

Socialization of Female and Male Assistant Principals

by

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Abstract

Assistant principals have one of the hardest jobs in the school, if not the hardest. Their role in a school generally consists of discipline, buses, textbooks, working with angry parents, and many more. Their hours are long. There is never enough time to sleep, exercise, or take care of their overall health. Their stress level is on overdrive. They are truly tested socially, emotionally, and physically. They are alone. Luckily, over time, the job that once seemed impossible to conquer shifts into a state of stability. This study focuses on the socialization of female and male assistant principals at the elementary and secondary level. The literature focus for this study centered around four main concepts: socialization, gender differences, the role of the assistant principal, and support structures. The central question for this study was: In what ways do male and female assistant principals become socialized into their role?

The researcher utilized a multiple case study in order to determine ways in which female and male assistant principals are socialized into their role and if their experiences are similar or different. Additionally, the researcher compared the findings with Armstrong's (2010) original work done solely on secondary assistant principals to determine if her *Epicycles of Transition*, which focuses on the early stages of the assistant principalship, are valid in the United States and with both elementary level and secondary level assistant principals. In order to gain the information needed, eight assistant principals with one to four years of experience were interviewed - two males and two females at the elementary level and two males and two females at the secondary level.

There were similarities and differences within and across the two cases, as well as in the comparison to Armstrong's work. There were eight themes identified through the analysis of the women's interviews. The themes are as follows: 'engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role,' 'observed former or present principals,' 'received encouragement to go into administration,' 'experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job,' 'impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization,' 'experience as an AP differed from 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year,' 'support structures were vital,' and 'utilized coping strategies to survive and thrive in their position.' The male assistant principals' interviews included all of the themes as the females with the exception of 'observed former or present leadership'; therefore, it can be perceived that there was not much difference in regards to how females and males are socialized into their role. When analysis was conducted to compare the findings to Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition, it was determined that all four phases were evident in the participants' experiences, confirming the consistency of Armstrong's model in a different context.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Assistant principals serve as second-in-command school leaders, but very little research focuses on that position in the field of education (Armstrong, 2011). Even though the assistant principalship is described as an important role in schools, there are significantly fewer studies on the role, when compared to studies of principals (Niewenhuizen & Brooks, 2013). Glanz (1994) described the assistant principal as the “forgotten man” and a “wasted educational resource” (p. 578). The literature that is available on assistant principals tends to focus on the negative aspects of the job and the fact that most individuals are not prepared as they enter the role (Armstrong, 2010).

This is a concern, because over the next several years, the number of principals retiring from their position is going to continue to rise, and assistant principals will be expected to step up into the roles of senior principals. In 2015, at the Model Schools Conference, Bill Daggett spoke about the Baby Boom generation and the effect that it would have on the education profession over the next few years. Daggett stated that 40% of school administrators would retire in the next few years, leaving a shortage of qualified, capable individuals to lead the nation’s schools. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics also cited in 2012 that there would be a total of 114,330 principals who would choose to no longer serve in their role due to a career change or because of retirement (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Researchers argued that there is not necessarily a shortage of school administrators, but rather a shortage of qualified administrators who have the capabilities to

produce change, increase student achievement, and to develop staff members to their fullest potential (Sciarappa & Mason, 2014; Versland, 2013).

Because of the deficits that assistant principals are believed to possess prior to moving into the role of principal, it is paramount that those individuals receive support, and the most logical person to provide that support is their building principal as he/she serves as a mentor to the assistant principal (Sun, 2012). Most individuals who go into administration are looking for growth and development in their careers (Sun, 2012). Research shows that in order to be successful in the fast-paced world of education, new administrators can no longer go it alone; they need support (Searby, 2014). For this reason, new principal mentoring is now mandated in at least thirty-two states in the U.S. (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006).

According to Richard (2000), being an assistant principal may be one of the toughest jobs in American education. It is a job that has many demands, with few pay increases in comparison to teachers, and often times is a thankless position. Most people in the role spend the majority of their time on discipline, are overwhelmed most days, and exhausted before the day even begins, but they enjoy being able to help students and families, even in the most difficult of circumstances (Richard, 2000). Being an assistant principal is not an 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. job. Often times, the assistant arrives at school before 7:00 in the morning and rarely leaves before 4:00 p.m. Athletic supervision, Parent Teacher Organization meetings, and school board meetings require evening attendance, dictating that the assistant principal's day extends beyond the school office. The role of the assistant principal reaches into the community and because of the hours and expectations of the role, often impacts the lives of their own families (Richard, 2000).

For this study, it is important to consider the gender differences that impact the profession of school administration because in the field of teaching women have always outnumbered men, but that is not the case in regards to educational leadership positions. The U. S. Department of Education compiled a survey in the late 80s that showed 76% of principals in schools across the U.S. were male, while 96% of superintendents across the U.S. were male. When the research was completed by the Education Development Center in 1994 female representation seemed to be improving, partly due to the attention being drawn to the disparity, but the numbers are still not close to showing equal gender representation. In the school year of 2011-2012, the National Center for Education Statistics (2012) reported that 76% of teachers were female, and 24% were male. Additionally, the Department for Professional Employees (2016) conducted a survey during 2011-2012 and found that 64% of building principals were women; however, the majority of that percentage was at the elementary level. The middle school level only had 42% of women represented in the principal role while high school fell even lower at 30%. Ironically, when looking at the make-up of superintendents, 87% of them are male leaving only 13% female. By 2015, the number of female principals had continued to rise and reached 65.7% (Department for Professional Employees, 2016).

Statistics point to the fact that historically, school administration career socialization and advancement has favored males (Education Development Center, 1994). Huston (2016) stated that it is a common perception that women are not as interested in moving up the ladder as men are, and lack that ambition. Oddly enough, this was contradicted in her study. In fact, out of the men and women surveyed, 74% of men said that they were interested in advancing to the next level, while 83% of women said they wanted to be promoted (Huston, 2016). Huston (2016) shared that women do have barriers, however. Based on Huston's study of executives, she stated:

“they aren’t finding mentors or sponsors, or they aren’t asking for promotions or higher salaries, or they’re not willing to sacrifice their evenings and weekends, whereas the men in the office can be expected to show up on a Sunday” (p. 13). Chisholm (2001) also agreed that oftentimes women are at a disadvantage in securing a leadership role because domestic responsibilities can cause interruptions. Additionally, Chisholm (2001) also noted a common struggle that women face in being respected by peers and having their authority acknowledged when they are given the opportunity to lead.

Rationale for the Study

After reviewing the available scholarly literature on assistant principals, it became evident to the researcher that there are likely diverse factors that contribute to the successful socialization into the role. Key research pieces by Armstrong (2010, 2011) on the socialization of assistant principals in Canada offered a framework for looking at this phenomenon. Impressed by the findings of that study, the researcher obtained permission from Armstrong to replicate her 2010 Canadian study, in a study with assistant principals in one school district in the southeastern part of the United States. However, two modifications were made. Armstrong did not report her findings by gender, and this prompted the researcher to question whether the socialization experiences of female assistant principals differed from those of male assistant principals. Additionally, Armstrong only looked at the socialization experiences of secondary assistant principals and for this research the socialization experiences of both elementary and secondary level assistant principals will be utilized. Therefore, for this current study, the socialization experiences of assistant principals in the U.S. context was explored to confirm or disconfirm her framework of vice-principal socialization phases, and in addition, gender differences were taken into consideration.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on Armstrong's (2010) model of socialization of vice-principals, called the Epicycles of Transition. [Note: vice-principals in Canada are the counter-part to assistant principals in the U.S. – serving as second-in-command school building leaders]. Armstrong's qualitative study was conducted in a large urban school district in Canada. Eight newly appointed secondary vice-principals were interviewed, with the aim of determining what structures, events, and people contributed or hindered their transition. The individuals chosen ranged in ages from 30 to 55 and were of diverse races. Four males and four females participated in the interviews and their years of experience as vice-principals ranged from one to three years.

Armstrong (2010) began by outlining the two different types of socialization: organizational and professional. "Professional socialization is the process of becoming a member of, and identifying with, a profession, and it begins when teachers consider becoming administrators and internalize the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that support professional membership" (Armstrong, 2010, p. 688). Organizational socialization serves to transmit and perpetuate the organization's culture and stability, and it represents the transition from the initial appointment of the new administrator until the individual is finally accepted into the organization (Alvy & Robbins, 1998). From her study, Armstrong (2010) developed a model that illustrates the phases of transition and socialization, created from the perspectives of the novice vice-principals (See Figure 1).

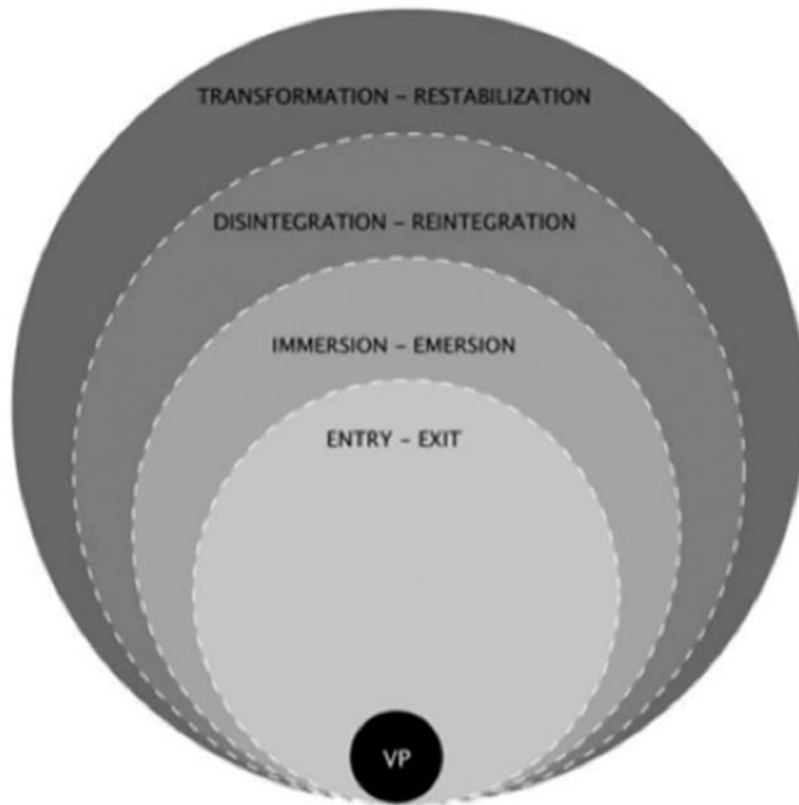


Figure 1. Epicycles of Transition from Armstrong, 2010, p. 697.

The four cycles represented in the figure are Entry-Exit, Immersion-Emersion, Disintegration-Reintegration, and Transformation-Restabilization. The non-linear model has dotted lines, which are meant to represent the possibility of forward movement and each phase is also meant to build on the other. The first phase, Entry-Exit, is the phase where the individual is still a teacher but has aspirations of becoming an administrator and is preparing for that transition. In this phase, the teacher begins to picture himself/herself moving up in the hierarchy and separating from the teaching role. Taking on additional responsibilities, assisting with building duties, filling in for administrators, serving as a leader of committees, and attending leadership professional development are informal “rites” that individuals in the Exit/Entry phase

might take part in. These socialization rites allow the aspirants to practice the role of vice-principal, network, gain support from supervisors, and show the potential they have as leaders. Other rites evolve during this time, which Armstrong (2010) calls divestiture and investiture. Giving up relationships with other teachers and leaving the classroom are examples of divestiture rites, whereas getting a new office, a walkie-talkie, and keys to the building are noted as investiture rites. “These Entry-Exit rites provoked feelings of satisfaction and sadness as the newly promoted vice-principals struggled with the realization that their entry into administration also entailed a corresponding physical, psychological, and social exit and separation from teaching” (Armstrong, 2010, p. 701).

Because of the contrasting emotions that develop through these experiences, the second transition cycle, Immersion-Emersion is triggered. Armstrong (2010) described Immersion-Emersion as “a sudden shift that stripped initiates of their comfortable teacher roles and contexts and immersed them in a different school culture” (p. 701). During this phase, vice-principals were tested emotionally, physically, and socially. In most cases, novices were thrown into a wide variety of duties and problems, which they may not have had any prior experience in handling. The vice-principals are at the center of the school activity in this phase and, because of that, they are inundated with students, parents, staff, community, and supervisor demands. A great deal of pressure to behave like an administrator is felt in this phase. The awareness of the fixed boundaries of their work is also more prevalent in this stage, which often increases the feeling of isolation. Teachers may attempt to discount the novices, question them about their experience, and go over their heads to the principal in an attempt to subvert their authority.

Ongoing conflict and persistent pressure to conform to a role that was so different than what the vice-principal imagined leads to feelings that bring on the third cycle, Disintegration-

Reintegration, usually occurring at the end of the vice-principal's first year but continuing well into the second year. In this stage, pervasive psychological and physical disintegration starts to take its toll. Some of the factors impacting this stage are ongoing crises, stress, long hours, inconsistent meals, and lack of sleep and exercise. This stage often brings about a sense of alienation because the vice-principal realizes he/she is in a no-man's land, sometimes longing to return to the classroom. Dreams that were once held about making things better for children may be squelched by the daily grind, resulting in emotional distancing. Vice-principals reported undergoing a period of self-analysis to try to resolve these internal conflicts between the constant negative demands of the position and their own values. When this reflection was reported in the Armstrong (2010) study, vice-principals noted that this enabled them to face the demands of their role and use prior skills to help re-establish equilibrium. They analyzed what was within their sphere of influence and began to take limited risks to make small changes in their schools. When the vice-principals were able to integrate their own values and skills into the role, the re-integration phase took place. They began to derive some satisfaction from their work.

The final cycle, which is a continuation of the socialization process initiated from the previous epicycle, is Transformation-Restabilization. In this phase, full integration into the school and culture has occurred and a shift has been made in regards to the vice-principal's outlook, goals, and values. There were still some socialization challenges that existed; however, "they saw themselves as better able to assert their values and expectations because of increased networks, knowledge of the role and their constituents, and their ability to put things into perspective" (Armstrong, 2010, p. 708). Stability and experience are a function of this cycle partly due to the acquired familiarity of the role and school. Vice-principals reported shifting from a task orientation to more of a people orientation, and levels of trust with their teachers had

grown through collaboration with them. “As part of developing a capacity to cope psychologically with the socialization challenges, the vice-principals acquired an interior and exterior “toughness” that was described as “developing a thick skin” and “not taking things personally” (Armstrong, 2010, p. 708). This stage represented the third year and vice-principals reported that they were equipped to resolve conflicts, balance their personal and professional lives, and anticipate socialization challenges.

Problem Statement

The role of assistant principal has continued to shift and change over the last 100 years and the limited literature on this school leadership role indicates that the assistant principal is vital to the school. The importance of the assistant principal is always realized; however, those individuals rarely get to participate in ways to improve themselves as a leader through instructional supervision, program development, and evaluation procedures (Glanz, 1994). “Assistant principals assuming positions within the last decade face the same demands for instructional leadership as their principals due to the rapid, ongoing educational reforms calling for increased student achievement and building-level compliance with mandated changes” (Searby, Browne-Ferrigno, & Wang, 2016, p. 14). Although the literature points to the importance of the job, in many cases, assistant principals are undervalued and overworked. A strong assistant principal is a vital part of the leadership team in moving a school forward in continuous improvement. However, the assistant principals often enter the position feeling unprepared, because the roles and responsibilities of an assistant principal are very seldom clearly defined (Armstrong, 2014; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). When an assistant principal makes the transition from teacher to building leader, he or she is crossing a huge divide. The new demands of leadership can be daunting, and it can take time for the assistant to feel fully

socialized into the role. Socialization happens when the assistant principal acquires the new personal and professional identity of a school leader, and has learned the norms, values, behavior, and social skills appropriate to the position (Ashforth, 2001; Crow, 2004; Hart, 1991). Armstrong (2010) conducted a study on the socialization of secondary vice-principals in Canada, resulting in a conceptual framework, which depicted the phases in the process of socialization for vice-principals. This study was groundbreaking research; however, we do not know if assistant principals in the U.S. at the elementary and secondary level experience socialization in the same way as in Canada. In addition, we do not know if female and male assistant principals experience socialization differently, as gender was not a factor studied by Armstrong (2010). Thus, the need for this study in which gender and the experiences of both elementary and secondary assistant principals will be explored.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how female and male elementary and secondary assistant principals are socialized into their role, and to ascertain if there are differences in their socialization experiences. The study is a modified replication of a study of vice-principals, conducted in Canada by Armstrong (2010), which resulted in the Epicycles of Transition model depicting four phases that secondary vice-principals go through as they become socialized into the role. After investigating the socialization experiences of assistant principals in one southeastern state, the findings of this current study were compared to the findings of the Armstrong (2010) study to confirm or disconfirm her model of vice-principal socialization phases, when gender differences are taken into consideration. In the United States, vice-principals are generally referred to as assistant principals.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study was: In what ways do female and male assistant principals become socialized into their role? There are four sub questions.

1. In what ways do female assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
2. In what ways do male assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
3. Do female and male assistant principals differ in their socialization experiences, and if so, in what ways?
4. In what ways do the experiences of the assistant principals in this study confirm or disconfirm Armstrong's (2010) Epicycles of Transition model when gender is taken into consideration?

Significance of the Study

According to Armstrong (2014), between the years of 2009-2017, there will be 53% of working assistant principals eligible for retirement across the country. In the same respect, there will be half of sitting principals eligible for retirement in 2018. This will create administrative shortages, making the importance of the assistant principals becoming socialized into their roles even more important, as it will allow them to take on the roles of principal in a more confident and efficient way. In Armstrong's (2014) research, she reported that 74.9% of participants felt as though they were prepared for the role of assistant principal or principal, but their feelings changed once they assumed that role. "Many stated that they felt unprepared for the complexity and unpredictability of their administrative roles and transitions" (Armstrong, 2014, p. 15). This research study of how female and male assistant principals are socialized into their role can help raise awareness in regards to what assistant principals' current roles and responsibilities are in relation to what they should be in order for them to grow and develop into instructional leaders.

It is understood that many assistant principals are not fully prepared for their role or beyond, and this study may assist educational leadership professors in preparing aspiring assistant principals. In addition, it can help school district central office personnel to create support structures that can professionally develop assistant principals so that they are better prepared for the senior principalship. Through this research, light may be shed onto what socialization practices and support structures are most beneficial.

Limitations

The researcher acknowledges that there are limitations that exist in this study. First of all, the sample size was small. A purposeful sample of eight assistant principals from a southeastern part of the United States were interviewed. All assistant principals worked in the public school system in the same county. The criteria used for choosing participants for the study were the following: the number of years of experience they had serving in their role (4 or less), their gender, and the level of school in which they worked (to achieve a mixture of elementary, middle, and high school levels). The study did not include all assistant principals in the county, so findings cannot be assumed to be consistent with the experiences of all assistant principals in the district, state, or country.

Assumptions

Because the researcher, herself, is an assistant principal, she knows first-hand that there are challenges to being socialized into the role of assistant principal. She assumed that being an assistant principal does not always mean that one will be prepared to move into the senior principalship. The researcher assumed that the interviewees would be completely open and honest in their answers. The researcher assumed the responses gained would confirm or disconfirm previous literature on socialization of assistant principals. The researcher assumed

that the participants would be comfortable answering all questions fully as they had served in the same capacity as the interviewer. The researcher made every attempt to bracket her experiences, remain neutral, and report all information as factual without bias.

Definition of Terms

- Socialization – a continuing process whereby an individual acquires a personal identity and learns norms, values, behavior, and social skills appropriate to his or her social position.
- Coercion – use of force or intimidation to obtain compliance.
- Compliance – the act of conforming, acquiescing, or yielding.
- Complicity – the state of being an accomplice.
- Principal – the senior school administrator at the individual building level.
- Assistant Principal – a person second in command in a school building who assists the principal in his or her work.
- Vice Principal – another term used for assistant principal.
- Headteacher – another term used for assistant principal by those in England.
- Mentor – a wise and trusted counselor or teacher who advises or counsels a less-experienced person.
- Mentee – a person who is guided by a mentor.
- Protégé – a person under the patronage, protection, or care of someone interested in his or her career or welfare; synonymous with mentee.
- Instructional Leader – the leader of a school whose chief focus is on the teaching and learning that takes place in the school and whose vision is centered on improving student achievement.

- Elementary School – the lowest level of school that provides education for students ranging from pre-k to fifth or sixth grade.
- Middle School – a school between elementary and high school, usually includes grades six through eight.
- High School – a school attended after elementary and middle school, consisting of ninth through twelfth grade or tenth through twelfth grade.
- Elementary Level – level referring to those working with pre-k-fifth or sixth grade students.
- Secondary Level – middle and high schools, which generally encompass sixth-twelfth grades.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 consists of the research problem, conceptual framework, purpose statement, research questions, significance of the study, limitations, assumptions, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature focusing on the topics of socialization of assistant principals, roles and responsibilities that assistant principals had in the past in comparison to the present, how gender plays a part in the school administration world, and the support structures that exist to help develop assistant principals into their present roles and beyond. Chapter 3 provides the methodology used for the study, which consists of data collected through interviews, observations, and the collection of artifacts. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, which were compiled from information gathered from the selected assistant principal interviews. Chapter 5 interprets the findings of the study and presents future implications based on those findings.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Conceptual Framework: Socialization of Assistant Principals

This study is based on Armstrong's 2010 study of socialization of vice-principals conducted in a large urban school district in Canada. Eight newly appointed secondary vice-principals were interviewed, twice within the same year, with the aim of determining what structures, events, and people contributed or hindered their transition from teaching to administration. The individuals chosen ranged from 30 to 55 years of age and were of various races. Four males and four females participated in the interviews and their years of experience ranged from one to three years. Armstrong's study explored the personal, professional, and organizational transitions. In her study, she began by outlining the two different types of socialization: organizational and professional. When teachers consider becoming administrators and internalize the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that support professional membership, they go through a phase of professional socialization in which they identify with the profession of administrator (Hart, 1991; Heck 1995). Organizational socialization represents the transition from the initial appointment until the new administrator is finally accepted into the organization (Alvy & Robbins, 1998). From her study, Armstrong developed a figure that illustrates the phases of transition and socialization that was derived from the perspective of the novice vice principals (See figure 1).

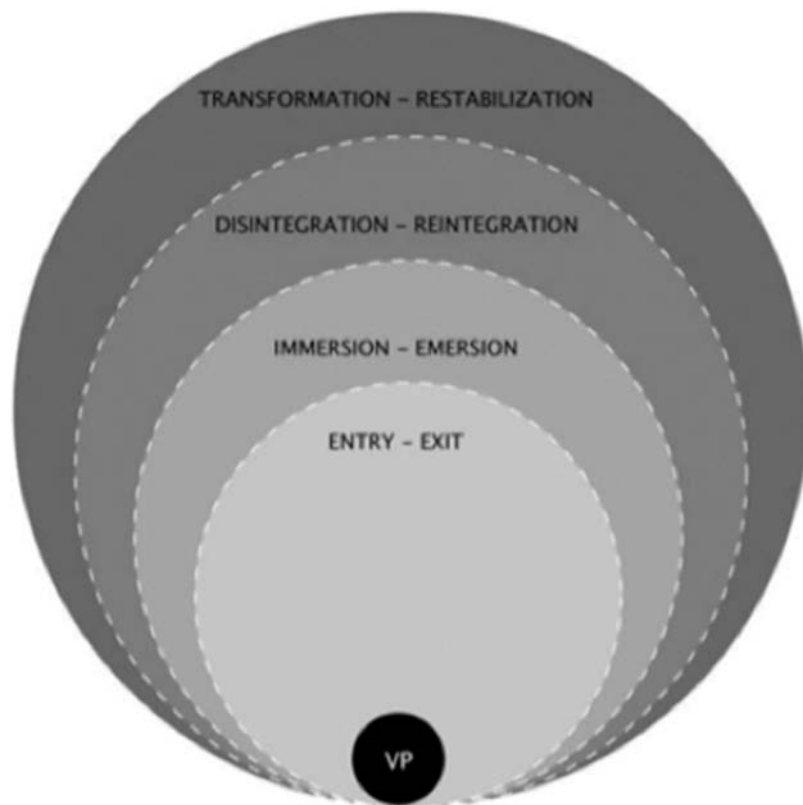


Figure 1. Epicycles of Transition. (Armstrong, 2010, p. 697)

When reviewing the model, it looks very clean and fluid; however, Armstrong (2010) stated that it is actually a chaotic nonlinear process that was experienced by the new vice-principals. The four cycles represented in the figure are Entry-Exit, Immersion-Emersion, Disintegration-Reintegration, and Transformation-Restabilization. The model has dotted lines, which are meant to represent the possibility of forward movement and each phase is also meant to build on the other.

The first phase is called Entry-Exit and represents the phase where the individual is still a teacher but has aspirations of becoming an administrator and is preparing for that transition. In this phase, the teachers begin to try to picture themselves moving up in the hierarchy and separating themselves from teaching. Additional responsibilities, assisting with duties, filling in

for administrators, serving as a leader of committees, and attending leadership professional development were informal rites that individuals in the Entry-Exit phase might take part in. These socialization rites allow the aspirants to practice the role of vice-principal, network, gain support from supervisors, and show off the potential they have as a leader. The formal rites centered around certification courses the individuals took and they were required to undergo individual “tests” with senior administrators that could have a powerful impact on their success. Other tactics used in this phase were waiting periods after being contacted regarding their promotion status, as well as secrets being kept. If the secret of promotion was shared prior to board meetings, their breach of secrecy could result in removal from the role. In many cases, novices had to begin work in the summer although their contracts did not begin until September. Other rites evolved during this time that Armstrong (2010) calls divestiture and investiture. Giving up relationships with other teachers and leaving the classroom are examples of divestiture rites, whereas getting a new office, walkie-talkie, and keys to the building are noted as investiture rites. “These Entry-Exit rites provoked feelings of satisfaction and sadness as the newly promoted vice-principals struggled with the realization that their entry into administration also entailed a corresponding physical, psychological, and social exit and separation from teaching” (Armstrong, 2010, p. 701).

