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Mississippi High School Assistant Principals' Perceptions of Their Readiness to Pursue the Principalship and Factors that Might Influence Readiness

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MISSISSIPPI HIGH SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR READINESS TO PURSUE THE PRINCIPALSHIP AND FACTORS THAT MIGHT INFLUENCE READINESS

by

Bennett Teague Burchfield

Abstract of a Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2015
ABSTRACT

MISSISSIPPI HIGH SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR READINESS TO PURSUE THE PRINCIPALSHIP AND FACTORS THAT MIGHT INFLUENCE READINESS

by Bennett Teague Burchfield

August 2015

The purpose of this study was to determine if certain factors as well as the influence of these factors affect the perceptions of assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship. Mississippi high school assistant principals (n=107) responded to an online questionnaire that gathered personal and professional demographic data and also collected a readiness rating as well as an influence of factors ratings both based on a 5-point Likert scale.

A multiple linear regression was used to predict the readiness of assistant principals to pursue the principalship based on personal and professional factors as well the influence of those factors. The regression model revealed a positive, statistically significant predictor of readiness in assistant principals to pursue the principalship with single, never married individuals and negative, statistically significant predictors of readiness with the factors of assistant principals that make between $125,000 and $149,999 and $150,000 and $174,999. The influence of years of experience and level of degree reported as being positive, significant predictors of readiness and the influence of amount of children reported as being a negative, significant predictor of readiness.
According to Crow (2006), the principalship is a complex role. Simon and Newman (2003) add that recruiting and retaining highly qualified principals are becoming more difficult. Opportunities for those ready to transition into the principalship, are available. When aspiring principals can accurately assess their readiness to pursue the principalship, they are then empowered to transition into the position with confidence, creating the opportunity for a more successful experience personally and professionally.
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by

Bennett Teague Burchfield

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2015
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to several members of my family. First, I would like to thank my parents for instilling in me the value of service to others. Their example as educators has provided me with a successful blueprint to follow. Mom, I am also grateful for the unconditional love and support that you have provided for me over the years. Dad, thank you as well for establishing an expectation that pushed me towards my potential. While I am grateful for that, words can’t express how much it has meant to me for you to model that very same expectation.

This work is also dedicated to my wife, Robyn and our two children, Phillip and Ellyn. Robyn, it is with much emotion that I write about the love and support you have always provided for both our family and me. The sacrifices that you have made throughout this process have never gone unnoticed, and the benefits will prove to go far beyond the completion of this program. This journey has been worth it only because I have had you to go through it with me.

Phillip and Ellyn, you both have been the daily inspiration that I have needed to successfully complete this process. Watching both of you value the simplest concepts of your educational foundation has provided me with the endurance I needed to complete this program. Throughout this process, my goal was to be able to balance quality time with you with the expectations of this program. I hope that in your eyes I was successful.

I Love You!
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I must thank Dr. Lee for his guidance and support as the committee chair. His professional advice always came in a timely and direct manner. I would also like to thank Dr. Benigno for his input as a member of my committee as well as the positive words that always seemed to put me at ease. I would like to thank Dr. Johnson as well for serving as a committee member. His insight and wisdom regarding statistics proved to be a catapulting force for me as I completed this process. Last, I would also like to thank Dr. Roberson for serving on the committee and providing the thorough feedback necessary to improve this product.

The instructors of the Departments of Educational Leadership and School Counseling, Educational Studies and Research, and Curriculum and Instruction deserve recognition as well. The multiple perspectives that were delivered during this experience always created an engaging classroom environment. The knowledge gained throughout this program will have a lasting effect on my philosophy as an educator.

Last, I must also give thanks to “Car Pool University”. Jonathan Anderson, Bill Broadhead, Jeff Heath, David Herndon, Cedric Johnson, and Jeff White made the process, as well as the drive, quite informative yet very entertaining at the same time. It is my hope that I supplied a smidgen of knowledge and entertainment that I received on all those trips to Hattiesburg and Long Beach.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape is ever changing. As stated in the Common Core State Standards, “Today’s students are preparing to enter a world in which colleges and businesses are demanding more than ever before” (National Governors Association Center & Council of Chief State School, 2010, para. 1). Over the past several years, both federal and state governments have established new curriculum initiatives to help local school districts perform at a level that will allow students to compete globally. These same initiatives have paved the way for accountability measures to compare learning from one district to the next. Technological innovations are continuing to alter the way educators interact with and educate their students (MDE, 2012).

Societal demands have also spawned innovation within the educational environment. An increase in diversity within schools has led to educators facing the challenge of reaching all students regardless of their cultural background or language barrier. According to Gay (2013), this culturally responsive teaching “is an equal educational opportunity initiative that accepts differences among ethnic groups, individuals, and cultures as normative to the human condition and valuable to societal and personal development” (p. 50). Musick and Meier (2010) asserted that the increasing shift from the traditional family setting to a single or same sex parent home environment has led to a broader socioeconomic make-up within the classroom. Students with disabilities also are guaranteed a free and appropriate education with accommodations and other services readily available when needed (IDEA, 1997).
These phenomena have created changes in faculty behavior. The once prevalent practice of teacher isolation has been replaced with the need to collaborate within departments and across subject areas and grade levels (Dufour & Fullan, 2013). According to Dokoupil (2010), accountability shock has led to teacher mobility, especially in educational settings that have increasing amounts of pressure due to higher expectations or even a sharp decline in accountability ratings. The need for professional development has increased to address new curriculum standards, differentiation techniques, technological advancements as well as management techniques to use to minimize behavioral issues caused by a broad ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic educational landscape.

The principal is charged with addressing the many different demands of today’s educational landscape; and addressing these demands has made the principalship one of the most challenging occupational positions (Guterman, 2007). The demanding nature of the position, along with the increasing number of school leaders eligible for retirement, has led to a shortage of potential applicants for upcoming vacancies for the principalship. With the aforementioned concerns a reality, it is necessary to view the assistant principal’s position as a viable option for pursuing the principalship.
The assistant principal’s position has historically been under-researched (Cranston, Tromans, & Reugebrink, 2002). According to Marshall and Hooley (2006), while the assistant principal is viewed as an invaluable resource for the success of a school, little attention has been given to its role and function. Due to the lack of research and literature currently dedicated to the assistant principal, this research attempts to reveal what perceptions currently exist among assistant principals as they relate to their readiness to pursue the principalship.

Marshall (1992) noted that the assistant principalship is usually thought of as an entry-level position for most educational administrative careers. If the assistant principal’s position is the genesis of a career in educational administration, more detailed information regarding the pursuit of the principalship must be identified and implemented to aid in the process of filling future vacancies in administration with high quality individuals. This research aids prospective secondary school principals to better understand any current personal and professional situations that allow for a better assessment of readiness regarding the pursuit of the principalship while school districts can also benefit by offering relevant, individualized professional development for assistant principals within their district so that they are better able to promote from within.

Statement of the Problem

Readiness “entails having the knowledge, ability, and proper mindset necessary for navigating immediate organizational or job-specific challenges” (Gonzalez, 2013, p. 10). There are many factors that contribute to assistant principals’ perception of their readiness to be a principal. Assistant principals with ambitions to pursue the principalship
must consider both personal and professional factors prior to making the transition into
the principalship. The purpose of this study is to determine if certain factors affect the
perceptions of assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship.

While there are many, nine factors were researched in the study. Four personal
factors—age, family income, marriage, and children, have been chosen to help assess
readiness in those being surveyed. Five professional factors—years of experience, level of
education, current pursuit of a degree, and number of peer assistant principals were also
chosen to assess the readiness among those being surveyed. The demands of the
educational environment, coupled with one’s current personal and professional factors,
affect the decisions that assistant principals make when accepting a principalship or not.
In this study, the findings should reveal which of these factors, according to the
perceptions of high school assistant principals throughout the state of Mississippi, have
the greatest impact on assistant principals’ readiness to be a principal.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

The hypotheses and research question and hypotheses are as followed:

Research Question

The researcher seeks to determine:

Is there a relationship between assistant principals’ perception of their readiness and their
-age?
-family income?
-marriage status?
-amount of children?
-years of experience in the educational field?
Hypotheses

H₁: There is a significant relationship between assistant principals’ perception of readiness to pursue the principalship and the variables of age, family income, marital status, amount of children, experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and peer assistance.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between assistant principals’ perception of readiness to pursue the principalship and the influence of the variables of age, family income, marital status, amount of children, experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and peer assistance.

Definition of Terms

In an attempt to better inform the reader as well as allow for better comprehension of key terminology, definitions for this study have been provided.

1. **Accountability**—For the purpose of this study, this term refers to the responsibility of educators to focus on the processes and products of education. Formulas are created to determine the success of academic outcomes as it compares to other districts and schools. Consequences are applied to districts and schools based upon the academic outcomes (Thurlow, 2009).

2. **Accountability Shock**—For the purpose of this study, this term refers to the reactions and decisions of teachers when accountability ratings negatively impact
the perceptions of their schools. This “shock” usually leads teachers to transition to another school or district (Feng & Sass, 2011).

3. **Assistant Principal**—For the purpose of this study, this title refers to the second person in charge in a school setting whose position falls directly below the principal.

4. **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)**—A set of high quality academic expectations in English-language arts (ELA) and mathematics that define the knowledge and skills all students should master by the end of each grade level in order to be on track for success in college and career (Council of Chief State School Officers ([CCSSO] 2013).

5. **Curriculum**—For the purpose of this study, this term refers to the guide and materials that students will interact with so that they may achieve certain educational outcomes (Ebert II, Ebert, & Bentley, 2013).

6. **Principal**—For the purpose of this study, this title refers to the first person in charge in a school setting and is expected to be the instructional leader of the school.

7. **Readiness**—For the purpose of this study, the readiness involves having the knowledge, ability, and proper frame of mind that is necessary for responding to the immediate organizational challenges of a particular position (Gonzalez, 2013).

**Delimitations**

Delimitations of this study are as follows: only high school assistant principals of public schools in the state of Mississippi whose names were submitted to the Mississippi Department of Education personnel database were surveyed, data were only analyzed and
collected during the 2014-2015 school year, (c) only the nine factors of the survey instrument were researched to define the perception of high school assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship.

Assumptions

Basic assumptions of this research study are as followed: the names submitted to the Mississippi Department of Education personnel database are accurate and complete, the participants of the survey were completed honestly, the participants of the survey were answered accurately, and the participants of the survey have a desire to enter the principalship.

Justification

This study adds clarification as to the factors that influence assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship. With limited research currently available regarding this topic, the results of this research could benefit assistant principals who desire the principalship by offering insight from fellow assistant principals about their perceptions of readiness to pursue the principalship through their individual experiences. School districts could also benefit by offering relevant, individualized professional development from the results of the research for assistant principals within their district so that they are better able to promote from within.

Summary

Currently, the principalship is one of the most challenging occupational positions (Guterman, 2007). With an increasing number of school leaders retiring annually, it is necessary to suggest the assistant principal’s position as a viable option for filling the void in the principalship. The purpose of this study is to determine if certain factors
affect the perceptions of assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship. The findings reveal which of these factors, as well as the influence of each factor, according to the perceptions of high school assistant principals throughout the state of Mississippi, have the greatest impact on assistant principals’ readiness to be a principal.

