Principals under the age of 40 averaged a substantial number of years (eight) in the classroom before becoming principals (“Teaching,” 1993).

In a similar study, Fiore and Curtain (1997) found 54.1% of working principals had experience as an assistant principal or program director prior to becoming a principal in 1993-1994. The only position that was more widely reported in career path statistics for principals was teaching; 98.8% of all public school principals had experience as a teacher prior to becoming a principal. The average number of years that the principal had taught before becoming a principal was 11 years (Fiore & Curtain, 1997).

The principal’s job requires not only an understanding of the educational process at the classroom level but also the skills to coordinate the efforts of a staff that includes teachers, other administrative personnel, and other professional and nonprofessional staff



("Teaching," 1993). Practically one half (49.8%) of all principals in the SASS (1990-91) came to their position with other administrative experience at the school or district level. The report described this prior experience included the position at the school level as: assistant principal and department head and at the district level: curriculum specialist and subject matter supervisor. Those who held such positions averaged about 5 and one half years in those positions before becoming principals ("Teaching," 1993). An additional major finding of the SASS (1990-91) indicated that less than 20% of all principals have prior non-teaching, non-administrative experience in elementary and secondary education before becoming principals, averaging about six years ("Teaching," 1993).

Pietro (1999) conducted a study of 1,113 assistant principals and principals in 171 school districts in western Pennsylvania. Respondents rated classroom experience as the most important training activity for those involved in leadership preparation. They also rated workshops, conferences, and in-service activities lowest, although these ratings were still positive. The survey results indicated that both principals and assistant principals were included in every aspect of the school's operation. Administrator duties presented by Marzano et al. (2005) require prior teaching experience such as modeling desired behaviors, direct assistance to teachers in their day-to-day activities, and managing curriculum and instruction (p. 18-19).

Kersten and Kersten (2006) interviewed school superintendents regarding career-preparation strategies. These respondents most frequently cited ample leadership experience in the classroom as the most important strategy. The vacancy announcement criteria for assistant principal and principal positions, respectively, in this study's large, urban school district, required three years teaching experience in grades K-12

(preferably), and the ability to desire three years administrative experience as a principal or assistant principal.

Papa, Lankford, and Wyckoff (2002) posit, “Over 85 percent of all principals have been teachers. Principals in urban districts are more likely than their suburban counterparts to have a non-teaching career path” (p.2). Their study on New York state administrators reported that urban and low-performing schools are more likely to have principals with less experience. Consequently, about two-thirds of new principals leave their first principalship within six years which impedes development of a culture necessary to improve student performance (Papa, Lankford & Wyckoff, 2002).

The authors maintain today’s principals are more likely to have less classroom experience than those of a decade ago.

Although teaching is one of the most traversed pathways to the principalship, Loder and Spillane (2005) asserted, “scholars have paid little attention to the interrelationship between the roles of teacher and administrator, particularly the structural constraints attendant in the transition from the former role to the latter one” (p. 263). These researchers studied 16 female school administrators’ experiences with role conflict and role discontinuity within their first five years of transitioning from teaching to administration. The findings of this qualitative study indicated that this transition triggered role conflicts that emerged from the participants’ movement from the relatively private and intimate domain of the classroom, where they focused on instruction and students, to the public domain of the school and community, where they shifted their focus to managerial and political responsibilities (Loder & Spillane, 2005).

Many new administrators also find it disconcerting to deal with teachers as supervisors rather than as peers. Operating for the first time from a school-wide perspective, some are shocked to see the parochialism of some teacher's behavior (Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1995).

The aforementioned study demonstrated that participants, in an effort to resolve this tension, employed a cognitive strategy whereby they attempted to retain their identity as teachers. The findings suggested that principal leadership programs should help principal aspirants develop strategies to cope with role conflict and role discontinuity. The authors further recommended alternate frameworks for conceptualizing school leadership (e.g., distributed leadership), as they may also help manage these problems and challenges (Loder & Spillane, 2005).

**Administrative team.** Principals have limited time and they possess varied interests and skill sets. For example, some principals may prefer to be directly involved in providing instructional leadership, where others might want to exercise the role of an especially skilled administrator or master teacher. The principal is ultimately accountable for providing the leadership essential for student learning; however, by enacting administrative teaming, the leadership scope broadens and assistant principals engage in managing operations and the implementation of school programs effectively.

Stokes (1973) called for a new operational position of the assistant principal, which would include becoming a member of a well-structured administrative team in order to address the complexity of educational involvement and change of the 1970s. He related that partnership in the operation of the school can only lead to a strong, efficient program. Stokes (1973) cautioned that failure to utilize available administrative

manpower will unquestionably hamper the operational procedure of the school as well as the total school system. Moreover,

When principals see the assistant principal as only someone to do the undesirable tasks, they lose the opportunity to multiply administrative efficacy. However, principals who work as administrative teams with their assistants could *multiply* (emphasis added), not just supplement, their effectiveness. School district policymakers need to identify structures for supporting administrative teamwork at the school site. (Marshall & Hooley, 2006, pp. 20-21)

Considerable research illustrated that administrative teams are a viable alternative, distributing discrete leadership roles to educators other than the principal (The Assistant Principals, 1980; Michel, 1996; Obisesan & Cooper, 1999). In 1980, The Assistant Principals Commission called for assistant principals to become part of an administrative team in order to increase their role effectiveness. Many current studies reveal that organizational change is impossible without a visionary leader to guide the process. Others researchers suggested that neither the top-down nor bottom-up leadership style can singularly help stimulate the continuous change needed for organizational survival in the changing world (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Marsh & Bowman, 1988).

Obisesan and Cooper (1999) suggested “the role of leadership must change from the old bureaucratic to a democratic approach. The responsibility brings with it the leadership ability to create a flexible organizational structure that utilizes its human assets to enhance continuous change” (p. 1). The authors’ research illustrated the critical link between leadership and change in districts that utilize administrative teams consisting of all administrators in the school, as well as those consisting of assistant principals and

department heads. These teams promote characteristics associated with leadership for change that focus on continuous self-development, a vision for the future, and administrative teams led by the principals, all of which replace the one-man model of decision-making.

Pounder and Crow (2005) found when principals create administrative teams they share leadership responsibilities, model a distributed approach to leadership, and contribute to a professional learning community. The authors suggested sharing leadership responsibilities to expand the assistant principal's understanding of the scope of his or her own role beyond student management. Such responsibilities include instructional monitoring, supervision, accountability, community relationships, resource, allocation, and other administrative responsibilities. They concluded that leadership teams allow the assistant principal to benefit from behind-the-scenes leadership experiences.

The aforementioned researchers promoted the current theories of organization, which place greater emphasis on employee morale and job satisfaction. Participatory management stresses the importance of motivating employees and building an organization for that purpose. These types of organizations are structured to satisfy employees' needs, which, in turn, result in high productivity (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000).

MacCorkle (2004) posited,

When assistants are included in the decision-making process of the school and work on all aspects of the school administration from management to instructional

leadership, they are more inclined to feel comfortable in their jobs and wish to remain assistants or move to the principalship. (p. 56)

MacCorkle's (2004) study on the career stability of assistant principals found a significant correlation between career stability and the administrative process of a school. The data revealed that 70% of the respondents indicated that their administration uses either partial teaming or team methods for decision-making.

Administrative team participation cultivates continuous development and expands the dimensions of the assistant principal role. When the areas of responsibility are strengthened to define cooperative, varied, and unlimited growth opportunities for assistant principals that lie outside the traditional repetitive tasks (e.g., discipline and attendance), career stability, and job satisfaction are fostered.

The range of administrative and supervisory responsibilities in complex schools is far too large for one person to effectively manage. Zepeda (2007) maintains that effective principals cast the net to include others in the work of instructional leadership. With the involvement of administrative team members working under the same set of assumptions and values about teachers and their growth, there can be a more powerful message sent to teachers and support for their efforts at becoming better teachers. Administrative team members, through a more unified and coordinated program for professional development, can focus more effort to support teachers (Zepeda, 2007). Pounder and Crow (2005) suggest schools reconceptualize and redesign the role of the principal so that more candidates enter the job and sustain their commitment over time. The authors recommended fully embracing and implementing the concept of distributed

leadership in school administrative work. Assistant principals tend to find their role more meaningful when they are responsible for creating learning environments that enhance student achievement and help close the achievement gap (Pounder and Crow, 2005). District policymakers cannot afford to limit the potential of assistant principals who provide instructional leadership and day-to-day management in schools. The school leadership literature frames distributed leadership as a product of joint interactions of school leaders, followers, and aspects of their routines which impact employee morale, the shared vision, and student learning outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004; Spillane, 2006).

### **Summary**

Although the assistant principal position is traditionally regarded as the steppingstone to the principalship, role conflict and role ambiguity have been found to inhibit leadership preparedness necessary for promotion (Chan et al., 2003; Marshall, 1992, 1993; Koru, 1993). Close examination has revealed that incumbents have divergent career orientations (e.g., upwardly mobile vs. career assistant and those assistants who consider leaving) based on perceptions of position prestige or lack thereof. In addition, dissenting opinions over the actual or perceived principal shortages continue to be written and explained by circumstances such as administrator's reluctance to apply, insufficient leadership preparation, hiring practices, and increased role stress.

It is important for school districts to consider career-related issues in establishing administrative policies and procedures that may impact the career stability of assistant principals (e.g., role conflict, mentor exposure, compensation). Instability (i.e. turnover), as revealed in an inability to retain quality personnel and ineffective personnel practices, is a growing concern for the human resources administrator. When an employee is

assigned to a role where his or her primary strengths and interests are utilized, both job satisfaction and self-fulfillment are likely to result. Important results of proper staff assignment include retention of staff, high morale, employee commitment, goal achievement, and higher productivity (Norton, 2008). Examination of assistant principals' career stability may inform school organizations on faulty practices that may restrict or discourage career advancement of assistants currently in the school administrative ranks.

The prospect of an ever-increasing principal shortage is serious when considering the public schools' need to enlist qualified personnel willing to take responsibility for student achievement, school funding, teacher professional development and training and bureaucratic demands as student populations increase and diversify. Educational reform reports since the 1980s concluded that schools are only as good as their administrators. Strong leadership is relevant in any era, but particularly in today's high stakes public school arena. The current culture of education demands that principals have immediate impact on and ultimate responsibility for student achievement upon assignment to the role. The critical need for effective leadership in schools presents an accompanying need for training strong leaders at the entry-level of school administration, the assistant principalship. Assistant principal career stability data may also facilitate targeted training goals for aspiring and new principals in order to prepare them for the demands of today's school leaders.

In summation, the assistant career stability survey factors explored in this section (training in management and leadership, mentor exposure, role conflict, role ambiguity, prior classroom experience, and administrative team participation) reveal trends in the



literature. These factors along with demographic data were examined in relation to respondents' reported career stability. The findings of this research investigation were examined using Marshall et al.'s (1990) career orientation typologies and Marshall's (1992) career socialization theory discussed in this chapter as a framework. The next chapter will present the methodology employed in this research.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Successful operation of a school requires competent administrators. Assistant principals provide instructional leadership and manage the day-to-day activities in schools while working side by side with the principal to achieve the school's overall mission. Incumbents in the position regarded as the training ground for the principalship, assistant principals, were surveyed using the Assistant Principal Career Survey (Modified) to investigate their career stability (i.e. career choices assistant principals intend to make over the next five to ten years) and factors which determine their choices.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The guiding framework for the present study was based upon the following relevant research on assistant principals' individual and organizational career socialization. The six career orientation typologies developed by Marshall et al. (1990) describe the how assistant principals settle on an orientation to the career (i.e. upwardly mobile, career assistant, plateaued, shafted, assistant who considers leaving, downwardly mobile). Marshall (1992) reasoned that the assistant principalship is beginning of the administrative career socialization process and the researcher has written extensively on the characteristics of individuals in the role, the role itself, and the processes that occur in it. The career socialization theory developed by the scholar describes how assistant principals operate, observe, and learn what constitutes school leadership. Assistant principal career constructs are built upon role tasks that entry-level administrators must navigate in order to be

perceived as competent, achieve job satisfaction in the role and/or receive sponsorship for promotion. This orientation to the assistant principal role informs of the individual's professional growth needs, personal and professional values, as well as his/her willingness to conform to the organization's complex forces (i.e. school and district values) in order to achieve career advancement (Marshall, 1992).

The six selections of the career stability item (i.e. become a principal, take another administrative position, remain an assistant, return to the classroom, leave education altogether, and other) were collapsed to two profiles due to the extreme distribution of the respondent data. Self-reported career stability formulated the following two career orientation categories after initial data analysis (Marshall et al., 1990):

#### **Upwardly Mobile Assistant Principal**

This class of assistant principals express a desire for vertical movement within the organization, which affords greater influence and responsibility. Individual cultivates useful professional networks including a sponsor who assists with career goals, actively seeks promotion, demonstrates a willingness to take risks, and values loyalty to superiors (p. 19-20).

#### **Non-Upwardly-Mobile Assistant Principal**

Individual intends to remain in the assistant principal position, considers leaving, or is (voluntarily or involuntarily) downwardly mobile. (pp. 27-28).

On-the-job training based upon career orientation development benefits the entry-level administrator as well as the students, and the school culture as a whole. Those individuals who possess an upwardly mobile career orientation require targeted strategies to attract and groom them for today's school environment. Assistants who possess a non-

upwardly mobile career orientation require appropriate professional development to strengthen their skills in school management and instructional leadership.

The main contribution of this study was the identification of factors relative to assistant principals who have an upwardly mobile career orientation as well as for those who have a non-upwardly mobile career orientation in the large, urban school district in the southeast. Furthermore, the study examined career-related influences and a profile analysis of the respondents was developed based on the collected career stability data.

This chapter discusses the sample, instrumentation used to gather data, procedures for conducting the study, methods used for data analysis and the conceptual framework that guided the design of the study. The statistical model used in predicting the relationship between the specified factors and career stability is also explained. There is also a brief summary on how the results of logistic regression are interpreted.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the career stability of assistant principals in a large, urban school district in the southeast to offer data to better address assistants' career expectations, promotion preparedness and the future school leadership status of the district.

The research questions used to guide this study were:

1. What is the relationship of team management and leadership, mentor exposure, role conflict, role ambiguity, classroom experience, years served as an administrator and administrative team participation to career stability of assistant principals?

2. Within the broader categories of demographics (e.g. age, race, gender) and career-related influences (e.g. principal's leadership style, role conflict with teachers where they previously taught, etc...) which specific factors are related to the career stability of assistant principals?

A 32-item web based survey was used to obtain the data from all practicing assistant principals in the large, urban school district in the southeast. A logistic regression was performed to answer the research questions.

### **Research Design**

This research was conducted as a non-experimental, cross-sectional study using an electronic survey method. In an effort to extend MacCorkle's (2004) assistant principal career stability research in a significant way, the present study incorporated several extensions to make this elaboration of the research worthwhile. This study was designed to accurately collect and analyze self-reported assistant principal career stability data and examine reasons for them.