Because of the contrasting emotions that develop through these experiences, the second transition cycle, Immersion-Emersion is triggered. Armstrong (2010) describes Immersion-Emersion as “a sudden shift that stripped initiates of their comfortable teacher roles and contexts and immersed them in a different school culture” (p. 701). During this phase, vice-principals were tested emotionally, physically, and socially. In most cases, novices were thrown into a wide variety of duties and problems, which they may not have had any prior experience in handling.

An outline of duties might have been provided to the novices but with little detail or expectation. Very little training was provided, which required them to train themselves, making their school days extend well into the evening. The vice-principals become at the center of the school activity in this phase and because of that, they can become inundated by students, parents, staff, community, and supervisor demands. A great deal of pressure to behave like an administrator is felt in this phase. Boundaries are also more prevalent in this stage as the administrators have management roles to play and visiting the workrooms and classrooms on planning periods is not always possible, which increases their feeling of isolation. Teachers attempt to discount the novice, question them about their experience, and go over their head to the principal to continue to subvert their authority. Ongoing conflict and persistent socialization pressure to conform, leads to feelings that bring on the Disintegration-Reintegration cycle.

During the end of the vice-principals' first year and well into their second year, the third cycle, Disintegration-Reintegration, takes effect. This stage develops from the organizational socialization rites that the novices attempt to adapt to. Some of those factors are ongoing crisis, stress, long hours, inconsistent meals, and lack of sleep and exercise. This stage also brings about a sense of alienation and feeling like they are not supported. Because of this, self-analysis takes place. During that experience, vice principals reported the process of reintegration that enabled them to face the demands of their role and use prior skills to help support the acquisition. The challenges are not as grave in this phase and assistant principals are better able to resist socialization pressures, as well as delineate negative parts of the role while bringing in their own values and skills.

The final cycle, which is a continuation of the socialization process initiated from the previous epicycle, is Transformation-Restabilization. In this phase, full integration into the

school and culture has occurred and a shift has occurred in regards to the vice principals' outlook, goals, and values. There were still some socialization challenges that existed; however, "they saw themselves as better able to assert their values and expectations because of increased networks, knowledge of the role and their constituents, and their ability to put things into perspective" (Armstrong, 2010, p. 708). Stability and experience are a function of this cycle partly due to the familiarity of the role and school. This stage represented the third year and vice-principals reported that they were equipped to resolve conflicts, balance their personal and professional lives, and anticipate socialization challenges. At this stage, socialization was experienced as a reciprocal (Crow, 2004; Matthews & Crow, 2003) or negotiated interpersonal process that involved attempts at content and role innovation, such as mentoring and coaching new and existing staff and initiating programs that supported students. The more experienced vice-principals clearly articulated a shift from being task oriented to being people oriented, and they identified their ability to establish connections across the vertical and horizontal levels of the educational hierarchy as an integral part of their success (Armstrong, 2010).

The table below, which was compiled from Armstrong's description of each phase of her model, is a compilation of some of the factors that correspond with each phase of Armstrong's (2010) phases of socialization. Each phase has descriptors that have been identified through the secondary vice principal interviews conducted by Armstrong in Canada in 2010.

Table 1

Characteristics from Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition

Entry-Exit (before becoming an AP)	Immersion-Emersion (Year 1)	Disintegration- Reintegration (End of Year 1 and Year 2)	Transformation- Restabilization (Year 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking on additional responsibilities • Serving as a substitute administrator • Assisting with administrative duties • Student and staff scheduling • Leading committees • Attending professional development • Demonstrate their potential through opportunities given • Rehearse the role • Network • Supervisor sponsorship • Certification courses • Prove to supervisors they had the skills and knowledge to serve in the role • Barriers created by higher ups • Waiting periods • Expectation to conform • Ostracism by peers • Working outside the perimeters of the contract • Feelings of satisfaction and sadness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tested socially, emotionally, and physically • Isolated from familiar locations • Difficult tasks • Wide range of duties and problems • No prior preparation • Partial list of duties with little guidance or detail • Little to no technical training • Errors occur due to lack of training • Longer workdays • Increased physical and mental strain • Demands from all stakeholders • Pressure to perform and conform • Pressure to look, speak, and behave as an administrator • Professional roles and territory • Pressure and reprimands • Separation and initiation from teachers • Loss and isolation due to decreased interaction with peers • Intimidation and undermining of confidence • Teachers subvert authority and going to principal • Questioning of experience • Lack of confidence and respect by teachers • Time consuming responsibilities with limited or no support • Feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, frustration, loss, and anger • Rigid expectations for discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long working hours • Chronic and ongoing crises • Poor diet • Lack of sleep and exercise • Physical exhaustion • Emotional exhaustion • Sense of alienation • Lack of support • Self-analysis • Negative demands of the role • Struggle with own personal values and expectations • Letting go of skills, values, and traits tied directly to teaching, but did not support current role • Distancing of oneself emotionally • Realization that equality does not exist • Use of prior skills to meet demands • Acceptance of political challenges • Limited risks • Being proactive • Resist pressures • Integration of own values and skills • Circulating through negative aspects of the job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full integration into school and culture • Continual shift in goals, values, and professional outlook • More confident • Increased networks • Knowledge of the role • Knowledge of constituents • Ability to put things in perspective • Assertion of values and expectations • State of stability • Equipped for challenges • Ability to resolve conflicts • Balance of personal and professional lives • Knowledge of the organization as a whole from top level down • Strategic and proactive • Mentoring and coaching • Initiating programs • Move from task oriented to people oriented • Credibility and trust are established • Development of "thick skin" • Continual discomfort with negative aspects of the role

Armstrong, 2010, p. 698-708

Aside from Armstrong, other authors have researched the aspect of socialization processes and their impact on preparing aspiring and practicing school administrators for success. Normore (2004) is one of the researchers who studied socialization. Normore (2004) believed that training programs were the starting point for administrators to become socialized into their roles. When training programs are utilized as a means of professional development for administrators, it is believed that they are then more capable of fitting into their school professionally and organizationally. Ongoing professional development is critical. In relation to Armstrong's epicycles of socialization, Normore (2004) emphasized how socialization begins for school administrators at a phase he calls pre-appointment and continues into post appointment growth or ongoing development. Mentoring, collaboration, and dialogue are critical components of professional socialization. Pre-appointment professional socialization is characterized by the courses the individual takes, the experience of handling tasks, and the mentoring he or she receives to prepare for the role, which is very similar to the first phase (Entry-Exit) of Armstrong's work.

Normore (2004) discussed where pre-appointment professional socialization is characterized by the courses the individual takes, the experience of handling tasks, and the mentoring he or she receives to prepare for the role, which is very similar to the first phase (Entry-Exit) of Armstrong's work. Normore (2004) further discussed how individuals can move from being concerned with others to being concerned with oneself, which again relates to Armstrong's stage of Disintegration-Reintegration, where individuals begin to go through self-analysis as they try to discover their new identity.

Suggestions made regarding socialization techniques included encouraging the assistant principal to have more of a focus on technological knowledge and skill acquisition, engaging the

buddy system, trying to lessen the workload, and taking advantage of on the job leadership opportunities. Normore (2004) suggested school districts and individual schools take it a step further by creating leadership opportunities to help ensure aspirants have exposure to the role prior to placement.

In addition to Armstrong (2010) and Normore (2004), Crow (2007) studied professional and organizational socialization of second and third year headteachers (assistant principals/vice principals) and what they experienced in England. Throughout his study, headteachers reported having a traumatic first year experience and self-learning was expected, and having the ability to form relationships was vital to the role. Other similarities that existed among these authors is the mention of divestiture and investiture methods, where divestiture represents the removal of identity such as when the individual moves from teacher to administrator and investiture represents the learning and identity supporting the new role (Crow, 2007). He also outlined the importance of mentoring to support socialization methods and takes it a step further to say that the current person who is considered superior should be the one supporting the subordinate. Leadership must support learning communities, collaboration, and experimentation. In order to explore the perceptions and sources of socialization, Crow (2007) conducted a study similar to Armstrong's in which he interviewed, observed, and documented four headteachers (known as assistant principals in the U.S.A.) on three separate occasions. The focus of the interviews was on teaching, the decision to become a headteacher, prior experiences, challenges, learning methods, experiences, and assessments of successes and failures. One difference between Armstrong's (2010) work and Crow's (2007) work is the observations that were conducted. Crow (2007) observed his interviewees in various settings such as parent meetings, student meetings, and staff conversations. Then, through the interviews, he found that headteachers did

not feel prepared for the role, the personnel issues that loomed, the political dilemmas that existed, or the money concerns, which directly impacted the school's budget. Crow outlined the socialization process that occurs between teacher and headteacher that directly relates to Armstrong's findings (2010). The difficulties of the first year and the loneliness of the job were pointed out by the English headteachers. Self-learning was again mentioned and it included how to deal with crises, how to pace themselves for all that they encounter in their role, and how to become more confident in their ability and in their showmanship to others. Based on Crow's (2007) interviews, the following was noted:

In learning survival skills, headteachers talked about learning to show more decisiveness that what they appeared to have, balancing their humanness while not appearing to be unable to cope, and developing a hard-enough shell to take criticism without letting it effect relationships. Headteachers had to learn that they could not do everything themselves. (p. 57)

Normore (2004), Crow (2007), and Armstrong (2010), all focused on the concept of socialization from the perspective of the assistant principal and all three researchers found similarities in the rites of passage or experiences that individuals go through prior to entering administration and continuing well into the third year of administration. In all studies done by these researchers, the individuals communicated the difficulty of the first three years. "Although they continued to express discomfort with the negative aspects of their role, the vice-principals coped by believing that it was a temporary rite of passage to the principalship" (Armstrong, 2001, p. 708).

Gender Issues in Leadership

Huston (2016) states the following:

From every direction in the last decade, women are hearing a call to arms. Women have been told to lean in, ask for what they want, know their value, play big, don their bossy pants, and close the confidence gap. The messages galvanize. They embolden women to take their proper seats at the table and they never promise power to those who want it. If women work hard and raise their expectations, they're told, they will achieve the highest levels of success - and that means they will be making more of the big decisions. (p. 1)

Sources indicate that although representation of women in school leadership has increased, women still do not fill administrative positions in proportion to their numbers in teaching or in proportion to those who are trained and certified to become administrators (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2015).

In the field of teaching, women have always outnumbered men. The U. S. Department of Education compiled a survey in the late 80s that showed 76% of principals in schools across the U.S. were male, while 96% of superintendents across the U.S. were male. When the research was completed by the Education Development Center in 1994, female representation seemed to be improving, partly due to the attention being drawn to the subject, but the numbers are still not close to showing equal gender representation. In 2003, a survey was sent out by the American Association of School Administrators and it was found that 18.2% of superintendents were female. Although that number had increased from 1990, the difference was simply 10.5% to 18.2%. This statistic directly correlates with Skrla's (2003) conclusion that was drawn almost twenty years ago that stated that men were forty times more likely to advance from teaching to superintendency than women and based on the statistics he might have been on to something. In the school year of 2011-2012, the National Center for Education Statistics (2012) reported that 76% of teachers were female, and 24% were male. Additionally, the Department for Professional

Employees (2016) conducted a survey during 2011-2012 and found that 64% of building principals were female; however, the majority of that percentage was at the elementary level. The middle school level only had 42% of women represented in the principal role while high school fell even lower at 30%. Ironically, when looking at the make-up of superintendents in 2012, 87% of them were male leaving only 13% woman. In 2015, the number of women principals continued to rise and reached 65.7% (Department for Professional Employees, 2016). On another note, these statistics point to the fact that historically, school administration, career socialization, and advancement has favored males (Education Development Center, 1994).

One factor that is seldom mentioned when females are the boss is that their decisions may be questioned because they are female. Huston (2016) stated that men do not have to think about anything other than making a judgment, whereas women have to think about making a judgment and then how to ensure they will not be judged by others along the way. An example of this is outlined in Huston's work (2016). She shared how Marissa Mayer was completely bombarded with negativity and backlash when she made the decision to change the work from home policy at Yahoo. She was openly criticized for this stance. In a similar situation, where the male CEO of Best Buy made the same decision, his decision was not openly criticized and no backlash was received on his part. The reporters simply shared the announcement. Two years later, people still criticize Mayer for her decision. The male CEO received some attention the first couple of months and it was over for him. One of the most intriguing pieces of it all is the fact that the female leader only impacted a couple of hundred people with her decision and the male impacted thousands with his decision. Why then must the scrutiny continue for the female over the exact same situation?

Huston (2016) notes that there are many benefits in having a leader who is a woman. “Have a greater number of women in the room when a crucial decision is being made is not only better for women, it’s better for the decision. And that’s better for everyone” (Huston, 2016, p. 4). She added, “Being a patient but ambitious hard worker isn’t enough. If we want more women in leadership, we need to stop seeing them as people who merely get the team to the starting line; we need to start seeing them as potential drivers for race day and, even better, as leaders who can decide whether there should be a team in the first place” (Huston, 2016, pg. 16).

Gender differences. Women have proven to be more likely to continue their education through advanced degrees in comparison to men (Diprete & Buchmann, 2013). “Women have made substantial gains in all realms of education and now generally outperform men on several key educational benchmarks” (Diprete & Buchmann, 2013, p. 1). Women are stronger in their approaches to decision making (Huston, 2016). According to Huston’s research, men are trusted to make the hard decisions because it is believed that men make the decision that has to be made. Women can make the exact same decision and the quality of their choices are questioned. One of the questions posed by Huston is whether or not the underrepresentation of women has anything to do with intelligence. A survey was sent out by The Pew Research Center to over 2800 individuals in America and 86% thought men and women were of equal intelligence, while 9% actually believed women were more intelligent, so that paints a picture that intelligence is not the issue when it comes to why women are viewed in a different light than their counterparts. Women have proven that they are capable of making good strategic decisions, when needed. The difference between men and women is that a man can do this once and it carries him, where as a woman has to show that she is capable of making a smart, strategic choice time and time again (Huston, 2016). Men are seen as strong individuals who can make the hard decisions

(Blackmore, 1999). Ironically, women dominate the field of education, yet still lack in the area of leadership positions in education (Chisholm & Napo, 1999). Men seem to be the privileged gender when it comes to leadership, primarily because women's personal costs such as being single or having children impact them professionally (Chisholm, 2001).

Difficulties women leaders face. Joy (1998) conducted a study that led readers to believe that based on her findings that qualified women were more likely than qualified men to be passed over in promotion therefore leading readers to believe that promotions into school administration could be considered discriminatory. When looking at women in regards to educational leadership positions across countries and cultures, their presence is still considerably lower than their male counterparts (Shah & Shah, 2012). Factors such as role stereotyping, gender power relations, socialization, and others noted could be impacting this divide between males and females (Shah & Shah, 2012).

Huston (2106) noted that men's decisions are accepted more readily than women's. Women's decisions are generally questioned. Men are more apt to be promoted within than women are, which is a struggle for women working hard to move forward in their careers. It is believed that women are not as interested in moving up the ladder as men are, but rather lack that ambition (Huston, 2016). However, this was contradicted in a study that was conducted in 2013. From the men and women surveyed, 74% of men said that they were interested in advancing to the next level, while 83% of women said they wanted to be promoted (Huston, 2016). Huston (2016) shared that many critics believe women are to blame for not reaching the success they hope to attain. Some reasons for that are "they aren't finding mentors or sponsors, or they aren't asking for promotions or higher salaries, or they're not willing to sacrifice their

evenings and weekends, whereas the men in the office can be expected to show up on a Sunday” (Huston, 2016, p. 13).

Chisholm (2001) found through his work that oftentimes women are at a disadvantage in securing a leadership role because domestic responsibilities can cause interruptions. One struggle that seems to be evident throughout Chisholm’s research (2001), is the struggle that women face in being respected by peers and having their authority acknowledged when they are given the opportunity to lead. Numerous studies have been done since the prior one and the one commonality among them is the fact that women simply do not move up the ranks as quickly or get paid as much as men, even when using the same tactics (Huston, 2016). Women enjoy collaboration, which in many cases can be viewed as being incapable of making a decision (Huston, 2016). Often, when women take the time to collaborate because they want to create buy in and analyze all the options, they are then viewed as being incapable of making a decision (Huston, 2016). Other issues that have been raised as barriers to female leadership are the lack of visibility and recognition they are given (Chisholm, 2001). These are two things that can lead to women feeling unsupported by their authority figures. Chisholm (2001) also found that women were often times overlooked, decisions were made in their absence, and they continue to feel undermined in their jobs.

The Assistant Principalship

Past-history of assistant principals. According to Glanz (1994), there have been very few changes made to the assistant principalship since its inception. In the nineteenth century there were principals or head teachers who were in charge of schools, but their authority was lacking because city superintendents exercised authority from above. Some things began to change after 1900. School systems began to grow and became more complex, which made it

difficult for superintendents to have contact daily with the schools and the operations of each. This is the point in time when the superintendent began to relinquish administrative and supervisory duties to the building principal (Glanz, 1994). Ironically, the building principal continued to teach classes up until about 1920. At that time, mentoring young teachers and teachers with limited experience in the areas of classroom management, curriculum, and instruction became the primary responsibility of the building principal. The U.S. Bureau of the Census of 1975 reported that between 1920 and 1930, the number of principals doubled as schooling expanded (Glanz, 1994). Because of this expansion, the principalship moved into the realm of management as opposed to instructional development. Because of this, other supervisory positions had to be created in order to meet the growing demands of complex schools. The building principal then began to have the assistance of an individual classified as a general supervisor, more commonly known as the assistant principal. Responsibilities associated with the role at that time were things such as coordinating special school programs, collecting data for evaluation purposes, and preparing attendance reports. During this time, assistant principals were completely subordinate to their principals, the majority of these individuals were male, and were hired to deal with instructional supervision, assists the principal, and work with logistical operations of the school. The number of assistant principals at a school is generally dependent on the number of students or if the school system allows local funding to support that unit if it is not awarded by the state. Gilbert (1957) shared that years ago, assistant principals were responsible for being the sole disciplinarian, as well as performing clerical type tasks such as attendance, textbooks, checking roll books, and stamps. Ultimately, assistant principals and their roles and responsibilities were not considered as important (Gorton & Kattman, 1985). Timothy J. Dyer, Executive Director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals,

shared that at one point in time there was very little being said about assistant principals within university training programs, professional books, or journals.

Glanz (1994) conducted research with assistant principals in an area of New York City to gain insight on three areas: their current responsibilities, what duties they felt they should have, and what parts of their jobs they enjoyed the most. The individuals who completed the questionnaire represented elementary, middle, and high school levels, and the majority of them had five or fewer years of experience. The duties that received the most attention were things such as administrative paperwork, dealing with parental complaints, duties such as break and lunch, ordering textbooks, covering schedules, dealing with disorderly students, and completing a plethora of forms and surveys. Another thing that was noted was that most assistant principals felt dissatisfied with their duties, felt that their job was thankless, and their morale was low. Respondents stated that they gained much satisfaction when being able to work directly with teachers and students. As one assistant principal noted:

The mindless tasks I perform daily really disturb me. In college I trained to do staff and curriculum development. Here on the job I'm responsible for paper work, lunch duty and discipline.... I derive little satisfaction from these duties. Endless paperwork, hall patrol, and especially guarding a gate rarely inspire me to do my best. I feel under-utilized. My expertise seems to be wasted with inane matters. This job is thankless, with little satisfaction. Working with the children and teachers gives me the greatest satisfaction. Helping a child or teacher succeed is really nice. When I can resolve a troublesome instructional problem I enjoy my job. I went to graduate school to complete certification by focusing on theories and research about instructional supervision, yet most, if not all,

of my time is spent on mundane and mindless administrative routines, like lunch duty.
(Glanz, 1994, p. 3)

Within Glanz's (1994) research, he ranked duties that assistant principals held based on surveys and questionnaires that had been disseminated. The duties ranked from number one being student discipline to number twenty-five being teacher selection. Some of the in between roles included textbooks, parent conferences, evaluation of teachers, counseling pupils, faculty meetings, curriculum development, and school budgeting. Glanz (1994) had the assistant principals rank the importance of their duties, resulting in teacher training being number one, staff development was ranked number two, and curriculum development was number three. The lowest ranked item was teacher selection. Items that fell in the 10-25 ranges were things such as school scheduling, assemblies, counseling pupils, student attendance, student discipline, and lunch duty (See table 2).

Despite the many challenges that assistant principals encounter in their role, the job can be fulfilling as Weiss noted in *The Role of the Assistant Principal* in 2008,

Working in collaboration with other teachers and administrators on a daily basis to solve problems the school might face is what makes it so rewarding. There are few things more gratifying than when a new program, curriculum or instructional strategy begins to show results, and I know that my teachers are helping students in a way that has never happened in the past. (p. 10)

Certainly, the responsibility for student attendance and discipline needs to be assigned to school personnel, but just because these tasks have always been assigned to assistant principals does not mean that is the way it always has to be. The tasks could be divided among other types

of staff members who might actually be more appropriately trained to handle the social and emotional aspects of a student's behavior (Hassenpflug, 1991, p. 5).

Glanz (1994) believed that the role of assistant principal needed to be reconfigured and the emphasis needed to be on how to improve the school instruction and curriculum primarily due to the fact that the role and responsibilities of principal are just too large for one individual. In order to make this transition, though, tasks such as lunch duty, parent conferences, and discipline would have to be taken off of the assistant principal in order to meet all the demands of their job in this newly defined role as partner as opposed to underdog (Glanz, 1994). Suggestions that Glanz (1994) made included allowing for the pressure to be taken off both the principal and assistant principals and utilizing others. For example, he suggested having a dean of discipline that is trained in that area so that the majority of that burden is taken off of the administrators so that their focus can be on instructional issues. Another suggestion made was to assign more personnel to things such as lunch duty, which would allow the assistant principal to spot check, ensuring everything is okay, and then continue on with instructional priorities within the school. When minute tasks are given to other teacher leaders as opposed to the assistant principal, a threefold effect will occur:

It will allow more time for staff development planning or simply assisting teachers in the classroom; Morale will improve by allowing APs to engage in more creative and intellectually stimulating instructional/curricular activities; Academic and social objectives will have a greater chance of being achieved because more time will be allotted for instructional improvement. (Glanz, 1994, p. 6)

Koru (1993), Kelly (1987), and Gorton and Kattman (1985) agree that the assistant principalship is not preparation enough to train one to become a principal. The other argument

made by Pellicer and Stevenson (1991) is that the assistant principalship should be set apart and viewed as unique and valuable in itself. It may be necessary for incentives to be provided when individuals enter the role and remain in that role (Glanz, 1994).

Role of assistant principals. According to Richard (2000), being an assistant principal may be one of the toughest jobs in American education. It is a job that has too many demands, with little pay increase in comparison to being a teacher, and most times it is a completely thankless position. The importance of the assistant principal is often times forgotten. In the same regard, it has also been noted as one of the most rewarding jobs. Most people in the role spend the majority of their time on discipline, are overwhelmed most days, exhausted before the day even begins, but they enjoy being able to help students and families, even in the most difficult of circumstances (Richard, 2000). Being an assistant principal is not an 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. job. Often times the assistant arrives at school before 7:00 in the morning and rarely leaves before 4:00 p.m. Athletic supervision, Parent Teacher Organization meetings, and school board meetings require evening attendance, dictating that the assistant principal's day extends beyond the school office. The role of the assistant principal reaches into the community and because of the hours and expectations of the role, takes its toll on the lives of the assistant's family (Richard, 2000). The complexity of the assistant principal's role is illustrated by the following quote:

He holds the telephone away from his ear when an angry parent calls. He counsels a girl about why she shouldn't quit school, plans a meeting with student government leaders, hurries to a teacher-evaluation meeting, and holds a hallway conference with a student interrupted by a teacher who needs him to unlock a faculty restroom for a student who is sick. (Richard, 2000, p. 2)

Researchers have steadily pointed out the challenges schools face in regards to the conditions of schools, the population of students they work with, and the accountability models put in place. One of the implications that has blossomed because of this attention, is in regards to leadership practice and because of that the quality of leadership preparation programs are constantly being evaluated and improved to better prepare future leaders for the task they are handed (Young, 2015). Even with the increased attention on preparation programs, assistant principals may still not be fully prepared to transition into their role (Armstrong, 2010). Twenty-five years ago, Marshall (1992) painted a rather grim picture, stating that assistant principals could not derive meaning or purpose from the work that they do, partly because attention was never paid to training, selection, job satisfaction, or motivation of the assistant principal. Armstrong's (2014) research, reported that 74.9% of assistant principals in her study felt as though they were prepared for the role of assistant principal or principal, but their feelings changed once they assumed that role. "Many stated that they felt unprepared for the complexity and unpredictability of their administrative roles and transitions" (Armstrong, 2014, p. 15). In relation to Armstrong's (2014) study, the following table demonstrates the transition over time with Glanz's (1994) table from the 90s that states what assistant principals do versus what they think they should do and the table showing the results of Glanz's study which was replicated by Sun (2012) to show the difference that occurred over the last fifteen years. The table depicting Sun's (2012) findings, illustrates the shift in the assistant principal's role from manager to leader in the realm of school administration.