A review of the literature associated with this study is presented in Chapter II. The chapter begins with a review of leadership characteristics and theory. Next, the chapter addresses the history of building level administration. Preparation programs for principals, job satisfaction of assistant principals, and responsibilities of the assistant principal and principal are addressed as well. Chapter II closes with a review of the literature pertaining to factors that influence readiness in assistant principals.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of related literature in this chapter is divided into six major parts. The first section is dedicated to the characteristics of leadership as well as theories of leadership in the school setting. The second section highlights the history of building level administration, beginning with the creation of the principalship and ending with the evolution of the assistant principal position. The third section is an overview of three different principal preparation programs, beginning with educational leadership programs, then focusing on the transition into internships and mentoring programs, and ending with professional development. Fourth, the positive and negative aspects of the position of assistant principal are highlighted. The fifth section is an overview of the responsibilities of the assistant principal and principal. The responsibilities include discipline, building management, curriculum and instruction, and teacher evaluation. Finally, the sixth section is devoted to personal and professional factors that are associated with school leadership as it relates to one’s readiness to pursue such a position.
Leadership

According to Northouse (2013), many scholars and practitioners have attempted to define the term leadership for over a century without any consensus. Northouse defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 5). Winston and Patterson (2006) define leadership more holistically through what they call an “integrative definition of leadership” (p. 6). Through a thorough research of literature related to leadership, Winston and Patterson (2006) created the following detailed definition:

A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization’s mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives…The leader achieves this same state for his/her own self as a leader, as he/she seeks personal growth, renewal, regeneration, and increased stamina—mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual—through the leader-follower interactions. (p. 7)

Beyond Northouse (2013) and Winston and Patterson’s (2006) efforts, many have attempted to provide their own thoughts and definitions on leadership. Kevin Kruse (2012), assembled what he felt was his 100 Best Quotes on Leadership. Among them is a passage from the Holy Bible, Proverbs 29:18 which states, “Where there is no vision, people will perish” (as cited in Kruse, 2012, para. 2). Aristotle made the list with “He who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander” (as cited in Kruse, 2012,
para. 18). More recent entries include John C. Maxwell who simply states “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way” (as cited in Kruse, 2012, para. 11) and Michael Jordan, who insisted that you “Earn your leadership every day” (as cited in Kruse, 2012, para. 100). It is clear through Kruse’s compilation of quotes that thoughts on leadership have been expressed throughout history, across continents, as well as professions.

Characteristics of Leadership

The concept of studying the attributes and traits of leaders has been around for quite some time (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004). Prior to the scientific research of leadership, there have been attempts in multiple civilizations throughout history to identify the different qualities of leadership (Zaccaro et al., 2004). Several historical contributions are worth noting.

According to Bass and Stogdill (1990), discussions of leadership qualities date back to the early civilizations of Egypt, Babylon, Asia, as well as Iceland. Mythological and biblical accounts of leadership focused on the heroic traits of leadership as well as wisdom and servanthood, respectively (Zaccaro et al., 2004). During the 6th century B.C., Lao-tzu wrote that wise leaders exhibit the characteristics of selflessness, hard work, honesty, efficiency, conflict resolution, and ability to empower others (Heider, 1985). Sun Tzu (1910), referring to his military leadership, wrote, “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles” (p. 72). Plato, in his book The Republic, emphasized, “in the ideal nation-state, effective leaders used reasoning capacities and wisdom to lead others” (as cited in Zaccaro et al., 2004, p. 101). Aristotle, a student of Plato, went a step further by adding that “leaders were to help
others seek virtue; they would do so by themselves being virtuous” (as cited in Zaccaro et al., 2004, p. 101).

Leadership continues to be a highly researched topic, and, in recent times, many have attempted to identify the characteristics of leadership. Collins (2001), through years of researching corporations across the United States, recognized seven characteristics that “great” companies do differently than “good” companies. Collins’ research reveals that leadership is an important quality that separates “great” companies from “good” companies. Today, Collins’ work in *Good to Great* is still used as a leadership model in the corporate world. Covey (1989), focusing more on the individual, identifies seven characteristics of highly effective leaders that is a quality model for leadership. Covey (2005) would later add an eight habit of finding your voice and inspiring others to find theirs. John C. Maxwell, a motivational speaker and author, has dedicated much of his life to writing on leadership. According to Maxwell (1999), there are 21 qualities that cannot be disputed regarding leadership. Listed below are Maxwell’s qualities:
Recent research has identified leadership qualities more specifically related to the educational setting. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), using 69 studies that included 2,802 schools housing 1.4 million students and over 14,000 teachers, developed a framework of 21 school leadership responsibilities. Through their meta-analysis, they found that school leadership “has a substantial effect on student achievement and provides guidance for experienced and aspiring administrators alike” (p. 12). Table 2 presents Marzano et al.’s (2005) list of responsibilities.

Table 1

21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charisma</td>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Self Discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>Servanthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
<td>Teachability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discernment</td>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>Vision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from The Indispensable Qualities of a Leader, by J. C. Maxwell, 1999, Thomas Nelson.

Table 2

21 Responsibilities of the School Leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affirmation</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Optimizer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change Agent</td>
<td>Ideals/Beliefs</td>
<td>Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent Rewards</td>
<td>Input</td>
<td>Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marzano et al. (2005) add that the 21 responsibilities, identified earlier are not new to the research regarding leadership. For principals to be effective, these behaviors must be standard operating procedures. Mastering these leadership skills is no easy task (Marzano et al., 2005). While Maxwell’s traits from Table 1 are general qualities of leadership and Marzano et al.’s traits identify more specific qualities of a school leader, consistencies can be found between the two. For example, the four traits of communication, discipline, focus, and relationships can be found on each table, therefore, these traits could be defined as prominent factors of leadership.

Theories of Leadership

This section will provide a review of different theories of leadership pertaining to the field of education. This section begins with an initial study of leadership, followed by the theories of trait leadership and situational leadership. The section then addresses the theories of transactional and transformational leadership and concludes with a description of instructional leadership.

Early Research on Leadership

Leadership theory began over 500 years ago when Niccolo Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* (Machiavelli & Mansfield, 1998), setting a foundation for the many leadership theories that exist today by addressing the political system of his day and outlining ways
for attaining political power. Machiavelli basically asserted that to be a great leader, one must be respected, supported, virtuous, authentic, and intelligent (Juarez, 2012). These fundamental leadership characteristics, which addressed the elitist, political upper class of his era, can be used today as a guide in any leadership position.

Trait Theory

Thomas Carlyle (1841) declared, “The history of the world is but the biography of great men” (p. 127), shaping what would be known as the Great Man Theory. Carlyle argued that heroes, or great men, shape history with their intellect, art, leadership as well as divine intervention. Carlyle’s take on leadership would become one of the earliest models of trait leadership theory.

In his book *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences*, Sir Francis Galton (1869) is thought to have contributed to the study of trait leadership as he attempted, through scientific modeling, to prove his theory that genius as well as other natural abilities are hereditary. Intelligence, according to Galton, is an attribute, among others, of a leader and these attributions are all inherited but not developed. This research laid the foundation for attempting to identify how leadership qualities are obtained and implemented.

Lewis Terman (1904) introduced one of the first studies solely dedicated to leadership. His research, through the observation of school children, reveals many qualities, or traits, that differentiates leaders from non-leaders. His findings suggest that verbal fluency, intelligence, low emotionality, daring nature, likeability, goodness, and charisma are all key attributes that all of the school aged leaders possess (Terman, 1904). Cowley (1931) used an array of subjects who were currently engaged in a
leadership/follower relationship to distinguish the traits of leaders. The research revealed commonalities among the different types of leaders, and each proved to possess different traits than their follower counterparts.

Contingency Theory

Ralph Stogdill’s (1948) research created new dialogue that suggests that traits were not the only factors that determine leadership, but that social situations help define the capacity of a leader. Stogdill states, “persons who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in other situations” (p.65). Through Stogdill’s research, the theory of situational leadership was developed.

Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1996) developed a very practical situational leadership model based on tasks and relationships. Using four quadrants, the different situational leadership styles of Hersey et al. were revealed. The first style is “high task and low relationship” (p. 138) and is very directive with the leader providing all the input with minimal relationship behavior. The second style is “high task and high relationship” (p. 140) and is very directive, with a persuasive touch. The third style is “high relationship and low task” (p. 141) and collaboration is the theme with the leader acting as a consultant. The fourth and final style is “low relationship and low task” (p. 142) and is considered the delegating style of leadership.

According to Hersey et al. (1996), none of the styles are more appropriate than the other. Effectiveness of each style is dependent on the “readiness” of the members of the group working on the task. The “readiness” of the group member is based on the ability and willingness of the group member participating in the task.
Behavioral Theory

Criticisms to the trait approach of leadership led theorists to research leadership as a set of behaviors. Broad patterns of different leadership styles were developed through an evaluation of those in leadership positions and classification of the observed actions into behaviors. According to Cherry (2006), Kurt Lewin developed one of the earliest frameworks of the behavioral theory when he argued for three different types of leaders; autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. Later on, Blake and Mouton developed behavioral leadership patterns into a five quadrant grid; the impoverished style of leadership that exhibits minimal concern for production and people, the authoritarian style that exhibits a maximum concern for production but a minimal concern for people, the middle-of-the-road leader that displays an effective blend of concern for production and people, the country club style that exhibits a maximum concern for people but minimal concern for production, and the team manager that has a maximum concern for people and production.

Transactional and Transformational Leadership Theory

Jim Burns (1978), who is considered as one of the founders of modern leadership theory, founded two very different leadership styles: transactional and transformational leadership. Burns made a distinction between the two leadership models by stating that transactional leadership is merely discrete exchanges of selfish intent, whereas transformational leadership is more focused on raising each other to higher standards of morality and motivation.
Ruggieri and Abbate (2013) offer a detailed distinction of both the transactional leadership style and the transformational style. Their explanation of transactional leadership is summarized below:

Transactional leaders are negotiating agents who conciliate and sometimes compromise to obtain greater decision-making power within the group. To achieve this goal, they perform a series of actions that enable them to influence and convince the followers, who are capable of providing valuable support. The activity of leaders consists of implementing interpersonal transactions in which tasks, expectations, and related awards are indicated and clarified. The aim of rewards and punishments is not to transform the followers but to ensure that the expected results are achieved. (p. 1172)

Ruggieri and Abbate (2013) also provide a view of the transformational leadership model:

The transformational leader changes each individual’s value system to construct a new one constituted by common goals, and actively engages with followers by obtaining their collaboration, and encouraging them to identify with an organizational vision beyond their own self-interest. (p. 1172)

Transformational leadership has been researched in the educational setting as well. Kenneth Leithwood (1994) created the school leadership version of the transformational model. In his work, Leithwood believes that individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence are all required skills for school administrators attempting to succeed in today’s educational climate.
Instructional Leadership

Many theorists have attempted to define instructional leadership (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Hallinger, 2005; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Smith & Andrews, 1989; Southworth, 2002; Swan, 2010). Swan (2010) defines instructional leadership as “the dynamic delivery of the curriculum in the classroom through strategies based on reflection, assessment and evaluation to ensure optimum learning” (p. 1). Instructional leaders, according to Brookover and Lezotte (1982), are simply principals who emphasize the importance of leadership in the area of curriculum and instruction. One of the most highly regarded descriptions of instructional leadership was developed by Wilma Smith and Richard Andrews (Marzano et al., 2005).
Smith and Andrews (1989) highlight four roles of the instructional leader. The first role of the instructional leader is that of a resource provider. In education, resources are scarce; thus, it is imperative that educational leaders provide the necessary resources to ensure teachers can perform their duties. The second role of instructional leaders is to be an instructional resource for their staff. Through this role, instructional leaders model the appropriate behaviors of educators by constantly keeping up with the current trends in education and also participating in instructional training as well as other collaborative processes. The third role of the instructional leader is to be an effective communicator. This role requires instructional leaders to have the capacity to establish goals for the school while also articulating the goals with clarity to the faculty to ensure success. The fourth and final role of the instructional leader is to simply be a visible presence. This practice allows administrative leaders to be accessible to the faculty as well as observe through classroom visitation that the resources, instructional guidance, and goals are put into practice.