A pilot study was conducted prior to the actual research investigation. The 15 respondents were practicing assistant principals randomly selected from two school districts that border the survey school district. Data from the pilot study was not included in the study analysis.

On April 30, 2009, a recruitment letter was sent to all acting assistant principals in the large, urban school district informing them of the forthcoming web survey. Participants were not compensated for participating in the survey. A fifty-dollar Visa gift card was offered as an inducement to participate in the survey. In May 2009, the Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified), a 32-item web-based survey was sent to the assistant

principals in the district ( $N = 286$ ). A respondent signified agreement to participate when he or she began the web based survey. The survey was completed in one session. A thank you for participation statement screen concluded the survey. Three e-mail reminders (one per week) were necessary to achieve the 60% participation target. Four follow-up e-mails were sent to encourage completion of the survey. The web-based survey concluded the first week of June 2009.

### Variables

As recommended by MacCorkle (2004), this study analyzed factors found in the educational leadership literature that may determine assistant principal career stability (see table 1).

Table 1

*Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified) Variables*

Type of Variable	Variable	Description
Demographic	Gender	Male = 1
		Female = 2
	Ethnicity	African American = 1
		White = 2
		Hispanic = 3
		Asian = 4
Native American = 5		
	Other = 6	

Table 1 (continued)

Type of Variable	Variable	Description
	Total years spent in education	
	Years as an administrator	
	Years served in district	
	Grade level assignment	Elementary = 1 Middle = 2 High = 3 Other = 4
Outcome variable	5 to 10 year plan	Become a principal = 1 Take another administrative position = 2 Remain an assistant = 3 Return to the classroom = 4 Leave education altogether = 5 Other = 6
Career-related variables	Administrative process at your school	Hierarchy = 1* Shared hierarchy = 2 Partial hierarchy = 3 Administrative team = 4
	Principal's primary leadership style	Authoritarian = 1

Table 1 (continued)

Type of Variable	Variable	Description
		Participative = 2
		Delegative = 3
	Mentor program participation prior to or just after becoming an administrator	Yes = 1 No = 2
	If yes, describe program you were involved in	Formal district sponsored = 1 Formal preservice program = 2 Informal mentoring within district either while striving to become an AP or after becoming one = 3 Informal mentoring during first administrative assignment within your school = 4 Other = 5
	Participation in leadership academy, team management training program, or both either prior to or just after becoming an administrator	Yes = 1 No = 2
	If yes, describe program you were involved in	Formal district sponsored = 1 Formal preservice program = 2 Team management training or leadership summer institute = 3 Other = 4



Table 1 (continued)

Type of Variable	Variable	Description
	Working in school where previously taught before becoming an administrator	Yes = 1 No = 2
	If yes, is there role conflict with your faculty	Yes = 1 No = 2
Role Conflict	I have to do tasks that should be done differently	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1
	I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1
	I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1
	I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1

Table 1 (continued)

Type of Variable	Variable	Description
	I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1
	I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and are not accepted by others	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1
	I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1
	I work on unnecessary tasks	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1
Role Ambiguity	I feel certain about how much authority I have	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1

Table 1 (continued)

Type of Variable	Variable	Description
	Clear, planned objectives exist for my job	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1
	I know that I have divided my time properly	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1
	I know what my responsibilities are	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1
	I know exactly what is expected of me	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1
	I have clear expectations of what has to be done	Agree = 4 Slightly Agree = 3 Slightly Disagree = 2 Disagree = 1

Table 1 (continued)

Type of Variable	Variable	Description
Open-ended Question	Are there other factors not mentioned that may affect your career plans	

*Note:* \*Hierarchy = Principal makes all decisions, APs are delegated tasks; Shared hierarchy = Principal has primary responsibility for decision-making, consults with APs for specific tasks; Partial teaming = Principal assigns the APs specific tasks for which they are completely responsible; Administrative team = Principal and AP(s) share decision-making on most tasks.

### **Population and Research Setting**

The survey district's human resources office provided the district email addresses for web survey accessibility to the population. Of the 289 names provided by the district human resources department, three were returned undeliverable. The research population for this study was 286 practicing assistant principals in the large, urban school district located in the southeastern United States. The population by gender was comprised of 197 males and 89 females. The population by grade level consisted of 138 elementary, 78 middle and 70 high school assistant principals.

The district employs 19,485 individuals including 9,363 full time teachers, 8,945 student support staff and 1,177 administrative/office staff. The district's student enrollment is over 137,000. The grade level organization with the district is pre-kindergarten, kindergarten through grade five, grades six through eight, and grades nine through twelve. Included in the aforementioned grade organization are over 2,700 self contained exceptional students and over 18,000 limited English proficient students. The district has a total of 172 schools comprised of 99 elementary, 31 middle, 33 high schools, four alternative schools

and five pre-k sites. The student ethnic distribution is 41.8% African American, 33.7% White, 15.5% Hispanic, 4.7% Asian, and 4.3% American Indian/multiracial.

The district is located in the southeastern region of North Carolina. The district is one of the largest employers in the county it serves. It is ranked fifth in the nation for the number of board-certified teachers. In 2007, the district led all other urban school districts in the National Assessment of Educational Progress results for math and reading in grades four and eight. The assessment, known as the Nation's Report Card, evaluated math and reading skills in the two grades for 11 urban school districts across the country.

### **Sampling Procedure**

The target population of the research was all practicing assistant principals in the large, urban school district in the southeast ( $N=286$ ). These individuals represent the future leadership capacity of the district. The study obtained e-mail access to all of the assistant principals in the district *by* consulting with the school district's Office of Accountability and Research and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's Institutional Review Board. A recruitment letter (See Appendix A) was sent to all assistant principals announcing and requesting participation in the web based survey. The sample was comprised of first year assistant principals, experienced assistant principals and former principals now practicing as assistants.

### **Instrumentation**

MacCorkle (2004) developed the Assistant Principal Career Survey instrument in order to examine what factors assistant principals perceived as significant in their career decision-making. Survey items were built primarily upon the conclusions and theories presented in the literature review. Seven additional variables as predictors of career stability

were added by this researcher to the MacCorkle (2004) survey: race, grade level assignment, years of service in the district; participation in team management and leadership training; number of years teaching in the classroom prior to becoming an administrator, leadership style of the principal (Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1939); and possible role conflict with supervising former teacher colleagues. Written permission from the developer was obtained for the specific purpose of this study. The present study also expanded the career stability item (outcome variable) to include the selections “to return to the classroom” (downwardly mobile) and “take another administrative position” (upwardly mobile). The 32 Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified) questions were composed of four-point Likert scale questions (14), multiple-choice items (10) and open-ended questions (5) to explore additional factors not stated on the survey. Demographic data (age, gender, and ethnicity) was also requested. The last two sections of the Assistant Principal Career Survey included the Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity scales (1970) comprised of 14 items that used a four-point Likert scale (e.g. agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, disagree). The final survey question was an open-ended question, which invited respondents to self-report factors regarding their career plans that may not have been included in the survey items (See APPENDIX B).

### **Reliability and Validity of Instrument**

As an initial step to ensuring that the survey modifications were clear and concise, four professors independently reviewed the survey instrument and provided suggestions to improve question and instruction clarity. Those changes were incorporated and a pilot survey was conducted to determine content and process validity of the Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified). Pilot study participants were asked to address the

following issues: (a) clarity of the survey questions, statements, and text; (b) survey organization and structure; (c) ease of transition from one section of the survey to another; (d) appropriateness of Likert scale as method of response to statements; and (e) length of time in minutes required to complete the survey. Standardized administration of the May 2009 Assistant Principal Career Stability (Modified) within the survey district was accomplished by ensuring that all respondents received the same directions on the opening screen prior to beginning the web based survey.

A substantial body of empirical research exists about the construct validity and reliability of the Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) scales. Netemeyer, Johnston & Burton (1990) found both scales have adequate to good reliability and construct validity. Coefficient alphas for values for role conflict and role ambiguity were .782 and .831 respectively. The researchers also evaluated alternative structural models and showed that role conflict and role ambiguity are distinct constructs. MacCorkle (2004) reported an Alpha score of .8520 for the eight questions for role conflict and an Alpha score of .7465 for the six role ambiguity items which both indicate reliability.

### **Data Collection**

The Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified) consisted of 32 items. Data from the eight demographic items were analyzed using SPSS statistical software for descriptive frequency reporting, and SAS software was used to perform the logistic regression analysis.

### **Preliminary Analysis**

**Missing data.** One hundred seventy-seven assistant principals completed the survey. Of these completed surveys, one hundred sixty-two assistant principals responded

to career stability by stating intentions to either become a principal, take another administrative position, remain an assistant principal, return to the classroom, leave education altogether, or other. Fifteen assistant principals did not respond to or were undecided about career stability. Career stability was collapsed into a binary choice (Yes, No) in regard to upwardly mobility as 137 out of 177 (77.40%) indicated intentions to become a principal or take another administrative position, 25 out of 177 (15.28%) indicated no intentions of upward mobility by stating a desire to remain an assistant principal, remain in the classroom, leave education altogether, or other. The remaining 15 (8.47%) assistant principals were undecided or did not respond to career stability. Eliminating these 15 assistant principals left 162 assistant principals in the sample for a more in-depth examination using logistic regression analysis.

Of the one hundred sixty-two assistant principals who completed a survey with a response to upward mobility, 5 (3.09%) provided a grade level assignment other than high school, middle school, or elementary school and 6 (3.70%) indicated ethnicity other than White or African-American. The study lost 11 out of 162 (6.79%) assistant principals who responded to upward mobility by excluding the aforementioned grade level assignments and ethnicities due to sparseness for statistical analysis which left an overall rate of 127 out of 151 (84.11%) upwardly mobile respondents and 24 out of 151 (15.89%) non upwardly mobile respondents.

Of the 151 assistant principals who responded to upward mobility and indicated a grade level assignment at high school, middle school, or elementary school and classified themselves as African American or White; 133 provided complete information. Two assistant principals did not indicate their age, four assistant principals did not indicate the



number years taught prior, one assistant principal did not respond to assignment without manpower, two assistant principals did not respond to operate differently, one assistant principal did not respond to incompatible requests, one assistant principal did not respond to unnecessary tasks, two assistant principals did not respond to clear goals, two assistant principals did not respond to divided time, two assistant principals did not respond to responsibilities, two assistant principals did not respond to I know what is expected of me, and two assistant principals did not respond to clear expectations of what has to be done. Of these 21 missing observations on predictor variables, there were 18 out of 151 (11.92%) assistant principals with missing information and three of these assistant principals had missing observations for more than one predictor variable. The remaining 133 assistant principals with complete information revealed an upwardly mobile proportion of 112 out of 133 (84.21%). Consistently an overall rate of 84% upwardly mobile career stability was found for a sample size of ( $n=162$ ), ( $n=151$ ), and ( $n=133$ ). Though some assistant principal observations were eliminated from the analysis among those who responded to upward mobility, performing a logistic regression is temperamental and to ensure convergence of this statistical procedure, a decision was made by this researcher to analyze 133 assistant principals for model development.

**Correlation (multicollinearity).** A Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to examine relationships between continuous variables and a Spearman rank correlation was used to examine relationships between both continuous and ordinal variables (see Appendix D and Appendix E, respectively). These correlations were used to determine multicollinearity amongst predictor variables. If correlation between two predictor variables was  $0.5 \leq r \leq 1.0$  or  $-1.0 \leq r \leq -0.5$  they were deemed correlated with one other. This information

was for examination purposes and would have been used to eliminate predictor variables from the logistic model if multicollinearity existed.

**Outcome variable.** The intent of this investigation was to utilize self-reported career stability data to examine assistant principal career orientation. Therefore, the 15 respondents who did not report their career stability were eliminated from the study analysis ( $n=162$ ).

The majority (84.57%) of assistant principals fell in the upwardly mobile category, therefore the six selections of the career stability (i.e. outcome variable) item: become a principal, take another administrative position, remain an assistant, return to the classroom, leave education altogether, and other, were collapsed into two categories. The logistic regression distribution defined the two as: Upwardly Mobile (become a principal or take another administrative position) or Non Upwardly Mobile (otherwise).

A binomial model was deemed the appropriate model to analyze the Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified) data, as the following assumptions held true: there were  $n$  independent trials, each trial had two possible outcomes, success or failure, and the probability of success, was the same for each trial. Binomial logistic regression, referred to as the binary logit by Long (1997), is a modeling approach used to predict a dichotomous outcome variable in relation to its factors of any type and to determine the variance explained by them. The use of binary logit “is largely one of convenience and convention, since the substantive results are generally indistinguishable” (p. 83). The binomial model for career stability was as follows:

$$\text{Upwardly Mobile} = \begin{cases} 1 - \text{Become a Principal or Take another Administrative Position} \\ 0 - \text{Otherwise} \end{cases}$$

## Data Analysis

**Descriptive statistics.** Summary characteristics of the sample (see Table 3) were examined for all predictor variables by the outcome variable. For categorical variables the frequency and percent were examined, for continuous variables the mean and standard deviation were examined, and for ordinal variables the median, minimum, and maximum were examined.

**Model development and validation.** Stepwise logistic regression was used to develop a model to predict the likelihood of an assistant principals' desire to move upwardly. Twenty-eight of the thirty-one predictor variables were included in the model statement of SAS software for consideration as a predictor variable and the confounding predictor variables role conflict and role ambiguity were also considered. The Pearson and Spearman Correlations were used to examine what multicollinearity predictor variables were showing which may affect a significant relationship with the outcome variable, upward mobility, and to determine if any variables should be removed from the model statement. No multicollinearity was found in the predictor variables included in the model using the stepwise logistic regression.

Three survey questions were not considered as predictor variables, Q13 type of mentorship program, Q15 type of Leadership/Management training program, and Q17 role conflict with faculty. These survey questions were not intended for all surveyors. Type of mentorship program was only to be responded to by assistant principals who participated in a mentorship program, type of leadership program was only to be responded to by assistant principals who participated in a leadership program and role conflict with faculty was only to be responded to by assistant principals who were currently working in the school in

which they taught for becoming an administrator. The  $p$ -value was set to .05 as the level of significance. The calculation of cumulative gains validated the model (see APPENDIX C). The predicted model revealed a steady yet marginal improvement over the actual results.

### **Logistic regression**

Tabachnick & Fidell (2007) point out the flexibility of logistic regression, “Logistic regression allows one to predict a discrete outcome such as group membership from a set of variables that may be continuous, discrete, dichotomous, or a mix” (p. 437). A logistic regression was performed to investigate the two questions which guided this study:

1. What is the relationship of team management and leadership, mentor exposure, role conflict, role ambiguity, classroom experience, years served as an administrator and administrative team participation to career stability of assistant principals?
2. Within the broader categories of demographics (e.g. age, race, gender) and career-related influences (e.g. principal’s leadership style, role conflict with teachers where they previously taught, etc...) which specific factors are related to the career stability of assistant principals?

### **Protection of Human Rights**

This research proposal was submitted for review to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte’s Institutional Review Board Committee to ensure that protection of human subjects research compliance and ethics policies were met in regard to federal, state and university regulations. A certificate of approval was granted for this research prior to involvement with human subjects.