Table 2

Duties APs Actually Do vs. Duties APs Think They Should Do from Glanz's Study

APs Actual Duties	Rank	Duties APs Think They Should Do	Rank
Student Discipline	1	Teacher Training	1
Lunch Duty	2	Staff Development (in-service)	2
School Scheduling (coverages)	3	Curriculum Development	3
Ordering Text Books	4	Evaluation of Teaching	4
Parental Conferences	5	Instructional Leadership	5
Assemblies	6	Formulating Goals	6
Administrative Duties	7	Innovations and Research	7
Articulation	8	Parental Conferences	8
Evaluation of Teachers	9	Articulation	9
Student Attendance	10	School Scheduling (coverages)	10
Emergency Arrangement	11	Emergency Arrangement	11
Instructional Media Services	12	Assemblies	12
Counseling Pupils	13	Administrative Duties (paperwork)	13
School Clubs, etc.	14	Instructional Media Services	14
Assisting PTA	15	Counseling Pupils	15
Formulating Goals	16	Faculty Meetings	16
Staff Development (In Service)	17	Ordering Textbooks	17
Faculty Meetings	18	School Clubs, etc.	18
Teacher Training	19	Assisting PTA	19
Instructional Leadership	20	Student Attendance	20
Public Relations	21	Student Discipline	21
Curriculum Development	22	Lunch Duty	22
Innovations and Research	23	Public Relations	23
School Budgeting	24	School Budgeting	24
Teacher Selection	25	Teacher Selection	25

Glanz, 1994, pp. 7-11

Note: Coverages refer to scheduling teachers to cover for absent regular classroom teachers. Articulation refers to the administrative and logistical duties required to prepare for graduation (e.g., preparing and sending cumulative record cards for students graduating to schools at the next level).

The changing role of the assistant principal. Some of the current expectations for a person serving in the capacity of assistant principal are to take care of attendance, discipline, buses, unscheduled interruptions from crises that erupt, and overall focusing the majority of their time on the negative aspects of the job (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). However, assistant principals are now being commended for performance outside of the managerial role. For example, The National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Assistant Principal of the

Year Award Program look at individuals who have contributed to student learning through overseeing instruction and assessment, monitoring curriculum, showing professionalism, and demonstrating collaborative leadership.

Table 3

Duties APs Actually Do vs. Duties APs Think They Should Do from Sun's Study

APs Actual Duties	Rank	Duties APs Think They Should Do	Rank
Student Discipline	1	Instructional Leadership	1
Administrative Duties (paperwork)	2	Evaluation of Teachers	2
Counseling Pupils	3	Student Discipline	3
Evaluation of Teachers	4	Administrative Duties (paperwork)	4
Parental Conferences	5	Formulating goals	5
Instructional Leadership	6	Curriculum Development	6
Lunch Duty	7	Teacher Training	7
School Scheduling (coverages)	8	Staff Development (in-service)	8
Formulating goals	9	Counseling Pupils	9
Emergency Arrangements	10	Teacher Selection	10
Faculty Meetings	11	Parental Conferences	11
Staff Development (in-service)	12	Innovations and Research	12
Student Attendance	13	Faculty Meetings	13
Teacher Training	14	Student Attendance	14
Curriculum Development	15	Public Relations	15
Teacher Selection	16	Emergency Arrangements	16
Public Relations	17	Assemblies	17
Assemblies	18	School Scheduling (coverages)	18
Assisting PTA	19	School Budgeting	19
School clubs, etc.	20	Lunch Duty	20
Innovations and Research	21	School clubs, etc.	21
Instructional Media Services	22	Articulation	22
Articulation	23	Assisting PTA	23
School Budgeting	24	Instructional Media Services	24
Ordering Textbooks	25	Ordering Textbooks	25

Sun, 2010, pp. 175-176

Note: Coverages refers to scheduling teachers to cover for absent regular classroom teachers
 Articulation refers to the administrative and logistical duties required to prepare for graduation (e.g., preparing and sending cumulative record cards for students graduating to schools at the next level).

Edney, a principal quoted in *The Role of the Assistant Principal* (2008), reported on the value of her assistant principal saying, “It can be like having another principal around. We make decisions as a team, a unit. Assistant principals are invaluable to the smooth operations in the

running of a school” (p. 1). When assistant principal Weiss was interviewed for the article *The Role of the Assistant Principal*, he defined his job as having two categories - instructional and organizational. Responsibilities that help support the school climate such as community interactions, student supervision, guidance, discipline, and testing would fall in the organizational category. Richard (2000), also noted that the assistant principal has responsibilities such as conversing with faculty, holding parent conferences, supervising and welcoming visitors, fielding constant telephone calls and complaints, supervising afterschool activities that can go well into the night, monitoring lunch duty, and even cleaning the floor at times. In Richard’s research (2000), one assistant principal interviewed stated, “The job description is wide open. My wife sometimes calls me a firefighter. You don’t have much of an opportunity to set an agenda for each day” (p. 2).

Challenges to the role. Several researchers have cited common challenges that assistant principals encounter in their roles. Weiss, an assistant principal who was interviewed on the challenges of his role in 2008 article *The Role of the Assistant Principal*, reported challenges as being able to balance all the organizational tasks in a way that still allows for the opportunity to provide instructional leadership. Time seems to be a commodity that is a luxury as an assistant principal. There is never enough time to get everything done, which requires the individual to prioritize, delegate, and decide on simple plans as opposed to more complex ones. As mentioned earlier, assistant principals are considered instructional leaders, but unfortunately many of them are not able to focus their energy and time on student learning or instructional leadership skills (Richard, 2000). Time spent on discipline issues wear down assistant principals and, in many cases, makes it extremely difficult to get other tasks done, such as being in classrooms and interacting with children, which is what the students really need (Richard, 2000).

“The forgotten man in the elementary school is frequently the assistant principal --we know he is there but little about him” (Glanz, 1994, p. 1). The role of the assistant principal seems to be expanding; however, many are still dealing with administrative tasks, discipline issues, and custodial type duties and are not given the opportunity to participate in instructional leadership duties. Time seems to continue to be the overarching challenge with regards to most tasks and duties expected of the assistant principal. Most APs would like to devote more of themselves to fulfilling roles and duties, but because of mundane tasks that fall solely on their shoulders, they are not always given the opportunity to progress in those areas (Glanz, 1994). The importance of the assistant principal is always realized; however, those individuals rarely get to participate in ways to improve themselves as a leader through instructional supervision, program development, and evaluation procedures (Glanz, 1994).

Often times, but not always, most individuals who have accepted the role and responsibility of assistant principal have done so in hopes of it being a stepping stone to the principalship. Some would say this is realistic thinking; however, this way of thinking can also present some problems. According to the study completed by Armstrong (2014), between the years of 2009-2017, there will be an average of 53% of assistant principals eligible for retirement. In the same respect there will be half of principals eligible for retirement in 2018. This creates shortages and makes the importance of the assistant principals becoming socialized into their roles even more important as it will allow them to take on the role of principal, when that door opens, in a more confident way.

Recommendations for addressing challenges to the role of assistant principal.

Armstrong (2014) used her research to determine what supports could help individuals as they assumed their new roles as assistant principals and they are as follows: “Take advantage of

professional development and mentoring, embrace opportunities to learn about and practice the role desired, participate in an aspiring leader program at some point” (p. 128). Armstrong (2014) noted that experience, professional development, and personal attributes seemed to be well-defined factors that attributed to positive socialization and success of assistant principals, while professional development, opportunities and experiences, and mentor relationships were lacking and needed further attention. Consistent communication also attributed to successful day-to-day operations of the school. Being able to advocate for oneself with regards to responsibilities is paramount as it has been recorded that most individuals serving in the role of assistant principal find satisfaction and enjoyment from training teachers, curriculum development, and staff development (Glanz, 1994).

Support Structures for Assistant Principals

In the summer of 2015, at the Model Schools Conference, Bill Daggett spoke about the Baby Boomer generation and the effect that it would have on the education profession over the next few years. It was stated that 40% of school administrators would retire in the next few years leaving in its path a shortage of qualified, capable individuals to lead our schools. Similarly, the U. S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics also cited in 2012 that there would be a total of 114,330 principals who would choose to no longer serve in their role due to a career change or because of retirement. Because of this, concern has been raised. It is understood that in order to produce change in schools, which can lead to more effective teaching which then leads to better student learning and achievement, it takes an instructional leader with the skill set and knowledge to be able to guide and nurture that change. It is being argued that there is not necessarily a shortage of school administrators, but rather a shortage of qualified administrators who have the capabilities to produce change, increase student achievement, and

develop staff members to their fullest potential (Sciarappa & Mason, 2014; Versland, 2013). Another factor that may be contributing to the shortage of leaders is the lack of support they receive in this demanding role. Teachers who would be considered qualified for administration are not interested in going beyond the classroom due to the high stakes involved (Daresh, 2004). Another argument has also been raised that the assistant principals who aspire to be a principal are not properly trained and need further preparation in order to fulfill the complex role of the principalship (Hartzell, 1993; Wong & Wong 2009). Because of the deficits that assistant principals are believed to possess prior to moving into the role of principal, it is paramount that those individuals receive support, and the most logical person to provide that support is the principal with whom the assistant principal works, and who can serve as a mentor (Sun, 2012). Most individuals who go into administration are looking for growth and development in their careers (Sun, 2012). In Sun's (2012) study, each person was seeking a mentoring relationship with his or her principal. Research shows that in order to be successful in the fast-paced world of education, new administrators can no longer go at it alone; they need support (Searby, 2014). For this reason, new principal mentoring is now mandated in at least thirty-two states according to Alsbury and Hackmann (2006).

Benefits of mentoring. Participation in professional development and the opportunity to share and reflect are benefits that both mentors and mentees can experience by participating in a mentoring relationship (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennant, 2004). Extensive mentoring affords new principals the experience of “entering schools confident in their ability to foster a strong learning community and be sensitive to the culture they are joining” (Villani, 2005). Southworth (1995) reported that individuals participating in a mentoring process were very positive about the benefits they gained through the experience. Some benefits of the mentoring that were noted

were peer support, as well as the ability to gain confidence throughout the process while they were still learning (Bush & Coleman, 1995).

Aside from support, one of the greatest benefits is the opportunity to observe, and learn through direct experiences with the mentor (Coleman, 1996). Mentoring relationships afford the protégés the opportunity to increase their confidence in relation to their own leadership abilities, receive support and meaningful feedback, and share experiences with their mentor that can lead to individual growth (Daresh, 2004; Ehrich, et al., 2004). Crum and Sherman (2008) stated, “Protégés gain knowledge and skill through dialogue with mentors and opportunities to enact best practice” (p. 110). The benefits do not only exist for protégés, though, as noted by Daresh (2004) and Ehrich et al. (2004). Along with mentees, research is showing that mentors receive benefits by participating in the partnership. Often times new ideas can be gleaned from the young protégés (Searby, 2014). Those serving in the role of mentor have the pleasure of reflecting on their own practice based on their interaction with their mentees and grow professionally, which in turn can lead to their career progression. According to Clayton, Sanzo, and Myran (2013), mentors reported that by being a part of this relationship, they found themselves reflecting on their own beliefs and viewing things in a new light with regards to leadership and decision-making. They gain satisfaction, their experiences become more enriched, and the relationship serves as professional development in some cases (Bush, 1995). The school systems that implement mentoring programs for new principals also benefit. Chong, Low, and Walker (1991) stated, “The relationship proliferates organizational norms and culture, ensures hard learned knowledge and skill are transferred to younger colleagues, improves overall performance of the work group, and provides a steady supply of trained personnel” (p. 21). “The mentoring process benefits the educational system by helping new heads to become more effective at an earlier

stage in their careers, and by the espousal of a culture of mutual support and development among the wider community of heads” (Bush & Coleman, 1995, p. 67).

Challenges of mentoring. Having the time to form a relationship in which open, professional dialogue exists between a mentor or mentee can be difficult because of the demands placed on instructional leaders’ time. In order for a mentor and mentee relationship to be effective, it must be built on mutual trust, which only grows with time (Clayton et. al., 2013). In mentoring programs in Singapore, England and Wales, time seemed to be the biggest issue with regards to mentoring relationships being effective (Bush & Chew, 1999, p. 49). In a study outlined by Clayton, et al, (2013) time was an area of concern that impacted the mentor/protégé relationship. Because of the time constraints, it was reported that the interaction between the mentor and mentee was not always meaningful. Even the mentors reported that majority of the relationships they were involved in were informal due to the time constraints and the expectation the program placed on the outside work such as journaling (Clayton, et al., 2013). In this study, there appeared to be much conflict over the protégé being given the opportunity to serve outside of his or her classroom, but yet the mentor was required not to be out too much. The pairing of the mentor and protégé, if not thought out and conducted in a strategic manner, can also cause issues and lead the entire process to be a failure (Bush & Chew, 1999). Mentoring relationships seem to be more difficult for women and racial minorities as research shows women are not given as much opportunity to develop their leadership styles or allow their voice to be heard (Clayton, et al., 2013). The lack of value placed on the mentoring program can also negatively impact its success. In one case study, the program was reported to be acknowledged by the district; however, all building level administrators were not on board with letting these potential leaders reap the rewards of the program to the fullest (Clayton, et al., 2013).

There are times where accountability measures take away from building internal capacity in schools and school districts as made evident in some of Clayton, et al. (2013) research. This belief can cripple and even damage mentoring programs that could improve student achievement. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) stated, “to re-culture schools to become energized to make important changes and build the capacity to sustain these improvements, educators need opportunities to collaborate with one another with trust, candor, and commitment to continuous improvement” (p. 89). (Clayton et al, 2013, p. 89). The demands of instructional improvement can range from pacing guides, student engagement, test preparation, effective instructional strategies. New assistant principals could benefit from mentoring to become instructional leaders, not just managers.

Mentoring in educational leadership. There are many definitions that are associated with the word mentor, but Crosby (1999) defined it as “a trusted and experienced supervisor or advisor who by mutual consent takes an active interest in the development and education of a younger, less experienced individual” (p. 13). According to the American School Board Journal (2007), the need for administrative mentors has been proven necessary as there were over half of the states that required principal mentoring beginning in 2007. These may be programs that school systems have developed to “grow their own” administrators, but others may be programs for mentoring new principals statewide. Many systems have gone beyond just growing the assistant principal into the role of principal and are beginning to look at teachers who have the ability to lead and affect change as prime candidates for future administrative positions. Coaching and mentoring are even taking place at that level in an effort to develop future leaders for schools. Sun (2012) proclaims that by mentoring and coaching these individuals, it serves not only to prepare them in a much more effective manner, but it also is a better alternative to

professional development that the teacher leader might attend. The American School Board Journal (2007) also noted that through mentoring programs, individuals could be better prepared to become true instructional leaders. Through Sun's research (2012), it was found that the assistant principals surveyed did not feel as if they were fully prepared to take on the role as an instructional leader due to insufficient preparation. It was also determined that even with having a collaborative relationship with the building principal, the assistant principal still felt there were boundaries that set up the assistant principal as the subordinate which deprived him/her of potential opportunities for growth (Sun, 2012). Noting the importance of having the senior principal as a mentor, Vann (1991) stated:

No textbook on the principalship, no college course, no amount of discussion with anyone can substitute for action under fire. An on the job relationship with a mentor principal can fill in all but the smallest of the remaining gaps. Under the watchful and caring eyes of a mentor, the potential for mistakes due to inexperience or ignorance is greatly reduced and conversely, the potential for success is greatly enhanced. (p. 85)

“Traditional coursework in principal preparation and development programs often fails to link theory with practice, is overly didactic...and is not aligned with established theories of leadership,” as stated by Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2007, p 5). Because of this, it has been stated that programs are not fully preparing building leaders, but rather short-changing them (Clayton, et al., 2013). Grogan, Bredeson, Sherman, Preis, and Beaty (2009) emphasized the importance of creating partnerships that could exist between universities and districts as a way to prepare educational leaders by successfully partnering them with a mentor. When there is a collaborative relationship that exists between the district and the university, the gap that once existed with regards to leadership preparation begins to decrease because theory can now be put

into practice and meaningful and authentic experiences can occur (Clayton et al., 2013).

Recently, the paradigm has begun to shift in that the mentee is now viewed as the one who should be the initiator of the relationship with the mentor. Mentees are now encouraged to be responsible for setting the goals for what they wish to attain through the relationship, and rather play an active role in all facets of the relationship (Searby, 2014).

The benefits of a formal mentoring program for assistant principals. Mentoring for new school leaders happens in many countries. In both Singapore and in England and Wales, best practices in mentoring are a focus; however, the overall mentoring relationship is quite different (Bush & Chew, 1999). Bush and Chew (1999) explain how Singapore, England and Wales understand the importance of administrative mentorships. Singapore has a program that is very skill specific that assistant principals and principals can participate in to better hone in on their own practice. After the training, the participants are expected to spend a minimum of eight weeks with a mentor in their school. Through this experience, the protégé experiences a strong training background, which in return is practiced out through daily leadership tasks that are monitored by the mentor. Mentors are given the opportunity to model for the mentee and provide feedback on the tasks as necessary. There is also an individual who works with both the mentor and mentee in an effort to make sure all learning targets are being exposed, understood, and met. In England and Wales, in 1988 there was an act passed called the Education Reform Act that stated, “effective leadership in schools depends on supporting, developing and training heads” (Bush & Chew, 1999). The program started as early as 1989 and was begun as a way to support what is termed new heads, which are school principals in Britain. In Singapore, there is no training that precedes or follows the mentoring, but rather the new head is supported through a mentoring relationship during his/her first year in their role (Bush & Chew, 1999). It is noted that

when the mentoring program was introduced, a trend of mentoring schemes began in other areas of England and Wales. England and Wales believe that a strong mentoring relationship negates the need for any sort of compensatory trainings as evidenced in this quote. “[Mentoring] is an in-service model of professional development. It may be regarded as a substitute for training rather than forming part of it as in Singapore and the USA.” (Bush, 1995, p. 3). In England and Wales, the mentor and mentee generally meet five times during their yearlong relationship and the location varies. Another noted difference is that the mentor/mentee relationship is seen as more of a support structure than an overall growth structure. In later years, though, the view of the mentor and mentee relationship changed in England and Wales and it began to look more like the program operating out of Singapore. The quote below by Millett (1996) displays the change.

The central issue we need to tackle is leadership, in particular how the qualities of leadership can be identified and fostered...we should make explicit all of the key characteristics of those most likely to succeed in establishing and maintaining excellence as the head teacher of a school...The NPQH will provide the preparation of leadership that our head teachers and our children deserve. It will also provide a demanding and objective assessment that will sort out those who are ready to be leaders of schools from those who only give the appearance of being ready. (Bush & Chew, 1999, p. 47)

The number of aspiring leaders seems to increase when mentoring programs are partnered with district leadership programs because individuals know that they have an increased level of support through that mentoring relationship (Ehrich et al., 2004; Fleming, 1991). Through the implementation of formal mentoring programs, more complex administrative areas that aspiring leaders can sometimes lack experience in are supported, such as school law, curriculum and instruction, and finance (Fusarelli & Smith, 1999).

Key attributes for mentoring success. When deciding to take part in a mentoring relationship, both parties should view it as a learning partnership (Zachary, 2012). It is not simply for the protégé, but rather both individuals can reap benefits. Walker and Scott (1993) have pointed out that there are two attributes that have a major impact on the success of a mentoring experience. Those two things are the relationship between the mentor and protégé, and the ability that the mentor has in building on and strengthening the leadership qualities the protégé already possesses. Just as seen in the work Sun did just last year, the same was true in 1995. Being given opportunities to carry out tasks within organizations and then reflecting and discussing those experiences with a mentor is a key component to the relationship (Normore, 2004; Muth, 2002; Sun, 2012). The need for programs to choose the best mentors and pair mentors and mentees strategically so that the aspiring leaders can have their learning and professional development needs met is instrumental to the success of the relationships (Daresh, 2004). Through Clayton et al.'s, (2013) research, three trends were discovered that were specific to the mentor and mentee relationship and are as follows: 1) the working relationship is more successful when there is a strategy with regards to pairing the mentor and mentee; 2) having tools to effectively engage both individuals in conversation and to set goals is helpful; 3) reflection and being able to compare leadership styles seemed to be profitable.

Chapter III: Methods

Research Methodology

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how female and male assistant principals are socialized into their role and to determine if there is a difference in the two. The study is a modified replication of a study of secondary vice-principals, conducted in Canada by Armstrong (2010), which resulted in the Epicycles of Transition model depicting four phases that vice-principals go through as they become socialized into the role. After investigating the socialization experiences of vice/assistant principals in one southeastern state, the findings of this current study will be compared to the findings of the Armstrong study to confirm or disconfirm her model of vice-principal socialization phases, when gender differences and school levels are taken into consideration. In the United States, vice-principals are generally referred to as assistant principals. Accordingly, the central research question that guided this study was, “In what ways do female and male assistant principals become socialized into their roles?” The central research question was explored through the following sub-questions:

1. In what ways do female assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
2. In what ways do male assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
3. Do female and male assistant principals differ in their socialization experiences, and if so, in what ways?
4. In what ways do the experiences of the assistant principals in this study confirm or disconfirm Armstrong’s (2010) Epicycles of Transition when gender is taken into consideration?

Research Design

In order to understand how assistant principals were socialized into their roles, the researcher utilized the qualitative research approach. Qualitative methodology was the most appropriate research method for this study because the researcher needed to understand how assistant principals were socialized into their roles and if those experiences differed between females and males based on their roles and responsibility, as well as support structures they were provided. In 2010, Armstrong developed phases that she believed assistant principals went through as they transitioned into their roles in the beginning of their career and into each year up to year four; however, her study only considered assistant principals at the secondary level, and her study was only conducted in Canada. Her findings were sound, but in order to determine if her phases are relative to all assistant principals, at all levels, further study was required. Permission was obtained by the researcher to use Armstrong's original interview protocol, with a few additions, to determine if her phases could be a clear depiction of the socialization of assistant principals in the United States. Because the researcher herself is an assistant principal, she must be expected to feel personally involved in every step of the research process, because every consideration and decision will have to be based on entirely personal grounds (Fink, 2000). Qualitative researchers use interview data, observations, and documents in order to determine if themes and patterns exist (Creswell, 2014). There are several methods of qualitative research available, but for the purpose of this research, multiple case study was the most appropriate design method to choose. Case studies are a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, which is often one or more individuals. Cases are bound by time and activity,

and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2008, 2013).

This study was a multiple case study because the researcher investigated the phenomenon of socialization with two “cases” who were assistant principals (four females and four males) serving at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The researcher investigated whether or not the female and male assistant principals differently perceived the ways in which they were socialized into their roles. These perceptions were then analyzed and compared with Armstrong’s (2010) Epicycles of Transition model of socialization phases to confirm or disconfirm that model’s efficacy in the American context and to examine if there were gender differences in the phases of socialization presented by Armstrong.

The case studies conducted were bound by location. The location for the study was in a large school district in one southeastern state and the cases consisted of assistant principals of eight different schools varying in grade levels, size, socioeconomic status, and demographics.

Data Collection

In order to gain the information needed for this study, interviews were conducted with eight assistant principals, four females and four males, at schools across the same large county, but varying in level from elementary to middle to high school. The researcher gained permission from Dr. Denise Armstrong to do a comparison study with her findings in a similar study in Canada and to use her original interview protocol. The additions of the exploration of gender differences in the socialization process and adding the elementary piece were the only modifications made to the original Armstrong study. The primary source of data came from interviews with the assistant principals, which utilized open-ended questions that were based on Armstrong’s (2010) original interview protocol, with some additions. The same interview

protocol was used with all the assistant principal participants and the researcher only deviated from the question if the assistant principal gave an answer that prompted further questioning (see Appendix A). Thus, the interview protocol was deemed to be research-based, valid, and reliable.

In addition to the interview data, the researcher kept field notes before and after each interview. These consisted of descriptions of the school, the setting of the interview, the demographic information of the participant, and any noteworthy occurrences from the interview. Other sources of data were the job description of each assistant principal, website information, and other documents provided by the assistant principal. These sources allowed for triangulation of the data. The triangulation of the artifacts, observations, and interviews provide more insight into the participants and their experiences with socialization. “Any case study finding or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode” (Yin, 2008, p. 116).

Participants

Permission to interview eight assistant principals from Walt D School System was granted by the Institutional Review Board of Auburn University. Due to the nature of the study and the researcher’s equal grounding in relation to the participants because she serves in the same role, safeguards were put in place to reduce risks of discomfort, potential breaches of confidentiality, and any fears of coercion. For example, in order to protect the identity of all the participants, pseudonyms were used such as Assistant Principal 1, Assistant Principal 2, Assistant Principal 3, Assistant Principal 4, and that continued all the way up to eight, as there were eight participants. The schools, where the people served as assistant principals, were not disclosed nor was the county in which the research was done to add a deeper level of protection around the individuals who participated in the interviews. Participants were informed that their

participation was totally voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time, and that the researcher would not be sharing any of the interview information with their superiors. They signed a consent form and were given a copy of it for their records that outlined these safeguards.

After the researcher gained consent from the IRB, she reached out to the assistant superintendent of the school system to get permission to solicit the participation of assistant principals at each level - elementary, middle, and high school, within the district. After permission was granted by IRB, the researcher contacted all assistant principals, within the county where the research was conducted, through an email invitation to invite him or her to participate in the study. At this point, purposeful sampling took place. A total of forty assistant principals were invited, and eleven initially responded. From this number, four females and four males were selected, with two of each gender representing the elementary and secondary grade levels.

In order to gain input that would provide the most accurate depiction of the assistant principals' socialization experiences, the assistant principals chosen to participate were selected based on years of experience, level of school in which they work, and gender. Participants varied in ages from mid 30s to late 50s, but each had been in the position four years or less. All interviews occurred during the spring semester of the school year in the months of January and February. The table below is representative of the participants.