According to the United States Department of Education (USDOE, 2005), instructional leadership goes beyond the work of a principal and serves to unify teacher leaders, grade level chairs, principals, and central office staff. The USDOE developed five key elements of instructional leadership as a guide for school administrators. First, instructional leaders must prioritize their duties with teaching and learning consistently being the main focus of their daily schedule. Second, instructional leaders must be well versed in the current trends of reading research. Third, instructional leaders focus on the ongoing cycle of improving the alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and standards. Fourth, instructional leaders use data to create dialogue regarding best
practices, student achievement, and potential professional development. Last, instructional leaders afford teachers the opportunity to continue developing as professionals through training and workshops (Zepeda, 2013).

History of the Principalship

In order to fully understand the positions of the principalship and the assistant principalship, it is imperative to first understand how the positions were created and how they have evolved into their present state. Several factors played a role in the evolution of these positions including, but not limited to student enrollment, the number of faculty employed, as well as an increase in the services that are provided by public schools to their community (Goldman, 1966). According to Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, and Usdan (1990), six stages define the evolution of school administration. These stages include the one room schoolhouse teacher, head teacher, the teaching principal, school principal, supervising principal, and the change agent/instructional leader.

The school administrator position indirectly began with the creation of the one-room schoolhouse in the early 1800s. The one-room schoolhouses, which typically consisted of children in first through eighth grades, were very uniform regarding organization, pedagogy, and curriculum (Rose & Campbell, 1997). Discipline and punishment had its place in the one room schoolhouse. The New York State Historical Association (2009) offers more specific details of the culture of discipline and punishment:

Some teachers employed a system of strict discipline, ridicule, and harsh punishment. The old proverb “spare the rod and spoil the child” was more than just a saying. The rod was one of the most important instruments of instruction.
The teacher maintained good order in the classroom and on the playground by judging the degree and nature of punishment when he or she deemed it necessary.

(p.3)

With autonomy to discipline students within the classroom setting, the one-room schoolhouse teacher had some of the characteristics and responsibilities of the position of the principal (Rose & Campbell, 1997).

According to Grady (1990), as consolidation brought more students under one roof and grading was introduced to the educational environment, the role of the teaching principal, a position that preceded the creation of the principal, was created. The teaching principal initially oversaw a small group of teachers and had to perform only a few simple administrative duties. Initially, most of the teaching principal’s time was spent teaching early on (Grady, 1990). Eventually, however, the teaching component of the principalship was eliminated as daily supervision of instruction increased as an administrative task.

Gradually, the central office dynamic was created as the common school reform movement grew (Kowalski, 2006). The superintendent position was created to communicate the common curriculum and to ensure that the curriculum was implemented. According to Grady (1990), as school enrollment began to increase in number, the superintendent’s supervisory role was delegated to the principal. The superintendent, who at first was expected to make daily contact within the school, would become more focused on the managerial role of leading building level administrators while principals became the facilitator of the school building (Glanz, 1994). This new position of school principal became a general trend across the United States, especially in
large cities at the onset of the United States Civil War (Grady, 1990). Due to the growth of public schools across the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, the responsibilities of the school administrators such as the superintendent and principal began to increase.

Evolution of the Assistant Principal Position

Due to urbanization, and from that, increasing public school enrollments, the position of the assistant principal evolved in the first couple of decades of the twentieth century. According to Glanz (1994), public school enrollment increased by more than 50% between the years of 1895 and 1920. This population increase among students led to shifts in the roles of building level administrators.

Glanz (2004) notes that this shift led to more and more responsibilities of the principal, all delegated by the superintendent, such as completing attendance reports, gathering evaluation forms of teachers, and facilitating the multiple programs of schools. These responsibilities, along with filling in for absent teachers, modeling lessons for the faculty, and mentoring new teachers in the areas of instruction and classroom management created a more demanding role for the principal (Glanz, 1994). As more responsibilities were given to the principal, a need for additional administrative assistance became apparent (Glanz, 1994).

The post-World War II era marked a time when the assistant principal position was beginning to find its place in the educational setting. The assistant principal position spawned from the need to aid the principal in the growing responsibilities of the educational environment. Glanz (1994) stated that supervisory roles, such as evaluating teachers in the areas of mathematics and science and overseeing the daily operations of
the facilities, became key responsibilities of the newly created assistant principal position. The responsibilities of the assistant principal would soon expand. Several reformations of education in the United States, as well as the demands that followed, can be credited for the expansion of the administrative responsibilities (Woods, 2012). The assistant principal’s position evolved into a more complex role, however; the assistant principal’s role was uncertain, poorly defined, lacked clear focus, and did not have a sufficient philosophical base (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

The 1980s and 1990s brought about a noticeable shift regarding the duties of the assistant principalship. *A Nation at Risk*, an educational report that highlighted deficiencies in the United States public education system, spawned an urgency to correct the problems of the educational system (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). New accountability standards brought on the evolution and expansion of the duties of the assistant principal from mostly managerial related duties to include instructional duties. Gaston (2005) revealed that new responsibilities were assigned to the assistant principal by the building principal and they were continually added in a manner that was fragmented and disjointed. These new instructional duties mostly included the compilation of data with the results of the compiled data used to plan academically to improve curriculum and instruction. Adding these duties improved the results from accountability assessments, thus improving the overall culture of the school (Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson, 2002).

Another shift in the role of the assistant principal occurred at the turn of the twenty-first century. This shift can be credited to the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002) as it amplified the federal government’s involvement in K-12 education. This reformation
affected the roles of the assistant principal and principal in a way that allowed for the evolution of their relationships to grow to a higher level through collaborative efforts in areas such as planning, curriculum and instruction, and professional development (Dee & Jacob, 2010).

Principal Preparation Programs

According to Johnson-Taylor and Martin (2007), there is currently a demand for qualified instructional leaders who aspire to transition into the principalship. Principals, especially in underperforming schools, are under more pressure than ever to improve the educational culture of their schools (Aarons, 2010). Bloom and Krovetz (2001) note that adequate preparation for the principalship is greatly needed for today’s assistant principal. Daniel Domenech, the executive director of the American Association of School Administrators stated “There’s been a lot of emphasis on teacher quality and teacher development, but not nearly enough in…. principal development” (as cited in Aarons, 2010, para. 2). The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 2005) suggested a disconnect between the actual work of school administrators and the academic preparation they receive. Problems defined by SREB include not placing a high priority on preparation programs, the tendency of interns to follow and not lead, an obvious disconnect between collegiate leadership programs and school districts as it relates to structuring supervised internships, a lack of support for interns during their experience, and a lack of rigor during the evaluation of interns.

To rectify these inadequacies, Bloom and Krovetz (2001) note that assistant principals need training in the areas of curriculum, instructional leadership, and teacher supervision along with an opportunity to apply those learned skills. A consortium of
programs known as the Rainwater Leadership Alliance, consisting of school districts, universities, and nonprofit organizations from across the country, unveiled their perspective regarding appropriate elements of a principal preparation program.

According to Cheney and Davis (2011), these elements consist of an “undergirding competency framework” (p. 10), “strategic and proactive recruiting” (p. 10), a “rigorous selection process” (p.10), “relevant and practical coursework” (p.10), “experiential, clinical school-based opportunities” (p.10), “placement and on-the-job support” (p.11), and “robust data collection and continuous learning” (p.11). These elements should be present in educational leadership programs, principal internships and mentorships, and professional development so aspiring administrators can be selected, taught, trained, and placed appropriately to maximize their potential for success in leadership programs.

Educational Leadership Programs

Today, states place a requirement on prospective public school administrators to receive training through an educational leadership program (Cheney & Davis, 2011). These advanced degree programs attempt to educate prospective administrators on the effective practices of successful educational leaders (Cheney & Davis, 2011). To help prepare prospective administrators succeed in such a demanding environment, educational institutions have attempted to improve the capacity of potential educational leaders by adopting the work of two consortiums that have developed two general sets of standards for educational leadership programs across the nation (CCSSO, 2013).

The two consortiums addressing the effective practices of educational leaders are the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (CCSSO, 2008) standards and the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC, 2011) standards. Recognition and
implementation of the standards through academic practice and first hand experiences are necessary for what ultimately leads to an endorsement in school administration or educational leadership as well as a diploma from the desired college or university (CCSSO, 2013).

The ISLLC (CCSSO, 2008) standards, focusing generally on all educational leaders, were created to develop a common set of standards that would strengthen all principal preparation programs. The six standards created generally cover pertinent areas of educational leadership such as vision, instruction, management, collaboration, ethics, and the big picture. Below is a brief description of each of the six ISLLC standards.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 1</td>
<td>An educational leader promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 2</td>
<td>An educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and an instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 3</td>
<td>An educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.</td>
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Table 3 (continued).

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<th>Standard</th>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 4</td>
<td>An educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 5</td>
<td>An educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 6</td>
<td>An educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.</td>
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Note: Adapted from The Importance and Use of the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards as Perceived by P-12 Principals in a Large Suburban School District, by G. Cunningham, 2009.

The ELCC (2009), a partnership between practitioners and professors who focus more specifically on the building level principal, also developed standards that have helped measure the performance of school administrators. According to Cunningham (2009), the ELCC standards “are an adaptation of the 1996 ISLLC standards created to describe what principals, superintendents, supervisors and curriculum directors need to know and to be able to do upon completion of study at the university level” (p. 9). These standards are very similar to the ISLLC (CCSSO, 2008) standards with an additional standard identified as the “internship,” which allows educational leadership students the opportunity to put into practice the standards that are taught throughout their educational leadership program. The seven ELCC standards are listed below.
Table 4

*ELCC Standards*

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<thead>
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<th>Standard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 1</td>
<td>Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a district vision of learning supported by the school community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 2</td>
<td>Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by promoting a positive school culture, providing an effective instructional program, applying best practice to student learning, and designing comprehensive professional growth plans for staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 3</td>
<td>Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by managing the organization, operations, and resources in a way that promotes a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4</td>
<td>Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by collaborating with families and other mobilizing community resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 5</td>
<td>Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 5</td>
<td>integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 6</td>
<td>Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 7</td>
<td>The internship provides significant experiences for candidates to synthesize and apply the knowledge and practice and develop the skills identified through substantial, sustained, standards-based work in real settings, planned and guided cooperatively by district personnel for graduate credit.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from *The Importance and Use of the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards as Perceived by P-12 Principals in a Large Suburban School District*, by G. Cunningham, 2009.

While the ISLLC and ELCC standards have provided a framework of reference for prospective administrators participating in educational leadership programs, there have been doubts in recent years as to the effectiveness of the programs in turning out quality educational leaders (Cheney & Davis, 2011). According to Arthur Levine, president of Columbia University’s Teacher College, a “majority of programs range from inadequate to appalling, even at some of the country’s leading universities” (as cited by Cheney & Davis, 2011). Due to the many changes of the educational landscape, studies have shown that higher education has not amended its curriculum to reflect the changes of the K-12 educational leadership experience. Because of this, according to Hess and Kelly (2005), graduates of these programs are not prepared for success in this new era of accountability.
Educational leadership theory is not enough to prepare prospective administrators for the principalship. Effective, on-site training implementing the standards learned in the classroom is necessary for a successful transition into the principalship. Experiences through internship and mentoring programs may offer the benefits needed to successfully transition into the principalship.