The survey school district's Office of Accountability Center for Research and Evaluation also internally reviewed this investigation and granted approval using applicable research and evaluation standards prior to recruitment of the sample.

The recruitment letter informed the assistant principals in the district that the research investigation was not affiliated with the district Human Resources Department. Participants were informed that their responses would be completely anonymous. The opening screen of the web based survey informed respondents that completing and returning the survey would constitute consent to participate.

### **Summary**

The study was conducted with assistant principals in a large urban school district in the southeast. Respondents were emailed a commercial online survey and asked to report their career orientation. This chapter explained the methods that were used to conduct this investigation. Chapter four will present the results obtained with these methods and discuss the findings in relation to the career orientation typologies and assistant principal socialization constructs (Marshall et al., 1990 and Marshall, 1992).

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE DATA

This study sought to determine the factors related to career stability of assistant principals in a large urban school district in the southeast. This chapter presents the findings of the data collected from the Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified) and the statistical analysis of the data. This chapter includes descriptive statistics, results of the statistical analyses and closes with a summary of findings.

### **Description of the Total Sample**

The total sample ( $N=177$ ) included first time assistant principals as well as principals who had formally retired from the district but returned to assume interim assistant principal roles (voluntarily downwardly mobile). The self-reported career stability and career-related factors of the total provided the study's central point. The total sample frequencies reported are based upon all who responded to at least one question on the Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified). (See table 2).

Table 2

#### *Demographic Profile of the Total Sample*

Variable		N	%
Gender	Male	52	29.4%
	Female	125	70.6%

Table 2 (continued)

Variable		N	%
	Total	177	
Ethnicity	African-American	92	52%
	White	79	44.6%
	Hispanic	3	1.7%
	Asian	1	0.57%
	Native American	0	0.00%
	Other	1	0.57%
	Total	176	
Age	25-35 years	48	27.1%
	36-45 years	55	31.0%
	46-55 years	35	19.7%
	56-65 years	33	18.6%
	66-75 years	2	1.1%
	Total	176	
Years in Education	0-9 years	16	9%
	10-19 years	92	52%
	20-29 years	39	22%
	30-39 years	26	14.7%
	40-49 years	3	1.7%
	Total	176	

Table 2 (continued)

Variable		N	%
Years as an Administrator	0-4 years	88	49.7%
	5-9 years	41	23.2%
	10-14 years	28	15.8%
	15-19 years	8	4.5%
	20 plus years	10	5.6%
	Total	175	
Years taught prior to Admin	0-4 years	14	7.9%
	5-9 years	68	38.4%
	10-14 years	51	28.8%
	15-19 years	25	14.1%
	20 plus years	14	7.9%
	Total	173	
Years in District	0-4 years	29	16.3%
	5-9 years	41	23.1%
	10-14 years	48	27.1%
	15-19 years	21	11.8%
	20 plus years	38	21.4%
	Total	177	
Grade Level	Elementary	84	47.7%
	Middle	46	26.1%



Table 2 (continued)

Variable	N	%	
	High	42	23.8%
	Other	4	2.27%
	Total	176	
Principal's Leadership Style	Authoritarian	35	19.7%
	Participative	116	65.5%
	Delegative	26	14.6%
	Total	117	

Of the total sample of 177 assistant principals, the majority of respondents (70.6%) was female and (29.4%) was male. The proportion of female and male assistant principals in the sample approximates the general population provided by the district human resources department (69% female, 31% male).

African Americans (52%) comprised just over one half of the ethnic representation of the sample. The second highest ethnic representation was White (44.6%), Hispanic origin composed a small percentage (1.7%), and (0.6%,  $n=1$ ) in the following categories Asian, and "other" reported as Iranian/Indian. No participants endorsed the Native American ethnicity ( $n=0\%$ ). One respondent did not disclose ethnicity (0.6%). The ethnic representation of the population was not available from the school district.

The average age of the sample was 44 years (SD = 10.1, range 29-69). The majority of the respondents in the sample were in the less than 46-year-old distribution (58.1%). Four assistant principals (2.3%) did not respond to this item.

The average years in education for the sample was 18.7 years (SD = 8.79, range 7-44). More than half of the respondents in the sample were in the 10-19 years in education distribution. One respondent did not answer this item (0.6%).

The average years served as an administrator of the sample was 6.7 years (SD = 5.62, range 7 months-25 years). Two respondents (1.2%) did not answer this item. The highest distribution in years served as an administrator, 49% of the sample, was 0-4 years.

The average years taught in the classroom prior to becoming an administrator of the sample was 10.6 years (SD = 5.15, range 2-25). Four respondents (2.2%) did not answer this item. The average years of service in the survey district for the sample was 12.7 years (SD = 8.65, range 1-35). The grade level assignment distribution was 47.7% elementary ( $n = 84$ ), 26.1% middle school ( $n = 46$ ), and 23.8% high school ( $n = 42$ ).

Write in responses to the “other” grade level assignment item were self-reported as: Pre-K-age 22 ( $n = 1$ ); Alternative Education ( $n = 1$ ); Pre-K/Early Prevention of School Failure ( $n = 1$ ), and K-12 ( $n = 1$ ). One respondent did not answer this question. The proportion of assistant principals per grade level assignment in the sample approximates the general population reported by the district human resources office (48.2% elementary, 27.2% middle, and 24.4% high school).

In response to the item, “What is your principal’s primary leadership style,” respondents reported the following Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) styles of leadership

descriptors: 19.7% authoritarian/autocratic ( $n = 35$ ), 65.5% participative/democratic ( $n = 116$ ), and 14.6% delegative/laissez-faire ( $n = 26$ ). Participative/Democratic made up more than half of this category.

### **Reliability of Survey Instrument**

A pilot study was conducted in which participants completed the web based survey and commented on the readability and clarity of the Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified). Neither concerns nor misunderstandings were noted, therefore no revisions were made to the survey. In order to test the reliability of the Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970) scale items (Q18-Q31), the present study conducted a Chronbach's Alpha on both the role conflict and role ambiguity scales separately to determine whether the questions in each section measure the same construct. The eight questions for role conflict produced an Alpha score of .837, which is considered reliable. The six items for role ambiguity produced an Alpha score of .830, which is also an indicator of reliability.

### **Preliminary Analysis Results**

**Correlations.** The Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to examine relationships between continuous variables and a Spearman rank correlation to examine relationships between both continuous and ordinal variables (see Appendix D and Appendix E, respectively). Age of assistant principal was positively correlated with years in education ( $r = .89$ ), years as an administrator ( $r = .62$ ), years taught in the classroom ( $r = .56$ ), and years served in this school district ( $r = .58$ ). Additionally, from the Pearson correlation, years in education was positively correlated with years as an administrator ( $r = .76$ ), years taught in the classroom ( $r = .72$ ), and years served in this

school district ( $r = .64$ ). Role conflict was correlated with do tasks differently ( $r = .68$ ), assignment without manpower ( $r = .70$ ), have to buck a rule or policy ( $r = .64$ ), groups operate differently ( $r = .55$ ), receive incompatible requests ( $r = .62$ ), accepted by one but not by others ( $r = .57$ ), inadequate resources or material and have to work on unnecessary tasks ( $r = .74$ ), because these variables defined role conflict. Similarly, role ambiguity was correlated with certain about authority ( $r = .46$ ), clear goals and objectives ( $r = .73$ ), have divided time properly ( $r = .43$ ), know my responsibilities ( $r = .83$ ), know what is expected of me ( $r = .90$ ), and have clear expectations ( $r = .84$ ). These correlations suggested that it was not necessary to use all of the variables in the model development in order to avoid nonessential multicollinearity. The variables that were selected by the stepwise logistic regression model were carefully examined using the Pearson and Spearman Correlations to ensure no multicollinearity.

**Outliers.** The summary of characteristics of the sample (Table 3) and a box-plot of each predictor variable were examined to test for outliers. There were no outliers for this study; however, there were missing observations. There were 162 assistant principals who responded to the career stability item which was further reduced to 151 assistant principals due to sparse grade level and ethnicity values. There remained a small number of missing observations ( $n=18$ , 11.92%) among the 151 assistant principals who responded to career stability, grade level assignment and ethnicity of African-American or White; no treatment for missing values was performed and these assistant principals were not included in the stepwise logistic regression ( $n=133$ ).

### **Tests of Assumptions for Logistic Regression Analysis**

The logistic regression was deemed the appropriate model to analyze the Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified) data as the following assumptions hold true: there are  $n$  independent trials, each trial has two possible outcomes, success or failure and the probability of success is the same for each trial.

**Level of measurement for variables.** Ordinal variables are rank ordering variables, and the central tendency for these variables was represented by the median. Continuous variables are real numbers, and the central tendency for these variables was represented by the mean and median. Discrete variables were categorized with no rank ordering and were represented by frequency or percent. The following variables were defined as continuous variables: (a) approximate age of assistant principal, (b) years spent in education, (c) years served as an administrator, (d) years taught in the classroom, and (e) years served in the school district. Approximate age of assistant principal was calculated using the respondents' year of birth and the current year, 2009.

Categorical variables were defined as: (a) gender, (b) race, (c) grade level assignment, (d) administrative process at one's school, (e) principal's primary leadership style, (f) participation in mentor program, (g) type of mentor program, (h) participation in leadership program, (i) type of leadership program, (j) working in school taught prior to becoming an assistant principal, and (k) other factors and type of other factors.

The following variables were defined as ordinal variables: role conflict, role ambiguity, (a) do tasks differently, (b) assignment without manpower, (c) have to buck a rule or policy, (d) groups operate differently, (e) receive incompatible requests, (f) accepted by one but not by others, (g) inadequate resources or material, (h) have to work

on unnecessary tasks, (i) certain about authority, (j) clear goals and objectives, (k) have divided time properly, (l) know my responsibilities, (m) know what is expected of me, and (n) have clear expectations.

Role conflict was defined as the composite value of Q18 – Q25. Role ambiguity was defined as the composite value of Q26 – Q31. The value of these ordinal variables was assigned as follows: Agree=4, Slightly Agree=3, Slightly Disagree=2, Disagree=1.

### **Descriptive Statistics Results**

**Research question one.** What is the relationship of team management and leadership training, mentor exposure, role conflict, role ambiguity, classroom experience, years served as an administrator and administrative team participation to career stability of assistant principals?

The data in Table 4 indicates the career stability factors examined in research question one for the two categories of assistant principals found in the study. The majority of upwardly mobile assistant principals reported having participated in team management and leadership training 83 (88.30%) and mentor exposure 61 (89.71%), in comparison with non-upwardly mobile assistant principals, who reported fewer training experiences, 11 (11.70%) and mentor exposure 7 (10.29%) opportunities. However, over one-half, ( $n = 76$ ) (55.47%) of the 137 upwardly mobile assistants who responded to the item reported not having mentor exposure. The majority of upwardly mobile assistants who participated in a mentor experience described it as a formal ( $n = 32$ , 91.43%) as opposed to informal ( $n = 26$ , 88.67%). Marshall (1992) suggested mentorship positively influences assistant principal career outcomes. Similarly, the majority of upwardly

mobile participants in leadership programs described their affiliation as formal ( $n = 63$ , 86.30%) rather than informal ( $n = 20$ , 95.24%).

Non-upwardly mobile assistants spent more years teaching in the classroom ( $n = 13$ ) and served twice as many years in the district ( $n = 21$ ) than upwardly mobile assistant principals ( $n = 10$  years and  $i = 10$  years, respectively). Similarly, non-upwardly mobile assistant principals had served as administrators twice as long as upwardly mobile assistant principals. Upwardly mobile assistants averaged five years in the role compared to non-upwardly mobile assistants' twelve years. Marshall et al. (1990) explained upwardly mobile assistants perceive the position as short term and transitional; however, necessary for skill development and proving oneself for promotion.

The majority of upwardly mobile assistant principals ( $n = 59$ ) reported serving on an administrative team, which allows distributed leadership as opposed to the traditional hierarchical school leadership structure. Shared hierarchy ( $n = 38$ ) was the administrative process of the next highest number of upwardly mobile assistants, followed by partial teaming ( $n = 28$ ) and delegated tasks ( $n = 12$ ). The majority of non-upwardly mobile assistant principals ( $n = 10$ ) also served on administrative teams, followed by an equal number of respondents on partial and shared team ( $n = 7$ ) and a single respondent ( $n = 1$ ) reported a delegated tasks administrative process. In summary, upwardly mobile assistant principals expressed higher importance for career mobility opportunities, and adhering to organizational values than non-upwardly mobile assistant principals.

**Research question two.** Within the broader categories of demographics (e.g., age, race, gender) and career-related influences (e.g., principal's leadership style, role conflict with teachers where they previously taught, etc.) which specific factors are

related to the career stability of assistant principals? The data in Table 3 indicates the demographic and career-related factors reported by the sample. The data reported a thirteen-year difference in the mean age between upwardly mobile ( $M = 41.5$ ) and non-upwardly mobile ( $M = 53.1$ ) assistant principals. Pellicer et al. (1998), reported findings that 80% of principals and 82% of assistant principals were between the ages of 35 and 54 years old. The present study demonstrates the increasing age of assistants, which may lead to more administrators who are eligible for retirement sooner than later.

The majority of the respondents in both categories (i.e., upwardly mobile and non-upwardly mobile) were female. It is noted, however, female assistant principals comprised the majority of the total sample (69.13%). Male respondents displayed an obvious inclination to upward mobility (88%) as opposed to non-upward mobility (12%).

More African Americans ( $n = 78, 87.64\%$ ) than Whites ( $n = 53, 79.10\%$ ) reported upwardly mobile career stability, while more Whites ( $n = 14, 20.90\%$ ) than African Americans ( $n = 11, 12.36\%$ ) reported non-upwardly mobile career stability. It must be noted that the majority of the sample reported their ethnicity as African American ( $n = 89$ ). African American assistants, as a whole, reported a greater desire for upwardly mobile career stability than non-upward mobility as did White assistant principals. The percentage of female respondents in the study contradict Shakeshaft's (1987) assertion that "most women enter teaching to teach, but most men enter teaching to administer" (p. 87). Further, the literature documents the challenges women and minorities face due to white male domination of power positions in education; however, the female and minority upwardly mobile respondents in the present study view their work role as



productive, secure, and able to provide career advancement (Hoff & Mitchell, 2007; Marshall, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1987; Shakeshaft, 1989).

Non-upwardly mobile assistant principals averaged ten more years in education (26%) than upwardly mobile assistant principals (16%) in the district. The non-upwardly mobile assistant principal has created role contentment with support from colleagues, interaction with students, and does not wish to be a principal. The individual views the role as a career commitment (Marshall et al., 1990; Marshall, 1992).

Assistant principals in elementary grade level assignments comprised the majority of the upwardly mobile ( $n = 64$ , 83.12%) and non-upwardly mobile ( $n = 13$ , 16.88%) categories. Upwardly mobile middle school assistant principals ( $n = 35$ ), slightly outnumbered high school assistant principals ( $n = 34$ ) who expressed upwardly mobile career stability. Non-upwardly mobile assistants in middle school and high school assignments showed slight variance ( $n = 8$  and  $n = 3$ , respectively).