Table 4

Participant Profiles 1

Assistant Principal	Gender	Ethnicity	Years in the Role	Level
1	F	White	Less than 1	Elementary
2	F	White	1 ½ years	Secondary
3	F	White	2 ½ years	Secondary
4	F	White	3 ½ years	Elementary
5	M	White	Less than 1	Elementary
6	M	White	2 ½ years	Secondary
7	M	White	Less than 1	Elementary
8	M	White	2 ½ years	Secondary

Researcher Positionality

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) asserted that the qualitative researcher is the instrument of data collection. In other words, the data is deciphered through a human instrument rather than through machine. One way a researcher is able to demonstrate qualitative research integrity is by disclosing her own professional role and how it might influence the study. In this case the researcher serves in the same capacity as the individuals interviewed; therefore, it allowed for more engagement from the respondents and more opportunity to probe because the researcher understood the role each of them filled. There was a presumption that openness would already be present as the researcher could relate through experience and in some cases knew the respondents. However, in order to guard against researcher bias, the researcher had to make an intentional effort to bracket her own experiences as an assistant principal (Yin, 2003). She had to resist the tendency to filter the interview through her own experiences in order to fully listen with the intent to understand another’s experience that might be very different, and to also be making sure that the interview stayed focused on the research questions being studied.

Data Analysis

Individuals were recorded during their interviews, which lasted no longer than one hour.

Recordings were then professionally transcribed, and coding of the interviews began. This process included analyzing data for similarities of the information reported in the interview and compiling them into manageable segments (Schwandt, 2014). In hand-coding the data, the researcher implemented processes recommended by Saldana (2015) for analyzing qualitative data. First, the researcher thoroughly read all eight transcribed interviews twice before assigning any codes. Next, each transcript was analyzed again, this time employing eclectic coding (Saldana, 2015). Eclectic coding is a first-cycle coding method in which the researcher assigns words or phrases to lines or segments of the transcript. The codes may be of different types, such as noting emotions, noting processes, highlighting exact quotes (in-vivo coding), or other analytic memos in the margins (Saldana, 2015). Next, holistic coding was employed, in which the researcher applied a single code to a large unit of transcribed data, and a master code list was kept. From the holistic codes, the researcher looked for similarities across the eight transcripts in order to develop some common themes, with the research questions always in mind. In this step, the researcher kept a running list of illustrative quotes as examples of each theme. Creswell (2013) stated, “themes in qualitative research are broad units of information that consists of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (p. 185). Themes, patterns, and categories were identified to align with the first three research questions in the fourth step. These themes were organized in order for the researcher to create a “conceptual schema” instead of having only a list of themes (Schreier, 2012). The researcher analyzed themes within each case and across cases (keeping female and male data separate as per the research questions). In the last step for analyzing the interview data for research questions one through three, the researcher reviewed all transcripts again to ensure that primary themes and patterns corroborated with the data obtained from the interviews. This was done to establish validity of the data.

Research question four involved comparing the findings of this study with the Armstrong (2010) study to see if the data confirmed or disconfirmed her model of Epicycles of Transition depicting the phases of socialization for assistant principals. In order to do that, the researcher reviewed all of the research transcripts from the beginning again, that time looking for evidence where the participants expressed experiencing the four phases of Armstrong's model of socialization phases. Illustrative quotes from the participants were noted where the phases could be corroborated. These were then reviewed as a whole to ascertain whether or not all the phases were represented in this study. Thus, the researcher was able to confirm or disconfirm whether Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition model of socialization for assistant principals is transferable and applicable in the U. S. context.

Summary

A multiple case study consisting of four female and four male assistant principals at the elementary and secondary level was conducted in a large county in the southeastern part of the United States, in order to answer the central research question, "In what ways do female and male assistant principals become socialized into their roles?" All participants ranged from mid 30s to late 50s and had no more than 4 years of experience in their role. A qualitative approach, consisting of interview data, observations, and field notes, were used to help the researcher understand how the individuals were socialized into their roles. The study was a replica of Dr. Denise Armstrong's study that was conducted in Canada in 2010 and the interview protocol utilized for the research was the same protocol used by her for her research with a few additions that would address gender differences. All interviews were transcribed and coded, both eclectically and holistically. Themes and patterns were outlined and analyzed in an effort to establish validity. Lastly, the researcher's findings were compared to Armstrong's model of

socialization phases to see if her mode of Epicycles of Transition could be confirmed or disconfirmed.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how female and male assistant principals are socialized into their role, and to ascertain if there are differences in their socialization experiences. The study is a modified replication of a study of vice-principals, conducted in Canada by Armstrong (2010), which resulted in the Epicycles of Transition model depicting four phases that secondary vice-principals go through as they become socialized into the role. After investigating the socialization experiences of elementary and secondary assistant principals in one southeastern state, the findings of this current study have been compared to the findings of the Armstrong (2010) study to confirm or disconfirm her model of vice-principal socialization phases, when gender differences were taken into consideration. In the United States, vice-principals are generally referred to as assistant principals.

The central question for this study was: In what ways do female and male assistant principals become socialized into their role? There are four sub questions.

1. In what ways do female assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
2. In what ways do male assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
3. Do female and male assistant principals differ in their socialization experiences, and if so, in what ways?
4. In what ways do the experiences of the assistant principals in this study confirm or disconfirm Armstrong's (2010) Epicycles of Transition model when gender is taken into consideration?

Data Collection Methods and Setting

In order to gain the information needed for this study, interviews were conducted with eight assistant principals, four females and four males, at schools across the same large county, but varying in level from elementary to middle to high school. The researcher gained permission from Dr. Denise Armstrong to do a comparison study with her findings in a similar study in Canada and to use her original interview protocol. The addition of the exploration of gender differences in the socialization process, as well elementary assistant principals being included were the only modifications made to the original Armstrong study. The primary source of data came from interviews with the assistant principals, which utilized open-ended questions that were based on Armstrong's (2010) original interview protocol, with some additions (see Appendix A). The same interview protocol was used with all the assistant principal participants and the researcher only deviated from the question if the assistant principal gave an answer that prompted further questioning. Thus, the interview protocol was deemed to be research-based, valid, and reliable.

In addition to the interview data, the researcher kept field notes before and after each interview. These consisted of descriptions of the school, the setting of the interview, the demographic information of the participant, and any noteworthy occurrences from the interview. Other sources of data were the job description of each assistant principal, website information, and other documents provided by the assistant principal. These sources allowed for triangulation of the data. The triangulation of the artifacts, observations, and interviews provided trustworthiness of the study. "Any case study finding or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode" (Yin, 2008, p. 116). Individuals were recorded during their interviews, which lasted no more than one hour. The majority of the interviews were concluded within 35-45

minutes. Recordings were then professionally transcribed, and coding of the interviews began.

This process included analyzing data reported in the interview and breaking them into manageable segments (Schwandt, 2014). In hand-coding the data, the researcher implemented processes recommended by Saldana (2015) for analyzing qualitative data. First, the researcher thoroughly read all eight transcribed interviews twice before assigning any codes. Next, each transcript was analyzed again, this time employing eclectic coding (Saldana, 2015). Eclectic coding is a first-cycle coding method in which the researcher assigned words or phrases to lines or segments of the transcript. The codes were of different types, such as noting emotions, noting processes, highlighting exact quotes (in-vivo coding), or other analytic memos in the margins (Saldana, 2015). Next, holistic coding was employed, in which the researcher applied a single code to a large unit of transcribed data, and a master code list was kept. From the holistic codes, the researcher looked for similarities across the transcripts in order to develop some common themes, with the research questions always in mind. In this step, the researcher kept a running list of illustrative quotes as examples of each theme. Creswell (2013) stated, “themes in qualitative research are broad units of information that consists of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (p. 185). Themes, patterns, and categories were identified to align with the first three research questions in the fourth step. These themes were organized in order for the researcher to create a “conceptual schema” instead of having only a list of themes (Schreier, 2012). The researcher analyzed themes within each case and across cases (keeping female and male data separate as per the research questions). In the last step for analyzing the interview data for research questions one through three, the researcher reviewed all transcripts again to ensure that primary themes and patterns corroborated with the data obtained from the interviews. This was done to establish validity of the data.

Research question four involved comparing the findings of this study with the Armstrong (2010) study to see if the data confirmed or disconfirmed her model of Epicycles of Transition depicting the phases of socialization for assistant principals. In order to do that, the researcher reviewed all of the research transcripts from the beginning again, that time looking for evidence where the participants expressed experiencing the four phases of Armstrong's model of socialization phases. Illustrative quotes from the participants were noted where the phases could be corroborated. These were then reviewed as a whole to ascertain whether or not all the phases were represented in this study. Thus, the researcher was able to confirm or disconfirm whether Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition model of socialization for assistant principals is transferable and applicable in the U. S. context.

The researcher will profile the district, the schools, and the assistant principals within the district. Pseudonyms have been used for the district, schools, and numbers were utilized for the participants.

District profile. The school system, which will be referred throughout the writing as Walt D School District, is located in the southeastern part of the United States that is considered to be an area that has a strong religious presence. Also, majority of the area tends to vote Republican during elections. The current superintendent has been in place for less than two years and is one of four superintendents who have worked in the district in the last three years. This is one of the largest districts in the state and serves over 30,000 students and has well over 2,000 employees. The demographic makeup of the district based on data from 2014 can be found in the table below (Ballotpedia, 2015).

Table 5

District Profile

White	African American	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Hispanic
87.1%	9.6%	0.7%	0.9%	0.1%	1.6%	4.6%

School #1. School #1 is one of the larger elementary schools in the district and is located in the southern part of the district. It serves students from pre-k to sixth grade and has over 1,000 students who attend daily. There are over 100 staff members in which half of those are teachers. Between 45% of the student population is on free or reduced lunch. The demographic makeup of the school is somewhat different from other areas in that about 94% of the student population is Caucasian or Hispanic. Caucasian students make up about 86.6% of the student population followed by Hispanic (7.5%), Asian (1.1%), African American (1.7%), Two Races (2.6%), American Indian (0.4%), and Pacific Islander (0.1%) (Graphiq, 2017).

School #2. School #2 serves two grades in the county and is considered to be a secondary school located in the southern part of the district. There are currently over 450 students that attend this school. This is one of the smaller schools in the district when compared to other schools of its nature. There are over 25 teachers on staff. The demographic makeup is predominately Caucasian coming in at 91.7%. The remainder of the 8.3% of students is Hispanic (3.7%), Asian (0.9%), Black (1.7%), Two Races (1.7%), and American Indian (0.2%). 35-40% of the student population at this school is on free or reduced lunch (Graphiq, 2017).

School #3. School #3 is located in the southern part of the district and serves two grade levels just like school #2. It is also considered to be a secondary school. There are almost 700 students that attend this school and over 45 teachers are on staff to work with students. Close to 65% of students are on free or reduced lunch. This school is a bit more diverse than the first two

schools as the demographic information is as follows: Caucasian (59.6%), African American (20.1%), Hispanic (15.7%), Two races (3.2%), Asian (0.9%), American Indian (0.3%), and Pacific Islander (0.3) (Graphiq, 2017).

School #4. School #4 is located in the eastern part of the county and has three grade levels on their campus that are considered to be elementary level. There are over 800 students that attend this school and close to 47 teachers work on staff. Less than 25% of students who attend this school are on free or reduced lunch. The demographic makeup of the school is very similar to that of school #1. The demographic data is as follows: Caucasian (85.3%), African American (9.2%), Hispanic (2.6%), Two races (2.3%), Asian (0.4%), and American Indian (0.2%).

School #5. School #5 is located in the northern part of the district and serves students from pre-k to sixth grade with over 35 teachers working on staff. Almost 70% of their student population is on free or reduced lunch status based on family income. There are over 525 students that attend this school. The demographic makeup of the school is as follows: Caucasian (51.8%), African American (43.3%), Hispanic (2.8%), Two Races (1.9%), American Indian (0.2%) (Graphiq, 2017).

School #6. School #6 is located in the eastern part of the county serves close to 1,100 students from 9th-12th grade. There are almost 60 teachers that are on staff at the school. Only 14% of the 1,100 students are on free or reduced lunch. Demographically, their numbers fall as follows: Caucasian (82.9%), African American (10.5%), Hispanic (3.5%), Asian (1.1%), Two races (0.7%), American Indian (0.7%), and Pacific Islander (0.5%) (Graphiq, 2017).

School #7. School #7 is located in the central part of the county and is another large elementary schools working with over 1,100 students daily from pre-k to sixth grade. There are

over 60 teachers on staff at school #7. Over 55% of the student population is on free or reduced lunch at this school. In regards to demographics, their information is as follows: Caucasian (77.8%), Hispanic (9.7%), Black (8.0%), Two race (3.0%), Asian (1.3%), American Indian (0.1%), Pacific Islander (0.1%) (Graphiq, 2017).

School #8. School #8 is the largest school in the district and is located in the southern part of the county. There are over 1,800 students in grades 9th-12th that attend this school and over 100 teachers that teach there. Half of the student population are eligible and receive free or reduced lunch. Demographic information is as follows: Caucasian (70.4%), African American (16.0%), Hispanic (11.0%), Two races (2.0%), American Indian (0.4%), and Asian (0.3%) (Graphiq, 2017).

The table below indicates if the school being discussed is elementary or secondary level, has the student population listed, number of teachers on staff, as well as demographic information.

Table 6

School Profiles

School	School Level	Student Population	White	Black	Hispanics	Other	Free/Reduced Lunch Rate	Teachers
1	Elementary	1,000	86.6%	1.7%	7.5%	4.2%	40-45%	60
2	Secondary	450	91.7%	1.7%	3.7%	2.9%	35-40%	25
3	Secondary	700	59.6%	20.1%	15.7%	4.6%	65%	45
4	Elementary	800	85.3%	9.2%	2.6%	2.9%	25%	47
5	Elementary	525	51.8%	43.3%	2.8%	2.1%	70%	35
6	Secondary	1,100	82.9%	10.5%	3.5%	3.1%	14%	60
7	Elementary	1,100	77.8%	8.0%	9.7%	4.5%	55%	60
8	Secondary	1,800	70.4%	16.0%	11.0%	2.6%	50%	100

Description of Cases

Case 1: Females

Assistant Principal #1. Assistant Principal #1 is a female who works at Cinderella Elementary School in Walt D School District. She has just less than one year of experience as an assistant principal in the elementary level. Prior to being an assistant principal, she worked as a teacher for ten years in the elementary setting.

Assistant Principal #2. Assistant Principal #2 is a female who works at Beauty Middle School in Walt D School District. She has one and a half years of experience as an assistant principal at the middle school level. Prior to being an assistant principal she worked as a teacher for fourteen years in the middle school setting.

Assistant Principal #3. Assistant Principal #3 is a female who works at Belle Middle School in Walt D School District. She has two and a half years of experience as an assistant principal at the elementary and middle school setting. Prior to being an assistant principal, she worked as a teacher for ten years in the high school setting.

Assistant Principal #4. Assistant Principal #4 is a female who works at Lady Elementary School in Walt D School District. She has three and a half years of experience as an assistant principal at the elementary level. Prior to being an assistant principal, she worked as a teacher for six and a half years in an elementary setting.

Case 2: Males

Assistant Principal #5. Assistant Principal #5 is a male who works at Buzz Elementary School in Walt D School District. He has half of a year's experience as an assistant principal at the elementary level. Prior to being an assistant principal, he worked as a teacher for nine years in an elementary setting.

Assistant Principal #6. Assistant Principal #6 is a male who works at Woody High School in Walt D School District. He has two and a half years of experience as an assistant principal at the elementary, middle, and high school level. Prior to being an assistant principal, he worked as a teacher for thirteen and a half years in a high school setting.

Assistant Principal #7. Assistant Principal #7 is a male who works for Prince Charming Elementary School in Walt D School District. He has half of a year’s experience as an assistant principal at the elementary level. Prior to being an assistant principal, he worked as a teacher for nine years in the middle school and high school setting.

Assistant Principal #8. Assistant Principal #8 is a male who works for Mufassa High School in Walt D School District. He has two and a half years of experience as an assistant principal at the high school level. Prior to being an assistant principal, he worked as a teacher for sixteen years in the high school setting.

The table below lists the assistant principals that were interviewed for the research, the number of years that they have served in the role of assistant principal, their gender, and the case in which they fall-female or male.

Table 7

Participant Profiles 2

Assistant Principal	Years in the role	Gender	Case
1	Less than 1 year	F	1
2	1 ½ years	F	1
3	2 ½ years	F	1
4	3 ½ years	F	1
5	Less than 1 year	M	2
6	2 ½ years	M	2
7	Less than 1 year	M	2
8	2 ½ years	M	2

Data Analysis

A multiple case study was designed in order to answer the following sub-questions:

1. In what ways do female assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
2. In what ways do male assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
3. Do female and male assistant principals differ in their socialization experiences, and if so, in what ways?
4. In what ways do the experiences of the assistant principals in this study confirm or disconfirm Armstrong's (2010) Epicycles of Transition model when gender is taken into consideration?

The two cases in this study were female and male assistant principals with 4 or less years of experience in their role. Interviews were conducted in a setting of the interviewee's choice and each interview lasted no more than an hour.

Findings by Case

The findings are presented for each case, and organized by the research question. The cases under each research question are presented in the following order: females, males, comparison of females and males, and comparison to Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition.

Analysis of Case #1-Females.

Research Question #1: In what ways do female assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role? The first case was the female assistant principals serving at the elementary and secondary level. Eight themes emerged from the female assistant principals' responses to the research questions that pertained to the ways female assistant principals perceived they are socialized into their role, which are displayed in Table 8. The female assistant principals noted that the following occurred as part of their transition and impacted their

perception of the role: engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role, observed former or present principals, received encouragement to go into administrations, experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job, impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization, experience as an AP differed from 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year, support structures were vital, and utilized coping strategies to survive and thrive in their position.

Engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role. All four females interviewed shared leadership experiences that they participated in prior to the role. Some of those experiences often involved serving in the role of the assistant principal or principal when the administrators were off campus, while others were serving on leadership committees, lead teacher, and coaching.

Assistant Principal #1 served in many leadership roles. She stated, “I was a teacher mentor. I was head of the sunshine committee. I was a grade level chair. I had a lot of leadership roles.”

Assistant Principal #2 had a few leadership roles and said, “I was sponsor coach of Scholar’s Bowl. I coached cross-country and track.”

Her superiors afforded Assistant Principal #3 many leadership experiences. She noted, “I had a lot of leadership experiences. I was facilitator of BBSST, which is now RTI. I was a department chair. I was a technology mentor. I mentored student teachers.”

Assistant Principal #4 seemed to be given experience in many areas. She commented, I was writing lead teacher for the school. I was on the leadership committee that we had, ACIP team, committee chair, PR chair. I was on a fundraising committee. One time I was just told to do a talent show.

The females in this study all had individuals in their life that saw something in them and afforded them the opportunity to practice their leadership skills to enhance and build on the

ability that was already present. All four individuals were proud of the leadership opportunities they were afforded at their schools.

Observed former or present principals. Female assistant principals stated that having the opportunity to observe and learn from others, to see things done first hand, was helpful in their transition. Three out of the four female assistant principals stated that they were watching and learning from their current or former principal. Each of those three female assistant principals also noted that the person they looked up to was no longer serving as their principal, but they still made an effort to stay in touch with them. Many of the people who the APs observed were also some of the same people who encouraged them to go into administration. None of them currently work for the person who they observed and were learning from.

Assistant Principal #1 spoke of this individual often during the interview. She continued by saying,

Suzy Q was my principal at Flower Elementary and she now serves on the board in that county, and she was definitely my first role model. In fact, she and I still keep up. My former principal here at Cinderella Elementary, I definitely learned a lot from her, and she encouraged me as well.

In addition, Assistant Principal #2 responded, “My principal who I had for eight years and another principal. They were both my role models.”

Assistant Principal #4 lamented the importance of a great principal as she spoke about her former and current principal often during the interview. She recognized her former principal as the person she learned the most from by reporting, “Ms. Bambi mostly. She is by far the best principal I ever worked for.”

Although the principals that the three females reported as being the people that they observed and learned from are no longer their principal, each person indicated that they stay in touch with those individuals and will often times reach out to them. These individuals are part of their network of support, which is indicative of support structures mentioned later, as well as a characteristic noted in Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition.

Received encouragement to go into administration. Former principals and supervisors were the individuals who saw something in three out of the four of these assistant principals and encouraged them to move into administration.

Earlier she shared how vital her former principals had been in her learning process and Assistant Principal #1 described how her former principal encouraged her to pursue administration.

My second year of teaching my principal asked me if I was ever going into administration and she said, "You should." I was getting my master's that year and she said, "I think you should go into administration." So I kind of just took her advice and thought about it, and thought, yeah, that is something, I think I would be interested in.

Assistant Principal #2 knew that she would not be able to continue teaching much longer because burnout was beginning to set in. She always had a desire to help others, especially younger teachers. One day her supervisor stopped by and stated, "You need to be a supervisor, or an assistant principal. You just got that quality."

Assistant Principal #4 affirmed sentiments of Assistant Principal #1 and #2. "There was a principal that I worked for, she actually hired me and guided me into what direction I wanted to go once I was in the program."

Two of these ladies shared that they did not necessarily see themselves becoming administrators so the encouragement that they received from their superiors played a large role in regards to their pursuit of leadership.

Experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job. In all four cases of female assistant principals, there was incongruence in regards to how they perceived the job and what the job actually entailed once they began in the role. Assistant Principal #1 replied,

I think you don't realize how busy they all and what all they do day to day and the long hours they work, and I think that when they make mistakes, you don't understand why, but it's because they're so busy doing other things. I appreciate everyone around me. I appreciate the office staff more. I mean, it's not like I never...It's not like I didn't before, it's just you appreciate everyone a lot more, because you know what they do day in and day out.

With honesty and openness, Assistant Principal #2 explained her initial thoughts. "I was scared to death of it. I didn't think it was a job I could do. Now that I am in it, I love it and am so glad I took that leap because I think God put me in a place that I need to be."

The viewpoint of Assistant Principal #3 suggested that her role was more of a manager than a leader. She announced,

I thought I would be more of an instructional leader than a disciplinarian, than a bus organizer, than a 'last minute try to find me a sub because I am sick' person. Sometimes, I kind of ask myself, well, why do I want the next level? Why do I want to be a principal when I've already had the experience of what the principals is going to take care of, only at a much greater capacity? He gets the worst of the worst. Why do I want to do that?

Wondering what assistant principals did all the time is what Assistant Principal #4 did. She added to the other females' beliefs.

I thought, gosh why are they never down here? What are they doing? What is keeping them? I really think a misconception I had was the amount of parents they deal with. I don't know why I didn't think that, but I just, I didn't. I thought 'what are you doing out there?' What is taking up so much of their time?" Once she was in the role, her perception changed to, "I don't have freaking time to do anything ever. Sometimes I'll go, 'No, you don't understand what I'm doing for you.' I think a lot of times it's kind of funny. I've had a couple of teachers say, "Well you've forgotten what it's like." No, I haven't, see I'm cleaning up the mess you've made, that's a good reminder of being in the classroom.

The assistant principals expected the role of assistant principal to be very different than it actually was when they were still teachers. Their responses indicated that their perception of the role before they entered it was often incorrect or inaccurate.

Impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization. Assistant principals found that their new role thrust them into the "glass house" of administration, where the eyes of the public were upon them. Because of this, the job directly impacted their lives inside and outside of the organization. Each individual shared how her life had been impacted, both inside the school and outside, by taking on this role.

In relation to living in a glass house, Assistant Principal #1 shared some of those same feelings. She illustrated,

I feel like I have to be perfect all the time. I feel like people are watching me, like I live in a glass bowl. Like a fish bowl. I feel like people watch me all the time. I also know that nobody is perfect, so I have to kind of recognize that it's okay not to be perfect. And, hopefully they'll respect that. I don't go to community events. I don't go. I know too many of the parents so I do not attend.

The effects of the job on home life became evident when Assistant Principal #2 responded.

First year was really tough because there was so little time spent at home. I feel like I don't spend quite as much time with my kids. Outside, it's given me more confidence as a person. I'm a happier person. It's given me a lot more confidence in myself just in the outside world.

More positive identity developed for Assistant Principal #3, despite the fact that she had to re-evaluate her actions out in the community. She mentioned: "I think it's definitely given me more confidence in my ability. It's helped me grow as an individual. It's helped me and made me see the system and the school as an organization and as a living organism." In regards to outside of school, she commented on her perceived image, "I think you are viewed differently in the community. I don't think the expectation is as high as if I was a principal, but they still look at me differently. I am comfortable drinking a glass of wine out at dinner, but I am not sure I would be comfortable doing that as a principal."

Based on Assistant Principal #4 response, the job may have had more of a negative impact in regards to the perception of others as she reported,

I don't even like telling people what position I am. I just tell them where I work. With this job you are dealing with adult problems. People are going through divorces, deaths of

children, illness, illness of parents. Even when you have to let somebody go, that is somebody's livelihood. I don't like that.

Positives and negatives were found in relation to the impact that the job had on each female both inside and outside of the organization. One commonality that was found in the three ladies who had more than one year of experience was that the balancing act had gotten easier with experience.

Experienced difference in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year in the role. When questioned about the transition of each year, the female assistant principals agreed that with more years of experience, their job has gotten easier. The first year was always the hardest, but each year brought more confidence and less struggles. By the time the individuals reached the end of their second and into their third, it was explained that they felt like they were in their stride.

Assistant Principal #1 who was in her first year reported that some of her biggest difficulties during her first year had to do with learning to balance work and home, having to lose her identity as a teacher while also creating boundaries with parents out in the community, as well as learning whom to trust and confide in since the job is so lonely. She said,

I think it's helpful when you are clearly told what your purpose is, like what you're responsible for. We had those meetings often, and it was like we all were on the same page, we all knew what was going on, and I knew specifically what my duties were.