Internships

Internships should allow prospective administrators to gain a better understanding, through practice, of the role of the instructional leader. According to Cunningham (2009), the internship process “provides significant experiences for candidates to synthesize and apply the knowledge and practice and develop the skills identified through substantial, sustained, standards-based work in real settings, planned and guided cooperatively by district personnel for graduate credit” (p. 25). After logging many hours gaining relevant classroom instruction, administrators practice, beyond theory, the standards learned through their educational leadership programs during internships. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 2005) describes a successful internship as “a sturdy vessel upon which new practitioners can navigate the swift, unpredictable currents that separate classroom theory and on-the-job reality” (p. 10). A sound internship program, according to SREB:

Creates the opportunity for aspiring principals to demonstrate, under the guidance of an experienced and trained school leader and a university supervisor, that they have mastered the necessary knowledge and skills to change schools and classrooms and can apply these skills effectively in a school setting where they must work with real teachers to accelerate student achievement. (p. 10)
While internships can be patterned in many different ways, Hackmann, Schmitt-Oliver, and Tracy (2002) note that an optimal amount of time for an internship is one year. Observing the ebbs and flows of the entire academic year, while also participating in activities such as budgeting, hiring, scheduling, as well as planning, allow aspiring school leaders to participate in these projects all the way through to completion (Hackman et al., 2002). Furthermore, full placement in an educational environment is the most effective way to replicate the daily experiences of an administrator (Hackman et al., 2002).

While problems have been highlighted in internship programs, solutions have been provided. Gray (2001) highlights several suggestions for K-12 school districts to consider for creating successful internships below.

Table 5

Five Tips for Successful Internships

1. Integrate the intern into the school.
2. Develop a vision for the internship experience.
3. Gradually increase the responsibilities of the intern.
4. Provide time for continuous evaluation.
5. Rely on the university supervisor when problems arise.

Note. Adapted from Principal Internships, by T. I. Gray. 2001, Phi Delta Kappan.

Relationships can be developed and expectations can be defined through the internship integration process (Gray, 2001). As the integration process develops, a composition of the vision can be created by the principal and intern that will ensure the experience is worthwhile (Gray, 2001). As the intern becomes more comfortable in the process, shadowing the principal is gradually replaced by the delegation of the
responsibilities by the principal to the intern (Gray, 2001). To maximize the benefits of the internship process, daily evaluation and discussion between the principal and intern is required (Gray, 2001). If any issues arise during the internship process, the university supervisor should act in the capacity of a mediator for the principal and intern (Gray, 2001).

Incorporating these suggestions will create a positive environment that will foster some success for those in the internship process. It is imperative that interns, especially in a service-oriented profession such as education, prove themselves capable of mastering the necessary competencies of the profession prior to accepting a role in the principalship (SREB, 2005).

Mentoring Programs

The mentorship program is another element of a strategic principal preparation program. Pete Hall (2008) stated:

Most administrative certification programs include an internship, which may or may not be beneficial to the candidate, depending on how much actual hands on experience is gained. Classes in research, theory, and discussion can prepare a candidate only so much. (para. 4)

Because of this, mentorship programs are needed as a guide for the inexperienced administrator. According to Hall (2008), mentoring is likened to the concept of the apprenticeship. Just as craftsmen train and develop under the tutelage of a master artisan, so should an assistant principal train alongside a veteran principal (Hall, 2008).

While mentoring programs are a desired expectation, these programs can have impairments as well. Hall (2008) asserts, “the continuation of the learning process…has
been erratic and inconsistent” (para. 3). Olson (2007) admits that administrators, who do receive mentoring during their initial years in the position, only receive a minimal amount of coaching by their mentor. According to SREB (2005), many mentoring programs “go through the motions of mentoring” (p. 9), meaning that an established mentoring program is in place, but the implementation of the program is rarely carried out according to the extent of its intent.
Research (e.g., Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Spirro, Mattis, & Mitgang, 2007) has revealed guidelines that can aid in correcting these deficits. Anderson and Shannon (1988) acknowledged the nurturing process, modeling, the mentoring functions of teaching, sponsoring, encouraging, counseling, and befriending, a focus on professional and personal development, and an ongoing relationship as attributes of successful mentors. More recently, Spirro et al. have described in more detail how successful mentoring programs work. First, prospective mentors, described generally as leadership coaches by Strong, Barrett, and Bloom (2003), must receive quality training, funded by the state and/or district, prior to committing to a mentorship (Spirro et al., 2007). Second, data must be collected to establish what is and what is not working as it relates to the mentorship process (Spirro et al., 2007). Third, mentoring must be provided for two or more years or at least for one year (Spirro et al., 2007). Fourth, state and local funds should support a robust mentoring program that provides quality training, adequate stipends that reflect the complexity of the task, as well as an adequate timeline to provide a meaningful induction for prospective administrators (Spirro et al., 2007). Last, the induction process must focus prospective administrators on establishing effective goals, having the courage to change the status quo in an effort to improve teaching and learning, as well as confronting opposition to change where it exists (Spirro et al., 2007).

Principal preparation programs like internships and mentoring programs help to develop aspiring principals as they lean on veteran leadership coaches prior to the principalship as well as the early stages of their principalship. While these programs offer initial coaching and advice crucial for success, continuous learning is essential to maximize the potential throughout a principalship. Professional development,
specifically focused for educational leadership, is the answer for sustained, effective learning.

**Professional Development**

According to Fink and Resnick (2001), continual growth in the area of instructional leadership, provided through appropriate professional development, is imperative for sustained success in the educational setting. Thus, selecting the most effective professional development for instructional leaders is a daunting, but necessary challenge (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002). Furthermore, professional development programs designed specifically for assistant principals are few in number (Dean, 2007). According to the National College of School Leadership (n.d), professional development should “reflect prior learning and experience, and that individual development needs will vary with experiences and context” (p. 19).

The National Institute of School Leadership (NISL) is an example of an instructional leadership program that uses a professional learning community atmosphere to enhance learning. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), according to Dufour (2004), are described as “every imaginable combination of individuals with an interest in education” (p. 6). Little research has been done regarding the effectiveness of NISL (Perella, 2012). However, PLCs for school administrators, according to David (2009), have gained traction in recent years. According to Hirsh and Hord (2008), external organizations, like NISL, and the school system may offer these opportunities for administrators. PLCs are organized in many different ways; they may organize the meetings by school demographics, experience levels of the administrators, or even by content needs of interests (Hirsh & Hord, 2008).
As with teachers, collaborating with administrative peers is beneficial to improving instructional knowledge (David, 2009). However, most building level administrators have not had experience as a member of a learning community; when opportunities do arise, many complain about being away from the building or having meetings too often (David, 2009). Therefore, successful principal learning communities must exhibit “sufficient meeting time, strong facilitators, and carefully constructed agendas grounded in the real problems that school administrators face” (p. 89).

Knowledge gained in the field through the help of internships, mentoring programs, and professional development all help aspiring and practicing principals succeed in their positions. However, practice in the field, along with sustained, professional development is not the only factor that fosters a successful educational administrative career. A satisfactory perception of their position is also needed for success to be obtained.

Job Satisfaction of Assistant Principals

Kwan and Walker (2010), while researching job satisfaction of assistant principals (APs) in Hong Kong stated, “Job satisfaction relates to the degree to which a person is satisfied with some or all aspects of their job” (p. 533). Jepsen and Sheu (2003) assert job satisfaction is “a universal and essential aspect of adult career development” (p. 162). Job satisfaction fosters positive results at the workplace and is a factor in stress reduction (Demato & Curcio, 2004).

According to Woods (2012), “satisfaction among APs is generally considered to be low, but the factors associated with AP job satisfaction issues vary from study to study” (p. 27). Changes in demands along with increased responsibilities have made the
principalship less attractive (Fraser & Brock, 2006; Marshall, 1992). This level of intensity and complexity has also made it more difficult for schools to attract and retain successful educational leaders (Pounder & Crow, 2005).

Managerial tasks related to the assistant principalship have a negative impact on job satisfaction (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). There is a common understanding that assistant principals spend an abundance of their time on what many would consider objectionable duties (Woods, 2012). The amount of work placed on school administrators along with the added stress on their personal lives are quite discouraging (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Furthermore, demands on time, an inability to balance time between work and family, and negative aspects of the position such as student discipline, ethical quandaries, and termination dilemmas are all reasons that the position is considered unattractive (Fields & Egley, 2005; Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Terpstra and Honoree’s (2004) research states that low wages have also contributed to dissatisfaction regarding these educational positions.

The assistant principal position is viewed positively as well by those transitioning from the classroom. According to Marshall and Hooley (2006), those who make the progression from teacher to assistant principal view this progression as rewarding as well as a substantiation of their abilities as a leader. While some assistant principals are content with the traditional responsibilities of discipline and building management, most assistant principals actually welcome the instructional leadership role (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012). Hausman et al. (2002) identify, through their research, five aspects of the assistant principal position that lead to an overall satisfaction of their job. These aspects were their commitment to the profession, a sense of efficacy, common goals,
support from the community, and a healthy balance of personal and professional life (Hausman et al., 2002).

Navigating the process of principal preparation is essential to understanding the growth an educational leader experiences. Opportunities to practice the position prior to entering the assistant principalship allow aspiring assistant administrators to successfully make the transition into the position.

Responsibilities of the Assistant Principal

The role of the assistant principal has changed dramatically over the past decade (Katz, Allen, Fairchild, Fultz, & Grossenbacher, n.d.). This role has been redefined due to increased levels of accountability from federal, state, and local government (Katz et al., n.d.). While there are others, the four broad categories of discipline, building management, curriculum and instruction, and teacher evaluation are all addressed in the sections to follow. These categories factor into the overall administration of a school, and when there is an allocation for an assistant principal position, these administrative responsibilities are shared by the principal and assistant principal.

Discipline

The successful results of teaching and learning occur when schools are safe and secure (USDOE, 2014). Marzano’s (2003) research finds that a safe and orderly school environment is created when rules and procedures are established, appropriate consequences for violating the rules and procedures are created, and self-discipline is encouraged and practiced. Thus, student discipline is a common task for assistant principals (Nelson, 2002).
According to Marzano et al. (2005), one of the most important duties of school administration is to shield teachers from issues that disrupt instructional time. Bear (2010) states educators address school discipline with two distinct goals. The first goal is “to create and maintain a safe, orderly, and positive learning environment, which often requires the use of discipline to correct misbehavior” (p. 1). The second goal, according to Bear (2010) is “to teach or develop self-discipline” (p. 1). By addressing misconduct while coaching self-discipline, schools can minimize and even prevent behavioral issues from occurring (Bear, 2010).

School-wide behavior management systems have been implemented to establish a safe and orderly school environment (Nelson, 2002). Successful behavior management systems emphasize consistency throughout the classrooms through uniform implementation of strategies (Fitzsimmons, 1998). School-wide positive behavior support (PBS) is an example of a behavior management system. According to McKeivitt and Braaksma (2008), PBS is “a broad set of research-validated strategies designed to create school environments that promote and support appropriate behavior of all students” (p. 735). Listed below are McKeivitt and Braaksma’s five key features of a PBS system:

Table 6

*Key Features of a Positive Behavior Support System*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Define the expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Teach the expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Reinforce expected behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Develop response to behavioral errors</td>
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To ensure success of a school-wide behavior management system, Fitzsimmons (1998) asserts long-term commitments as well as effective professional development are necessary. McKevitt and Braaksma (2008) offer several basic considerations to ensure a successful behavior management system. First, a team is established to guide and maintain the implementation of the system (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008). Second, McKevitt and Braaksma believe that acquiring a sufficient amount of acceptance of the system, or buy-in, among the faculty will ensure sustainability and success. Third, it is imperative to align the discipline policy with the expectations of the PBS system (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008). Fourth, staff development, according to McKevitt and Braaksma, is necessary to fully implement PBS with integrity. Fifth, adequate funding is needed to successfully implement a PBS system (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008). And last, families and community must be included throughout the implementation of the PBS system (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008).