The majority of upwardly mobile and non-upwardly assistant principals described their principals' primary leadership type as Participative, ( $n = 93$ , 86.92% and  $n = 14$ , 13.08%) respectively. The next largest number of upwardly mobile assistant principals ( $n = 27$ , 87.10%) describe their principal's leadership style as authoritarian in contrast to ( $n = 4$ , 12.90%) non-upwardly mobile assistant principals. The smallest percentage of assistant principals in both categories described their supervising principal as delegative.

Only a small percentage of the sample reported working in as an administrator in the school where they previously taught, ( $n = 19$ ) upwardly mobile ( $n = 17$ ), and

non-upwardly mobile ( $n = 2$ ). Of the nineteen, one from each career stability category reported role conflict with faculty members.

Marshall (1992) concluded upward mobility can be predicted when positive career factors such as opportunities for promotion and respected sponsorship align with a personal desire for promotion. Assistant principal career stability orientation and longevity are ultimately determined by internal and external career-related influences (see Table 3), which may promote or hinder career advancement.

Table 3

*Summary of Characteristics of the Sample (N = 162)*

Variable	Upwardly Mobile AP		Non-Upwardly Mobile AP		Total n (%)
	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	
Q1: Age	41.5	8.85	53.1	8.85	
	135 (84.38)		25 (15.62)		160 (100)
Q2: Gender					
Male	44 (88.00)		6 (12.00)		50 (100.00)
Female	93 (83.04)		19 (16.96)		112 (100.00)
Q3: Race					
African American	78 (87.64)		11 (12.36)		89 (100.00)
White	53 (79.10)		14 (20.90)		67 (100.00)

Table 3 (continued)

Variable	<u>Upwardly Mobile AP</u>		<u>Non-Upwardly Mobile AP</u>		<u>Total</u> n (%)
	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	
Q4: Years in Education					
	16.3	9.33	26.9	9.33	
	137 (84.56)		25 (15.44)		162 (100.00)
Q5: Years as Administrator					
	5	6.58	12.1	6.58	
	136 (84.47)		25 (15.53)		161 (100.00)
Q6: Years Taught					
	10.0	5.68	13.0	5.68	
	134 (84.81)		24 (15.19)		158 (100.00)
Q7: Years in District					
	10.5	10.2	21.0	10.2	
	10.5	10.2	21.0	10.2	
	137 (84.56)		25 (15.44)		162 (100.00)
Q8: Grade level					
High	34 (91.89)		3 (8.11)		37 (100.00)
Middle	35 (81.4)		8 (18.6)		43 (100.00)
Elementary	64 (83.12)		13 (16.88)		77 (100.00)
Q10: Admin Process					
Delegated	12 (92.31)		1 (7.69)		13 (100.00)

Table 3 (continued)

Variable	Upwardly Mobile AP		Non-Upwardly Mobile AP		Total n (%)
	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	
Shared	38 (84.44)		7 (15.56)		45 (100.00)
Partial	28 (80)		7 (20.00)		35 (100.00)
Admin	59 (85.51)		10 (14.49)		69 (100.00)
Q11: Principal's Leadership Style					
Authoritarian	27 (87.10)		4 (12.90)		31 (100.00)
Participative	93 (86.92)		14 (13.08)		107 (100.00)
Delegative	17 (70.83)		7 (29.17)		24 (100.00)
Q12: Mentor Program Participation					
Yes	61 (89.71)		7 (10.29)		68 (100.00)
No	76 (80.85)		18 (19.15)		94 (100.00)
Q13: Type of Mentor Program					
Formal	32 (91.43)		3 (8.57)		35 (100.00)
Informal	26 (86.67)		4 (13.33)		30 (100.00)
No Response	3 (100.00)		0 (0.00)		3 (100.00)
Q14: Leadership/Management Training					
Yes	83 (88.30)		11 (11.70)		94 (100.00)
No	54 (79.41)		14 (20.59)		68 (100.00)

Table 3 (continued)

Variable	<u>Upwardly Mobile AP</u>		<u>Non-Upwardly Mobile AP</u>		<u>Total</u> n (%)
	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	
Q15: Type of Leadership/Management Program					
Formal	63 (86.30)		10 (13.70)		73 (100.00)
Informal	20 (95.24)		1 (4.76)		21 (100.00)
Q16: Working Where Previously Taught?					
Yes	17 (89.47)		2 (10.53)		19 (100.00)
No	120 (83.92)		23 (16.08)		143 (100.00)
Q17: Role Conflict with Faculty					
Yes	1 (50.00)		1 (50.00)		2 (100.00)
No	16 (94.12)		1 (5.88)		17 (100.00)
Q18-Q25: Role Conflict (Median values)					
Q18: Do Tasks Differently					
	2	1.0-4.0	3	1.0-4.0	
	136 (84.47)		25 (15.53)		161 (100.00)
Q19: Assignment without Manpower					
	1	1.0-4.0	1	1.0-4.0	
	137 (85.09)		24 (14.91)		161 (100.00)
Q20: Have to Buck a Rule/Policy					
	1	1.0-4.0	2	1.0-4.0	
	137 (84.57)		25 (15.43)		162 (100.00)

Table 3 (continued)

Variable	Upwardly Mobile AP		Non-Upwardly Mobile AP		Total n (%)
	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	
Q21: Work w/Groups which Operate Differently					
	3	1.0-4.0	3	1.0-4.0	
	135 (84.44)		25 (1.62)		160 (100.00)
Q22: Receive Incompatible Requests					
	2	1.0-4.0	2	1.0-4.0	
	136 (84.48)		25 (15.52)		161 (100.00)
Q23: Accepted by One but Not by Others					
	3	1.0-4.0	2	1.0-4.0	
	137 (84.57)		25 (15.43)		162 (100.00)
Q24: Assignment without Adequate Resources					
	1	1.0-4.0	2	1.0-4.0	
	137 (84.57)		25 (15.43)		162 (100.00)
Q25: Work on Unnecessary Tasks					
	1	1.0-4.0	2	1.0-4.0	
	136 (84.48)		25 (15.52)		161 (100.00)
Q26-Q31: Role Ambiguity (Median Values)					
Q26: Certain about Authority					
	4	1.0-4.0	4	1.0-4.0	
	137 (84.57)		25 (15.43)		162 (100.00)

Table 3 (continued)

Variable	Upwardly Mobile AP		Non-Upwardly Mobile AP		Total n (%)
	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	Mean Median n (%)	SD Range	
Q27: Clear Goals/Objectives					
	4	1.0-4.0	3	1.0-4.0	
	135 (84.44)		25 (1.62)		160 (100.00)
Q28: Have Divided Time Properly					
	3	1.0-4.0	3	1.0-4.0	
	136 (85.00)		24 (15.00)		160 (100.00)
Q29: Know My Responsibilities					
	4	1.0-4.0	4	1.0-4.0	
	135 (84.44)		25 (1.62)		160 (100.00)
Q30: Know what is Expected of Me					
	4	1.0-4.0	4	1.0-4.0	
	135 (84.91)		24 (15.09)		159 (100.00)
Q31: Have Clear Expectations					
	4	1.0-4.0	4	1.0-4.0	
	136 (84.48)		25 (15.52)		161 (100.00)
Q32: Other Factors Mean (%)					
Buddy System/ Politics	5 (83.33)		1 (16.67)		6 (100.00)
Educ/Training	3 (100.00)		0 (0.00)		3 (100.00)

Table 3 (continued)

Variable	Upwardly Mobile AP		Non-Upwardly Mobile AP		Total n (%)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
	Median	Range	Median	Range	
	n (%)		n (%)		
Perform vs. Eval		1 (100.0)	0 (0.00)		1 (100.00)
Reduction in Force		15 (88.24)	2 (11.76)		17 (100.00)
Tmwork/Comm		3 (75.00)	1 (25.00)		4 (100.00)

*Note:* Q18-Q31 Agree = 4, Slightly Agree = 3, Slightly Disagree = 2, Disagree = 1. The median, minimum, and maximum is reported for Q18-Q25; The mean and standard deviation is reported for Q1, Q4, Q5, Q6, and Q7; Frequencies and percents are reported for all other variables.

### Logistic Regression Results

A stepwise logistic regression model was performed to determine the likelihood of an assistant principal's upwardly mobile career stability. A total of 133 respondents completed all questions on the survey and are included in this analysis. Of the 133 respondents, 112 (84.21%) were “upwardly mobile.” Career stability (coded 1=Upward mobility and 0=otherwise) was the outcome variable. Variables available for model selection were (a) age, (b) sex, (c) race, (d) number of years spent in education, (e) number of years served as an administrator, (f) number of years taught in the classroom, (g) number of years served in the school district, (h) grade level assignment, (i) administrative process at the assigned school, (j) principal’s primary leadership style, (k) mentor program participation, (l) team management/leadership training participation (m) currently working in school where previously taught (n) Role conflict (o) “I have to do tasks that should be done differently” (p) “I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it” (q) “I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment” (r)



“I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently” (s) “I receive incompatible requests from two or more people” (t) “I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not by others” (u) “I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to executive it” (v) “I work on unnecessary tasks” (w) Role ambiguity (x) “ I feel certain about how much authority I have” (y) “Clear, planned goals and objective exist for my job” (z) “I know that I have divided my time properly” (aa) “I know what my responsibilities are” (bb) “I know exactly what is expected of me” (cc) “I have clear expectations of what has to be done.”

At Step 1, the “number of years as an administrator” was entered into the model with an  $R^2=36.25\%$  ( $p=.0001$ ). At step 2, “number of years served in the school district” entered into the model resulting in an  $R^2$  of 44.08%, which was statistically significant ( $p=.0001$ ).

At Step 3, “I have to buck a rule or policy” entered into the model with an  $R^2$  of 48.49%. which was statistically significant ( $p=.0001$ ). At Step 4, “I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it” was entered into the model and resulted in an  $R^2$  of 53.69%, which was also statistically significant ( $p=.0001$ ). After step 4, no variables were entered into the equation. The final results found four predictor variables yielded a statistically significant relationship to the prevailing career stability (i.e. upwardly mobile) of the sample (see table 4).

A stepwise selection was the method used to select the predictor variables in the model; for a predictor variable to enter in the model the significance level was 0.05, and for a predictor variable to remain in the model a significance level of 0.05 was required. Meaning, the predictor variable only entered into the stepwise selection if  $\alpha \leq 0.05$  and

only remained in the selection if  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ . Results of the Hosmer and Lemeshow Goodness-of-fit test revealed no evidence of a lack of fit in the final selected model ( $p\_value = 0.7755$ ) of four predictor variables.

Table 4

*Analysis of Maximum Likelihood Estimates*

Predictors	df	PE <sup>a</sup>	SE	X <sup>2</sup>	Pr>X <sup>2</sup>	PE <sup>b</sup>	95% Wald CI	
							Lower	Upper
Intercept	1	6.26	1.32	2.49	<.0001			
Assignment Without Manpower	1	0.94	0.43	4.84	0.03	2.56	1.11	5.93
Buck a Rule	1	-1.40	0.48	8.69	0.01	0.25	0.10	0.63
Years as Admin	1	-.025	0.07	11.99	0.01	0.78	0.68	0.90
Years of Service in District	1	-0.12	0.05	6.65	0.01	0.89	0.81	0.97

*Note:* df = degrees of freedom. PE<sup>a</sup> = parameter estimate. SE = standard error. X<sup>2</sup> = Wald Chi-Square. PE<sup>b</sup> = point estimates. CI = confidence interval.

Table 4 shows the parameter estimates, standard error, Wald statistics, statistical significances, point estimates and 95% Wald confidence limits for each of the four predictor variables. According to the Wald criteria only “I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it,” “I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment,” number of years as an administrator and number of years served in the district reliably predicted career stability. The parameter estimates indicated the fewer years an assistant principal has served as an administrator the more likely he/she had upwardly mobile career stability. Similarly, the fewer years an assistant principal has

served in the school district, the more likely he/she had upwardly mobile career stability. The more an assistant principal agreed with “I have received an assignment without the manpower to complete it,” the greater his/her career stability inclination was to be upwardly mobile. Lastly, the more an assistant principal disagreed with “I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment” the greater his/her career stability inclination was to be upwardly mobile.

The respondents had the opportunity to specify their 5 to 10 year career intentions. The majority of survey respondents, 137 out of 177 (84.57%) expressed intentions to be upwardly mobile (i.e., become a principal or take another administrator position). Twenty-five out of 177 (14.13%) of the assistant principals expressed intentions of non-mobility (i.e. career stable, those who consider leaving, downwardly mobile), and the remaining 15 out of 177 (8.47%) did not specify their career intentions.

The intent of this study was to utilize respondents’ specified five to ten year career plan as a means to determine career stability. Therefore, the 15 assistant principals who did not specify their career stability were eliminated from the study analysis (logistic regression). This left 162 assistant principals who responded to career stability. There were 11 assistant principals who did not respond to a grade level assignment of high school, middle school, elementary school and were not classified as African-American or White. Eliminating these 11 assistant principals and an additional 18 assistant principals who had missing information on the predictor variables left a total of 133 assistant principals with complete information for analysis. The logistic regression analysis reported the majority of assistant principals, 112 out of 133 (84.21%) expressed intentions to be upwardly mobile.

## Summary of Results

Individuals who enter organizations have two basic socialization options: establish a career in a given assignment or pursue the top appointment in the organizational hierarchy (Huscusson, 2001). The findings suggest the sample's driving motivation for entering the assistant principalship was the opportunity for upward mobility as Marshall (1992) hypothesized. Assistant principals are traditionally selected for their positions based upon demonstrated success in a prior role (e.g. teacher, academic facilitator, counselor, etc...), therefore these talented educators develop expectations for performance-based promotion.

The majority of the respondents were categorized as upwardly mobile assistant principals, defined by Marshall et al. (1990) as individuals who value loyalty to superiors, demonstrate a willingness to take risks, and make their intentions for promotion clear. The literature purports the belief that the assistant principal role does not prepare incumbents to become principals due to little or no opportunity to engage in instructional and transformational leadership activities (Austin & Brown, 1970; Hartzell et al., 1995; Pietro, 1999). Conversely, many believe the role to be the definitive training ground for the principalship and an invaluable learning experience (Capasso & Daresh, 2001; Drake & Roe, 2003; Golanda, 1991; Hartle & Thomas; 2004). Despite the varied role tasks delegated by their supervisors (i.e. principals) which may or may not support successful career socialization; these individuals view themselves as competent and able to make the necessary training gap adjustments to assume a principalship.

These findings inform the large, urban school district in the southeast of a data-based pipeline of certified administrators with leadership experience, willing to assume principalships as well as other administrative leadership positions.