With 1½ years of experience, Assistant Principal #2 commented,

It was very busy. Some weeks I had tons to do and other weeks it was relaxed. I kind of just had to get in the groove of the job and kind of the flow. The first of the year activities are always intimidating, but it was exciting too. The first year was basically doing things

I wasn't sure I could do, doing them, and then building that confidence. The second year, I kind of knew what the role was like, and I have just been trying to do things better.

Assistant Principal #3 who had 2 ½ years in her role shared her experiences:

My first year I didn't have the experience to handle every single situation. I thought I did and always tried to handle those situations, but it really taught me to look at things differently in each situation. The second year, I was more comfortable knowing routines, knowing kids, knowing the teachers, anticipating the problems before they happened, being able to resolve problems easier because I had the resources to resolve those problems.

Assistant Principal #4 who had 3 ½ years of experience stated,

The first year I had teachers that had taught thirty plus years and they are thinking what does she know. That was a really tough thing for me because I am really outgoing, really friendly, and it's hard to tell somebody who is thirty years older that you that they need to do something. The first time I suspended a kid stands out too and I learned to always investigate deeper. With time, trust builds and things get easier. Each year has gotten easier. By the time I started my third year, I felt like I was in my stride.

Whether it was difficulties adjusting to the fast-paced world of administration, having to learn the expectations for discipline and how to handle the serious incidences, or just the ins and outs of the role, each female expressed concerns and difficulties in her transitions; however, over time the difficulties decreased and confidence increased as evidenced through their interviews and sharings.

Support structures were vital for socialization. Supports that these female assistant principals found to be particularly helpful all centered around people in some context. Assistant Principal #1 stated,

My principal who I had worked for the previous five years helped me a lot through the way, like pulling me in, “Here you need to be a part of this conference, I’m going to teach you how to do this, come learn how to do that.” The assistant principal was always helpful too; just having supportive people who have been through these types of experiences in the office kind of prepare you for that.

Assistant Principal #2 affirmed the belief that people are the most important support structure, but she took it a step further by adding the component of the ‘right people.’ She announced,

Everyone I have called at the county has always been very helpful. I know a lot of people already and that helps a lot too. I know principals I can call, they’re always willing to help me out, or assistant principals I know.

People were again the most important support structure noted by Assistant Principal #3.

My support network of friends. I call my mom every single morning and I don’t care what it is. She’s going to listen to me, not that she has the expertise that I do. She can just listen, just having somebody, a sounding board. Having a network of support has really helped me in putting things in check.

In agreement with others' responses, Assistant Principal #4 reinforced the belief in people by adding, "One great thing to me was going to AP meetings. I think it was so helpful. I know that goes back to people."

Support structures were a vital part of the female assistant principals' transition and although the females identified many supports, the one that was common among all of them was people. Although the context of the people might have been different, people were still the overwhelming response of what helped them the most through their transition.

Utilized coping strategies to survive/thrive in the position. Each female shared coping strategies and many of their strategies were in line with each other. Assistant Principal #1 said, "I drank Coke. When I did have to start working all summer, I started getting up earlier in the morning and running, exercising because I knew in the summer months are hours were longer." Assistant Principal #2 indicated, "I've done a lot of reading. Other strategies are having a good friend base to call." When asked about strategies, Assistant Principal #3, shared,

I think conversations with colleagues, as in other assistant principals and principals. Give us access to the principals. Let us all sit down and let's talk about some things. I mean we expect our teachers to vertical team but we don't do vertical teams.

Assistant Principal #4 mentioned, "I read a lot. I just ask tons of questions everywhere I go. I just want to know what the people are doing and why they are doing it."

The table below is representative of the female assistant principals' statements that indicate the theme that was determined to be evident in the research, in answer to the research question: In what ways do female assistant principals perceive they are socialized into the role? This table does not have their quotes in their entirety, but rather short statements that exhibit occurrence of the theme.

Table 8

How Females Perceive They are Socialized

Theme	AP #1	AP #2	AP #3	AP #4
Engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role	I had a lot of leadership roles.	I was sponsor coach of Scholar's Bowl.	I had a lot of leadership experiences.	One time I was just told to do a talent show.
Observed former or present principals	My former principal. I definitely learned a lot from her.	My principal and another principal. They were both my role models.		Ms. Bambi mostly. She is by far the best principal I ever worked for.
Received encouragement to go into administration	My principal asked me if I was ever going into administration...	...You need to be a supervisor, or an assistant principal.		There was a principal that I worked for, she actually hired me and guided me.
Experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job	I think you don't realize how busy they all and what all they do day to day and the long hours they work.	I was scared to death of it.	I thought I would be more of an instructional leader than a disciplinarian.	I really think a misconception I had was the amount of parents they deal with.
Impacted personally by new identity- inside and outside of the organization	I feel like I have to be perfect all the time.	First year was really tough because there was so little time spent at home.	I think you are viewed differently in the community.	I don't even like telling people what position I am.
Experienced 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year differently	I had to learn to balance work and home.	The second year...I have just been trying to do things better.	My first year I didn't have the experience to handle every single situation.	By the time I started my third year, I felt like I was in my stride.
Support structures were vital for socialization	Just having supportive people...	I know principals I can call or assistant principals I know.	My support network of friends.	I know that goes back to people.
Utilized coping strategies to survive/thrive in the position	I drank coke. I started getting up earlier in the morning and running.	I've done a lot of reading.	Give us access to the principals. Let us all sit down and let's talk about some things.	I just want to know what the people are doing and why they are doing it.

Analysis of Case #2 -Males

Research Question #2: In what ways do male assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?

The second case analyzed was the male assistant principals serving at the elementary and secondary level. Seven themes emerged from the male assistant principals' responses to the research questions that pertained to the ways male assistant principals perceived they are socialized into their role, which are displayed in Table 9. The male assistant principals noted that the following occurred as part of their transition and impacted their perception of the role: engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role, received encouragement to go into administration, experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job, impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization, experience as an AP differed from 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year, support structures were vital, and utilized coping strategies to survive and thrive in their position.

Engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role. Being given leadership experiences and opportunities to build on prior and current experiences were noted to be beneficial for all four males. Each one shared that they had the opportunity to participate in leadership activities and half of them actually served as substitute administrators from time to time. Assistant Principal #5 stated,

I have had two principals over my nine year career and the first one gave me the opportunity as far as office stuff, ACIP plan, budget, Title I information, just gave me a lot of responsibility inside the school. Second principal came in as I was in the leadership program and gave me the lead teacher role. When he wasn't on campus, I was in charge.

Assistant Principal #6 was afforded some of the same opportunities and shared some of those experiences by stating,

I had a lot of administrative experience because I did budgets, I did parent meetings every year. I had to organize trips so to be honest with you, there's a lot of stuff that I know about that most APs don't know about.

Some of the leadership experiences were not similar, yet were still leadership experiences as proved by Assistant Principal #7. He explained his experience by saying, "More on the coaching side. There's a lot of leadership in coaching. I spent 20 years as a manager before becoming a teacher."

Other leadership experiences were not sought after and in some cases, not even wanted, as Assistant Principal #8 explained, "When I got hired, my principal made me the department chair in the first three weeks of school. He wanted me to boost their passing rates of the grad exam." Opportunities to lead and develop were given to all four males, but the level of experience and leadership they were given was different. Despite the differences, the opportunities were reported to have attributed to their transition and they were thankful for the growth.

Received encouragement to go into administration. Encouragement was a trend among all four males as that pushed them into pursuing further education in order to become an administrator. A former principal saw the potential in Assistant Principal #5 and he reported, "She pointed out my strengths in that area, and then just the challenge behind it all kind of plateaued as a teacher." However, being an administrator was not part of the plan for Assistant Principal #6. He further explained,

I'd always told myself that I'd never be an administrator. People would say, "I think you could be an administrator." My principal sat me down one summer and asked me what I was doing. She then proceeded to tell me I need to be a principal. I told her I didn't need to be a principal and didn't want to do that. She said, "Yes, you do." Long story short, I thought about it for about a week and then started the program. Two years later I am an assistant principal.

Leadership came in various forms for Assistant Principal #7 as he worked as a manager prior to becoming a teacher. So, when he moved into education, his leadership capabilities became evident to others. He described his encouragement encounter:

I remember when I finished my Master's and was told by a former boss who had moved up that I need to pursue administration. He said, "I need you to pursue administration."

So I thought about it and decided, well, teaching is not my ultimate goal. If I want to be a superintendent someday, I'll need an administrative certificate.

Likewise, Assistant Principal #8 had previously had a management position. And, although the encouragement he received did not come from a superior, encouragement came from his wife who was an educator. He depicted their conversation, by stating, "My wife told me, "You've already had some management experience. You might as well get paid to do this at the school level."

Three out of the four men shared that they had either always wanted to be an administrator or that desire developed over time as they worked as a teacher. Although one of them said that it was not a goal, encouragement was one of the factors that attributed to each of their continuations of schooling to pursue administration.

Experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job. Based on the male assistant principals' answers, they seemed to see more congruence in regards to the perception of the role and the actual job; however, the extent to which some things such as discipline occurred was at a heightened level than what they expected.

Perception was not reality in reference to the job of assistant principal. Assistant Principal #5 noted,

I always thought, "Man, I'm going to get to teach teachers, I'm going to get to play with students, I'm going to be in and out of classrooms all the time," but you know that doesn't happen. It's a lot of paperwork that I have to do on top of the discipline, which consumes a portion, a good portion of it. 75% of my day is putting out fires.

Assistant Principal #6 shared some of the same sentiments by noting, "I've realized it's not as easy as, "Oh they should be doing this," because everybody thinks that. I like the job. I think that there's something I'm good at and some things I need to work on." In addition, Assistant Principal #7 continued, "You don't realize, and of course, how could you or why would you, all the different hats the assistant principal wears in a given day. It's not just the police hat."

The complexity of the role was made apparent by Assistant Principal #8, who explained,

I knew they had to deal with all the problems in the school. One of the things I think would be a fair comment, though, about it, and I guess this depends on the school that you're in, how much discipline you're really going to have to do and how much of your day is going to be spent with discipline and all the problems related with that. All the parents, going through the paperwork. You're spending an inordinate amount of time.

The demands of the job of assistant principal were not realized by the four males ahead of time. There was a surface level understanding, but not a deep understanding of how demanding or complex the role and all of the responsibilities would be.

Impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization. The role of assistant principal has proven to provide a plethora of emotions for the individuals that serve in that capacity as all the males experienced some form of impact from the role.

Even though Assistant Principal #5 spoke on how his life had been impacted outside of the organization, the majority of his focus was on how his role changed inside the organization as he explained,

You have to be a little bit more guarded, just for the professional side of it, and then there's I mean, there's times that you got to put on the game face whether you know what you are doing or not.

Assistant Principal #6 took a direct hit from the loneliness of the role as he described his feelings, by stating,

I kind of feel that I have been in a very void, dark place. Dark may not be the right word, but at times I have felt like I was thriving and then others I've been in a black hole. I don't really talk to people.

The community effect was illustrated by Assistant Principal #7 as he reported, "You're always in the eyes of the public. I'm always mindful, even when I go grocery shopping." The influence the job has on life outside of school was commented on by Assistant Principal #8 as he lamented, "Besides my short-term memory is shot, it is stressful. I try not to take it home with me. There's a certain fatigue that begins to set in after a while. You're on standby all the time. "

The influence the job can have on a person's professional and personal life was evidenced through the analysis of the males' responses. In addition, the self-analysis that the role can induce was shown to directly impact one of the males.

Experienced difference in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year in the role. When looking at all four males and their years of experience, an identifiable difference in their experiences could be found in each year, yet their first year stood out and tended to be what they discussed the most throughout their interviews in regards to the transition.

Assistant Principal #5 who had 6 months of experience noted, "The biggest challenge is learning the job and learning what the principal wants." Assistant Principal #6 who had 2 ½ years of experience announced, "I'm a relationship person and I need to be able to read people. It's hard to when you don't know them and they don't know you." Assistant Principal #7 who had six months of experience responded, "Every day is almost a challenge, it just gets a little bit easier." Assistant Principal #8 who had 2 ½ years of experience echoed that same sentiment by stating, "You don't have a gentle transition. I immediately dove in and was surprised at how fast and furious it is. There's no real moment when I was like, "Hm, I'm on the other side of the ledger now."

The transition, although different for all four, had its ups and downs. Yet, with each additional year of experience, the transition proved to bring about more positives than negatives for the respondents.

Support structures were vital for socialization. Support structures can assist in transitioning and all four male assistant principals expressed that they had supports that they deemed helpful in regards to socializing them into their role. Some supports were programs

provided by the county, professional development, and there was an overwhelming response in regards to other people as being primary supports.

The need for continued growth and development was mentioned by Assistant Principal #5 who replied, “The biggest thing to make the transition easier is professional development and the mentor program.” Assistant Principal #6 added another component by mentioning, “I call people and it’s important to know who to call because a lot of times you call and they don’t want to deal with it our don’t know how.” Assistant Principal #7 echoed the same sentiment by affirming, “It’s about people. I have never been in a position where my education helped me more than the people.” Assistant Principal #8 shared his appreciation for all the people that he had supporting him by adding, “We have four other administrators, so you can draw on them. I thought they were good resources. We have a great office staff. Those people really helped me in figuring out certain things.”

Resources, especially in regards to relying on other people, were critical in the transition of the role of assistant principal. The males indicated that other people, mentoring and professional development were what was most needed, as well as most helpful in their transition.

Utilized coping strategies to survive/thrive in the position. Strategies to help cope and increase their ability to thrive in the position, as well as decrease their stress levels were shared by the males. All four shared coping strategies that they found to be beneficial in navigating through their roles.

The need to not react, but pause and respond was noted by Assistant Principal #5. He explained, “You got to take time to back up a lot. Don’t react.” Assistant Principal #6 looked at things from a personal standpoint and mentioned, “I try not to take things personally. I try not to make things emotional. It’s not about me.” Taking time to reflect and wind down was a strategy

Assistant Principal #7 utilized. He responded, “I have a decompression time. I have a lot of downtime away from school. I may look at emails and stuff later in the evening. Very seldom do I answer my phone.” Assistant Principal #8 relied on people. He suggested, “You need a good mentor. If you don’t have a good mentor, I’m not sure how you’re going to be a more fully developed AP.”

Support structures came in various types as exhibited in the males, but were a critical component for each male and assisted in easing the transition to assistant principal. The table below is representative of the male assistant principals’ statements that indicate the theme that was determined to be evident in the research. This table does not have their quotes in their entirety, but rather short statements that exhibit the occurrence of the theme.

Table 9

How Males Perceive They are Socialized

Theme	AP #5	AP #6	AP #7	AP #8
Engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role	When he wasn't on campus, I was in charge.	Lot of stuff that I know about that most APs don't know about.	I spent 20 years as a manager before becoming a teacher.	When I got hired, my principal made me the department chair in the first three weeks of school. "You might as well get paid to do this at the school level."
Received encouragement to go into administration	She pointed out my strengths in that area..	People would say, "I think you could be an administrator."	I remember I was told by a former boss that I need to pursue administration.	"You might as well get paid to do this at the school level."
Experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job	I always thought, "Man, I'm going to get to teach teachers, I'm going to get to play with students...."	I've realized it's not as easy as, "Oh they should be doing this," because everybody thinks that.	You don't realize all the different hats the assistant principal wears...	...how much discipline you're really going to have to do...
Impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization	You have to be a little bit more guarded...	I kind of feel that I have been in a very void, dark place.	You're always in the eyes of the public.	You're on standby all the time.
Experienced 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year differently	... learning the job and learning what the principal wants.	I'm a relationship person and I need to be able to read people.	Every day is almost a challenge...	You don't have a gentle transition.
Support structures were vital for socialization	...professional development and mentor program.	I call people...	I have never been in a position where my education helped me more than the people.	We have four other administrators, so you can draw on them
Utilized coping strategies to survive/thrive in the position	You got to take time to back up a lot. Don't react.	It's not about me.	I have a decompression time.	You need a good mentor.

Comparison of Findings on Female and Male Assistant Principal Socialization

Research Question #3: Do female and male assistant principals differ in their socialization experiences, and if so, in what ways? When comparing the female and male assistant principals' interview data, there were seven themes that were found to be in common to both parties. Those common themes are as follows: engaged in leadership experiences, received encouragement to go into administration, experienced incongruity of perceived and actual job, impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization, experienced difference in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year, support structures were vital for socialization, and they utilized coping strategies to survive/thrive in their position.

The only theme that was not evidenced in both was observed former or present principals. That was a trend among all the females; however only two of the males stated that they were learning from principals. All other males indicated that they were learning from professors and central office personnel. There were no real noticeable differences in regards to their perceptions of the role, their transitions, or experiences. They also listed many of the same support structures and coping strategies to make it through their job.

Comparison to Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition Model

Research Question #4: In what ways do the experiences of the assistant principals in this study confirm or disconfirm Armstrong's (2010) Epicycles of Transition model when gender is taken into consideration? Dr. Denise Armstrong conducted a study in 2010 on secondary assistant principals and their socialization experiences as they transitioned into this role. By conducting this study, she developed the Epicycles of Transition. The Epicycles of

Transition model is made up of four phases: Entry-Exit, Immersion-Emersion, Disintegration-Reintegration, and Transformation-Restabilization.

Entry-exit. This is the first phase in Armstrong's model and is considered the time period prior to becoming an assistant principal. There are some notable characteristics that Armstrong identified in this stage (See Table 1). Some characteristics include taking on additional responsibilities and serving as a substitute administrator, waiting periods, expectation to conform, ostracism by peers, and feelings of satisfaction and sadness. A male assistant principal serving in an elementary setting explained barriers that were created by higher ups and the waiting periods he went through prior to becoming an assistant principal. He described,

Before, you start to question if you made the right decision financially because you couldn't get an interview anywhere, and you start to question as you heard all of those statements about there being no qualified people and that you have to get your degree. Next thing you know, your chest is full, you're coming out, you're ready. No call. Not even a token interview as one of three. So now you're going, oh, my God. I'm in that pile of unqualified, not ready, whatever. You're taken back. Then you get that first interview and you go, I rocked that, and you don't get a call. You get a thank you for applying. Then, of course, when you land the job there are feelings of pure excitement. I'm going to change the world; life is good, let's motor. Then you find out you're really powerless, and you just added a lot more work.

A male assistant principal serving in a secondary setting expressed how he took on other responsibilities, which prepared him for the role. He stated,

I had a lot of administrative experience because I did budgets. I did parent meetings every year. I had to do schedules. I had to organize trips so to be honest with you, there's a lot of stuff that I know about that most APs don't know about. They don't know how to deal with money stuff because they don't.

In this phase and looking at all the many characteristics of this phase, the only one of Armstrong's characteristics not represented by the interviewees in this present study was 'working outside the perimeters of the contract.' All other characteristics could be identified; therefore, it is appropriate to say that all participants experienced this Entry-Exit phase of the cycle.

Immersion-emersion. This is the second phase in Armstrong's model and this phase is representative of the first year in the role of assistant principal. This phase, and the Disintegration-Reintegration phase, represent the two hardest years in the role. During this phase, individuals are tested socially, emotionally, and physically. They are assigned a wide range of duties in which they may have no prior preparation or guidance. They experience separation from their peers, which can lead to a feeling of isolation vulnerability, loss, and anger. A male elementary assistant principal evidenced separation from peers as he shared, "We have definitely developed a line and not crossing the line. You have to keep it professional, can't cut up like I used to. It's the loneliest job you'll ever have. I'm very lonely."

Being exposed to a wide range of duties, problems, and difficult tasks added to the social, emotion, and physical strain as indicated by a secondary female assistant principal as she lamented, "My first year I didn't have the experience to handle every single situation. I thought I did and I always tried to handle those situations but it really taught me to look at things differently for every situation."

When looking at the second phase, there were a couple of characteristics that may have not been present in the assistant principal interviews. The first was ‘errors occur due to lack of training.’ Although errors were mentioned, it was stated that it was because they were doing so much at one time as opposed to a lack of training. ‘Demands from all stakeholders’ was also a characteristic that did not seem to be mentioned. All other characteristics were determined to be experienced by the assistant principals in this current study. Therefore, because only two out of twenty-four of the characteristics were not present, the researcher deems that the assistant principals in this study experienced the phase.

Disintegration-reintegration. This is the third phase in Armstrong’s model and is representative of the end of year 1 and all of year 2. In this phase, the characteristics that were present in the Immersion-Emersion are still present, but some changes are observed. Hours are still long and the individuals schedule is still impacted by chronic and ongoing crises causing a poor diet, lack of sleep and exercise in some cases. Self-analysis starts to take place in this phase and the individual begins to struggle with their own values and expectations, while distancing themselves emotionally. There are some positives that start to develop in this phase and that is they are able to use prior skills to meet demands and have learned how to circulate through the negative aspects of the job. One of the negatives of the job in which the assistant principals had to navigate through is discipline. A male assistant principal working at the elementary level suggested, “There’s no crying in baseball, but here it’s boo-hoo central. It’s all over the place. Sometimes they’re crying because of hunger. Sometimes they’re crying because they’ve been bad.”

In this phase, self-analysis goes into full effect as evidenced by this male assistant principal working in a secondary setting. He reported, “This job has really taught me that first of all, there

are a lot better people in the county than me. There's a lot of smart people and I'm here to do a job."

The third phase has over twenty characteristics that can fall into this time frame. Out of the twenty, there were a few that were not identified in the research. Those characteristics are lack of sleep and exercise, distancing of his or herself emotionally, and the realization that equality does not exist. There are still an overwhelming number that were present; therefore, it can be assumed that the participants experienced the Emersion-Immersion phase of Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition model.

Transformation-restabilization. This is the final phase of Armstrong's model and is representative of year 3 and beyond. This is the phase in which assistant principals seem to find their stride and overall it has many more positive attributes than the three previous phases. Characteristics that are evidenced are: the individual becomes more confident, knowledge of the role is present, a state of stability is present, they are able to resolve conflicts, and credibility and trust are established.

The continual discomfort with negative aspects of the job and the movement from task oriented to people oriented shines through with this elementary female assistant principal's response. She noted,

I think I internalize a lot more than I used to about things. You know the part of this job is you are dealing with adult problems. People are going through divorces, deaths of children, illness, and loss of jobs. I don't like that part.

The ability to put things in perspective, building confidence and the development of a thick skin were some of the characteristics exhibited by one of the secondary female assistant principals. She announced, "I've had to get a lot tougher. Grew a thick skin. I've learned not to take things

personally.” The researcher deemed that the participants experienced the last phase of Armstrong’s model, Transformation-Restabilization, as there were only two characteristics of that phase which were not touched on by participants in this current study, and those were ‘assertion of values’ and ‘expectations and initiating programs.’ Although it can be assumed that all participants in this phase have initiated programs that information was not volunteered by any of the participants.

Through the analysis of the interviews, each of Armstrong’s phases of the Epicycles of Transition were represented, therefore, her model was confirmed in this new context and with elementary and secondary assistant principals, both male and female. In the Entry-Exit phase, female and male assistant principals reported that they had additional responsibilities and took on leadership roles as a teacher, they cited sponsorship from their supervisor, experienced feelings of satisfaction and sadness, as well as felt an expectation to conform when serving in a leadership position in the school. The second phase of the model, Immersion-Emersion, was confirmed by females and males stating that their least favorite part of the job was discipline and they explained that there was a wide range of duties and problems that they were not always prepared to handle. Separation and initiation from their peers was present, which did not assist in regards to decreasing the feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, frustration, loss, and anger that they faced. Within the third phase, Disintegration-Reintegration, females and males began to self- analyze and work through the negative aspects of the jobs, such as handling the extreme amount of discipline issues in the school. In addition, they expressed the effect that the long hours had on their home life and how they built on their prior skills to meet the demands of the role. Within the last phase, Transformation-Restabilization, confidence and stability continued to

grow as the knowledge base grew. The importance of relying on other people and mentoring relationships were also noted in this phase to assist and ease the difficult transition.