Providing a safe and orderly educational environment is crucial for the success of students, staff, faculty, and administration (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008). Proactivity, through behavior management systems, could minimize discipline concerns. Proper implementation is crucial to establish an effective behavior management system and will allow administration to focus their time, efforts, and energy in more important areas.
Current expectations for assistant principals are not the same as they were even five years ago (Douglas, 2014). The assistant principal of the past was expected to be a proficient manager of the building who occasionally addressed instructional matters (Douglas, 2014). However, according to Moore (2009), traditional tasks such as textbook management, discipline, detention supervision, transportation, and maintenance along with teacher observation, developing the master schedule, and previewing lesson plans are still commonplace in the educational administration setting. Douglas adds that today “Good assistant principals have a unique and pragmatic skill set they employ to manage facilities, logistics, and resources, and we hire people who we know have an aptitude for these responsibilities” (para. 4).

Grate’s (2005) research reveals that the role of the assistant principal lacks a standard job description. Therefore, the traditional role of the assistant principal as a disciplinarian, mediator, and hall monitor has been shaped over the years by the complicated nature of schools (Bartholomew, Melendez-Delaney, Orta, & White, 2005). As assistant principals become familiar with their role, they develop an expertise about their position that actually prevents them from gaining more experiences, especially in the area of instruction (Katz et al., n.d.). Instead of broadening their experiences, assistant principals become entrenched in certain managerial roles that inhibit professional growth in the area of curriculum and instruction (Katz et al., n.d.).

The assistant principal position can become mired in the everyday routines of building management. In turn, assistant principals who fall victim to this practice lose
sight of the most important elements in the educational setting, instruction and student achievement. Weller and Weller (2002) add these words regarding these concerns:

The ambiguity in the role of assistant principal allows for the ineffective use of this position, which should be a vital link between the principal and teachers, parents and students, and an extension of the principalship in promoting effective, quality-oriented outcomes. (p. xiii)

According to Katz et al. (n.d.), assistant principals often get left out of instructional leadership roles. As managerial obstacles continue to affect the daily workload of the assistant principal, it is the responsibility of the assistant principal to be purposeful in seeking new learning experiences, especially in the area of curriculum and instruction. As assistant principals become more instructionally sound, they can improve upon their professional practice as educational leaders (Katz et al., n.d).

Curriculum and Instruction

Marzano et al. (2005) report that a lack of student achievement is one of many issues that currently plague the public education system. Furthermore, they maintain that school leadership impacts student achievement either positively or negatively, depending on the effectiveness of the leaders. As accountability increases, more focus must be applied toward the instructional needs of the school. Principals have partially delegated the responsibilities of an instructional leader to assistant principals to balance the demands of accountability.

Assistant principals have become viable resources for principals as instructional responsibilities increase (Oliver, 2005). According to Douglas (2014), it is a requirement for “principals to be instructional leaders and have an in-depth understanding of
pedagogy for evaluation purposes, professional learning communities, purchasing quality instructional materials, and designing building-level professional development” (para. 3). With this expectation in mind, it is essential for principals to not only accept the responsibility of instructional leadership, but to also delegate portions of the responsibility to their assistant principal.

Beyond the typical roles of textbook management, discipline, transportation, and teacher evaluation, an assistant principal’s duties are quite ambiguous (Moore, 2009). Assistant principals who share similar positions within a school district may have very different roles as well as different processes to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. According to Moore, this ambiguous approach to the position leads to a lack of uniformity in the position and a lack of productivity follows. Standardizing the processes of assistant principals within a district is the solution to the ambiguous nature of the assistant principalship. Moore asserts the standardization of administrative processes leads to clear, concrete expectations for assistant principals that will allow them to be more efficient with the typical tasks of the assistant principal so they more focused in the area of instruction.

According to Good (2008), there are ten practices that assistant principals can use to help improve their instructional leadership capacity. Listed below are Good’s ten practices:

Table 7

Practices for Assistant Principals that Increase Instructional Leadership Capacity

| 1. | Talk to your principal about how you increase your instructional leadership capacity and take a more active role in the educational plan for the school. |
Table 7 (continued).

2. Set a goal for how many classrooms you will visit each week.


4. Make a best practice suggestion and follow up on it implementation.

5. Attend learning community and team meetings with your teachers.

6. Become a trained facilitator, then train your teachers. Ask for an opportunity to regularly facilitate grade level, vertical, or horizontal meetings.

7. Take time to teach a class.

8. Attend professional development training with your teachers.

9. Find a mentor who embodies the instructional leadership qualities you want to emulate.

10. Become more internally disciplined to follow your new goals.

Note. Adapted from Sharing the Secrets, R. Good, 2008, Principal Leadership.

Through proper administrative practices, growth in the area of curriculum and instruction will occur (Good, 2008). Through this growth, Good (2008) states that assistant principals can experience a confidence to share newly acquired knowledge throughout the building. The ability to address the faculty instructionally can enable an assistant principal to apply their knowledge by evaluating a teacher’s practice.

Teacher Evaluation

Teacher evaluation is typically one of the first instructional roles assistant principals undertake (Katz et al., n.d.). This process, in most cases, is familiar to assistant principals because of previous evaluations that have been performed of them as a teacher (Wilhelm, 2014). Several considerations should be made when assigning assistant
principals to a teacher for evaluation. Thoughtful principals will assign new assistant principals optimum teachers for evaluation. These teachers, according to Wilheim, should experience with positive interactions with students, should be excellent managers of the classroom, should not have a large number of failures, should be coachable, and professional in their behavior. Principals should also balance the veteran status and ability of the teachers who are being evaluated. Wilheim states that the inexperience of the assistant principal along with the years of experience of the veteran teacher being evaluated can prove to be problematic. Principals should also prevent situations that place novice assistant principals in a position to evaluate first year teachers. Because first year teachers lack experience as well as tenure, the potential for them to be non-renewed is greater and, putting a novice assistant principal in this position could prove to be troublesome. To curb these issues, Wilheim suggests assigning novice assistant principals to strong, tenured teachers to ensure successful evaluation and conversation beyond the evaluation.

Two basic purposes are served through teacher evaluation (Danielson, 2007). First, effective teacher evaluation can foster an improvement in teacher quality (Danielson, 2007). To ensure such quality, Danielson (2011) stated “a consistent definition of good teaching” (p. 36) must be established. Beyond defining what good teaching is, there must be “a shared understanding of this definition between faculty and administration (Danielson, 2011, p. 36). Danielson (2011) also asserts “evaluators must be able to assess teachers accurately so teachers accept the judgments” (p. 36). Second, Danielson (2007) states that teacher evaluation helps foster professional development.
Teachers must recognize their “responsibility to be involved in a career-long quest to improve practice” (Danielson, 2011, p. 36).

Danielson (2011) asserts the status quo evaluation process has many deficiencies. The deficits include outdated evaluation criteria, ineffective evaluation commentary which includes rating teachers at the highest of levels, a one-size fits all approach to the evaluation process, an inconsistency among evaluators when evaluating teachers, and a lack of collaborative discussion during the evaluation process (Danielson, 2011).

According to Marzano, (2012):

Teacher evaluation systems have not accurately measured teacher quality because they’ve failed to do a good job of discriminating between effective and ineffective teachers, and teacher evaluation systems have not aided in developing a highly skilled teacher workforce. (para. 1)

Factors that Influence Readiness

The principalship is a complex role (Crow, 2006). Because of the complexity of the position, recruiting and retaining highly qualified principals are becoming more difficult (Simon & Newman, 2003). Therefore, principal shortages at all levels are being reported across the United States (Fenwick, 2000). Thus, opportunities for those ready to transition into the principalship are available.

Several factors contribute to one’s readiness to become a school administrator. Through research, Kwan (2009) indicated that the single most important factor influencing assistant principals’ aspirations to transition into the principalship is their sense of efficacy. Efficacy, according to Reeves (2011), is the personal conviction of educators that their actions have a positive consequence on the academic success of their
students. According to research of Harris, Arnold, Lowery, and Crocker (2000), the decision to transition into the principalship is simply to affect more students positively throughout the school setting.

Several factors also deter educators from the principalship. For example, the demands of the position keep assistant principals from entertaining the transition into the principalship. According to Cusick (2002), aspiring principals view the principalship as a demanding, difficult, and unattractive position. These demands, according to Cusick, are a lack of adequate compensation, stress, time required to have a positive affect, as well as the potential conflicts that could arise between the school and community.

Inadequate compensation for the position of the principal is one factor affecting the readiness of aspiring principals. According to Mitchell (2009), the responsibilities required for the position do not match the compensation received. Studies have shown that in some instances, veteran teachers’ salaries were comparable to that of the principal’s salary (Viadero, 2009). Bass, Principal, and Lufkin’s (2006) research suggests that compensation and benefits should correlate with the responsibilities of the principalship in order for schools to attract worthy candidates.

Another factor affecting the readiness of aspiring principals to pursue the principalship is the level of stress associated with the position. Demands to prepare students competing in a global economy have led to higher standards in the educational setting (Marx & Harris, 2006). Furthermore, accountability, especially in the area of assessment, has fostered negative sentiments that affect not just the administrative position, but the classroom and community as well (Ng, 2006).
While stress is a reality for the principalship, there are also ways to deal with it. A survey completed by multiple principals cites thirty ways to fight stress while in the principalship. Confronting your stress through various activities and decisions will lead to more positive and productive professional habits (Boyadjian et al., 2014). Below is the list of stress relievers.

Table 8

*30 Ways to Fight Stress*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laugh</th>
<th>Cook</th>
<th>Find Empty Classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>Peer Fun Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise File</td>
<td>Manage Time</td>
<td>Personal Appointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Network</td>
<td>Jog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time with Students</td>
<td>Watch TV</td>
<td>Outdoor Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand Horizons</td>
<td>Plan Work at Home Day</td>
<td>Meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Take a Fun Class</td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave it at Work</td>
<td>Inspirational CD’s</td>
<td>Time with Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Weekend Retreats</td>
<td>Address the Stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>Enjoy the Work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from *Principals Offer 30 Ways to Fight Stress*, L. Boyadjian et al., 2014, Education World.

A devotion to the family may curtail an aspiring principal’s readiness to transition into the principalship. Whitaker and Vogel (2005) report that family obligations and commitments are barriers to the principalship. The demands of the principalship include spending large amounts of time at work as well as bringing work home (Fields, 2005).

While it is not easy, families with a spouse in the principalship manage to find balance (Hopkins, 2009). Several factors, according to Hopkins, allow for a healthy
First, teamwork is essential. Sharing the daily chores and norms of the day with your spouse minimizes judgments of a lack of support. Protecting time for the family is also important. When family functions can be scheduled into the day like work assignments, balance between work and the home can be found. Last, incorporating teamwork and the family calendar together into the work schedule can prove beneficial. Creating family ventures out of school activities is an efficient way to tackle the balance between family and work.

Potential conflicts within the educational environment as well as between the school and community deter an aspiring principal from the position. The position of principal could negatively impact personal relationships within the educational setting as well as in the community (Waskiewicz, 1999). Kwan’s (2009) research indicates that assistant principals were reluctant to transition into the principalship because of a fear of jeopardizing relationships with peers and community members.

School districts address these concerns by increasing the capacity of their assistant principals to ensure a successful transition in the event a vacancy occurs (Johnson-Taylor & Martin, 2007). A network of support and continual administrative professional development is vital to attracting and retaining quality individuals who have the capacity to lead a school (Johnson-Taylor & Martin, 2007). Kaplan and Owings (1999) report that the readiness of assistant principals is dependent on the experiences their principals allow them to undertake during the school day. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the principal to prepare assistant principals for the transition into the principalship (Johnson-Taylor & Martin, 2007). Modeling is not enough; principals must intentionally provide assistant principals with opportunities during the school day that
will support personal growth and a potential transition into the principalship (Johnson-Taylor & Martin, 2007). Johnson-Taylor and Martin offer suggestions for cultivating assistant principals who will be ready to successfully transition into the principalship:

Table 9

*Strategies that Build the Bench*

1. Inquire about career goals when hiring.
2. Hire only assistant principals who are solid in instruction.
3. Get on the same page quickly.
4. Involve assistant principals in all aspects of running the school.
5. Get out of the way.
6. Have the difficult conversations.
7. Provide professional development.
8. Cheer for your assistant principal.