Chapter Five will provide further information on the examination of assistant principal career stability. Conclusions, implications and recommendations drawn from the statistical analysis in the quantitative portion of the study, as well as open-ended responses, will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will discuss conclusions and implications drawn from the results of the research study. Marshall et al.'s (1990) career orientation categories and Marshall's (1992) assistant principal career socialization theory provided the framework for analyzing the findings of the study. Results will also be discussed in regard to those found in MacCorkle's (2004) study of assistant principals. Lastly, recommendations for further research related to administrative careers will be proposed.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to examine, through a review of the literature and electronic survey, factors germane to career stability (career choices assistant principals intend to make over the next five to ten years) of assistant principals in a large, urban school district in the southeastern United States. The exploration of career stability deepens the description of the role of assistant principal and provides an understanding of how incumbents view their fit and future in the school organization. It is impossible to address the ability of schools to hire school administrators without recognizing the path individuals take to those positions (Gates et al., 2003). All of the 177 study participants were employed in the district as practicing public school administrators. The large, urban school district in the southeast provided a rich pool for data collection. The researcher utilized MacCorkle's (2004) Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey, which was modified by the researcher, to collect data for this quantitative analysis. The 32-question

Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified) was electronically sent to the 289 acting assistant principals in the survey district. Three surveys were returned undeliverable because of inaccurate e-mail addresses, which left a population of 286. The total study sample comprised 177 respondents, yielding a 61% participation rate. The researcher used SPSS to examine demographic factors and SAS software to perform the logistic regression for further respondent data analysis.

The following questions guided the research:

1. What is the relationship of team management and leadership, mentor exposure, role conflict, role ambiguity, classroom experience, years served as an administrator, years served in the school district, and administrative team participation to career stability of assistant principals?
2. Within the broader categories of demographics (e.g. age, race, gender) and career-related influences (e.g. principal's leadership style, role conflict with teachers where previously taught, etc...) which specific factors are related to the career stability of assistant principals?

This study revealed results on assistant principals' career stability that are not consistent with current report of a nationwide shortage of available qualified candidates. However, the findings may potentially offer an explain for the findings of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction data (NCPAPA, 2009) which reveal there are three times as many individuals holding administrative licenses than those actually practicing in administration. Based upon study findings, the majority (84.57%) of the respondents ( $n=162$ ) expressed an upwardly mobile career orientation; indicating the district currently has far more aspirants than available principalships in the district.

Therefore, as an upwardly mobile assistant seeks to actualize his/her career stability orientation, those that do not promptly receive sponsorship, relevant leadership preparedness experiences, or performance recognition more than likely will become an “assistant principal who consider leaving” due to feelings of being overqualified and undervalued (Marshall et al., 1990). The findings clearly indicate the longer an assistant principal remains in the position within the district the more likely he/she is to have a non-upwardly mobile career orientation. As a result, the upwardly mobile assistant principal who perceives he/she is experiencing career stagnation may leave for a higher salary and higher status as opposed to becoming “shafted” or “plateaued” (Marshall et al., 1990) thus creating the disparity between those holding licenses in administration in the state and those actually practicing as administrators.

The present study revealed the majority of respondents are seeking upward mobility, 84.57% ( $n = 137$ ). This percentage included the career stability selection “take another administrative position.” The majority of respondents, 77.4 % ( $n = 124$ ), reported intentions to “become a principal.” None of the respondents selected “return to the classroom.” A minority, 8.5% ( $n=15$ ) of the respondents did not state a career stability intention, and as a result, these respondents’ data were eliminated from the study analysis.

At the onset of this study (three and one half months away from the close of the current school term), the survey district posted 12 principal vacancies (Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 2009). This study raises awareness on the considerable number of certified principalship candidates in the district willing to fill these openings. Roza (2003) proposed that the real explanation for the principal shortage within the metropolitan



school district was one of distribution, not of inadequate supply; thus the patterns of career stability observed among assistant principals in the present study are likely similar to those of other urban school districts in the country.

Thirty-nine years later, this study's data coincides with the results of Austin and Brown's (1970) study, which found that a modest minority of the study participants "looked forward to making a life's work of the assistant principalship" (p. 70). Retrospectively, the majority of assistants reported leaving the position for better salaries and influence on the school's educational program as a whole (i.e. upward mobility). Educational leadership and policy scholar Catherine Marshall (1992) explains, "According to the norms of the profession, career success in administration is measured by the attainment of higher power, status, and pay and a higher administrative position in the hierarchy" (p.9). Traditionally, researchers and incumbents have viewed the lure to the position as the initial step in parlaying the position into a lucrative, symbiotic administrative career (Chan, Webb, & Bowen, 2003; Cunningham, & Sherman, 2008; Huscusson, 2001; Marshall, 1992).

This chapter will delineate the factors that significantly impacted the sample majority's career stability orientation to upward mobility. The findings reveal the majority of participants' traditional view of the assistant principal position as a stepping-stone by self-reported declarations to seek administrative advancement. Utilizing this data may allow district leaders to focus on diverse leadership development strategies in order to meet the needs of the schools, programs and personnel alike. In response to research question two, the following profile analysis was created based on the collected career stability data.

**Research question one.** What is the relationship of team management and leadership, mentor exposure, role conflict, role ambiguity, classroom experience, years served as an administrator, years served in the school district, and administrative team participation to career stability of assistant principals?

Due to the large percentage of respondents who endorsed the career stability selections consistent with a desire to become upwardly mobile (84.57%), a binomial model was deemed the appropriate model to analyze the Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified). The binomial distribution was defined as: upwardly mobile (become a principal or take on another administrator position) or non upwardly mobile (otherwise). The upwardly mobile majority confirmed Marshall's (1992) assertion that "few practicing administrators prefer to remain in the assistant principalship" (p. 9). Some of the respondents may retire as career assistant principals, but as Mertz (2000) argued, they did not seek to be such as evidenced by their self-reported career stability to become principals.

Four variables yielded a statistically significant relationship to the prevailing career stability orientation (i.e., upwardly mobile) of the sample: (1) number of years served as an administrator, (2) number of years served in the school district, (3) "I have to complete an assignment without the manpower to complete it," (role conflict scale item), and (4) "I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment" (role conflict scale item).

The fewer years an assistant principal has served as an administrator, the more likely he/she had upwardly mobile career stability. The median years as an administrator for the upwardly mobile category was four years; conversely, the median for the non-

upwardly mobile category was 12 years. Marshall et al. (1990) posited, “The upwardly mobile AP cannot afford to become complacent in the current job role” (p.21). The time spent as an assistant principal was a factor in the study profile; the upwardly mobile participants in the 1990 study spent 3 to 10 years in the position. The results would suggest that assistant principals who desire upward mobility comprehend that complacency and stagnation are counterproductive to career advancement. The findings indicate the longer one remains in the assistant principal role, the less he/she desires advancement. Marshall (1993) concluded “Career assistants put their energies into their current positions” (p. 3). External factors for non-upward mobility such as the school’s system’s desire for new blood and opportunities for advancement being withheld by supervising principals were posited by Brown and Rentschler (1990). The present study’s results are similar to those found by Miller’s (2008) study on elementary assistant principals; the younger the respondent the more of an interest in moving on to a principalship, and the overwhelming interest of the study respondents in becoming a principal dispelled the belief of a possible principal shortage in the survey school district. Similarly, the findings corroborate Huscusson’s (2001) study, which indicated the majority of the respondents professed an upwardly mobile orientation. The present study’s findings affirm Marshall’s (1992) assertion that the most powerful reward and incentive for assistants lies in using the position as a stepping-stone to administrative careers, particularly for line positions. In contrast, Glanz (2004) authored the *The Assistant Principal’s Handbook* with the intent to re-conceptualize the role as a valuable and gratifying career position.

The fewer years an assistant principal has served in the school district, the more likely he/she had upwardly mobile career stability. The median years served in the district for the upwardly mobile category was 10 years and 22 years for the non-upwardly mobile category. The Marshall et al. (1990) typology profile described upwardly mobile APs as being able to “make it clear that he/she desires a higher position and will actively pursue administrative advancement” (p. 20). Entry-level administrators learn the acceptable values in their district, then must decide whether or not to adopt these norms in order to obtain successful career advancement (Marshall, 1992). Those who possess divergent values decrease their likelihood of successful career socialization (i.e. promotion). Upwardly mobile assistants are willing to comply with dominant values, quietly remake policy taking limited risks and poised to move up in the hierarchy (Marshall, 1992). Gates et al. (2004) argued that examination of administrative career flow data on the district level may reveal what appears to be an exodus, when in actuality administrators are simply moving across districts, not leaving the field. The study’s sample more than likely included transfers from other districts who came to the survey district seeking a better alignment of professional values. These transfers may have been previously “shafted” as these individuals fit the criteria of upwardly mobile but have no chance of promotion; or were “the assistant who considers leaving” and subsequently transferred due to their youth, leadership background and willingness to change locales (Marshall et al., 1990).

The more an assistant principal agreed with “I have received an assignment without the manpower to complete it,” the greater his/her career stability inclination was to be upwardly mobile. Marshall et al. (1990) proposed “any task that is put before

upwardly mobile assistant principals is completed to the satisfaction of superiors. They meet or exceed task expectations, and they ensure that their task management is noticed” (p.20). The literature reveals the hierarchal, bureaucratic nature of school organizations in which the principal, as boss, determines the duties and role parameters of assistant principals (Glanz, 2004; Mertz, 2000; Marshall, 1992; Michel, 1996; Pellicer & Stevenson, 1991). Assistant principals are subject to work demands and stressors that are less visible than the experienced principals, and are held accountable, despite having fewer coping mechanisms (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). The upwardly mobile aspirant perceives the position as a conduit to honing autonomous leadership skills by regarding the temporary inconveniences of role conflict as opportunities to demonstrate professional competence. Challenging school-based leadership experiences such as these afford aspiring principals opportunities to internalize and apply the leadership theory and research from their administrative preparation programs. Marshall (1992) proposed that assistant principals who are rewarded for their efforts, despite experiencing role conflict, have a high probability of job satisfaction. Recruiting administrators who demonstrate strong outcomes in the face of such challenges into principal mentorship experiences would acquaint them with the responsibilities and realities of the principalship.

The more an assistant principal disagreed with “I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment” the greater his/her career stability inclination was to be upwardly mobile. The career orientation typology (Marshall et al., 1990) explains, “upwardly mobile APs know they must avoid defiance of superiors or of the organization and exhibit a strong identity with the prevailing values of the organization” (p. 21). The upwardly mobile assistant is defined as one who values loyalty to superiors. These

ambitious administrators may have learned of the perils of “bucking the system” through the cautionary tales of mentors, colleagues and superiors. According to Marshall et al. (1990) administrators who challenge existing practices are viewed as less trustworthy and not loyal enough to be included in the administrative group. Assistants learn the appropriate values for their educational community and comprehend that their words and actions must demonstrate compliance. A rule of expected behavior is to not be labeled a “troublemaker” (Marshall, 1992, p. 45). Social errors such as going against loyalty norms may impede an assistant principal’s upward mobility. Loyalty errors include failure to support the boss, defiance of district orders, or publicly questioning superiors (Marshall, 1992, p. 49). The survey respondents’ disagreement with confrontation support Marshall’s (1992) contention that risks taken by assistant principals must be productive to the school setting yet not cause major changes nor invite strong opposition.

To summarize, taking on challenging, self-initiated growth opportunities; willingness to support and help actualize the vision of the district, and an understanding of the organizational culture describe the career stability of upwardly mobile assistant principals in the district. Provision of district professional development programs with expanded management, curriculum and instructional leadership, and principal mentorship opportunities would provide assistants with leadership competencies of a formal and informal nature.

**Research question two.** Within the broader categories of demographics (e.g. age, race, gender) and career-related influences (e.g. principal’s leadership style, role conflict with teachers where they previously taught, etc...) which specific factors are related to the career stability of assistant principals?

A profile analysis of the assistant principals by top ten percent, fifty percent, and the bottom ten percent of career stability was developed (See Table 5, and Appendix F).

Table 5

*Profile Analysis of Upwardly Mobile Assistant Principals*

Variable	Value	Decile 1	Decile5	Decile 10
Age	Mean	38.43	40.88	58.46
Gender	Male	35.71%	52.94%	7.14%
	Female	64.29%	47.06%	92.86%
Race	African-Am	64.29%	52.94%	42.86%
	White	35.71%	52.94%	57.14%
Years in Educ	Mean	13.86%	15.12%	31.68%
Yrs as Admin	Mean	2.50%	5.21%	16.29%
Yrs in classrm	Mean	10.29%	9.72%	14.04%
Yrs in district	Mean	6.43%	8.91%	25.93%
Grade level	Elementary	57.14%	47.06%	42.86%
	Middle	28.57%	17.56%	21.43%
	High	14.29%	35.29%	35.71%
Admin Process	Adm Team	42.86%	41.18%	42.86%
	Partial Tm	0.00%	5.88%	21.43%
	Shared Hier	50.00%	29.41%	21.43%
	Delegated tasks	28.57%	29.41%	14.29%

Table 5 (continued)

Variable	Value	Decile 1	Decile5	Decile 10
Principal's Ldr Style	Authoritarian	28.57%	29.44%	14.29%
	Delegative	14.29%	0.00%	21.43%
	Participatory	57.14%	70.59%	64.29%
Mentor Exposure	Yes	35.71%	52.94%	14.29%
	No	64.29%	47.06%	85.71%
Manag/Leader Training	Yes	50.00%	58.82%	42.86%
	No	50.00%	41.18%	57.14%
Working in school previously taught	Yes	7.14%	11.76%	0.00%
	No	92.86%	88.24%	100.00%
Overall Role Conflict	Median	2.00	1.00	1.00
Overall Role Ambiguity	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00

Note: N = 162. Role Conflict/Role Ambiguity 4 = Agree, 3 = Slightly Agree, 2 = Slightly Disagree, 1 = Disagree.

***The top ten percent.*** Characteristics that classified participants in the top 10% include being around the age of 38, spending 14 years in education, spending three years as an administrator, spending 10 years teaching in the classroom, and serving six years in the current school district. These assistants slightly disagreed with overall role conflict and agreed with overall role ambiguity, and were most likely to have an upwardly mobile career orientation. Of this top ten percent population, the majority were African-American women working in an elementary grade-level assignment with no partial teaming administrative process and who worked under principals whose primary leadership style was participative. Additionally, the majority of the assistant principals



did not participate in a mentor program; half participated in a leadership program, and nearly all were no longer working at the school where they taught prior to becoming assistant principals

***The 50th percentile.*** Characteristics that classified participants in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile include being around the age of 41, spending 15 years in education, five years as an administrator, 10 years teaching in the classroom, and serving nine years in the current school district. These assistants disagreed with overall role conflict and agreed with overall role ambiguity, and were most likely to have an upwardly mobile career orientation. Nearly half of the respondents in the 50th percentiles were African-American women working in an elementary grade-level assignment with an administrative team process, and more than half of their principals' primary leadership style was participative. Additionally, half of the assistant principals participated in a mentor program, slightly more than half participated in a leadership program, and nearly all were no longer working at the school they taught prior to becoming an assistant principal.