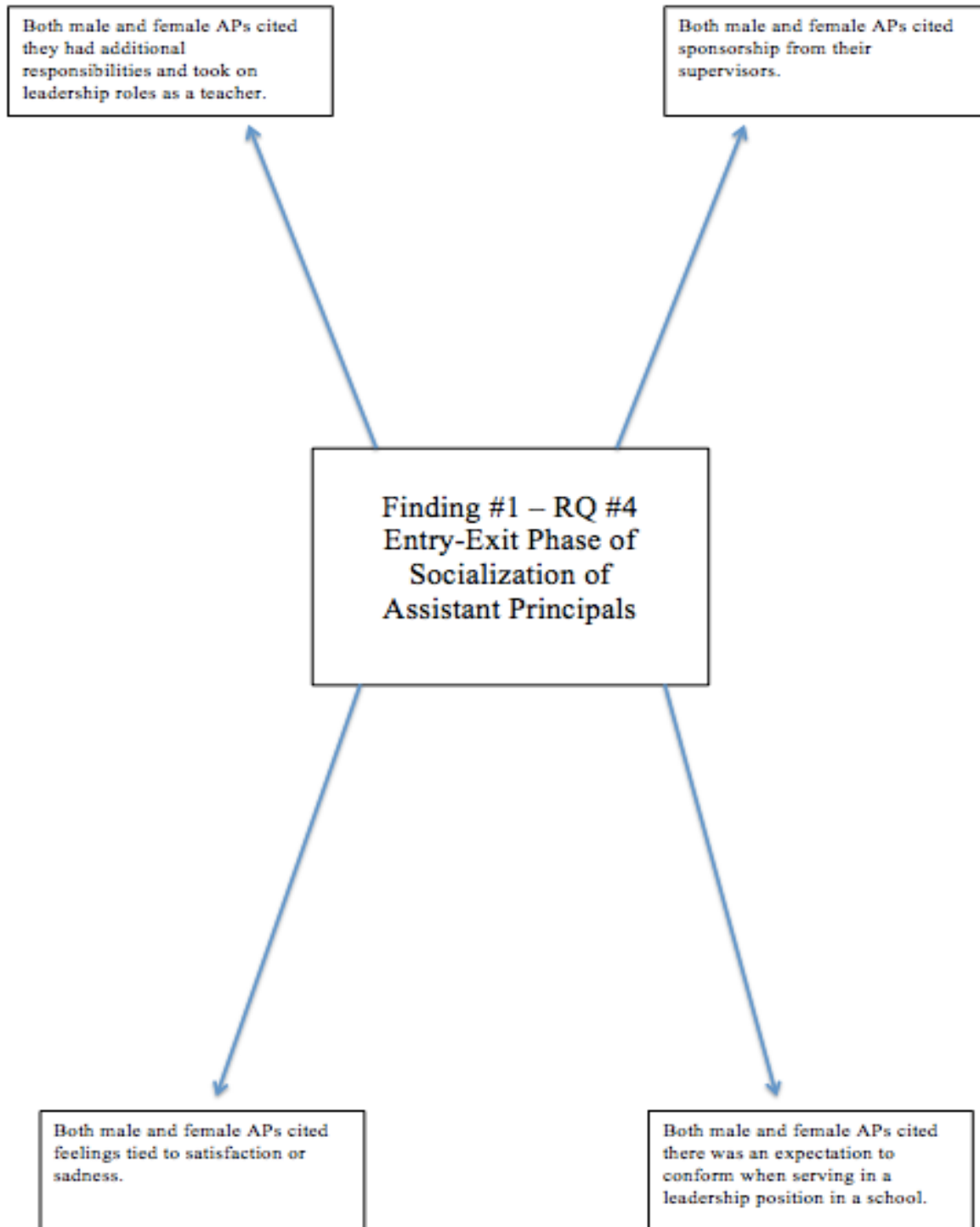


Figure 2. Entry-Exit Phase of Socialization

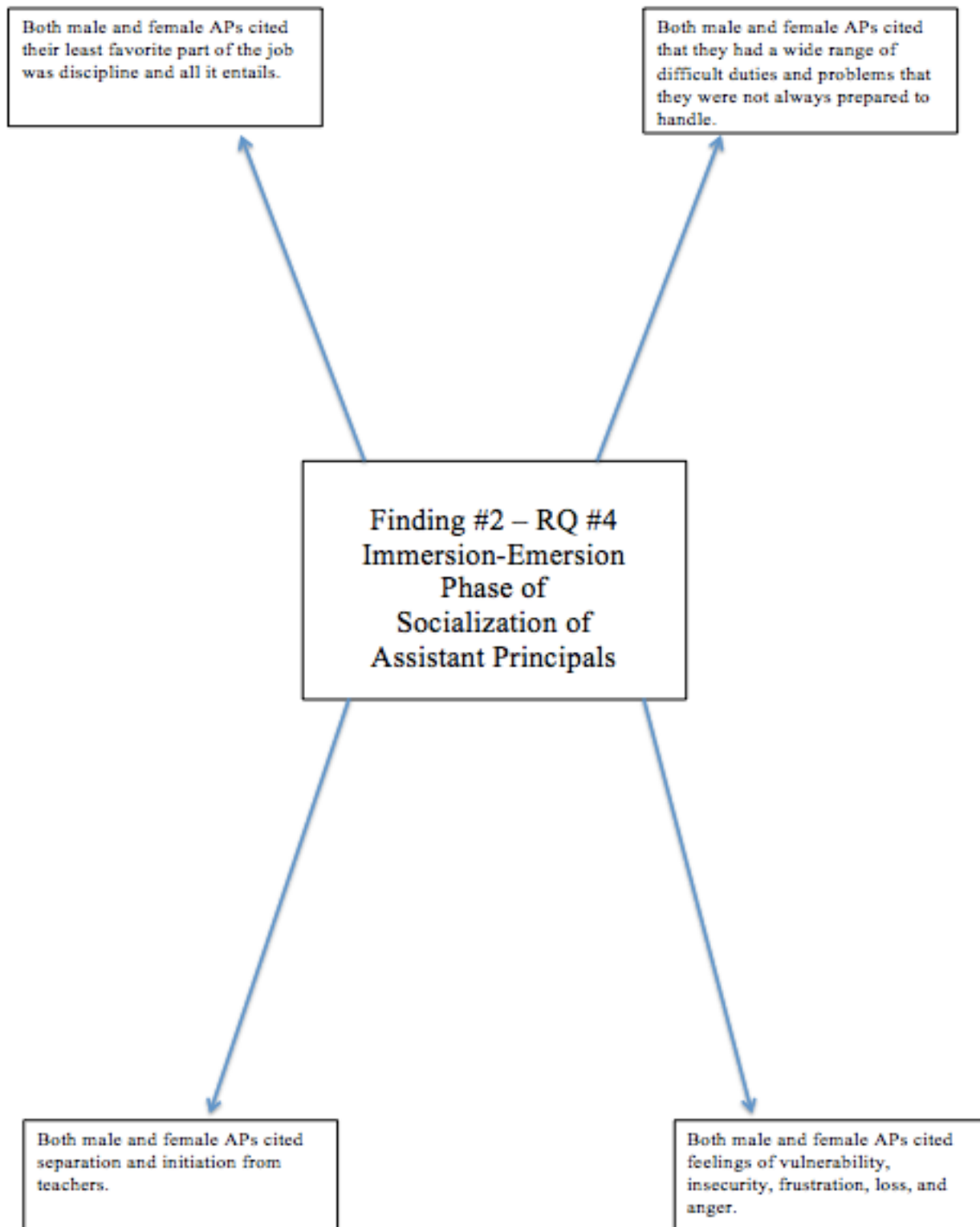


Figure 3. Immersion-Emersion Phase of Socialization

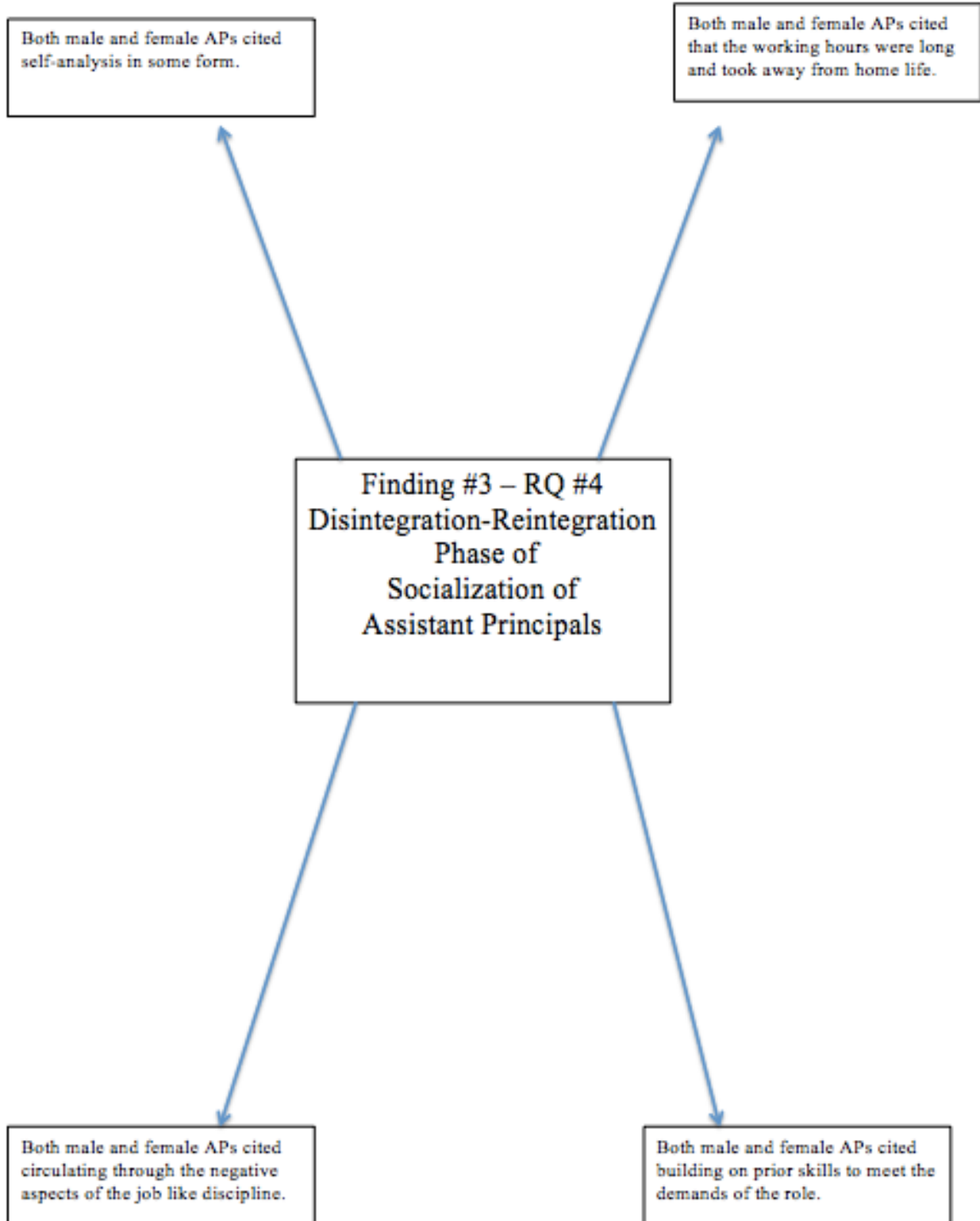


Figure 4. Disintegration-Reintegration Phase of Socialization

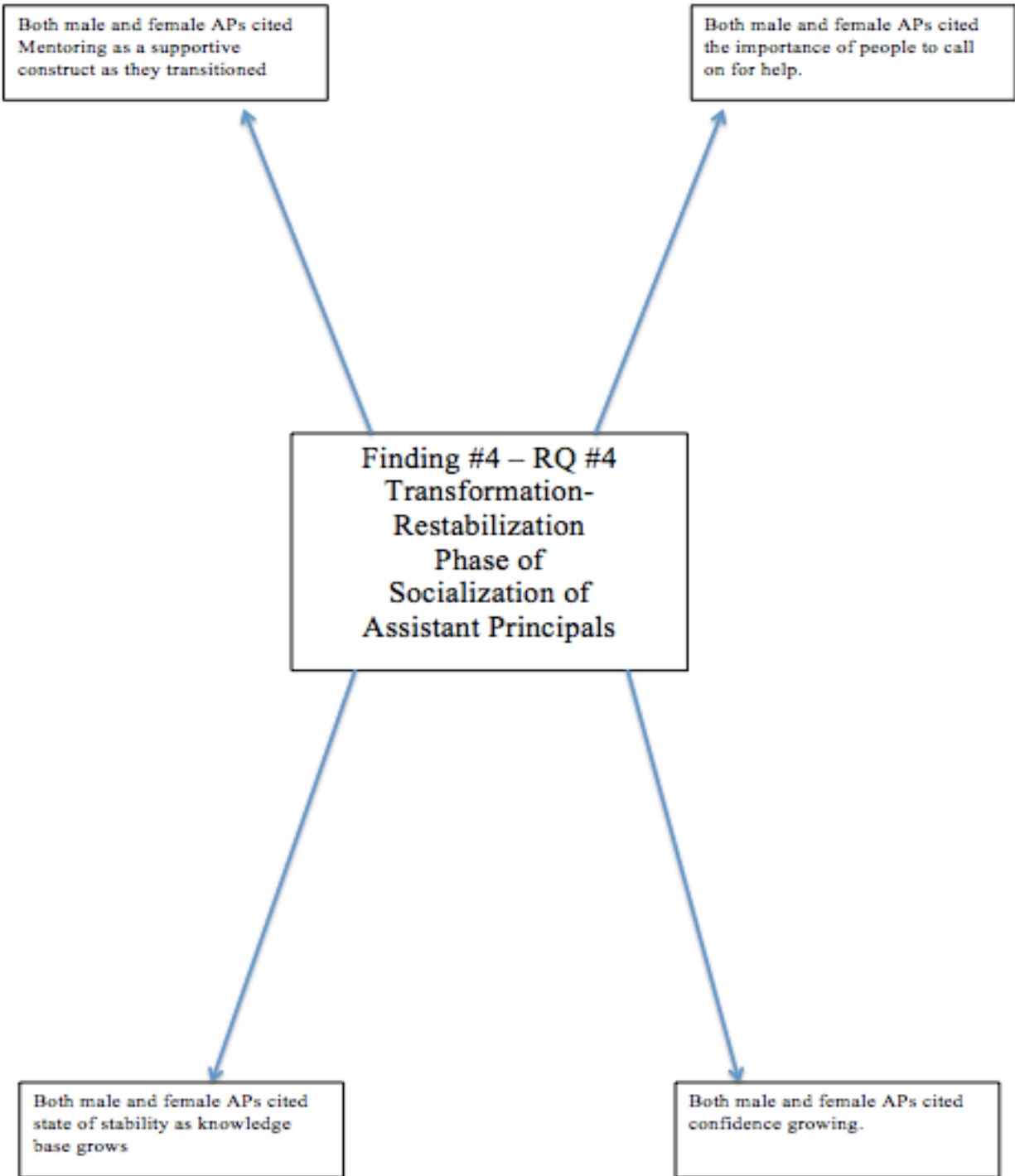


Figure 5. Transformation-Restabilization Phase of Socialization

Summary

Chapter 4 reported the findings of the study. The district, schools, and assistant principals were described in detail and then each case was analyzed. The cases consisted of the female and male assistant principals. After the females' and males' interviews were analyzed separately, a cross case analysis was conducted of both to determine what themes did and did not exist in common in the cases. The themes of the socialization experiences of females and males were identical with the exception of one theme. The themes which they had in common were the following: engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role, received encouragement to go into administration, experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job, impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization, experienced 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year differently, support structures were vital for socialization, and utilized coping strategies to survive/thrive in the position. The one difference for males was the theme 'observed former and present principals'.

Lastly, a comparison of the findings of this study and Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition was conducted to determine if her findings of secondary assistant principals in Canada held true for elementary and secondary assistant principals in one southeastern state in the United States. The researcher found that each phase of Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition model was experienced by the participants in the study. All the findings for each research question were summarized in detail and tables or charts were presented as visuals that also outlined the findings.

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how male and female assistant principals are socialized into their role, and to ascertain if there are differences in their socialization experiences. The study is a modified replication of a study of vice-principals, conducted in Canada by Armstrong (2010), which resulted in the Epicycles of Transition model depicting four phases that vice-principals go through as they become socialized into the role. After investigating the socialization experiences of assistant principals in one southeastern state, the findings of this current study were compared to the findings of the Armstrong (2010) study to confirm or disconfirm her model of vice-principal socialization phases, when gender differences were taken into consideration. In the United States, vice-principals are generally referred to as assistant principals.

The central research question for this study was: In what ways do female and male assistant principals become socialized into their role? There were four sub-questions.

3. In what ways do female assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
4. In what ways do male assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
3. Do female and male assistant principals differ in their socialization experiences, and if so, in what ways?
4. In what ways do the experiences of the assistant principals in this study confirm or disconfirm Armstrong's (2010) Epicycles of Transition model when gender is taken into consideration?

In depth interviews were conducted by the researcher in order to determine how assistant principals are socialized into their role, to determine if the socialization experiences of males and females differ, as well as to compare the findings to Armstrong's former work on assistant principal socialization.

Qualitative research was utilized for this study, as it was the most appropriate method to use. The multiple case study was conducted to look at the socialization experiences of male and female assistant principals, as well as to compare those findings to Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition. The findings of the study were reported in Chapter 4. This chapter includes the following: a short review of the literature, a methodology review, a discussion of the findings, limitations, implications and recommendations, significance of the study, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion.

Literature Review Summary

When teachers consider becoming administrators and internalize the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that support professional membership, they go through a phase of professional socialization in which they identify with the profession of administrator (Hart, 1991; Heck 1995). Organizational socialization represents the transition from the initial appointment until the new administrator is finally accepted into the organization (Alvy & Robbins, 1998). From her study, Armstrong developed a figure that illustrates the phases of transition and socialization that was derived from the perspective of the novice vice principals. The four cycles represented in her model are Entry-Exit, Immersion-Emersion, Disintegration-Reintegration, and Transformation-Restabilization. Each one of the phases ties into a time frame associated with the early transition prior to becoming an administrator up to year three and beyond in the role. Each phase is marked by characteristics that may be evident at that phase. There have been other authors who have

studied the idea of socialization. Through the work that Normore (2004) did, he believed that training programs were the starting point for administrators to become socialized into their roles. Normore (2004) believed there were two phases of socialization: pre-appointment, which is the beginning for school administrators and post appointment, which is the time frame after entering into administration. Many of the characteristics identified in Normore's work, were similar to Armstrong's findings. Crow was another researcher who looked at the early socialization of assistant principals in England. Through his study, he interviewed, observed, and documented four assistant principals' experiences. Normore (2004), Crow (2007), and Armstrong (2010), all focused on the concept of socialization from the perspective of the assistant principal and all three researchers found similarities in the rites of passage or experiences that individuals go through prior to entering administration and continuing into the third year of administration.

Dating back to well before the 90s, women have always outnumbered men in the field of teaching, but equal representation has not always been found in regards to leadership in schools (American Association of School Administrators, 2003). Ironically, women dominate the field of education, yet still lack in the area of leadership positions in education (Chisholm & Napo, 1999). Men seem to be the privileged gender when it comes to leadership, primarily because women's personal costs such as being single or having children impact them professionally (Chisholm, 2001). Historically, school administration career socialization, and advancement has favored males (Education Development Center, 1990). Sources indicate that although representation of women in school leadership has increased, women still do not fill administrative positions in proportion to their numbers in teaching or in proportion to those who are trained and certified to become administrators (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010). Barriers to female leadership are the lack of visibility and recognition they are given (Chisholm, 2001).

Factors such as role stereotyping, gender power relations, socialization, and others noted could be impacting this divide between males and females (Shah & Shah, 2012).

In school administration, the role of assistant principal can often times be forgotten. On most days, assistant principals spend their days fighting fires, dealing with discipline, greeting and saying goodbye to buses, trying to please parents, paperwork, duties, and many more (Richard, 2000). Their job often leaves them exhausted mentally, physically, and emotionally (Armstrong 2010). The role is complex, never slows down, and is full of challenges. Even with increased attention to preparation programs, these individuals are still not fully prepared to embrace the difficulties associated with the role (Armstrong, 2010). The shift in training programs has moved more towards the idea that an administrator should be an instructional leader and that is evidenced by The National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Assistant Principal of the Year Award Program which indicated that administrators should contribute to student learning through overseeing instruction and assessment, overseeing curriculum, exhibiting professionalism, and demonstrating collaborative leadership. However, the responsibilities and tasks assigned to the assistant principal do not always pertain to instructional leadership (Richard, 2000).

Because of the deficits that assistant principals are believed to possess prior to moving into the role of principal, it is paramount that those individuals receive support, and the most logical person to provide that support is the principal with whom the assistant principal works, and who can serve as a mentor (Sun, 2012). Most individuals who go into administration are looking for growth and development in their careers (Sun, 2012). Searby (2014) explained how new administrators can no longer go it alone; they need support. Individuals participating in a mentoring process were very positive about the benefits they gained through the experience

(Southworth, 1995). Some benefits of the mentoring that were noted were peer support, as well as the ability to gain confidence throughout the process while they were still learning (Bush & Coleman, 1995). Mentoring relationships afford the protégés the opportunity to increase their confidence in relation to their own leadership abilities, receive support and meaningful feedback, and share experiences with their mentor that can lead to individual growth (Daresh, 2004; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennant, 2004). The American School Board Journal (2007) noted that through mentoring programs, individuals could be better prepared to become true instructional leaders.

Research Design, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

Qualitative methodology was the most appropriate research method for this study because the researcher needed to understand how assistant principals were socialized into their roles and to ascertain if those experiences differed between males and females based on their roles and responsibilities, as well as support structures they were provided. In 2010, Armstrong developed phases that she believed assistant principals went through as they transitioned into their roles in the beginning of their career and into each year up to year 4. However, her study only considered assistant principals at the secondary level, and her study was only conducted in Canada. Her findings were sound, but in order to determine if her phases were relative to all assistant principals, at all levels, further study was required. Permission was obtained by the researcher to use Armstrong's original interview protocol, with a few additions, to determine if her phases of assistant principal socialization could be a clear depiction of the socialization of assistant principals in the United States, as well as with both males and females, and in elementary and secondary settings.

This study was a multiple case study because the researcher investigated the phenomenon of socialization with two “cases” which were four females (Case #1) and four males (Case #2) serving at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The researcher investigated whether or not the male and female assistant principals differently perceived the ways in which they were socialized into their roles. These perceptions were then analyzed and compared with Armstrong’s (2010) Epicycles of Transition model of socialization phases to confirm or disconfirm that model’s efficacy in the American context and to examine if there were gender differences in the phases of socialization presented by Armstrong.

The case studies conducted were bound by location. The location for the study was in a large school district in one southeastern state and the cases consisted of assistant principals of eight different schools varying in grade levels, size, socioeconomic status, and demographics.

Prior to interviews being conducted, the researcher contacted the assistant superintendent of the county to gain permission to go forward with her study once IRB approved the research. Once IRB approval was received, email invitations were sent to all assistant principals in the county and purposeful sampling was utilized in order to choose assistant principals that met the criteria of working in the elementary or secondary setting and having one to four years of experience.

The primary source of data came from interviews with the assistant principals, which utilized open-ended questions that were based on Armstrong’s (2010) original interview protocol, used with her permission, with only minor additions. The same interview protocol was used with all the assistant principal participants and the researcher only deviated from the question if the assistant principal gave an answer that prompted further questioning. Thus, the interview protocol was deemed to be research-based, valid, and reliable.

Individuals were recorded during their interviews, which lasted no longer than one hour. Recordings were then professionally transcribed, and coding of the interviews began.

This process included analyzing data for similarities of the information reported in the interview and compiling them into manageable segments (Schwandt, 2014). In hand-coding the data, the researcher implemented processes recommended by Saldana (2015) for analyzing qualitative data. First, the researcher thoroughly read all eight transcribed interviews twice before assigning any codes. Next, each transcript was analyzed again, this time employing eclectic coding (Saldana, 2015). Eclectic coding is a first-cycle coding method in which the researcher assigns words or phrases to lines or segments of the transcript. The codes may be of different types, such as noting emotions, noting processes, highlighting exact quotes (in-vivo coding), or other analytic memos in the margins (Saldana, 2015). Next, holistic coding was employed, in which the researcher applied a single code to a large unit of transcribed data, and a master code list was kept. From the holistic codes, the researcher looked for similarities across the eight transcripts in order to develop some common themes, with the research questions always in mind. In this step, the researcher kept a running list of illustrative quotes as examples of each theme. Themes, patterns, and categories were identified to align with the first three research questions in the fourth step. The researcher analyzed themes within each case and across cases (keeping female and male data separate as per the research questions). In the last step for analyzing the interview data for research questions one through three, the researcher reviewed all transcripts again to ensure that primary themes and patterns corroborated with the data obtained from the interviews. This was done to establish validity of the data.

Research question four involved comparing the findings of this study with the Armstrong (2010) study to see if the data confirmed or disconfirmed her model of Epicycles of Transition

depicting the phases of socialization for assistant principals. In order to do that, the researcher reviewed all of the research transcripts from the beginning again, that time looking for evidence where the participants expressed experiencing the four phases of Armstrong's model of socialization phases. Illustrative quotes from the participants were noted where the phases could be corroborated. These were then reviewed as a whole to ascertain whether or not all the phases were represented in this study. Thus, the researcher was able to confirm or disconfirm whether Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition model of socialization for assistant principals is transferable and applicable in the U. S. context.

Discussion/Interpretation of the Findings

Socialization was not a concept that the researcher had much experience with when she began conducting her study. The researcher is an assistant principal who is currently in her third year in the role so it was easy to relate to the information found in the literature, but as far as understanding socialization and the part it played in her transition, her knowledge base was limited. Because the researcher has served as an assistant principal for three years, the researcher looked at this study as beneficial in preparing individuals for the difficulties associated with the job, as well as an opportunity to determine what support structures could decrease the difficulties and assist the individual in working through them more efficiently. There is scant research that has been completed on assistant principals, and especially on their socialization into their role. The findings from this study on the socialization of female and male assistant principals confirmed Armstrong's (2010) Epicycles of Transition model.

In this section, the findings from the central research question and the sub-questions will be discussed. The central question for this study was: In what ways do female and male assistant principals become socialized into their role? There were four sub-questions.

1. In what ways do female assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
2. In what ways do male assistant principals perceive they were socialized into their role?
3. Do female and male assistant principals differ in their socialization experiences, and if so, in what ways?
4. In what ways do the experiences of the assistant principals in this study confirm or disconfirm Armstrong's (2010) Epicycles of Transition model when gender is taken into consideration?

Each theme will now be discussed and the findings will be interpreted in light of research literature and practical applications.

Socialization of female and male assistant principals. Sub-questions one and two focused on the individual socialization experiences of female and male assistant principals at all levels. The findings from the female assistant principals resulted in eight themes: engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role, observed former or present principals, received encouragement to go into administration, experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job, impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization, experienced differences in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year in the role, support structures were vital for socialization, and utilized coping strategies to survive/thrive in the position. All of the themes found to be present for females were also present for males with the exception of 'observed former or present principals.' Therefore, the researcher will use the data from sub questions one and two to answer the central research question: In what ways do female and male assistant principals become socialized into their role? The female themes will be discussed first followed by the males.