Note. Adapted from *Next in Line: Preparing Assistant Principals for the Principalship*, C. Johnson-Taylor, and M. B. Martin., 2007, NASSP.

**Summary**

Throughout history, leadership has been researched in many different ways. Detailed definitions have been created over time and many influential people have attempted to address what leadership is to them. Identifying traits of leaders has long been a practice across civilizations. Over the last century, the practice of identifying leadership traits has found its way into the educational setting.

School leadership has evolved significantly since the creation of the formal educational environment. The principalship was created as a demand for a formal education as well as a need to supervise instruction increased. As the duties and demands
of the principal increased, the assistant principal position was created and evolved to assist with the workload. A training ground for the principalship has indirectly been created through the evolution of the assistant principal position.

Increasing accountability demands have led to a need for experienced individuals to fill vacant assistant principal roles. Principal preparation programs offer opportunities for training so that these individuals can make the transition into the principalship successfully. These preparation programs are in the form of educational leadership programs, internships, mentoring programs, and professional development opportunities. Appropriate preparation prior to entry into the administrative field can yield satisfactory results along with sense of efficacy and satisfaction with their role as an administrator.

The job satisfaction of assistant principals has been researched thoroughly. Research has shown a low level of satisfaction from the position of the assistant principal. Accountability demands and increased responsibilities have led to added stress as well as an unattractive perception of the assistant principal position. Evidence of positive perceptions of the assistant principal role has also been found through research. Self efficacy, an overall commitment to the profession as well as opportunities to build relationships have led to a positive level of satisfaction for those in the assistant principal’s position.

Many responsibilities come with the position of the assistant principal. Creating a culture of discipline and high expectations is essential for success. Building management is another responsibility of the assistant principal position. As accountability increases in the educational environment, a focus on increasing the instructional capacity of assistant
principals has become the norm. Finally, the evaluation of teachers is also an important responsibility of assistant principals.

As the complexity of the assistant principal position increases, it is becoming more difficult to recruit and retain qualified educational leaders. A sense of efficacy has fostered readiness in many aspiring principals. However, accountability demands have led to shortages in the principalship in recent years and opportunities have been created for those aspiring principals who are ready to fill the void. Compensation concerns, stress, a lack of time, and potential conflicts with family and community have been noted to deter aspiring and acting principals into transitioning into the position or staying in the position altogether.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine if certain factors affect the perceptions of assistant principals’ readiness to become principals. This chapter details the process that were used to accomplish the research. The study utilized survey methodology through a questionnaire-type survey, developed by the researcher, and the questionnaire was analyzed using a multiple linear regression analysis. All active assistant principals throughout the state were invited to participate in the study, and surveys were given during the spring semester of the 2014-2015 school year.

This chapter has been organized in the following manner: research question, hypotheses, research design, participants, instrumentation, procedures, data analysis, as well as a brief summary of the chapter. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the appendix section. Serving as a guide to the research are the following question and hypotheses:

Research Question

Is there a relationship between assistant principals’ perception of their readiness and their
- age?
- family income?
- marriage status?
- amount of children?
- years of experience in the educational field?
- years of experience as an assistant principal
Hypotheses

H$_1$: There is a significant relationship between assistant principals’ perception of readiness to pursue the principalship and the variables of age, family income, marital status, amount of children, experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and peer assistance.

H$_2$: There is a significant relationship between assistant principals’ perception of readiness to pursue the principalship and the influence of age, family income, marital status, amount of children, experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and peer assistance.

Research Design

The study utilizes survey methodology through a one-time, survey-based, quantitative investigation of how personal and professional factors positively affect assistant principals’ perception of their readiness to pursue the principalship. The researcher used a multiple linear regression analysis to explore the relationship of eight independent variables (personal factors—age, family income, marriage status, and amount of children as well as professional factors—years of experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and number of peer assistant principals) with that of the dependent variable (readiness) as they apply to assistant principals.
Participants

The study targeted all assistant principals in public high schools throughout the state of Mississippi as participants for the research. A list of every high school assistant principal along with his or her email address were requested from the Mississippi Department of Education. There are approximately 350 assistant principals in public high schools in the state. The goal was to have at least one hundred respondents for the research.

Instrumentation

The researcher created the questionnaire, *An Assistant Principal Survey on Personal and Professional Factors that Affect One’s Readiness to Pursue the Principalship* (Appendix A), to measure the participants’ current perceptions of their readiness to pursue the principalship as well as factors (personal factors-age, family income, marriage status, and amount of children as well as professional factors-years of experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and number of peer assistant principals) that influence the participants’ perceptions of their readiness to pursue the principalship. The questionnaire is organized into three sections; Section I includes demographic factors, Section II includes assistant principals’ perception of readiness, and Section III includes influence of factors. Section II and III are Likert-type items with potential answers being strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Section II of the questionnaire consists of four questions and are included to measure the participants’ intentions of transitioning into the principalship as well as their
perceptions of readiness as it relates to their current knowledge, abilities, and mindset in their role as an assistant principal.

Section III of the questionnaire consists of eight questions and are included to measure the positive influence that factors (personal factors-age, family income, marriage status, and amount of children as well as professional factors-years of experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and number of peer assistant principals) have on an assistant principals’ perception of their readiness to pursue the principalship.

In order to validate the questions on the instrument, a panel of experts (Appendix B) was formed to constructively critique the survey. The experts consisted of the following: a retired principal from a Mississippi school district, an active principal in a Mississippi school district as well as an active assistant principal from a Mississippi school district were removed from the final study.

With Institutional Review Board approval, a pilot study was conducted to analyze the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The pilot study consisted of at least twelve assistant principals from a select public school district in the state of Mississippi. The results from the pilot study were entered in SPSS, and a Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient test was applied to examine the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire. It was determined that the survey instrument reported a Cronbach’s Alpha value of .91 indicating sufficient reliability.

Procedures

The following process was used for the distribution, retrieval, and data collection from the completed questionnaires of the respondents. Once obtaining approval from
The University of Southern Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (Appendix C), the researcher requested and received a list of all assistant principals in public high schools in Mississippi through the Mississippi Department of Education. The researcher then sent an emailed letter to all assistant principals across the state of Mississippi requesting their participation in the research. The emailed letter also explained the anonymity of completing the questionnaire, confidentiality of the questionnaire, and voluntary participation of the questionnaire. Attached to the email was a link to an electronic questionnaire in Qualtrics, which is the survey tool that was used for the collection of data for the research. Reminders to respond to the questionnaire were sent out once a week for four weeks after the initial email is sent. As respondents complete the anonymous, confidential, and voluntary questionnaire, the results of their responses were compiled and sorted by Qualtrics, which allowed easy access of the results for the researcher.

Data Analysis

Data from the questionnaire were collected and analyzed statistically through SPSS. Data was analyzed using frequency, means, and standard deviations to gather descriptive statistics from the factors of age, family income, marriage status, amount of children, years of experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and number of peer assistant principals. A multiple linear regression was used by the researcher to predict which factors, as well as the influence of factors, that affect the readiness of assistant principals’ pursuit of the principalship. To support the hypotheses, an alpha level of .05 was determined the significance level.
Summary

This chapter provided an outline of the procedures used for carrying out this study. The chapter begins by identifying the research question and hypotheses that were created for the study. The questionnaire was discussed in detail by providing an overview of the contents as well as how the questionnaire would be communicated to participants, collected, and scored to address the research question. In Chapter IV, the reports of the results of the study are examined.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to determine if certain factors as well as the influence of these factors affect the perceptions of assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship. An email link to a questionnaire was sent to 278 assistant principals throughout the state of Mississippi. There were 115 respondents to the questionnaire, giving a rate of return of 41% for this questionnaire. Eight of the 115 respondents did not complete the survey. Presented in this chapter are the results of the statistical analyses of the participants.

Descriptive Data

The participants in the study consisted of 107 high school assistant principals in Mississippi (N=107). The participants’ mean years of experience as an educator were calculated at 17.32 years with a standard deviation of 8.17. Frequencies and standard deviations were determined for the personal factors of age, family income, marital status, and amount of children. Regarding age, the majority of the participants fell in the “33-38” and “39-44” age ranges and represented 59.8% of the total participants (Table 10). As for family income, 33 participants fell in the income range of “75,000-$99,999” and another 33 participants fell in the $100,000-$124,999” income range. These 66 consisted of 61.6% of the total participants in this category (Table 11). Regarding marital status, 89 of the 107 assistant principals surveyed selected “Married”. At 83.2% of the total participant population, this represented an overwhelming majority of the total participants (Table 12). For amount of children, a total of 39 participants reported having “2”
children. Twenty-seven of the 107 reported having “3” children. These two participant groups were the majority surveyed at 61.6% for this particular category (Table 13).

Table 10

Frequencies and Percentages of Age of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27-32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>33-38</td>
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<tr>
<td>39-44</td>
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<td>29.9</td>
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<td>45-50</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>51-56</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
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<td>57-61</td>
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<tr>
<td>61+</td>
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<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11

Frequencies and Percentages of Family Income of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-$74,999</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000-$99,999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>$100,000-$124,999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30.8</td>
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<td>$125,000-$149,999</td>
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<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000-$174,999</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
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Table 11 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$175,000-$200,000</td>
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<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $200,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12

*Frequencies and Percentages of the Marital Status of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single, never married</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13

*Frequencies and Percentages of the Amount of Children of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Children</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36.4</td>
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</table>
Table 13 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Amount of Children</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The next set of descriptive statistics address the frequencies and percentages of the professional factors of years of experience as an assistant principal, highest degree completed, whether or not the participant is currently pursuing a degree, and if so, what degree, and peer assistant principals. Regarding years of experience as an assistant principal, 29 of the 107 participants reported having “2-4” years of experience and 28 reported having “Less than 2” years of experience. These 57 participants accounted for 53.3% of the total in this category (Table 14). As for highest degree completed, a total of 65 participants reported a “Master’s” degree as their highest level of degree. These 65 participants accounted for 60.7% of the total participant population in this category (Table 15). Regarding the pursuit of another degree, 86 participants reported “no” to working towards another degree. This group accounts for 80.4% of the participant population in this category. The other 21 participants currently working towards another degree were asked to select the degree in which they were currently pursuing. Of the 21 reporting, 12 participants reported pursuing a “Doctorate” degree. This participant group was the majority surveyed at 57.1% for this particular category (Table 16). As for peer assistant principals, 34 of the 107 reported having “1” peer assistant principal working
alongside them. Another 30 participants reported having “2” peer assistant principals working alongside them. These 64 participants were the majority surveyed at 59.8% for this particular category (Table 17).

Table 14

*Frequencies and Percentages of Assistant Principal Years of Experience of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>107</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15

*Frequencies and Percentages of Highest Degree Completed by Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degree Completed</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist’s</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>107</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16

*Frequencies and Percentages of Participants Pursuing Another Degree*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pursuit of Degree</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>80.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Pursuing</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist’s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17

*Frequencies and Percentages of Peer Assistant Principals of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer Assistant Principals</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question and Hypotheses

One research question was designed to guide the study. The goal of the question was twofold. First, the question measured if there was a relationship between the perception of assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship and the personal and professional factors of age, family income, marriage status, children, years of experience, years of experience as an assistant principal, level of education, current pursuit of a degree, and peer assistant principals. The question also measured if the influence of these same factors affected the perception of assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship.