***The bottom ten percent.*** Characteristics that classified participants in the bottom 10% include being around the age of 59, spending 32 years in education and 16 years as an administrator, 14 years teaching in the classroom, and serving 26 years in the current school district. These assistants disagreed with overall role conflict and agreed with overall role ambiguity, and were most likely to have an upwardly mobile career orientation. Of this bottom ten percent population, nearly all were women and more than half were White women working mostly in an elementary or high school grade-level assignment. Close to half of these respondents reported having an administrative team

process, and more than half of their principals' primary leadership style was participative. Additionally, nearly none of the assistant principals participated in a mentor program, slightly more than half participated in a leadership program, and none were working at the school where they taught prior to becoming an assistant principal.

### **Discussion of Open-ended Responses**

Of the 21% of assistant principals in the top ten percent who responded to Q32 "Are there other factors not mentioned in the survey which may affect your career plans?" 14.29% stated the current district mandated reduction in force (RIF), and 7.14% stated concerns about promotion inequities due to the buddy system and or politics. In the fiftieth percentile, 29% of assistant principals who responded to Q32- "Are there other factors not mentioned in the survey which may affect your career plans?," 5.88% stated the current district mandated RIF, 11.76% stated buddy system and/or politics, and 5.88% stated performance versus evaluation. Lastly, 14% of the assistant principals in the bottom ten percent who responded to Q32- "Are there other factors not mentioned in the survey which may affect your career plans?" 7.14% stated teamwork and communication, and 7.14% stated buddy system and/or politics. The profile analysis reveals that the bottom ten percent of this population consists of retired (voluntary downwardly mobile) or soon to retire assistant principals (See table 8).

During the school year 2008-2009, the survey district's \$1.19 billion operating budget was subject to two staggering fund reversion mandates from the state Department of Public Instruction, which exceeded nine million dollars. One week prior to the administration of the *Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey (Modified)*, the superintendent notified 39 assistant principals that they would no longer be employed

with the district in the 2009-2010 school year due to the anticipated reduction in funding for the next school year. Assistants subjected to the RIF were selected based upon the reduction in force criteria for assistant principals approved by the district board of education two months prior. The criteria were: all assistant principals irrespective of their renewal cycle, annual performance appraisals with an overall rating lower than “Effective” during one or more of the most recent two school years (seniority was taken into account). The statutory process for the non-renewal of an assistant principal’s contract and for terminating an assistant principal’s contract during the contract period was followed (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2009). In some cases the district chose not to renew contracts; other cases were terminations. Where an assistant’s evaluations and licensure made it appropriate, the district offered to rehire them as teachers contingent upon the number of vacancies the following school year. Despite notification of these daunting economic circumstances and impending career instability, the majority of survey respondents’ career intentions indicated a willingness to assume a school leadership position.

Similarly, respondents in all categories expressed concern about being impeded by the district buddy system or the commonly known politics of who you know, as opposed to what you know. Pounder and Crow (2005) recommend that districts allow teachers, school counselors, and university professors to participate in administrator hiring in order to encourage the selection of “potentially strong leaders whose ethnicity, values, or behaviors may vary from the norm” (p. 56).

Personal characteristics, (e.g. race and gender) also appeared in the literature as career-related factors in educational leadership career studies (Brown & Irby, 1998;

Flumo, 2006; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Lent et al., 1994; Marshall, 1992; Huscusson, 2001; Winter & Partenheimer, 2002). Researchers have identified conceptual models to explain gender disparities in the field. Historically, those selected for administrative advancement are likely very similar to the previous administrators, those who possess like personal characteristics, behavior and thinking (Brunner, 2000; Gates et al., 2004; Marshall, 1996; Marshall et al., 1990; Mertz, 2000; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1993). This phenomena is of particular relevance to the present study as it relates to the characteristics of the sample explained in profile analysis. The majority of the present study's respondents were female (70.6%) and over half were African-American (52%). The profile analysis further revealed the majority of the top ten percent was African-American females serving in an elementary grade level with no partial teaming administrative process. Additionally, the majority of these assistants did not participate in a mentor program and only half participated in a leadership program. Nearly half of the fiftieth percentile was African American women with upwardly mobile career stability serving in an elementary assignment. However, half of these assistants participated in a mentor program and slightly more than half participated in a leadership program. The bottom ten percent was nearly all females with upwardly mobile career stability; more than half were White and working in an elementary or high school assignment. Nearly none of these assistants participated in a mentor program, and slightly more than half in participated in a leadership program. In regard to ethnicity, gender, mentor support and leadership training factors reported in the deciles, a future investigation within the district would be enlightening in order to examine whether the common themes reported in the literature review (e.g., lack of mentor/sponsorship,

internal perceptions of gender and ethnicity barriers, external sexist assumptions, racial inequities, etc..) manifest as stumbling blocks to career advancement out of the position the upwardly mobile female assistant principals perceive as a stepping stone. Equally worth exploration is what percentage of these female assistant principals would return to the classroom, leave education altogether or remain an assistant upon determination of non-negotiable barriers to their upward mobility.

The 50th percentile population expressed concern regarding performance evaluations indicating an accurate assessment of job proficiency. The assistant principal role is one that is subject to ill-defined parameters and an exhaustive list of duties and responsibilities, often requiring new knowledge and skills which the assistant nor their supervising principal have been trained on or prepared to undertake (Stokes, 1973; Michel et. al, 1993; Daresh, 2001). The assistant's performance is primarily subject to his/her supervisor, the principal (Glanz, 1994). Mertz (2002) reported the preponderance of literature reveals that assistants view the principal as "boss in the traditional, hierarchical, bureaucratic organizational sense" (p.8). These assistants are keenly aware that interaction within this relationship is critical to their professional socialization and could subsequently create or limit opportunities for administrative advancement. Marshall and Hooley (2006) inform that involuntary downward mobility is more likely in larger districts where parents would be less aware. The authors further posit "This phenomenon also can be a very clear message to other administrators about behavior or errors" (p. 62). "Seemingly by virtue of his position (he in both cases) he is seen as the supreme authority in the context and accorded all of the rights and privileges devolving on such authority, even if perceived less than worthy of such" (p. 8). Marshall et al.

(1990) described the principal as “an insider who holds major control over the promotion process” (p. 29)

The bottom ten percent population, comprised primarily of voluntary downwardly mobile assistants and those soon to retire, expressed concern regarding teamwork and communication. The expectations and needs and intentions of this group appeared to be focused on collaboration and productive task accomplishment. Studies of assistant principal satisfaction have revealed that assistants who remain or return to the position feel that their responsibilities extend beyond the routine maintenance of discipline and attendance programs and focus more on interpersonal relationships (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Pellicer & Stevenson, 1999). The voluntary downwardly mobile assistant principal is generally placed in a job assignment with tasks they prefer and their internal commitment allows them to participate cooperatively, and they in turn expect teamwork and communication. Marshall et al. (1990) reported, “those who voluntarily reversed career directions wanted to return to the familiar work of discipline or a close identity with students” (p. 28).

### **Comparison with Prior Study Results**

The prior study upon which this study was based, “Factors that Influence the Career Stability of Assistant Principals,” conducted by Mary Lu MacCorkle (2004) utilized the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation to determine any relationship among the survey factors. Administrative team process and mentoring showed significance, but role ambiguity and conflict did not (three of the individual items under role conflict showed significant correlation with career plans). Also, age, number of years in education, and total years in administration showed significance when correlated with

career plans. The 394 respondents were secondary school administrators. The prior study revealed: 57.4% of respondents showed interested in actively pursuing the principalship, 20.3 % preferred to remain in the assistant principalship, 3.6% would remain in education but vacate their administrative position, and 9.1% indicated leaving education completely, and 9.4% related other factors, with retirement being the predominant response (MacCorkle, 2004).

The present study used Pearson Product-Moment correlations in order to examine continuous and ordinal variables prior to performing the logistic regression. The Pearson Product Moment correlations for this population revealed that age of assistant principal was positively correlated with years in education, years as an administrator, years taught in the classroom, and years served in this school district. Additionally, the Pearson Product Moment correlation indicated that years in education was positively correlated with years as an administrator, years taught in the classroom, and years served in the school district. As expected, role conflict was correlated with do tasks differently, assignment without manpower, have to buck a rule or policy, groups operate differently, receive incompatible requests, accepted by one but not by others, inadequate resources or material and have to work on unnecessary tasks, since these were the variables used to define role conflict. Similarly, role ambiguity was correlated with certainty about authority, clear goals and objectives, have divided time properly, know my responsibilities, know what is expected of me, and have clear expectations of what has to be done. It is necessary to note that two items on the role conflict scale met significance in both studies, “I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it” and “I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.” The two factors imply

these type of situations cause incongruity for assistant principals as they seek to avoid divergent behaviors, socialize successfully and support the mission of the school/district.

The assistant principals surveyed in the present study were elementary, middle and high school administrators. The majority of the current study's respondents ( $n=137$ , 84.57%) were upwardly mobile: 77.4% of respondents showed interest in actively pursuing the principalship, 6.5% would take another administrative position, 2.4% preferred to remain in the assistant principalship, 0.0% would return to the classroom, 2.9% indicated leaving education completely and 13.7% indicated other career stability with retirement being the predominant response.

The current study contributes to the body of literature which purports assistant principals' expectations of upwardly mobility (May, 2001; Marshall et al., 1990; Marshall, 1992; Mertz, 2000). Conversely, the prior MacCorkle (2004) study findings are similar to those found by Bates' (2003) study of secondary assistant principals in Florida which indicated that 50% were upwardly mobile, 26.6% considered themselves career assistant principals, 9.4% were plateaued, 8.3% were shafted, 2.1% considered leaving the field of education and 3.6% were downwardly mobile. The literature reveals that the role of an assistant principal differs from one school organization to another. Studies also show that the type (e.g. elementary, secondary) and importance of jobs assigned determine the perceived job satisfaction of assistant principals. Armstrong's (2004) study on assistant principal career satisfaction found 67.5% of the respondents (i.e. secondary school administrators in Texas) were "generally satisfied with their position" (p.87). Likewise, MacCorkle's (2004) study contributes to the body of literature which reveals



that secondary assistant principals are generally satisfied with their jobs and may not be as inclined toward upward mobility (Armstrong, 2004; Bates, 2003; Sutter, 1994).

The present study indicated the top ten and fiftieth percentile assistant principals were primarily working in elementary schools. The secondary assistants in the survey district (high school) comprised almost half of the bottom ten percent of the upwardly mobile respondent profile (see table 8).

### **Conclusions**

School districts nationwide report difficulty in recruiting and hiring school administrators due to the perception that there is a dearth of qualified aspirants. This trend of principal turnover threatens to "cut the legs out from under schools' ability to improve" (Buckingham, Donaldson, & Marnik, 2006, p. 37). However, educational researchers have challenged this view with empirical studies. A Policy Brief published by the Wallace Foundation (2003) reported that the supply of certified applicants is sufficient; however, human resources practices within districts may hamper schools from selecting the best candidate for the position. Gates et al. (2004) asserted, "by juxtaposing the conventional wisdom against the empirical realities, the studies reflect the importance of using empirical data where possible to monitor and better understand the labor market for school administrators" (p. xi). Roza (2003) reframed the definition of the shortage from one of shortfall to a case of inadequate distribution, particularly within metropolitan areas.

The twelve year difference between the average age of upwardly mobile and non-upwardly mobile respondents indicates that as assistant principals grow older, they lose interest in becoming a principal. If assistant principals are not actively recruited to move

into principalships at their time of interest, upwardly mobile career stability may abate. It is important that school districts identify and maintain current career stability data if they plan to groom assistant principals who desire to become principals into strong, effective leaders. Further, the findings from this study emphasize the importance of providing female principal aspirants with mentors, which according to the literature is a key mechanism for increasing the number of women in educational leadership and to overcoming barriers to their upwardly mobility (Brown & Irby, 1998; Brunner, 2000; Burney, 2007; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Korcheck & Reese, 2002; Marshall, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1989).

The present study used self-reported data to conduct a career stability analysis of assistants in a large, urban district which predicts a positive outlook for the survey district in regard to its pool of available, certified school administrators for impending vacancies. An analysis of career stability of these assistants provides insight to the district on issues relating to characteristics of upwardly mobile and non-upwardly mobile assistants, possible promotion inequities, specific role conflicts, and areas for providing guidance/practice experiences for these future leaders.

Despite fiscal downturn resulting in a RIF, receiving assigned duties without sufficient manpower to complete them, long hours, and increased demands for accountability; the majority of this study's respondents aspire to assume principalships or other administrative leadership roles. Furthermore, these administrators profess a desire to work within the district rules/policies to gain challenging fulfillment in their current position by maintaining lofty career goals while daily executing large scale or menial

assignments. The sample as a whole may be described as idealistic, committed, hardworking, flexible and loyal to their district leadership's mission.

Appreciation of the assistant principal whether upwardly mobile or non-upwardly mobile emerges from this study. In examining the career decision-making of assistants, issues such as negative perceptions of the principalship, de-motivation due to bureaucracy, roller-coaster accountability initiatives, exorbitant paperwork, and role ambiguity appear to be of no essential consequence to these dedicated professionals.

Districts rely heavily on the research and the linkages between educational leadership and effective, productive schools. The literature details the dynamics of school leadership that will shape the future of education, among these integral factors are the types of leaders being cultivated to take over tomorrow's schools. The findings of this study indicate the growing need for school districts to provide action-oriented, parallel training for assistants and principals alike in order to create strong leaders through job enrichment and apprenticeship practices as early in an administrator's career as possible. Districts can maintain a strong pipeline of aspirants by acknowledging that effective leaders may not fit in traditional molds, but are equally committed to teaching, learning and school improvement. Recognition of the need for supportive preparation for promotion, best practice methods for performance appraisal, as well as fostering a district-wide sense of educational community, may compel those without prior expectations to seek administrative advancement to do so. Additionally, a strong district leadership and development program will empower personnel to make career advancement intentions known as opposed to reluctance due to perceptions of an impenetrable buddy system as indicated by study respondents in the open ended response

item Q32 “Are there any other factors not mentioned in this survey that may affect your career plans?”

Effective leadership development practices were reviewed in other districts and countries by a not for profit policy think tank in North Carolina and commonalities for proactively identifying and preparing school leaders identified were: early talent identification, succession planning; rigorous screening of candidates; blending academics and field experience; and coaching components (Public School Forum of North Carolina, 2009).

It is necessary to mention the leadership development organizations at the state level mentioned by respondents, (e.g., North Carolina Principals’ Executive Program (PEP), North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association (NCPAPA), which provide networking opportunities, issue awareness and professional development in conjunction with training at the district level in North Carolina. North Carolina PEP, an agency of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Center for School Leadership Development, provided professional learning for school administrators for twenty-five years since its inception in 1984, and was the longest running program of its kind in the nation. Unfortunately, as a result of action by no funding from the North Carolina General Assembly, the North Carolina PEP ended on June 30, 2009 (NCPEP, 2009). Study participants touted their participation in the aforementioned programs in the open ended selection of the team management/leadership training survey item as positively impacting their career stability by providing leadership development training and support.