Research subquestion #1 – female assistant principals' experiences. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the female assistant principals' interviews shed light on their

experiences of socialization. There were eight themes that illustrate the commonality of their experiences, which will be discussed in detail below.

Engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role. Female participants in this study were asked if there were leadership experiences in which they took part in prior to moving into administration and all females stated that prior to taking on their position as an assistant principal they were given the opportunity to engage in leadership positions to develop themselves further. Assistant Principal #1 shared, “I was a mentor. I was head of various committees. I was grade level chair. I did have a lot of leadership roles.” Assistant Principal #4 commented, “I was lead writing teacher. I was on a leadership committee, ACIP Team, PR Chair, fundraising committee, and I was told to do a talent show.” Because of the opportunities that the females were afforded by their superiors, it can be believed that they were at an advantage in comparison to their peers that were not afforded those opportunities.

When teachers consider becoming administrators and internalize the knowledge, skills, and positions that support professional membership, they go through a phase of professional socialization in which they identify with the profession of administrator (Hart, 1991; Heck, 1995). Armstrong (2010) studied the socialization experiences of secondary assistant principals and through that study she developed phases, based on her research that she believed individuals went through as they are socialized into their role. The first stage of her model (Entry-Exit) was the stage prior to becoming an administrator and characteristics that are associated with that phase are taking on additional responsibilities, leading committees, demonstrating potential through opportunities given, and proving to supervisors they had the skills to serve in the role (Armstrong, 2010).

The findings from the female assistant principals confirmed the literature that states assistant principals go through this socialization phase prior to and entering the role of assistant principalship. The researcher's own experience of being afforded the opportunity to grow her leadership skills and how those opportunities equipped her with skills she may have not had otherwise also confirms the findings. This means that those individuals who choose to take on additional responsibilities, lead committees, and assist their administrator, when appropriate, are more likely to experience supervisor sponsorship, network in some occasions, and demonstrate their potential, which could open a door for them to move into the assistant principalship earlier.

Observed former or present principals. The four females were asked if there was anyone that they were watching and learning from prior to moving into administration or throughout their transition. Three out of the four female participants stated that they were observing and learning from former or present principals as they were transitioning in their role and that they considered those individuals role models. That was also a question asked later on but all of them answered it through the question in regards to observing and learning from others. Assistant Principal #1 responded,

Suzy Q was my principal at Flower Elementary and she now serves on the board in that county, and she was definitely my first role model. In fact, she and I still keep up. My former principal here at Cinderella Elementary, I definitely learned a lot from her, and she encouraged me as well.

Likewise, Assistant Principal #2 reported, "My principal who I had for eight years and another principal. They were both my role models."

Having role models and mentors is pointed out in the literature as being important for those in new positions. Through direct experiences with a mentor, opportunities to observe and

learn are afforded to the mentee (Coleman, 1996). Chong et al. (1991) argued that mentoring relationships, such as the ones experienced by the female assistant principals in this study, “proliferate organizational norms and culture, ensures hard learned knowledge and skill are transferred to younger colleagues, improves overall performance of the work group, and provides a steady supply of trained personnel” (p. 21). Crosby (1999) defined a mentor as a “trusted and experienced supervisor or advisor who by mutual consent takes an active interest in the development and education of a younger, less experienced individual” (p.13). Each one of these females were learning from their supervisor, but were also being developed by the opportunities they were given and the encouragement to reach further than some of them even realized at the time.

Through these findings of this study, the literature can be confirmed. This means that when superiors see teachers’ potential and afford them opportunities to grow their potential, while also guiding them and investing in them along the way by letting them participate in things they might not otherwise have the opportunity for, they are building capacity in regards to leadership. They are also modeling for them what will be expected of them should they decide to pursue administration. They are pouring into the potential that is there, but that might not have been uncovered and because of that they encourage future leadership in their own school, but also for their district. The researcher’s first principal saw potential in her the first year she was hired. Each year, the principal afforded the researcher another opportunity to grow and develop. By her third year teaching, she had entered the leadership and administration program. A year after completion, she had a job. She was and is the youngest assistant principal serving in her county and she attributes her early opportunities to all the people who saw past her age and saw her potential.

Received encouragement to go into administration. The same three females who reported that they were observing and learning from their former or current principals, were also the three that noted that they had received encouragement to go into administration. Assistant Principal #1 shared, “My second year of teaching my principal asked me if I was ever going into administration and she said, “You should.” A central office supervisor saw Assistant Principal # 2’s potential when she suggested, “You need to be a supervisor, or an assistant principal. You just got that quality.”

Stephen Covey believed, “Leadership is communicating other’s worth and potential so clearly that they are inspired to see it in themselves.” Crosby (1999) described a mentor as a “trusted and experienced supervisor or advisor who by mutual consent takes an active interest in the development and education of a younger, less experienced individual” (p. 13). The findings in the study are consistent with the literature from Bush and Chew (1999) who argued, “The central issue we need to tackle is leadership, in particular how the qualities of leadership can be identified and fostered” (p. 47). These females had mentors, maybe informal, but regardless they had individuals who saw their worth and potential and built on it. In Armstrong’s (2010) research as she discussed the Exit-Entry phase, it could be interpreted that individuals received sponsorship to enter administration based on the skills and knowledge they proved to have. This means that opportunities to practice, improve skills, gain more exposure and experience, and build the resume, can have a huge impact for an individual looking for that first job. It also means that when individuals have worked hard and proven themselves to their superiors, they are more likely to receive sponsorship and recognition that could assist them in receiving the job offer.

Experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job. Two separate questions were asked that helped develop this theme and they were: What were your perceptions of the role prior to moving into the assistant principalship? and What were your perceptions of the role after moving to the role?. There were some distinct differences for all females between the two as Assistant Principal #3 indicated,

I thought I would be more of an instructional leader than a disciplinarian, than a bus organizer, than a 'last minute try to find me a sub because I am sick' person. Sometimes, I kind of ask myself, well, why do I want the next level? Why do I want to be a principal when I've already had the experience of what the principals is going to take care of, only at a much greater capacity? He gets the worst of the worst. Why do I want to do that?

In relation to the prior comment, Assistant Principal #4 continued similar sentiments. She continued on by adding,

I thought, gosh why are they never down here? What are they doing? What is keeping them? I really think a misconception I had was the amount of parents they deal with. I don't know why I didn't think that, but I just, I didn't. I thought 'what are you doing out there?' What is taking up so much of their time?" Once she was in the role, her perception changed to, "I don't have freaking time to do anything ever. Sometimes I'll go, 'No, you don't understand what I'm doing for you.' I think a lot of times it's kind of funny. I've had a couple of teachers say, "Well you've forgotten what it's like." No, I haven't, see I'm cleaning up the mess you've made, that's a good reminder of being in the classroom.

In 1994, Glanz conducted a study to determine what the current responsibilities of assistant principals were. Through that study the duties that received the majority of the attention

were administrative paperwork, dealing with parental complaints, duties, textbooks, covering schedules, and dealing with discipline. Glanz (1994) also stated that there had been very few changes to the role of assistant principal since its inception and his theory was confirmed through the findings, as the duties that individuals had in 1994 are some of the same ones noted by the participants in this study. Because of the types of responsibilities held and the demands of the role, the job of assistant principal does not lend much opportunity for the individual to focus on instructional leadership unless it is an important priority of the principal and he or she sees the value in the assistant principal serving in that capacity. In the Immersion-Emersion phase, Armstrong (2010) discussed how some of the assistant principals she interviewed were excited about their new role, but how the excitement quickly dissipated and was replaced with feelings of uncertainty. One assistant principal was denied opportunities to some administrative privileges and responsibilities much like the assistant principal mentioned above who believed she would be afforded the opportunity to serve as an instructional leader as opposed to a manager. The assistant principals in her study also shared how they thought they would be able to handle issues such as discipline only to realize that policy and teachers often won the battle. In regards to challenges, they were aware there would be challenges, but the extensiveness of the challenges they would encounter from parents, students, and peers was not anticipated (Armstrong, 2010).

Through this we can learn the importance of building relationships with all stakeholders because until a relationship is formed, trust will not be developed. And, until trust is developed, no change will occur. The next important suggestion would be for the assistant principal to have a mentor who can support the individual through the difficult and challenging times, as well as give feedback on how to make things better the second time around. Lastly, being able to be an advocate for oneself is extremely important. Not all principals believe in distributive or shared

leadership, so if there is something the assistant principal feels passionately about, would like to implement, or be a part of, it may take the assistant principal advocating for himself or herself to get it done.

Impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization. The impact the job had on each female varied, but each one was affected by her new position both inside and outside of the organization. Assistant principal #1 illustrated,

I feel like I have to be perfect all the time. I feel like people are watching me, like I live in a glass bowl. Like a fish bowl. I feel like people watch me all the time. I also know that nobody is perfect, so I have to kind of recognize that it's okay not to be perfect. And, hopefully they'll respect that. I don't go to community events. I don't go. I know too many of the parents so I do not attend.

More positive identity developed for Assistant Principal #3, despite the fact that she had to re-evaluate her actions out in the community. She mentioned: "I think it's definitely given me more confidence in my ability. It's helped me grow as an individual. It's helped me and made me see the system and the school as an organization and as a living organism." In regards to outside of school, she commented on her perceived image,

I think you are viewed differently in the community. I don't think the expectation is as high as if I was a principal, but they still look at me differently. I am comfortable drinking a glass of wine out at dinner, but I am not sure I would be comfortable doing that as a principal.

Although most of the impacts mentioned by the participants were negative in nature that is contradictory to the research that was noted by Weiss who was quoted in *The Role of the*

Assistant Principal (2008) who stated, “There are few things more gratifying than when a new program, curriculum, or instructional strategy begins to show results” (p.10). Richard (2000) believed being an assistant principal might be one of the toughest jobs in American education; however, it has also been reported as being one of the most rewarding jobs. Aside from the literature from Richard (2000), the findings can also be confirmed through Armstrong’s (2010) research where she determined there were a variety of factors that could influence the individual’s life when serving in the position of assistant principal. The role of the assistant principal reaches into the community and because of the hours and expectations of the role, it takes its toll on the lives of the assistant’s family. The hours an assistant principal works are generally very long due to after school events they are required to attend (Armstrong, 2010; Richard, 2000). There is more stress involved in administration than in teaching and the exhaustion and strain placed on the individual can be quite extreme (Armstrong, 2010). Also, when an individual becomes an assistant principal, he or she is on call all the time. The fact that the assistant principal has a life and family outside of the job is often forgotten. Overall, the first two years are relatively negative in nature, but by year three more positives tend to occur (Armstrong, 2010).

These findings are important because they help us understand that the job of assistant principal does not just impact the individual in the role, but also the family. Being able to talk about the impact the job will have on a person’s family is very important and being able to have the family’s support is even more important. Too often, individuals’ marriages suffer and divorce occurs because the administrator ends up spending more and more time at work and less and less time at home. Knowing the impact the job can have and putting safety nets in place in order to balance home and work life, may help the assistant principal.

Experienced differences in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year in the role. The women interviewed had as little experience as ten months in the position and as much as three and a half years in the position. With each year of involvement, growth was noted in the role. The transition between first year to second year was described by Assistant Principal #2: “The first year was basically doing things I wasn’t sure I could do, doing them, and then building that confidence. The second year, I kind of knew what the role was like, and I have just been trying to do things better.” Assistant Principal #4 painted a picture explaining some of the difficult aspects of the job that she had to navigate through her first two years, but then shared the ease of her third year:

The first year I had teachers that had taught thirty plus years and they are thinking what does she know. That was a really tough thing for me because I am really outgoing, really friendly, and it’s hard to tell somebody who is thirty years older that you that they need o do something. The first time I suspended a kid stands out too and I learned to always investigate deeper. With time, trust builds and things get easier. Each year has gotten easier. By the time I started my third year, I felt like I was in my stride.

The findings from the female assistant principals’ interview responses confirmed the literature which depicts one struggle that women face is being respected by peers and having their authority acknowledged when they are given the opportunity to lead (Chisholm, 2001). Throughout the interview process, the researcher found that when questioning the individuals about their transition experience, each one of Armstrong’s phases was evident and the characteristics within the phase could be identified based on the year the assistant principal was discussing at the time. This means that Armstrong’s model and the research that she conducted that produced all these possible characteristics can better inform assistant principals about the

realities of their transitions, as well as raise awareness for the districts and schools in how to support and assist with the transition.

Support structures were vital for socialization. Participants were asked what support structures were helpful in their transition and although a variety of items were mentioned such as professional development, experience, and family support, nothing received more response than ‘people.’ All four females stated the importance of people. Assistant Principal #1 emphasized, “Just having supportive people who have been through these types of experiences in the office kind of prepare you for that.” In agreement, Assistant Principal #2 continued, “I know principals I can call, they’re always willing to help me out, or assistant principals I know.”

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) stated, “to reculture schools to become energized to make important changes and build the capacity to sustain these improvements, educators need opportunities to collaborate with one another with trust, candor, and commitment to continuous improvement” (p. 89). Daresh (2004) affirmed that a factor that could be contributing to the shortage of leaders is the lack of support they receive in the demanding role and that teachers who would be considered qualified for administration are not interested because of the high stakes involved. The findings from the research demonstrate what is defined as the most beneficial support structure – PEOPLE - while also providing why the support is considered to be such a key piece.

What can be gleaned from the findings is the importance of having a mentor. From the researcher’s own perspective, she has been part of mentoring relationships, both formally and informally, and those relationships helped her develop herself, her skills, and gave her a sounding board when difficult situations arose that she did not have experience with, which assisted with her socialization. Although new principal mentoring is mandated in at least thirty-

two states (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006), there are very few mentoring programs for assistant principals. It is usually assumed that the senior principal will mentor the assistant principal and often times that does not occur. “The principal has a strong responsibility to serve as a mentor for the assistant principal” (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991, p. 67). The researcher has been in the role of being a new administrator not only at a new school, but in a new district and had it not been for the people and their support, she is confident her transition would have been even bumpier.

Utilized coping strategies to survive/thrive in the position. In order to survive and thrive in the position of assistant principal, all four females recognized the need for coping strategies and gave ideas that they thought would be beneficial. According to Assistant Principal #1 she announced, “I drank Coke. When I did have to start working all summer, I started getting up earlier in the morning and running, exercising.” Assistant Principal #1 found that the job taxed her physically and so she adapted her own personal schedule to fit her needs. Emphasizing the need for leaning on others to learn how to emulate their leadership behaviors, Assistant Principal #3 recommended: “Give us access to the principals. Let us all sit down and let’s talk about some things.” Assistant Principal #3 realized that a coping strategy would be to talk more informally to those who had gone before in this role and had been promoted.

Research indicates that administrators need to find ways to fight stress and survive and thrive in their position. It has been confirmed that the job is stressful when considering Armstrong’s (2010) phases and she might argue that it is not only stressful, but also exhausting. The findings that female assistant principals viewed coping strategies as an important tool in regards to surviving and thriving in their position can be verified through the aforementioned research. Although there was not symmetry among the items listed, the females did identify

some strategies that they believed could be beneficial in helping others respond to the transition. They were doing things for themselves, reading and researching, questioning, remembering “it isn’t about you,” and setting time aside for themselves.

Table 10 is a depiction of the themes that were generated from the female interview analyses, as well as succinct quotes from the females that support the themes.

Table 10

Themes for Female Socialization

Engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role	I was a mentor. I was head of various committees. I was grade level chair. I did have a lot of leadership roles.	I was lead writing teacher. I was on a leadership committee, ACIP Team, PR Chair, fundraising committee, and I was told to do a talent show.
Observed former or present principals	Suzy Q was my principal at Flower Elementary and she...was definitely my first role model. In fact, she and I still keep up. My former principal here at Cinderella Elementary, I definitely learned a lot from her, and she encouraged me as well.	My principal who I had for eight years and another principal. They were both my role models.
Received encouragement to go into administration Experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job	My second year of teaching my principal asked me if I was ever going into administration and she said, “You should.” I thought I would be more of an instructional leader than a disciplinarian, than a bus organizer, than a ‘last minute try to find me a sub because I am sick’ person.	You need to be a supervisor, or an assistant principal. You just got that quality. I thought, gosh why are they never down here? What are they doing? What is keeping them? I really think a misconception I had was the amount of parents they deal with. I don’t know why I didn’t think that, but I just, I didn’t. I thought ‘what are you doing out there?’ What is taking up so much of their time?
Impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization	I feel like I have to be perfect all the time. I feel like people are watching me, like I live in a glass bowl. Like a fish bowl.	I think it’s definitely given me more confidence in my ability. It’s helped me grow as an individual. It’s helped me and made me see the system and the school as an organization and as a living organism.
Experienced 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year differently	The first year was basically doing things I wasn’t sure I could do, doing them, and then building that confidence. The second year, I kind of knew what the role was like, and I have just been trying to do things better.	The first year I had teachers that had taught thirty plus years and they are thinking what does she know. That was a really tough thing for me... With time, trust builds and things get easier. Each year has gotten easier. By the time I started my third year, I felt like I was in my stride.

Research subquestion #2- male assistant principals' experiences. Research subquestion two was: In what ways do male assistant principals perceive they were socialized into the position? This will be addressed and the analysis of the male's themes, along with discussion and interpretation will follow.

Engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role. As with the females, the males were asked if they had been engaged in leadership experiences prior to taking on their role and each one indicated that they had. Their experiences were much more diverse in nature in comparison to the females. One was afforded the opportunity to serve as a substitute administrator as was shared by Assistant Principal #5. He confirmed, "I was in the leadership program and my principal gave me the lead teacher role. When he wasn't on campus, I was in charge." Assistant Principal #6 was afforded some of the same opportunities and shared some of those experiences by stating, "There's a lot of stuff that I know about that most APs don't know about because of my experiences."

The findings in this study are consistent with the findings from other researchers in regards to the experiences and the impact it can have on the individual prior to the role. Entry-Exit, the first stage of Armstrong's model, was the stage prior to becoming an administrator and characteristics that are associated with that phase are taking on additional responsibilities, leading committees, demonstrating potential through opportunities given, and proving to supervisors they had the skills to serve in the role (Armstrong, 2010).

The findings from the male assistant principals confirmed the literature that states assistant principals go through this socialization phase prior to and entering the role of assistant principalship. This means that those individuals who choose to take on additional responsibilities, lead committees, and assist their administrator, when appropriate, are more

likely to experience supervisor sponsorship, network in some occasions, and demonstrate their potential, which could open a door for them to move into the assistant principalship earlier.

Received encouragement to go into administration. Although there was a difference in respect to who encouraged the men, each male reported that they were encouraged to move into administration. On some occasions, numerous people gave encouragement, as was the case with Assistant Principal #6. He noted, “People would say, “I think you could be an administrator. My principal sat me down one summer and proceeded to tell me I need to be a principal.” For others, it was their former boss. Assistant Principal #7 reported his former boss said, “I need you to pursue administration.”

The findings of this research are consistent with the Entry-Exit Phase in that supervisor sponsorship is apparent and these males have proven to people, more specifically their supervisors that they had the skills and knowledge to serve in the role (Armstrong 2010). Because of the support, the males probably had feelings of satisfaction and motivation which propelled them into taking the administrative courses needed to become administratively certified. This means supervisor sponsorship has a lot of power and that having a strong network of individuals in one’s corner could help provide additional support for the individual in regards to advancement. The satisfaction gained from knowing one is supported is also indicative of the importance encouragement plays not only to begin a task, but also to continue in it. The job of assistant principal can be very difficult, and the impact senior principals can have on their assistant principals can truly enhance or hinder their transition experience.

Experienced Incongruity of Perceived Job and Actual Job. Based on the analysis of the male assistant principal interviews, the disconnect between the perceived role and the real job was not as prevalent as the females, but the extent to which they thought they would be involved

in things was skewed at times. According to Assistant Principal #6, “I’ve realized it’s not as easy as, “Oh they should be doing this,” because everybody thinks that.” Assistant Principal #7 shared some of the same opinions, but in a different way. He mentioned, “You don’t realize, and of course, how could you or why would you, wear all the different hats the assistant principal wears in a given day? It’s not just the police hat.”

The findings are consistent with literature dating back over twenty years and to date. In 1994, Glanz conducted a study concerning what APs actually did and what they believed they should be doing. A comparison study was conducted by Sun in 2010 in which the same questions and categories were used and not much difference in the assistant principal duties was noted. Assistant principals still had a different view of what they should be doing in relation to the actual tasks they were performing, and the tasks had not changed in over fifteen years.

In order to keep from getting burned out, it is important for the assistant principal to first realize that the to-do list is simply that and that it may sit on the desk never complete due to the fires that ensue on a daily basis. Prioritizing is a large part in being able to truly be an instructional leader because there is always a reason not to leave the office. Assistant Principal #8, who has been in the role two and half years, explained: “I still do a lot of observation, but I have to prioritize those.” Being able to determine what can wait so that the AP can get into the classroom and be the instructional leader or devote the time to look at new curriculum is part of the balancing act. In order to re-energize and cope, support structures and strategies could be utilized throughout the day or at the end of the day to combat burn out.

Impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization. When questioned about the impact the job has had on their life, male assistant principals all disclosed that they experienced some form of impact from the role. The community effect was illustrated

by Assistant Principal #7 as he reported, “You’re always in the eyes of the public. I’m always mindful, even when I go grocery shopping.” Assistant Principal #8 agreed, as he lamented, “Besides my short-term memory is shot, it is stressful. I try not to take it home with me. There’s a certain fatigue that begins to set in after a while. You’re on standby all the time.”

The findings are congruent with Armstrong’s (2010) research. She determined there were several factors that could influence the individual’s life when serving in the position of assistant principal. Overall, the first two years are relatively negative in nature, but by year three more positives tend to occur. Some of the negative characteristics defined in her phases of Immersion-Emersion and Disintegration-Reintegration, help to confirm the findings. Some of those characteristics are expectation and pressure to conform, being tested socially and emotionally, questioning of one’s experience, and lack of support. In the final phase, Transformation-Restabilization, the individual learns to deal with the negatives and a sense of stability can occur. This translates into more positives. This means that although the pathway may be dark at times, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Because this is known, it is important that the assistant principals surround themselves with a network of support, as well as develop coping strategies to combat the negatives until the full integration into the school culture has taken place in phase three.

Experienced difference in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year in the role. The males interviewed had as little experience as six months in the position and as much as two and a half years in the position. With each year of involvement, differences were noted in their socialization into the role. Assistant Principal #5 indicated, “The biggest challenge is learning the job and learning what the principal wants.” Assistant Principal #6 felt the challenges his first year in the role but as time progressed the transition became easier. He stated, “I had learned the ins and outs and

people were excited to know I was coming back.” The same feelings resounded from Assistant Principal #7 who explained, “Every day is almost a challenge, it just gets a little bit easier.”

The findings from the male assistant principals’ responses align with Armstrong’s (2010) phases which show that the job of assistant principal gets easier as they transition to years two and three. This means that Armstrong’s model and the research that she conducted that produced all these possible characteristics can better prepare assistant principals with their transition, as well as raise awareness for the districts and schools in how to support and assist with the transition. As with any job, the longer one is in the position, the more comfortable one gets, moving from survival mode to thriving.

Support structures were vital for socialization. Participants were asked what support structures were helpful in their transition and although professional development was mentioned by one individual, all four males stated the importance of people. Three of them noted people who helped them through their transition. Assistant Principal #6 suggested, “I call people and it’s important to know who to call because a lot of times you call and they don’t want to deal with it or don’t know how.” Assistant Principal #8 shared his appreciation for all the people that he had supporting him by adding, “We have four other administrators, so you can draw on them. I thought they were good resources. We have a great office staff. Those people really helped me in figuring out certain things.”

The findings affirmed the research that shows that in order to be successful in the fast paced world of education, new administrators can no longer go it alone; they need support (Searby, 2014). Because having other people to lean on was the main support structure mentioned by the male participants that means that mentoring should be a part of each assistant principal’s socialization journey. With support, the transition that takes place could be lessened

and it could also prepare the individuals to later serve as a mentor for others who come after them. In most cases, a mentor will not be assigned, so the assistant principal will need to take the initiative in order to find a mentor, and build and maintain that relationship.

Utilized coping strategies to survive/thrive in the position. Coping strategies were a necessity for all male assistant principals to develop. When questioned about how to survive and thrive in their position, Assistant Principal #6 mentioned, “I try not to take things personally. I try not to make things emotional. It’s not about me.” Assistant Principal #8 suggested, “You need a good mentor. If you don’t have a good mentor, I’m not sure how you’re going to be a more fully developed AP.”

Research confirmed the findings that administrators need to find ways to fight stress and survive and thrive in their position. Education World (2015) published an article, which summoned the help of principals in identifying ways in which they reduced their stress levels because of the job. Even though the article applies to principals, the ideas given could be applied to assistant principals as well, in the researcher’s opinion. Some of the strategies recommended are to spend time with students, do not take your stress home, take the weekend off, exercise, and spend time with friends and family.

It has been confirmed in Armstrong’s (2010) phases that the job is stressful. She might argue that it is not only stressful, but also exhausting. The two phases that are most stressful are Immersion-Emersion and Disintegration-Reintegration and they are representative of the first and second year in the role. If an assistant principal does not develop coping strategies to deal with the stress of the job, it could stall their progression, it could cause them to get out of administration, or it could keep them from ever pursuing the principalship. The males were asked about specific support structures they use. They suggested things such as assessing and backing

up from the situation, taking time to not react, remembering it is “not about you,” turning off the phone and email, taking time to be with friends and family, and relying on faith.