Before the research question could be answered, an understanding of readiness was determined by using Gonzalez’s (2013) definition as a guide. According to Gonzalez, readiness “entails having the knowledge, ability, and proper mindset necessary for navigating immediate organizational or job-specific challenges” (p. 10). To establish a readiness score, participants in the study quantified their readiness by rating their intentions, current knowledge, abilities, and mindset of pursuing the principalship. Means and standard deviations were tabulated from the results to establish a score for all of these variables, with the average score totaling 4.03 with a standard deviation of .91 (Table 18).
Table 18

*Descriptive Statistics for Participants’ Readiness to Transition Into the Principalship*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readiness Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intentions of Transitioning</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Knowledge</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Abilities</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Mindset</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likert Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Means and standard deviations were calculated to quantify how the factors of age, family income, marital status, amount of children, experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and peer assistance are perceived by assistant principals to influence their readiness to pursue the principalship. These averages were calculated as a whole, with the average score totaling 3.65 with a standard deviation of .77 (Table 19).

Table 19

*Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Influence of Factors of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Children</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asst. Principal Experience</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Degree</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree Pursuing</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>1.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Asst. Principal</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of All Factors</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likert Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

There were two hypotheses associated with the research question:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between assistant principals’ perception of readiness to pursue the principalship and the factors of age, family income, marital status, amount of children, experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and peer assistance.

A multiple linear regression, developed through SPSS, was calculated to predict participants’ readiness based on age, family income, marriage status, amount of children, total years of experience, years of experience as an assistant principal, level of education, degree pursuing, and peer assistant principals. A significant regression equation was found ($F(20,86) = 1.923, p = .02$), with an $R^2$ of .309 with several statistically significant predictor variables associated with readiness. Assistant principals with a family income between $125,000 and $149,999 are .771 less likely to exhibit readiness to pursue the principalship ($p=.021$). Assistant principals with a family income between $150,000 and $174,999 are .639 less likely to exhibit readiness to pursue the principalship ($p=.039$). Assistant Principals who are single and have never married are 1.154 more likely to
exhibit readiness to pursue the principalship \((p=.010)\). There are no statistically
significant differences in the readiness of assistant principals in the age ranges of 27-32,
39-44, 45-50, 51-56, 57-61, and those older than 61 years of age as compared to those in
the 33-38 age range. There are no statistically significant differences in the readiness of
assistant principals falling in the family income ranges of $50,000-$74,999, $75,000-99,999,$175,000-$200,000, and those with a family income of more than $200,000 as
compared to those making between $100,000 and $124,999. There are no statistically
significant differences in the readiness of assistant principals who widowed, divorced, or
separated as compared to those who were married. There were no statistically significant
differences in readiness of assistant principals completing a Specialist’s or Doctoral
degree as compared to those who received a Master’s degree. The amount of children an
assistant principal has is positively and significantly correlated to readiness, indicating
that the more children an assistant principal has, the more readiness they display in
pursuing the principalship \((p=.032)\) Assistant Principals’ years of experience as an
educator \((p=.371)\), current pursuit of a degree \((p=.119)\), and peer assistant principals
\((p=.839)\) does not reach statistical significance.

Table 20

Unstandardized and Standardized Coefficients and Significance of Readiness Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.185</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age2</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age4</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age5</td>
<td>.542</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age6</td>
<td>-.958</td>
<td>-.201</td>
<td>.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age7</td>
<td>-.117</td>
<td>-.032</td>
<td>.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age8</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>.918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income2</td>
<td>-.332</td>
<td>-.137</td>
<td>.287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income3</td>
<td>-.258</td>
<td>-.131</td>
<td>.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income5</td>
<td>-.771</td>
<td>-.258</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income6</td>
<td>-.639</td>
<td>-.223</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marstat1</td>
<td>1.154</td>
<td>.335</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marstat3</td>
<td>-.126</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>.859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marstat4</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marstat5</td>
<td>1.232</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educ3</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educ4</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Many Children Do You Have?</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Many Years of Experience Do You Have?</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>.371</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you currently Pursuing</td>
<td>-.373</td>
<td>-.164</td>
<td>.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another Degree?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Many Peer Assistant</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals Do You Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alongside?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H2: There is a significant relationship between assistant principals’ perception of readiness to pursue the principalship and the influence of the variables of age, family income, marital status, amount of children, experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and peer assistance.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict participants’ perceived readiness based on the influence of age, family income, marriage status, amount of children, total years of experience, years of experience as an assistant principal, level of education, education currently pursuing, and peer assistant principals. A significant regression equation was found ($F(8,98) = 7.779, p < .001$, with an $R^2$ of .388) with a few statistically significant predictor variables associated with readiness. The influence of the amount of children of assistant principals’ negatively influenced the readiness of their pursuit of the principalship ($p=.045$). As assistant principals have more children, their readiness to pursue the principalship is .165 less likely to be influenced. The total years
of experience as an assistant principal positively influences their readiness to pursue the principalship ($p=.005$). Assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship is .224 more likely to be influenced with each additional year of experience. The influence of the level of degree achieved is also positively significant to assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship ($p=.003$). As assistant principals achieve higher levels of degrees, their readiness to pursue the principalship is .230 more likely to be influenced. There are no statistically significant differences in the influence of age, family income, marital status, degree currently pursuing, and peer assistant principals regarding the readiness of assistant principals to pursue the principalship.

Table 21

*Unstandardized and Standardized Coefficients and Significance of Readiness Factors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.038</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Age</td>
<td>.138</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>.132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Income</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Marital Status</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>.939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Children</td>
<td>-.165</td>
<td>-.220</td>
<td>.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Years Experience</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.284</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 21 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Level of Degree</td>
<td>.230</td>
<td>.292</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Pursuit of Current Degree</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>.758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Amount of Peer Assistant Principals</td>
<td>-.034</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>.641</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

The regression model revealed a positive, statistically significant predictor of readiness in assistant principals to pursue the principalship with single, never married individuals and negative, statistically significant predictors of readiness with the factors of assistant principals that make between $125,000 and $149,999 and $150,000 and $174,999. The influence of years of experience and level of degree reported as being positive, significant predictors of readiness and the influence of amount of children reported as being a negative, significant predictors of readiness. Chapter V will discuss these results further and conclusions will be drawn from the findings.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Introduction

The intention of this research study was to determine if certain factors affect the perceptions of assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship. This chapter begins with a summary of the results that were analyzed in chapter four. Limitations of the study have been identified are discussed. Next, recommendations for policy are outlined to aid practitioners in utilizing the research to support successful transitions into the principalship. Recommendations for future research are outlined next to assist those who wish to continue this research avoid particular obstacles or to even expand the research appropriately. Last, a summary of the chapter concludes the chapter.

Summary of the Results

Through an analysis of the responses from 107 high school assistant principals with an average of just over 17 years of experience in education, conclusions from the study were obtained. First, demographic data of the respondents regarding the personal factors of age, family income, marriage status, amount of children and the professional factors of years of experience as an assistant principal, level of education, current degree pursuing, and peer assistant principals were collected. Regarding personal factors, the majority of assistant principals surveyed fell mostly in the 33-44 age range, had a family income between $75,000-$124,999, and were married with two or three children. Regarding professional factors, the majority surveyed had a Master’s degree with 0-4 years of experience, were not currently pursuing a higher degree, and worked beside 1 or 2 assistant principals.
Readiness was quantified by rating respondents’ intentions to pursue the principalship, as well as their current knowledge of the role, abilities to perform in the role, and mindset to pursue the principalship. Based on these variables, it was determined that respondents to the questionnaire, as a whole, agreed that they were ready to pursue the principalship. The perceived influence of the aforementioned personal and professional factors as a whole was also quantified with the results determining the perception of all of the factors as an influence to the pursuit of the principalship.

With demographic data reported and readiness and the influence of factors quantified, the hypotheses of the research were addressed. Hypothesis 1 suggested that there was a significant relationship between assistant principals’ perception of readiness to pursue the principalship and the factors of age, family income, marital status, amount of children, experience, education obtained, education currently being pursued, and peer assistance. The results of the research revealed several variables that could significantly predict readiness in assistant principals’ pursuit of the principalship. Assistant principals with income ranges of $125,000-$149,999 and $150,000-$174,999 are not likely to pursue the principalship, proving that certain levels of income can have a negative affect on readiness. These findings support the research of Mitchell (2009) who states that the responsibilities and the compensation of the position did not always match, therefore deterring assistant principals toward the pursuit of the principalship. Assistant principals that were single and had never married are also positive significant predictors of readiness. This conclusion is supported by Whitaker and Vogel (2005) who report family obligations and commitments as barriers to the principalship. The amount of children an assistant principal was proved to be a significant, positive predictor of readiness. The
more children an assistant principal has, the more likely one is to pursue the principalship. Understanding that having more kids must lead to more family obligations and commitments, this conclusion contradicts the findings of Whitaker and Vogel (2005).

Hypothesis 2 suggested that there was a significant relationship between assistant principals’ perception of readiness to pursue the principalship and the influence of age, family income, marital status, amount of children, experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and peer assistance. The results of the research revealed several significant relationships between the perception of readiness and the influence of the aforementioned personal and professional factors. The influence of the amount of children proved to have a significant, negative impact on readiness. According to the survey, the more children assistant principals have, the less likely they would be influenced to pursue the principalship. While the factor of “amount of children” itself proved to be a positive factor of readiness, the influence of it, as perceived by Mississippi high school assistant principals, did not. Assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship positively influenced readiness with each additional year of experience as an educator. This finding is consistent with the research of Kaplan and Owings (1999) who report that the readiness of assistant principals is dependent on their work experiences delegated by their principal. The influence of the level of degree achieved by an assistant principal was a significant predictor of readiness. According to Johnson-Taylor and Martin (2007), professional development leads assistant principals towards the pursuit of the principalship, supporting the conclusion that the influence of the achievement of continued education is a predictor of readiness.
Limitations

Several limitations have been identified through the research process that could have impacted the study. First, the research study was limited to 278 high school assistant principals in the state of Mississippi. A sufficient, but small sample size of 100 was required for the research. Reliability could be strengthened by expanding this study to include elementary and middle school assistant principals in Mississippi or even including additional states to the research. Next, the researcher’s decision to include only a select few personal and professional factors to assess perceptions of readiness to pursue the principalship was a limitation. While there are too many personal and professional factors to include all in to a research study, more factors could have been incorporated to further strengthen the research by gaining more of an understanding of what factors promote or deter readiness in assistant principals’ pursuit of the principalship. Last, the varying degrees of socioeconomic status between districts and schools of the assistant principals surveyed was a limitation. For this study, all assistant principals contributing to the study were only aggregated as a whole to gain an overall readiness perception of their pursuit of the principalship. The socioeconomic differences in the environments of the assistant principals surveyed could have had an impact on the perceptions of their readiness to pursue the principalship.

Recommendations for Policy

This research is intended to provide assistant principals with insight to what factors influence their readiness to pursue the principalship. With only a limited amount of research currently available regarding this topic, the results obtained from this study highlight factors that do influence readiness in assistant principals’ pursuit of the
principalship. Assistant principals considering transitioning into the principalship can better prepare themselves for the principalship by assessing their own readiness through a comparison of the results of this research.

School districts, understanding now what influences readiness, can offer relevant, creative opportunities and incentives to help aspiring principals cope with factors that act as barriers to the position. Understanding that the amount of children an assistant principal has influences his or her readiness to pursue the principalship, time management skills could be enhanced through a professional development setting that could help aspiring principals better balance their personal and professional lives. With the pursuit of a higher degree positively influencing the readiness of assistant principals, financial aid incentives could be offered by school districts to promote readiness within the school district. These are just a few of the possibilities that school districts could entertain to help support assistant principals in their pursuit of the principalship.

Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the research including only high school assistant principals in the state of MS, a small sample size proved to be a limitation. Future research should include a larger sample size that not only includes just high school assistant principals in the state of Mississippi, but all assistant principals throughout the state of Mississippi, as well as neighboring states and beyond. While Mississippi high schools assistant principals offer valuable information regarding their perceptions of readiness to pursue the principalship, including the perceptions of elementary and middle school assistant principals from not only the state of Mississippi but neighboring states as well could prove beneficial.
Increasing the sample size along with adding other personal and professional factors could also allow for flexibility in the research. Comparisons could be made between elementary, middle, and high school assistant principals to see if perceptions of readiness to pursue the principalship are different amongst these groups. Increasing the range of those being surveyed by including the assistant principals from other states would allow for comparisons of their perceptions of readiness geographically by states. By including additional demographic factors like gender, race, as well as ethnicity, comparisons regarding assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship could also be researched. Additional professional factors such as size of school enrollment, extracurricular responsibilities, and number of tasks delegated, could further strengthen the research by offering a more thorough examination of assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship.

This study could be modified to make comparisons based on performance as well. Due to the accessibility of building and district level accountability data for Mississippi schools and districts, the perceptions of assistant principals’ pursuit of the principalship could be compared between assistant principals in low performing schools and districts with those in high performing schools and districts. The results of such a study could provide valuable information regarding comparisons of perceptions of readiness in assistant principals in high and low performing districts and schools.

Finally, this study could be modified to include the perceptions of principals’ readiness to pursue the superintendency. Using the same personal and professional factors, the results of such a study could prove interesting. With the principalship being one of the most challenging occupational positions (Guterman, 2007), this modification
to the study could provide insight into the similarities and differences of the perceptions of readiness of assistant principals’ to pursue the principalship to that of principals’ pursuit of the superintendency.

Summary

Chapter V provides a summary of the results from the research that included a compilation of demographic data of personal and professional factors of the assistant principalship, readiness and influence ratings from the study as well as statistically significant factors that proved to be predictors of readiness. Several limitations were found through the implementation of the study and discussed as a means of prevention in future studies. Multiple recommendations were made from the results of the research that can aid educational policy and practice as well as any research attempted on this topic in the future.

In closing, this researcher hopes to provide clarity for those wishing to assess their readiness to pursue the principalship. According to Crow (2006), the principalship is a complex role. Simon and Newman (2003) add that recruiting and retaining highly qualified principals is becoming more difficult. Opportunities for those ready to transition into the principalship, are available. When aspiring principals can accurately assess their readiness to pursue the principalship, they are then empowered to transition into the position with confidence, creating the opportunity for a more successful experience personally and professionally.
APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

An Assistant Principal Survey on Personal and Professional Factors that Affect One’s Readiness to Pursue the Principalship

Readiness “entails having the knowledge, ability, and proper mindset necessary for navigating immediate organizational or job-specific challenges” (Gonzalez, 2013).

I. Demographic Factors

1. What is your age?
   21-26  27-32  33-38  39-44  45-50  51-56  57-61  61+

2. What is your family income?
   Less than $50,000
   $50,000-$74,999
   $75,000-$99,999
   $100,000-$124,999
   $125,000-$149,999
   $150,000-$174,999
   $175,000-$200,000
   More than $200,000

3. What is your marital status?
   single, never married    married    widowed    divorced    separated

4. How many children do you have?
   0                       1                       2                       3                       4                       More than 4

5. How many years of experience do you have as an assistant principal?
   Less than 2  2-4  4-5  6-7  8-9  More than 10

6. What is the highest degree you have completed?
   Bachelor’s    Master’s    Specialist’s    Doctorate

7. Are you currently working towards another degree? If answer is yes, please mark which degree you are working toward.
   Yes   No

(If you answered yes above, select the degree you are currently pursuing)
   Master’s    Specialist’s    Doctorate    Other
8. How many peer assistant principals do you currently work alongside?
   0 1 2 3 4 5 More than 5

II. Assistant Principals’ Perception of Readiness

9. I have intentions of transitioning into the principalship.
   strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

10. Based on my current knowledge regarding an administrative role in a secondary school, I am ready to pursue the principalship.
    strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

11. Based on my current abilities regarding an administrative role in a secondary school, I am ready to pursue the principalship.
    strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

12. Based on my current mindset regarding an administrative role in a secondary school, I am ready to pursue the principalship.
    strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

III. Influence of Factors

13. My age positively influences my readiness to pursue the principalship.
    strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

14. My family income positively influences my readiness to pursue the principalship.
    strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

15. My marital status positively influences my readiness to pursue the principalship.
    strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

16. The amount of children I have positively influences my readiness to pursue the principalship.
    strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

17. The total years of experience as an assistant principal positively influences my readiness to pursue the principalship.
    strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree
18. The level of degree I currently hold positively influences my readiness to pursue the principalship.
   strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree

19. (Answer only if answer for question 7 is yes) The degree that I am currently working on positively influences my readiness to pursue the principalship.
   strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree

20. The amount of peer assistant principals that I currently work alongside of positively influences my readiness to pursue the principalship.
   strongly agree  agree  neutral  disagree  strongly disagree
Dear Participant,

Thank you for volunteering your time to assist me in the development of the questionnaire. To ensure that the attached questionnaire is valid, you are one of a panel of experts that must preview the document before I can take the next steps in the dissertation process. Your input is very important with respect to the questionnaire itself and the development of my dissertation overall. Your willingness and consideration to participate in this study is greatly appreciated.

Please rate the attached questionnaire based on the following information (Please respond to each question with a reply to this email):

1. Does the questionnaire contain language that can be understood by assistant principals who may or may not be considering pursuing the principalship?

2. Does the questionnaire address specific and appropriate issues in the statements, as it relates to assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship?

3. Do you find any of the questions offensive or obtrusive?

4. Are there any questions that you would exclude from the questionnaire?

5. Are there any other statements that you would include that are not that a part of the questionnaire?

6. Please make any other comments or suggestions about the questionnaire below:

(Again, simply respond to each question with a reply to this email)…

Thanks for all of your help…

Teague Burchfield
APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive 05147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional.reVIEW.board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Effect Report Form”.
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 15030304
PROJECT TITLE: Mississippi High School Assistant Principals' Perceptions of Their Readiness to Pursue the Principalship and Factors that Might Influence Readiness
PROJECT TYPE: New Project
RESEARCHER(S): Bennett Teague Burchfield
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership and School Counseling
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 03/25/2015 to 03/24/2016
Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board
Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Southern Mississippi. I am conducting a research study on the perception of Mississippi high school assistant principals’ readiness to pursue the principalship. I am interested in your perception regarding your readiness to pursue the principalship based on personal factors (age, family income, marriage status, and amount of children) and professional factors (years of experience, education obtained, education currently pursuing, and number of peer assistant principals currently working with you).

Please take a few moments of your time to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. The questionnaire contains 4 sections totaling 22 questions. Section 1 contains a definition of readiness that is the foundation of the study as well as instructions to begin. Section 2 consists of 10 questions and asks for demographic information about you. Section 3 consists of 4 questions and asks for your intentions of pursuing the principalship as well as your perception of readiness based on your current knowledge, ability, and mindset. Section 4 consists of 8 questions and asks you to answer how the demographic information from section 2 influences the perception of your readiness to pursue the principalship. Your responses to the questionnaire will reflect your perception of your readiness to pursue the principalship. Information acquired from the questionnaire will be shared with my dissertation committee upon the collection of all participants’ responses.

The data collected from the completed online questionnaire will be compiled and analyzed. All data collected will be anonymous and information compiled from the questionnaire will be confidential and reported in aggregated form. To ensure confidentiality of assistant principals participating in the study, no one will be identified by name. Once the research study is completed, I will permanently delete all questionnaires. To begin the questionnaire, simply click on the link to the questionnaire.

As the researcher, I am very appreciative of your participation in the study. However, you have the option to decline to participate if you so desire. There is no penalty or risk of negative consequence if you decide not to participate. To ensure an appropriate amount of participants respond to the survey, a weekly email will be sent to you over a 4-week period. Due to the anonymous nature of the questionnaire, four emails will be sent to you whether or not you elect to participate in the study. If you choose to participate in the research, complete only 1
questionnaire and disregard the others. If you choose not to participate in the study, disregard all emails concerning the questionnaire.

I will use the data you provide to inform and strengthen the research in the area of assistant principals’ perception of their readiness to pursue the principalship. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me: Teague Burchfield, email: tburchfield@madison-schools.com; phone: (601) 278-0845. The research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. David E. Lee, The University of Southern Mississippi, email: david.e.lee@usm.edu; phone: (601) 266-6062.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that all research fits the federal guidelines for research involving human subjects. Any questions or concerns about the rights of a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-5997.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Teague Burchfield
What are some general things you should know about research studies?
Assistant principals currently employed in public high schools throughout the state of Mississippi are being asked to take part in a research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to take part, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed with the intent to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in this study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. For this particular research, the risks are very minimal and are described in this document.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed decision about being in this research study.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this study is to determine if certain factors affect the perceptions of assistant principals' readiness to become principals. While there are many, only eight factors will be researched in the study. Four personal factors-age, family
income, marriage status, and amount of children have been chosen to help assess readiness in those being surveyed. Four professional factors—years of experience, level of education, education currently pursuing, and number of peer assistant principals were also chosen to assess readiness among those being surveyed.

The demands of the educational environment, coupled with one’s current personal and professional factors, affect the decisions that assistant principals make when accepting a principalship or not. In this study, the findings should reveal which of these factors, according to the perceptions of assistant principals throughout the state of Mississippi, have the greatest impact on an assistant principals’ readiness to be a principal.

**How many people will take part in this study?**
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 270 participants.

**How long will your part in this study last?**
If you chose to participate, you will receive a link to an online survey that will take you no longer than 15 minutes to complete. A consent form will also be provided online for you to read prior to completing the survey. Your name or identity will not be asked for within the survey, nor will your personal information be reflected anywhere within this research. A report of my findings will be made available upon request at the conclusion of this study; simply email me at tburchfield@madison-schools.com.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**
High school assistant principals willing to participate in this research will be asked to read a consent form online, indicate consent to participate, and complete an online survey. A group email message containing an attachment with informed consent information will be sent to all assistant principals from schools selected for this study. By clicking “Yes-Click Here to Take the Questionnaire” at the beginning or at the end of the email message containing consent, teachers will be confirming consent and will be directed to the online survey. The researcher will collect data from the survey. The survey will be permanently deleted upon completion of this project.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**
While there are no personal benefits related to your participation in the study, participants can assess their readiness to pursue the principalship through the completion of the survey.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?**
The risks that may be involved in this study are minimal. They include the possibility that the participant may not feel comfortable providing feedback pertaining to his/her own perception of their readiness to be a principal. These concerns may be allayed by the assurances of confidentiality for respondents that will be provided. Only the researcher and faculty advisors will view the participant...
responses. All responses will be stored securely online. The researcher will be the only person with access to the password needed to view responses. Surveys will be permanently deleted after one year.

**How will your privacy be protected?**
Participants will not indicate their identities on the survey. They will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Only the researcher and his university faculty advisors will have access to participant responses. All responses will be stored securely online. The researcher will be the only person with access to the password needed to view responses. Additionally, surveys will be permanently deleted after one year.

**What if you have questions about this study?**
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researcher listed on the first page of this form.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**
This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-5997.
REFERENCES


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