## Implications

This investigation follows administrative research grounded in the exploration of factors, which impact administrator career decision-making (Bates, 2003; Huscusson, 2001; MacCorkle, 2004; Marshall et al., 1990; Marshall, 1992; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Zellner et al., 2002; Papa, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2002). There is substantial evidence from educational research literature that effective school leadership is positively related to a variety of individual and organizational outcomes (Avolio & Bass, 2004, Hackett & Hortman, 2008; Marshall, 1992). In order to produce positive outcomes, it is essential that school districts create supportive, long-term staff development strategies for improving their administrative personnel's complex leadership skills. Young (2008) informs that individuals may leave the profession because of unfulfilled expectations, or leave their present district for other career advancing opportunities in another school district.

Effective schools require effective school leaders. School districts have a duty to provide schools with capable and effective leaders. In turn, the administrators who begin the leadership venture as assistant principals look to the school system to satisfy their professional and psychological growth needs in order to obtain job satisfaction.

Assistant principals should receive action-oriented work role training to carry out the autonomous duties as early in their administrator career as possible as they are often assigned tasks without adequate resources to carry them out. Marshall (1992) contends, "new assistant principals are shocked at how unprepared they are for the array of tasks they confront" (p. 41). The role requires the same capabilities as those required of principals, thus they should receive conjoint training on vision implementation, managing

for self and others, decision-making, negotiation, etc... It is not recommended to have both administrators in new initiative training at the same time. It is recommended that the same professional development skills be introduced to the assistant who holds the same licensure, shoulders the same student/parent/staff concerns and manages the same milieu alongside the principal.

In order to provide guidance for assistant principal career stability (career choice intentions over the next five to ten years) district human resource officers should conduct periodic surveys, which seek to measure satisfaction in the current role, hold administrator specific job fairs, and strive to make the district recruitment and selection process as transparent as possible. According to Pounder and Crow (2005), "Tapping leadership talent is a more potent recruitment strategy than the familiar "shotgun" approach' (p. 56). A seasoned mentor, scheduled networking events, which involve colleagues as well as superiors, should be available upon hire in the district. Whether an individual elects to be upwardly mobile or non-upwardly mobile, their ongoing learning and professional growth should be viewed as an investment in the future of the district and its mission realization.

The survey district may benefit from a leadership development model described by Lovely (1999) which exposed assistants to realistic experiences and responsibilities through collaboration with qualified principals who closely supervised and monitored their progress. This model assures mentorship affiliation, which is regarded in the literature as integral when considering moving higher on the career ladder (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004; Daresh & Playko, 1992; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Korcheck & Reese, 2002; Marshall, 1992; Zellner & Erlandson, 2001). Those assistants who do not

seek advancement would benefit from a mentorship model through acquisition of advanced leadership skills which would enable them to perform their current role more dynamically.

Recent studies have documented the increasing difficulties faced by district human resource departments in recruiting candidates to fill principalship vacancies. The predominate reasons are: expanding job responsibilities, decreasing job satisfaction and having to make choices between managerial and instructional duties while being held equally accountable for both (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; Zellner et al., 2002).

However, there is a cause for optimism in the survey district. The majority of the respondents in this study are certified administrators who hold expectations for upwardly mobile career stability, which focuses on contributing to the educational system in their individual manner despite a backdrop of intensification of the principal's role due to budget constraints and increased accountability standards. These educators are willing to accept the compensation, working conditions, intrinsic as opposed to external reinforcement, and selection subjectivity necessary to achieve academic advancement. It would appear that these professionals comprehend that the district does not create the unfavorable working conditions of the role, but that certain undesirable facets of the role are inherent.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

- While conducting this study, the need for further research related to assistant principal career orientation became evident. Future studies may include but are not limited to: Which districts conduct inventories on career stability of assistant principals in order to assess their professional development training

“appropriateness” based on the assistant’s career stability intentions? For example, assistants who express upward mobility would benefit from training which includes supervising a large number of staff, as well as broad span of curriculum/instruction leadership, fiscal management, and public relations activities. Assistants with intentions of non-upward mobility would benefit from professional development related to intellectual, emotional and professional “balance” in order to flourish despite organizational and leadership transitions. The educational leadership literature on assistant principals (Marshall, 1992; Marshall et al., 1990) informs that career orientations vary, therefore, it is essential to collect self-reported data on career stability in order to provide relevant, desirable career experiences which in turn may increase job satisfaction (i.e. retention) and/or increase motivation for career advancement (i.e. upward mobility to the principalship).

- Are there professional development strategies specific to assistant principals implemented at district levels? Are these training strategies intended to develop assistants into a new type of leader for new schools, or designed to replicate their predecessors training?
- Research on how school administrator career stability influences learning outcomes for students.
- Replication of this study in 5-10 years to observe the career stability results of this study would be informative. Did the career stability orientation within the district shift categories over time? What percentage of respondents actually remained in the assistant principal position?



- A longitudinal study on the career paths of the male and female respondents of this study in regard to which eventually assumed a superintendency. How would the findings compare to the literature on gender as a factor in school leadership roles?
- A study on professional “duties” which hinder or develop fledgling administrators. District based analysis of assistant principal responsibilities within each assignment could promote and accomplish individual psychological growth needs as well as organizational needs. For example, time spent on discipline by a certified administrator could be better utilized for curriculum and instruction leadership; grade-level teachers could be scheduled to assist with conducting discipline conferences.

### **Closing Remarks**

The present study was undertaken as an elaboration to MacCorkle’s (2004) career stability study and the researcher was ulteriorly enlightened on the conditions, commitment, idealism and restraints faced by assistant principals despite their career stability path. The magnitude of organizational socialization experiences and district contextual forces on assistant principal career stability is undeniable. The typology developed by Marshall et al. (1990) and the career socialization constructs (Marshall, 1992) were informative and appropriate central explanatory concepts for this study. I conclude this study with a quote by Suzette Lovely (2004) who poignantly stated:

Educational leaders have the responsibility to mentor the leadership potential in others. One of the greatest gifts we can give back to our profession is to encourage those with promise to become school leaders. Securing effective

candidates to take over when we're gone will guarantee a successful future for students, schools, the nation, and the world (p.18).

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## APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER

**UNC CHARLOTTE**

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte  
9201 University City Boulevard  
Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

Department of  
Educational  
Leadership

Phone: 704-687-8730

Fax: 704-687-3493

April 30, 2009

Dear Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Assistant Principal:

I would appreciate your assistance with this research project on identifying the factors that will encourage qualified educators to become and remain administrators. As the assistant principalship has traditionally been a springboard to the principalship, I am gathering information from all assistant principals in the district. The results of this research will be used in my dissertation at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. This research will contribute to the body of knowledge that seeks to address the imminent shortage of school administrators in our nation.

To participate, please complete the short questionnaire that I will send on May 11, 2009 to your CMS e-mail account from [surveyshare.com](http://surveyshare.com). This questionnaire will take approximately 8 minutes to complete. If you do not wish to participate, simply delete the questionnaire. Responses will be completely anonymous; your name will not appear anywhere on the survey. This study is not affiliated with CMS human resources. I will know when you respond, but I will not know who you are. Completing and returning the survey will constitute your consent to participate.

Please keep this letter for your records. If you have any questions regarding this research, contact my chair, Dr. Corey Lock in the Educational Leadership Department at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, by telephone (704) 687-8868 or by e-mail at [crlock@uncc.edu](mailto:crlock@uncc.edu), or contact me directly at [dedwards@uncc.edu](mailto:dedwards@uncc.edu) or by telephone (704) 877-9099. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please

contact the Office of Research Services at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte,  
(704) 687-2000.

Thank you for your support. Regards,

Danielle Felder Edwards  
Doctoral Candidate, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

APPENDIX B: ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL CAREER STABILITY SURVEY  
(MODIFIED)

**Background Information**

- 1) What is your year of birth?
- 2) Sex  
 Male  
 Female
- 3) Race  
 African-American  
 White  
 Hispanic  
 Asian  
 Native American  
 Other
- 4) How many years total have you spent in education?
- 5) How many years have you served as an administrator?
- 6) How many years did you teach in the classroom prior to becoming an administrator?
- 7) How many years have you served in this school district?
- 8) What is your grade level assignment?  
 Elementary School  
 Middle School  
 High School  
 Other

**A: Career Plans**

- 9) (**Select one**) Within the next 5 to 10 years I plan to:  
 Become a principal  
 Take another administrative position  
 Remain an assistant  
 Return to the classroom  
 Leave education altogether  
 Other

**B: Administrative Team Participation**

10) (Select one) Which statement best describes the administrative process at your school?

The principal makes all decisions and the assistant[s] are delegated tasks (hierarchy)

The principal has primary responsibility for decision-making, but consults with the assistant[s] about their specific tasks (shared hierarchy)

The principal assigns the assistant[s] specific tasks for which they are completely responsible (partial teaming)

The principal and assistant principal[s] share decision-making on most tasks (administrative team)

11) (Select one) What is the leadership style of your principal (Lewin et. al, 1939)?

Authoritarian (Autocratic)

Participative (Democratic)

Delegative (Laissez-Faire)

**C: Mentor Exposure**

12) Did you participate in any sort of mentor program either prior to just after becoming an administrator?

Yes (go to item 13)

No (go to item 14)

13) If you answered yes to item 12, which statement best describes the kind of program you were involved in?

Formal district sponsored mentor program

Formal preservice mentor program

Informal mentoring within a district either while striving to become an administrator or after becoming one

Informal mentoring during your first administrative assignment within your school

Other

**D: Team Management and Leadership**

14) Did you participate in any sort of leadership academy, team management training program, or both either prior to or just after becoming an administrator?

Yes (go to item 15)

No (go to item 16)

15) If you answered yes to item 14, which statement best describes the kind of program you were involved in?

Formal district sponsored team management training or leadership program (e.g. Advanced Leadership Development Academy)

Informal preservice team management/leadership training

Team Management training or Leadership Summer Institute

\_\_\_ Other (e.g. Principals' Executive Program)

16) Are you currently working in the school in which you taught before becoming an administrator?

\_\_\_ Yes (go to item 17)

\_\_\_ No (go to item 18)

17) If you answered yes to item 16, is there role conflict with your faculty?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

**E: Reflections on Administrative Duties (To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?)**

18) I have to do tasks that should be done differently.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

19) I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

20) I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

21) I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

22) I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

23) I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

24) I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

25) I work on unnecessary tasks.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

26) I feel certain about how much authority I have.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

27) Clear, planned goals and objectives exist for my job.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

28) I know that I have divided my time properly.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

29) I know that what my responsibilities are.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

30) I know exactly what is expected of me.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

31) I have clear expectations of what has to be done.

Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree
4	3	2	1

32) Are there other factors not mentioned in this survey that may affect your career plans?

<sup>1</sup>The Assistant Principal Career Stability Survey was used with permission from developer M. L. MacCorkle (2004).

The eight questions on role conflict and the six questions on role ambiguity are from Rizzo, J., House, R., & Lirtzman, S. (1970). Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15, 150-163.

APPENDIX C: UPWARDLY MOBILE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL MODEL VALIDATION

Decile	Number of APs	Number of Upward Mobile	Probability	Lift	Cumulative Lift	Cumulative Probability	Cumulative Lift	Cumulative Gains	Baseline Cumulative Gains
1	14	14	99.651%	1.18	14	99.651%	1.18	10%	11%
2	16	16	99.077%	1.17	30	99.345%	1.18	20%	24%
3	14	14	98.500%	1.17	44	99.076%	1.17	30%	35%
4	14	14	97.624%	1.16	57	98.725%	1.17	40%	46%
5	17	16	96.630%	1.14	74	98.250%	1.16	50%	59%
6	15	14	95.322%	1.13	88	97.762%	1.16	60%	70%
7	15	14	91.056%	1.08	102	96.804%	1.15	70%	81%
8	15	12	81.459%	0.96	114	94.886%	1.12	80%	91%
9	15	9	61.853%	0.73	123	91.216%	1.08	90%	98%
10	14	3	19.560%	0.23	126	84.483%	1.00	100%	100%



APPENDIX D: PEARSON CORRELATION-ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL CAREER STABILITY SURVEY (MODIFIED)

Variable	Role Conflict	Role Ambiguity	Age	Yrs in Educ	Yrs as Admin	Yrs Taught Classroom	Yrs Serve District	Do Tasks Differently	Assign w/o Manpower	Buck rule/pol	Operate Differently
Role Conflict	1.0000	-.5374	0.0853	0.0793	0.0617	0.0036	-.0012	0.6770	0.7028	0.6394	0.5512
Role Ambiguity	-.5374	1.0000	-.2368	-.1938	-.1204	-.0552	-.0883	-.3796	-.4006	-.4002	-.2311
Age	0.0853	-.2368	1.0000	0.8928	0.7220	0.6194	0.5778	0.1131	0.0794	0.0069	0.0296
Yrs in Education	0.0793	-.1938	0.8928	1.0000	0.7583	0.7172	0.6442	0.0831	0.0799	0.0142	0.0267
Yrs Taught Classroom	0.0036	-.0552	0.6194	0.7172	0.2476	1.0000	0.4666	0.0759	0.0816	-.1255	-.0978
Do Tasks Differently	0.6770	-.3796	0.1131	0.0831	-.0028	0.0759	-.0531	1.0000	0.5626	0.4183	0.2608
Assign w/o Manpower	0.7028	-.4006	0.0794	0.0799	0.0276	0.0816	-.0136	0.5626	1.0000	0.4914	0.2355
Buck rule or Policy	0.6394	-.4002	0.0069	0.0142	0.0752	-.1255	0.0584	0.4183	0.4914	1.0000	0.3267
Operate Differently	0.5512	-.2311	0.0296	0.0267	0.0867	-.0978	0.0286	0.2608	0.2355	0.3267	1.0000
Incompatible Request	0.6222	-.3245	0.0299	0.0177	-.0107	0.0378	0.0131	0.3525	0.3368	0.2788	0.5114

Variable	Role Conflict	Role Ambiguity	Age	Yrs in Educ	Yrs as Admin	Yrs Taught Classroom	Yrs Serve District	Do Tasks Differently	Assign w/o Manpower	Buck rule/pol	Operate Differently
Accepted/ not Accepted	0.5739	-0.2583	0.0713	0.0776	0.1185	-0.0039	0.0790	0.3007	0.2874	0.2888	0.4476
Inadequate Resources	0.7375	-0.4190	0.1094	0.1329	0.0650	0.0671	0.0176	0.4772	0.6212	0.5195	0.2727
Unnecessary Tasks	0.6805	-0.4746	0.0462	0.0808	0.0528	-0.0042	-0.0843	0.4934	0.4489	0.3811	0.2981
Certain about Authority	-0.2686	0.4569	-0.0631	-0.0291	0.0652	0.0755	0.0694	-0.1877	-0.1209	-0.1863	-0.1317
Clear Goals	-0.4416	0.7283	-0.2047	-0.2017	-0.1130	-0.0901	0.0599	-0.3578	-0.3800	-0.3782	-0.2812
Time Divided Properly	-0.2656	0.4336	-0.0455	-0.0758	-0.0537	-0.0177	-0.0515	-0.1668	-0.0829	-0.0611	-0.2239
Know what's Expected of me	-0.4931	0.8966	-0.1460	-0.1317	-0.0711	-0.0344	-0.0978	-0.3690	-0.4203	-0.3850	-0.1952
Clear Expectations	-0.4920	0.8410	-0.1794	-0.1690	-0.0982	-0.0524	-0.0537	-0.3182	-0.3629	-0.3413	-0.1990

APPENDIX D (continued)

Variable	Incompatible Request	Accepted not Accepted	Inadequate Resources	Un-necessary Tasks	Certain about Authority	Clear Goals	Time Divided Properly	Know Responsibilities	Know what's Expected of me	Clear Expectations
Role Ambiguity	-0.3245	-0.2583	-0.4190	-0.4746	0.4569	0.7283	0.4336	0.8251	0.8966	0.8410
Age	0.0299	0.0713	0.1094	0.0462	-0.0631	-0.2047	-0.0455	-0.2411	-0.1460	-0.1794
Yrs in Educ	0.0177	0.0776	0.1329	0.0808	-0.0291	-0.2017	-0.0758	-0.1912	-0.1317	-0.1690
Yrs Taught Classroom	0.0378	-0.0039	0.0671	-0.0042	0.0755	-0.0901	-0.0177	-0.1340	-0.0344	-0.0524
Do Tasks Differently	0.3525	0.3007	0.4772	0.4934	-0.1877	-0.3578	-0.1668	-0.3148	-0.3690	-0.3182
Assign w/o Manpower	0.3368	0.2874	0.6212	0.4489	-0.1209	-0.3800	-0.0829	-0.4186	-0.4203	-0.3629
Buck rule or Policy	0.2788	0.2888	0.5195	0.3811	-0.1863	-0.3782	-0.0611	-0.3064	-0.3850	-0.3413
Operate Differently	0.5114	0.4476	0.2727	0.2981	-0.1317	-0.2812	-0.2239	-0.1474	-0.1952	-0.1990
Incompatible Request	1.0000	0.5573	0.3728	0.3747	-0.1224	-0.2676	-0.2448	-0.2782	-0.3140	-0.3370

Variable	Incompatible Request	Accepted not Accepted	Inadequate Resources	Un-necessary Tasks	Certain about Authority	Clear Goals	Time Divided Properly	Know Responsibilities	Know what's Expected of me	Clear Expectations
Accepted/ not Accepted	0.5573	1.0000	0.3457	0.3556	-1.176	-1.687	-2914	-1.249	-1.825	-2.687
Inadequate Resources	0.3728	0.3457	1.0000	0.4656	-1.301	-4.107	-1.414	-4.137	-4.405	-3.502
Unnecessary Tasks	0.3747	0.3556	0.4656	1.0000	-2.813	-4.282	-2.724	-3.282	-4.086	-3.788
Certain about Authority	-1.224	-1.176	-1.301	-2.813	1.0000	0.3189	0.2478	0.2580	0.3288	0.3761
Clear Goals	-2.676	-1.687	-4.107	-4.282	0.3189	1.0000	0.2848	0.6948	0.6492	0.5336
Time Divided Properly	-2.448	-2.914	-1.414	-2.724	0.2478	0.2848	1.0000	0.1993	0.2987	0.2945
Know what's Expected of me	-3.140	-1.825	-4.405	-4.086	0.3288	0.6492	0.2987	0.7662	1.0000	0.7816
Clear Expectations	-3.370	-2.687	-3.502	-3.788	0.3761	0.5336	0.2945	0.6650	0.7816	1.0000

Note: N = 177

APPENDIX E: SPEARMAN CORRELATION-ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL CAREER STABILITY SURVEY (MODIFIED)

Variable	Role Conflict	Role Ambiguity	Age	Yrs in Educ	Yrs as Admin	Yrs Taught Classroom	Yrs Served District	Do Tasks Differently	Assign w/o Manpower	Buck Rule or Policy	Operate Differently
Role Conflict	1.0000	-.5374	0.0853	0.0793	0.0617	0.0036	-.0012	0.6770	0.7028	0.6394	0.5512
Role Ambiguity	-.5374	1.0000	-.2368	-.1938	-.1204	-.0552	-.0883	-.3796	-.4006	-.4002	-.2311
Age	0.0853	-.2368	1.0000	0.8928	0.7220	0.6194	0.5778	0.1131	0.0794	0.0069	0.0296
Yrs in Educ	0.0793	-.1938	0.8928	1.0000	0.7583	0.7172	0.6442	0.0831	0.0799	0.0142	0.0267
Yrs Taught Classroom	0.0036	-.0552	0.6194	0.7172	0.2476	1.0000	0.4666	0.0759	0.0816	-.1255	-.0978
Do Tasks Differently	0.6770	-.3796	0.1131	0.0831	-.0028	0.0759	-.0531	1.0000	0.5626	0.4183	0.2608
Assign w/o Manpower	0.7028	-.4006	0.0794	0.0799	0.0276	0.0816	-.0136	0.5626	1.0000	0.4914	0.2355
Buck rule or Policy	0.6394	-.4002	0.0069	0.0142	0.0752	-.1255	0.0584	0.4183	0.4914	1.0000	0.3267
Operate Differently	0.5512	-.2311	0.0296	0.0267	0.0867	-.0978	0.0286	0.2608	0.2355	0.3267	1.0000
Incompatible Request	0.6222	-.3245	0.0299	0.0177	-.0107	0.0378	0.0131	0.3525	0.3368	0.2788	0.5114
Accepted/ not Accepted	0.5739	-.2583	0.0713	0.0776	0.1185	-.0039	0.0790	0.3007	0.2874	0.2888	0.4476
Inadequate Resources	0.7375	-.4190	0.1094	0.1329	0.0650	0.0671	0.0176	0.4772	0.6212	0.5195	0.2727

Variable	Role Conflict	Role Ambiguity	Age	Yrs in Educ	Yrs as Admin	Yrs Taught Classroom	Yrs Served District	Do Tasks Differently	Assign w/o Manpower	Buck Rule or Policy	Operate Differently
Unnecessary Tasks	0.6805	-.4746	0.0462	0.0808	0.0528	-.0042	-.0843	0.4934	0.4489	0.3811	0.2981
Certain about Authority	-.2686	0.4569	-.0631	-.0291	0.0652	0.0755	0.0694	-.1877	-.1209	-.1863	-.1317
Clear Goals	-.4416	0.7283	-.2047	-.2017	-.1130	-.0901	0.0599	-.3578	-.3800	-.3782	-.2812
Time Divided Properly	-.2656	0.4336	-.0455	-.0758	-.0537	-.0177	-.0515	-.1668	-.0829	-.0611	-.2239
Know what's Expected of me	-.4931	0.8966	-.1460	-.1317	-.0711	-.0344	-.0978	-.3690	-.4203	-.3850	-.1952
Clear Expectations	-.4920	0.8410	-.1794	-.1690	-.0982	-.0524	-.0537	-.3182	-.3629	-.3413	-.1990

APPENDIX E (continued)

Variable	Role Conflict	Role Ambiguity	Age	Yrs in Educ	Yrs as Admin	Yrs Taught Classroom	Yrs Served District	Do Tasks Differently	Assign w/o Manpower	Buck Rule or Policy	Operate Differently
Role Conflict	1.0000	-.5374	0.0853	0.0793	0.0617	0.0036	-.0012	0.6770	0.7028	0.6394	0.5512
Role Ambiguity	-.5374	1.0000	-.2368	-.1938	-.1204	-.0552	-.0883	-.3796	-.4006	-.4002	-.2311
Age	0.0853	-.2368	1.0000	0.8928	0.7220	0.6194	0.5778	0.1131	0.0794	0.0069	0.0296
Yrs in Educ	0.0793	-.1938	0.8928	1.0000	0.7583	0.7172	0.6442	0.0831	0.0799	0.0142	0.0267
Yrs Taught Classroom	0.0036	-.0552	0.6194	0.7172	0.2476	1.0000	0.4666	0.0759	0.0816	-.1255	-.0978
Do Tasks Differently	0.6770	-.3796	0.1131	0.0831	-.0028	0.0759	-.0531	1.0000	0.5626	0.4183	0.2608
Assign w/o Manpower	0.7028	-.4006	0.0794	0.0799	0.0276	0.0816	-.0136	0.5626	1.0000	0.4914	0.2355
Buck rule or Policy	0.6394	-.4002	0.0069	0.0142	0.0752	-.1255	0.0584	0.4183	0.4914	1.0000	0.3267
Operate Differently	0.5512	-.2311	0.0296	0.0267	0.0867	-.0978	0.0286	0.2608	0.2355	0.3267	1.0000
Incompatible Request	0.6222	-.3245	0.0299	0.0177	-.0107	0.0378	0.0131	0.3525	0.3368	0.2788	0.5114
Accepted/ not Accepted	0.5739	-.2583	0.0713	0.0776	0.1185	-.0039	0.0790	0.3007	0.2874	0.2888	0.4476

Variable	Role Conflict	Role Ambiguity	Age	Yrs in Educ	Yrs as Admin	Yrs Taught Classroom	Yrs Served District	Do Tasks Differently	Assign w/o Manpower	Buck Rule or Policy	Operate Differently
Inadequate Resources	0.7375	-.4190	0.1094	0.1329	0.0650	0.0671	0.0176	0.4772	0.6212	0.5195	0.2727
Unnecessary Tasks	0.6805	-.4746	0.0462	0.0808	0.0528	-.0042	-.0843	0.4934	0.4489	0.3811	0.2981
Certain about Authority	-.2686	0.4569	-.0631	-.0291	0.0652	0.0755	0.0694	-.1877	-.1209	-.1863	-.1317
Clear Goals	-.4416	0.7283	-.2047	-.2017	-.1130	-.0901	0.0599	-.3578	-.3800	-.3782	-.2812
Time Divided Properly	-.2656	0.4336	-.0455	-.0758	-.0537	-.0177	-.0515	-.1668	-.0829	-.0611	-.2239
Know what's Expected of me	-.4931	0.8966	-.1460	-.1317	-.0711	-.0344	-.0978	-.3690	-.4203	-.3850	-.1952
Clear Expectations	-.4920	0.8410	-.1794	-.1690	-.0982	-.0524	-.0537	-.3182	-.3629	-.3413	-.1990

Note: N = 177



APPENDIX F: ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL PROFILE BY SELECT DECILES

Variable	Value	Decile 1	Decile 5	Decile 10
Approximate Age of AP	Mean	38.43	40.88	58.46
Q4: Years Spent in Education	Mean	13.86	15.12	31.68
Q5: Years Served as an Administrator	Mean	2.50	5.21	16.29
Q6: Years Taught in Classroom	Mean	10.29	9.72	14.04
Q7: Years Served in School District	Mean	6.43	8.91	25.93
Q18-Q25: Role Conflict	Median	2.00	1.00	1.00
Q18: Do Tasks - Differently	Median	3.00	2.00	1.00
Q19: Assignment without Manpower	Median	2.50	2.00	1.00
Q20: Buck a Rule / Policy	Median	1.00	1.00	1.00
Q21: Groups Operate Differently	Median	3.00	3.50	3.00
Q22: Receive Incompatible Requests	Median	2.00	1.00	2.00
Q23: Accepted by One by not by Others	Median	2.50	2.00	3.00
Q24: Inadequate Resources / Material	Median	2.00	1.00	1.00
Q25: Work on Unnecessary Tasks	Median	2.00	1.00	1.00
Q26-Q31: Role Ambiguity	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
Q26: Certain about Authority	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
Q27: Clear Goals and Objectives	Median	4.00	3.00	4.00
Q28: Have Divided Time Properly	Median	3.00	4.00	4.00

Variable	Value	Decile 1	Decile 5	Decile 10
Q29: Know my Responsibilities	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
Q30: Know what is Expected of me	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
Q31: Have Clear Expectations	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
Q2: Gender	Male	35.71%	52.94%	7.14%
Q2: Gender	Female	64.29%	47.06%	92.86%
Q3: Race	White	35.71%	47.06%	57.14%
Q3: Race	African-American	64.29%	52.94%	42.86%
Q8: Grade Level Assignment	High School	14.29%	35.29%	35.71%
Q8: Grade Level Assignment	Middle School	28.57%	17.65%	21.43%
Q8: Grade Level Assignment	Elementary School	57.14%	47.06%	42.86%
Q10: Administrative Process at your School	Administrative Team	42.86%	41.18%	42.86%
Q10: Administrative Process at your School	Partial Teaming	0.00%	5.88%	21.43%
Q10: Administrative Process at your School	Shared Hierachy	50.00%	29.41%	21.43%
Q10: Administrative Process at your School	Delegated Tasks	7.14%	23.53%	14.29%
Q11: Principal's Primary Leadership Style	Authoritarian	28.57%	29.41%	14.29%
Q11: Principal's Primary Leadership Style	Delegative	14.29%	0.00%	21.43%
Q11: Principal's Primary Leadership Style	Participative	57.14%	70.59%	64.29%
Q12: Participation in Mentor Program	Yes	35.71%	52.94%	14.29%
Q12: Participation in Mentor Program	No	64.29%	47.06%	85.71%
Q13: Type of Mentor Program	Formal	14.29%	29.41%	7.14%
Q13: Type of Mentor Program	Informal	14.29%	23.53%	7.14%

Variable	Value	Decile 1	Decile 5	Decile 10
Q13: Type of Mentor Program	Unknown	7.14%	0.00%	0.00%
Q13: Type of Mentor Program	N/A	64.29%	47.06%	85.71%
Q14: Participation in Leadership Program	Yes	50.00%	58.82%	42.86%
Q14: Participation in Leadership Program	No	50.00%	41.18%	57.14%
Q15: Type of Leadership Program	Formal	21.43%	47.06%	35.71%
Q15: Type of Leadership Program	Informal	28.57%	11.76%	7.14%
Q15: Type of Leadership Program	N/A	50.00%	41.18%	57.14%
Q16: Working in School Taught prior to AP	Yes	7.14%	11.76%	0.00%
Q16: Working in School Taught prior to AP	No	92.86%	88.24%	100.00%
Q32A: Other Factors	Yes	21.43%	29.41%	14.29%
Q32A: Other Factors	No	78.57%	70.59%	85.71%
Q32B: Type of Other Factors	Buddy System and/or Politics	7.14%	11.76%	7.14%
Q32B: Type of Other Factors	Performance versus Evaluation	0.00%	5.88%	0.00%
Q32B: Type of Other Factors	Reduction in Force	14.29%	5.88%	0.00%
Q32B: Type of Other Factors	Teamwork and/or Communication	0.00%	0.00%	7.14%
Q32B: Type of Other Factors	Unknown	0.00%	5.88%	0.00%
Q32B: Type of Other Factors	N/A	78.57%	70.59%	85.71%

Note: N = 151