Table 11 is a depiction of the themes that were generated from the male data analysis, as well as succinct quotes from the males that support the themes.

Table 11

Themes for Male Socialization

Engaged in leadership experiences prior to the role	I was in the leadership program and my principal gave me the lead teacher role. When he wasn't on campus, I was in charge.	There's a lot of stuff that I know about that most APs don't know about because of my experiences.
Received encouragement to go into administration	People would say, "I think you could be an administrator. My principal sat me down one summer and asked me proceeded to tell me I need to be a principal.	I need you to pursue administration.
Experienced incongruity of perceived job and actual job	I've realized it's not as easy as, "Oh they should be doing this," because everybody thinks that.	You don't realize, and of course, how could you or why would you, all the different hats the assistant principal wears in a given day.
Impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization	You're always in the eyes of the public. I'm always mindful, even when I go grocery shopping.	Besides my short-term memory is shot, it is stressful. I try not to take it home with me. There's a certain fatigue that begins to set in after a while. You're on standby all the time.
Experienced 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year differently	The biggest challenge is learning the job and learning what the principal wants.	Every day is almost a challenge. It just gets a little bit easier.
Support structures were vital for socialization	I call people and it's important to know who to call because a lot of times you call and they don't want to deal with it our don't know how.	We have four other administrators, so you can draw on them. I thought they were good resources. We have a great office staff. Those people really helped me in figuring out certain things.
Utilized coping strategies to survive/thrive in the position	I try not to take things personally. I try not to make things emotional. It's not about me.	You need a good mentor. If you don't have a good mentor, I'm not sure how you're going to be a more fully developed AP.

Research subquestion #3. Sub question #3 examined both females and males with respect to their socialization experiences: Are there differences in the socialization experiences of females and males, and if so, what are they? When comparing the female and male assistant

principals' interview data, there were seven themes that were found to be in common to both genders. Those common themes are as follows: engaged in leadership experiences, received encouragement to go into administration, experienced incongruity of perceived and actual job, impacted personally by new identity-inside and outside of the organization, experienced difference in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year, support structures were vital for socialization, and they utilized coping strategies to survive/thrive in their position.

The only theme that was not evidenced in both was 'observed former or present principals.' That was a trend among all the females; however only two of the males stated that they were learning from principals. All other males indicated that they were learning from professors or central office personnel. The men noted that several of these individuals who they were learning from were also considered to be their mentors, which could be the reason they were observing and learning from them as opposed to their former or current principal. I do feel that if I would have pointedly asked if they were learning from their principal that they would have unanimously said yes, but based on the information gained that point was not shared. There were no noticeable differences in regards to their perceptions of the role, their transitions, or experiences. Overall, there was an overwhelming number of similarities and very little difference between the female and male responses. They also listed many of the same support structures and coping strategies to make it through their job.

The Findings in Relation to the Original Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Armstrong's (2010) model of socialization of vice-principals, called the Epicycles of Transition. Armstrong's qualitative study was conducted in a large urban school district in Canada. Eight newly appointed secondary vice-principals were interviewed, with the aim of determining what structures, events, and people

contributed or hindered their transition. The individuals chosen ranged in ages from 30 to 55 and were of diverse races. Four males and four females participated in the interviews and their years of experience as vice-principals ranged from one to three years. From her study, Armstrong (2010) developed a model that illustrates the phases of transition and socialization, created from the perspectives of the novice vice principals.

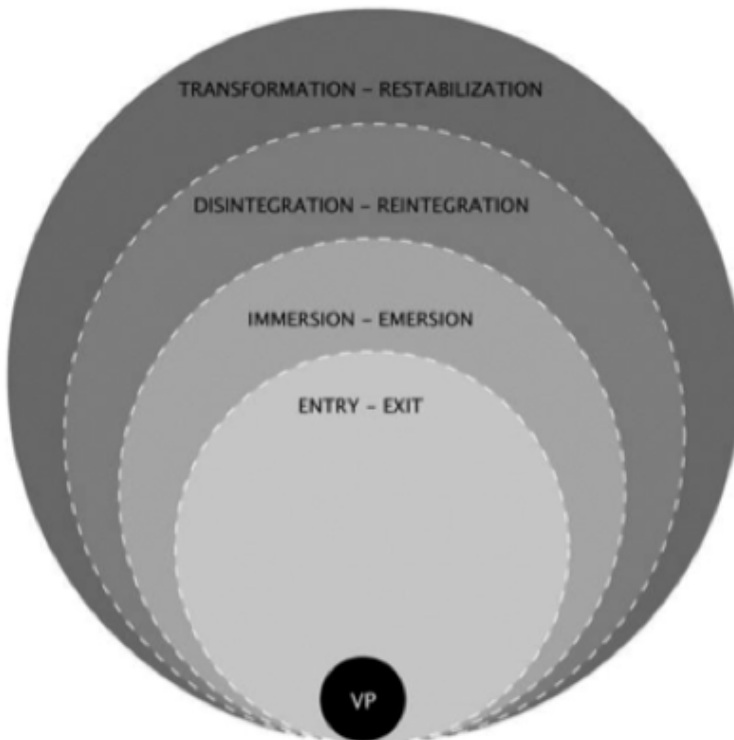


Figure 1. Epicyles of Transition. (Armstrong, 2010, p.697).

The four cycles represented in the figure are Entry-Exit, Immersion-Emersion, Disintegration-Reintegration, and Transformation-Restabilization.

Entry-exit phase. The first phase, Entry-Exit, is the phase where the individual is still a teacher but has aspirations of becoming an administrator and is preparing for that transition. In this phase, the teacher begins to picture himself/herself moving up in the hierarchy and separating from the teaching role. Taking on additional responsibilities, assisting with building

duties, filling in for administrators, serving as a leader of committees, and attending leadership professional development are informal “rites” that individuals in the Exit/Entry phase might take part in. These socialization rites allow the aspirants to practice the role of vice-principal, network, gain support from supervisors, and show the potential they have as leaders. Other rites evolve during this time, which Armstrong (2010) calls divestiture and investiture. Giving up relationships with other teachers and leaving the classroom are examples of divestiture rites, whereas getting a new office, a walkie-talkie, and keys to the building are noted as investiture rites. “These Entry-Exit rites provoked feelings of satisfaction and sadness as the newly promoted vice-principals struggled with the realization that their entry into administration also entailed a corresponding physical, psychological, and social exit and separation from teaching” (Armstrong, 2010, p. 701).

Current study confirmation of entry-exit. In this phase, Armstrong determined there were over fifteen characteristics that could be present for those individuals transitioning into the role of assistant principal. Based on the research findings, when considering female and male assistant principals at the elementary and secondary level, all the characteristics were noted except for ‘working outside the perimeters of the contract.’ A male assistant principal serving in an elementary setting explained barriers that were created by higher ups and the waiting periods he went through prior to becoming an assistant principal. He described,

Before, you start to question if you made the right decision financially because you couldn’t get an interview anywhere, and you start to question as you heard all of those statements about there being no qualified people and that you have to get your degree. Next thing you know, your chest is full, you’re coming out, you’re ready. No call. Not even a token interview as one of three. So now you’re going, oh, my God. I’m in that pile of unqualified,

not ready, whatever. You're taken back. Then you get that first interview and you go, I rocked that, and you don't get a call. You get a thank you for applying. Then, of course, when you land the job there are feelings of pure excitement. I'm going to change the world; life is good, let's motor. Then you find out you're really powerless, and you just added a lot more work.

A male assistant principal serving in a secondary setting expressed how he took on other responsibilities, which prepared him for the role. He stated,

I had a lot of administrative experience because I did budgets. I did parent meetings every year. I had to do schedules. I had to organize trips so to be honest with you, there's a lot of stuff that I know about that most APs don't know about.

The researcher has experienced many of the characteristics identified in the Entry-Exit phase (Armstrong, 2010). In fact, she made personal connections with fifteen of the characteristics in this phase during her own Exit-Entry phase. Some notable characteristics were 'taking on additional responsibilities,' 'leading committees,' 'demonstrating potential through opportunities given,' 'waiting periods,' and 'feelings of satisfaction and sadness.'

Immersion-emersion phase. Because of the contrasting emotions that develop through these experiences, the second transition cycle, Immersion-Emersion is triggered. Armstrong (2010) described Immersion-Emersion as "a sudden shift that stripped initiates of their comfortable teacher roles and contexts and immersed them in a different school culture" (p. 701). During this phase, vice-principals were tested emotionally, physically, and socially. In most cases, novices were thrown into a wide variety of duties and problems, which they may not have had any prior experience in handling. The vice-principals are found at the center of the school

activity in this phase and, because of that, they are inundated with students, parents, staff, community, and supervisor demands. A great deal of pressure to behave like an administrator is felt in this phase. The awareness of the fixed boundaries of their work is also more prevalent in this stage, which often increases the feeling of isolation. Teachers may attempt to discount the novices, question them about their experience, and go over their heads to the principal in an attempt to subvert their authority.

Current study confirmation of immersion-emersion. In the second phase, Immersion-Emersion, Armstrong (2010) explained how there were over 20 characteristics that could be present at this level. Based on the research findings, when considering female and male assistant principals at the elementary and secondary level, all the characteristics were noted except for ‘errors occur due to lack of training’ and ‘demands from all stakeholders.’ A male elementary assistant principal evidenced separation from peers as he shared, “We have definitely developed a line and not crossing the line. You have to keep it professional, can’t cut up like I used to. It’s the loneliest job you’ll ever have. I’m very lonely.” Being exposed to a wide range of duties, problems, and difficult tasks added to the social, emotion, and physical strain as indicated by a secondary female assistant principal as she lamented, “My first year I didn’t have the experience to handle every single situation. I thought I did and I always tried to handle those situations but it really taught me to look at things differently for every situation.”

Out of over twenty descriptors, the researcher could empathize with all but about three. From her own experience, the descriptors that resonate for her are ‘wide range of duties and problems,’ ‘increased physical and mental strain,’ ‘intimidation and undermining of confidence,’ ‘questioning of experience,’ and ‘feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, frustration, loss, and anger.’ When assistant principals are in the trenches of the job, they know it is difficult, but when

they are able to step back and look at a list of things they may experience and realize they did, in fact, go through the majority, it is affirming to know that it is normal and is part of a phase that will pass.

Disintegration-reintegration phase. Ongoing conflict and persistent pressure to conform to a role that was so different than what the vice-principal imagined leads to feelings that bring on the third cycle, Disintegration-Reintegration, usually occurring at the end of the vice-principal's first year but continuing well into the second year. In this stage, pervasive psychological and physical disintegration starts to take its toll. Some of the factors impacting this stage are ongoing crises, stress, long hours, inconsistent meals, and lack of sleep and exercise. This stage often brings about a sense of alienation because the vice-principal realizes he/she is in a no-man's land, sometimes longing to return to the classroom. Dreams that were once held about making things better for children may be squelched by the daily grind, resulting in emotional distancing. Vice-principals reported undergoing a period of self-analysis to try to resolve these internal conflicts between the constant negative demands of the position and their own values. When this reflection was reported in the Armstrong (2010) study, vice-principals noted that this enabled them to face the demands of their role and use prior skills to help re-establish equilibrium. They analyzed what was within their sphere of influence and began to take limited risks to make small changes in their schools. When the vice-principals were able to integrate their own values and skills into the role, the re-integration phase took place. They began to derive some satisfaction from their work.

Current study confirmation of disintegration-reintegration. As with the second phase, the third phase of Armstrong's (2010) model has over twenty recognizable attributes that accompany this phase. Out of the twenty, there were a few not exhibited. Those characteristics

are 'lack of poor diet,' 'lack of sleep and exercise,' 'distancing of his or herself emotionally,' and the realization that 'equality does not exist.' In this phase, self-analysis goes into full effect as evidenced by one male assistant principal working in a secondary setting. He reported, "This job has really taught me that first of all, there are a lot better people in the county than me. There's a lot of smart people and I'm here to do a job." The self-analysis continued as depicted by a female elementary assistant principal. "I feel like I have to be perfect all the time."

The researcher has faced all attributes of this phase. The only notable trait that the researcher still fights against is 'acceptance of political challenges.' The traits that stand out most to the researcher through her own experience in this phase are 'lack of exercise,' 'self-analysis,' 'distancing of oneself emotionally,' and the 'realization that equality does not exist.' In the researcher's opinion, the distancing of oneself emotionally could serve two purposes. It could serve to assist in fully transitioning the individual into stride of the role, but also to spring one forward to life as a principal, where total disconnect has to exist.

Transformation-restabilization phase. The final cycle, which is a continuation of the socialization process initiated from the previous epicycle, is Transformation-Restabilization. In this phase, full integration into the school and culture has occurred and a shift has been made in regards to the vice-principal's outlook, goals, and values. There were still some socialization challenges that existed; however, "they saw themselves as better able to assert their values and expectations because of increased networks, knowledge of the role and their constituents, and their ability to put things into perspective" (Armstrong, 2010, p. 708). Stability and experience are a function of this cycle partly due to the acquired familiarity of the role and school. Vice-principals reported shifting from a task orientation to more of a people orientation, and levels of trust with their teachers had grown through collaboration with them. "As part of developing a

capacity to cope psychologically with the socialization challenges, the vice-principals acquired an interior and exterior “toughness” that was described as “developing a thick skin” and “not taking things personally” (Armstrong, 2010, p. 708). This stage represented the third year and vice-principals reported that they were equipped to resolve conflicts, balance their personal and professional lives, and anticipate socialization challenges.

Current study confirmation of transformation-restabilization. According to Armstrong’s (2010) findings, the final phase of the model is when the assistant principal is wrapping up his or her transition into the role. In this phase, there are about twenty identifiable traits and out of those twenty, eighteen were recognized by the female and male elementary and secondary assistant principals who were interviewed. The two that were not identified were ‘assertion of values and expectations’ and initiating programs.’ The continual discomfort with negative aspects of the job and the movement from task oriented to people oriented shines through with this elementary female assistant principal’s response. She noted,

I think I internalize a lot more than I used to about things. You know the part of this job is you are dealing with adult problems. People are going through divorces, deaths of children, illness, and loss of jobs. I don’t like that part.

The ability to put things in perspective, building confidence and the development of a thick skin were some of the characteristics exhibited by one of the secondary female assistant principals. She announced, “I’ve had to get a lot tougher. Grew a thick skin. I’ve learned not to take things personally.”

The researcher is currently in the last phase of Armstrong’s model and based on her own experience she can relate to all the characteristics noted. This has by far been her easiest year in the role and at times she misses the challenges of the prior years. The traits from this phase that

are most prominent to her are ‘full integration into the school and culture,’ ‘ability to put things in perspective,’ ‘equipped for challenges,’ ‘balance of personal and professional lives,’ and ‘credibility and trust are established.’ In thinking about this phase, a situation came to mind that happened recently. The researcher had a parent cuss her out and then tell her she was going to call the board on her. The same incident happened her first year in the role. The first year, the researcher worried and stressed over the incident. She beat herself up. This year, the researcher let it roll right off her back, kept things in perspective because her skin is now thick, and took it upon herself to call the board and let them know what happened in the event the parent called. She was told that she was supported and they appreciated the call. It is amazing what just two years of experience can do for one’s confidence!

The table below represents all the phases in Armstrong’s Epicycles of Transition from her 2010 study of secondary assistant principals. A comparison study was conducted by the researcher and the chart is representative of her findings. The bolded characteristics were evident in this current research, while the un-bolded characteristics were not made visible in the current study.

Table 12

Characteristics from Armstrong's Epicycles of Transition Confirmed

Entry-Exit (before becoming an AP)	Immersion-Emersion (Year 1)	Disintegration- Reintegration (End of Year 1 and Year 2)	Transformation- Restabilization (Year 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking on additional responsibilities • Serving as a substitute administrator • Assisting with administrative duties • Student and staff scheduling • Leading committees • Attending professional development • Demonstrate their potential through opportunities given • Rehearse the role • Network • Supervisor sponsorship • Certification courses • Prove to supervisors they had the skills and knowledge to serve in the role • Barriers created by higher ups • Waiting periods • Expectation to conform • Ostracism by peers • Working outside the perimeters of the contract • Feelings of satisfaction and sadness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tested socially, emotionally, and physically • Isolated from familiar locations • Difficult tasks • Wide range of duties and problems • No prior preparation • Partial list of duties with little guidance or detail • Little to no technical training • Errors occur due to lack of training • Longer workdays • Increased physical and mental strain • Demands from all stakeholders • Pressure to perform and conform • Pressure to look, speak, and behave as an administrator • Professional roles and territory • Pressure and reprimands • Separation and initiation from teachers • Loss and isolation due to decreased interaction with peers • Intimidation and undermining of confidence • Teachers subvert authority and going to principal • Questioning of experience • Lack of confidence and respect by teachers • Time consuming responsibilities with limited or no support • Feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, frustration, loss, and anger • Rigid expectations for discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long working hours • Chronic and ongoing crises • Poor diet • Lack of sleep and exercise • Physical exhaustion • Emotional exhaustion • Sense of alienation • Lack of support • Self-analysis • Negative demands of the role • Struggle with own personal values and expectations • Letting go of skills, values, and traits tied directly to teaching, but did not support current role • Distancing of oneself emotionally • Realization that equality does not exist • Use of prior skills to meet demands • Acceptance of political challenges • Limited risks • Being proactive • Resist pressures • Integration of own values and skills • Circulating through negative aspects of the job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full integration into school and culture • Continual shift in goals, values, and professional outlook • More confident • Increased networks • Knowledge of the role • Knowledge of constituents • Ability to put things in perspective • Assertion of values and expectations • State of stability • Equipped for challenges • Ability to resolve conflicts • Balance of personal and professional lives • Knowledge of the organization as a whole from top level down • Strategic and proactive • Mentoring and coaching • Initiating programs • Move from task oriented to people oriented • Credibility and trust are established • Development of "thick skin" • Continual discomfort with negative aspects of the role

Armstrong, 2010, p. 698-708

Limitations of the Study

The researcher acknowledges that there are limitations that exist in this study. A purposeful sample of eight assistant principals from a southeastern part of the United States were interviewed. All assistant principals worked in the public school system in the same county. The criteria used for choosing participants for the study were the following: the number of years of experience they had serving in their role (4 or less), their gender, and the level of school in which they worked (to achieve a mixture of elementary, middle, and high school levels). The study did not include all assistant principals in the county, so findings cannot be assumed to be consistent to all assistant principals in the district, state, or country. Another limitation could be that the researcher also serves in the same capacity as the interviewees and that could present a potential bias through the interview process, although the researcher made every attempt to bracket her own experiences while conducting the research.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

When considering implications for how others could use this research, many came to light as the researcher analyzed the data. She found implications for university leadership programs, district office personnel, principals, assistant principals, and teachers considering moving into administration.

University leadership programs. The findings of this study, as well as Armstrong's study from 2010, could be used to inform aspiring administrators about the struggles they may face as they transition into the role of assistant principal, as well as help them navigate through each phase as they will know what characteristics are found in each year. The programs could also utilize this study to help individuals learn how to advocate for themselves in order to ensure support structures are put into place to help them be successful in their new role. The university

program faculty may also want to take note of the importance of hands-on experiences when an individual is transitioning from teacher to assistant principal and evaluate their program to determine if enough hands-on experiences are given and if there is ample opportunity to network and collaborate with others so that a strong, supportive base is there to decrease the feeling of loneliness that creeps in that first year.

District office personnel. The second implication is for district office personnel. The district office personnel may use this study to design a program in which an assistant principal is provided a mentor upon acceptance of this position. In addition, districts could start a program to help first year assistant principals navigate through their position and build on their strengths. Research shows that in order to be successful in the fast paced world of education, new administrators can no longer go it alone; they need support (Searby, 2014). The need for district personnel to choose the best mentors and pair mentors and mentees strategically so that the aspiring leaders can have their learning and professional development needs met is instrumental to the success of the relationships (Daresh, 2004). By creating programs that support assistant principals, their socialization experience could be less troublesome and burn out is less likely to occur because they may experience more satisfaction in their position, as opposed to displeasure.

Principals. The third implication is for principals who are generally the people who are responsible for hiring and training the assistant principal. Because of the deficits that assistant principals are believed to possess prior to moving into the role of principal, it is paramount that those individuals receive support, and the most logical person to provide that support is the principal with whom the assistant principal works, and who can serve as a mentor (Sun, 2012). Assistant principals have reported that they are inundated with tasks with little or no training. Principals could ease them into the transition of their role by giving a few tasks at a time, letting

them learn them well, then exposing them to some new ones so that assistant principals do not feel like they are drowning and alone in their difficulties the entire first year.

Assistant principals. The fourth implication is for assistant principals, who were at the heart of this study. Because of the demands of the job, that are not always realized upon acceptance of the position, this research could help shed light on what the role looks like prior to actually entering it. The figure that Armstrong (2010) developed and the characteristics she described at each phase could change the playing field for those starting out in administration. Having literature that breaks each stage of the transition down from inception to full integration of the culture at year three could be of benefit as it could give the assistant principal a road map of things that could occur and advice on how to prepare for those things. Since the job of assistant principal has been deemed one of the most difficult (Richard, 2000), the coping strategies and support structures could also assist in easing the transition and perhaps shorten the transition phase, in some cases.

Teachers moving into administration. The last implication for this study is for the teachers who are thinking about or planning to move into administration. The findings from the literature explained the grueling transition that takes place as one takes that first step towards moving into administration and well into year three. Armstrong (2010) explained how the transition actually begins when the person starts to consider moving into administration and this phase can be quite difficult as it can bring ostracism by peers, feeling of sadness, waiting periods, and barriers of moving forward. Teachers planning to move into administration should feel informed, as now there is a roadmap to understand what is part of the transition and what should be expected.

Overall Significance

According to Armstrong (2014), between the years of 2009-2017, there will be 53% of working assistant principals eligible for retirement across the country. In the same respect, there will be half of sitting principals eligible for retirement in 2018. This will create administrative shortages, making the importance of the assistant principals becoming socialized into their roles even more important, as it will allow them to take on the roles of principal in a more confident and efficient way. In Armstrong's (2014) research, she reported that 74.9% of participants felt as though they were prepared for the role of assistant principal or principal, but their feelings changed once they assumed that role. "Many stated that they felt unprepared for the complexity and unpredictability of their administrative roles and transitions" (Armstrong, 2014, p. 15).

This research study helped fill a gap in the educational leadership literature on the socialization process of assistant principals. Adding to the work of Armstrong (2014), Barnett (2012), and Soho (2012), this study of how female and male assistant principals are socialized into their role can help raise awareness in regards to what assistant principals' current roles and responsibilities are in relation to what they should be in order for them to grow and develop into instructional leaders. It is understood that many assistant principals are not fully prepared for their role or beyond, and this study may assist educational leadership professors in preparing aspiring assistant principals. In addition, it can help school district central office personnel to create support structures that can professionally develop assistant principals so that they are better prepared for the senior principalship. Through this research, light may be shed onto what socialization practices and support structures are most beneficial.

Recommendations for Future Research

There has been very little research done that focuses on assistant principals at both the elementary and secondary level. In addition, there has been very little research conducted on the socialization of assistant principals at both levels in the United States. Because of this, this research offers findings that could be of value in regards to the socialization of male and female assistant principals at all levels and supports structures that can assist them through their transition. Implications exist for leadership programs, district office personnel, principals, assistant principals and teachers considering going into administration, but there should be additional areas explored. The following are recommendations for future research:

A larger sample size consisting of assistant principals from all over the southeastern areas as opposed to one state would make the study more generalizable. Also, including assistant principals from all over the United States would be of even better value in regards to future research. Because of that, future researchers are encouraged to expand the sample size.

Thinking about the support structures that were helpful and those that interviewees felt would have been helpful, the study could be expanded by looking at school districts that had those support structures in place and whether or not they eased the transition for assistant principals. Looking at districts and assistant principals from this point of view could provide a deeper understanding of how to support future assistant principals as they are socialized into their role.

Another way of expanding the research would be to look at age and if it influenced the socialization experience, as well as looking at promotion from assistant principal to principal. Do similar phases exist for those moving from assistant principal to principal? Does the age of the individual affect the transition experiences?

Lastly, the study could be deepened by looking at individuals who moved onto principalship after their three years of socialization and how their socialization experiences of being an assistant principal prepared them for promotion. This could help school systems understand how many years of experience are needed for a person to be successful as a senior principal.

Researcher's Positionality and Learning Experience

The researcher of this study currently serves as an assistant principal in a large school that serves over 1,000 students and over 100 staff members. The researcher has served in this role in the same school for three years. During that time, she has worked for two principals and four superintendents. There has been much change in the time she was hired. Prior to this role, the researcher worked for five years as a general education teacher for three of those years and a special education teacher for the first two years. She worked in another school district during those five years before transitioning to her current role. The school she worked at previously was a Title I school and served students in grades 1-5 the first two years and then grades K-2 the last three years as the school system went through a restructuring because of overcrowding. All of the researcher's experience has been in Title I schools.

Before beginning the research, the researcher had transitioned into the role of being a first year teacher, then two years later she transitioned into becoming a general education teacher, and lastly she transitioned into becoming an assistant principal in a different school district. Because the researcher had experience with transitioning, it gave her some knowledge going into her study. Her experience could be considered a limitation because she could have skewed ideas in regards to how assistant principals are socialized into their role; however, after doing further study of Armstrong's phases of socialization, she believed that there was congruence with

socialization research previously conducted and her own experience, which could lend itself to enhancing her study. Being able to understand each phase of socialization has allowed her the opportunity to share her results with other assistant principals and district leaders in an effort to smooth other assistant principals' transitions, while also providing them ideas for their own support structures and coping skills to ease the transition.

Through interviewing the eight elementary and secondary assistant principals, it became evident that there were distinct support structures that each person felt could have benefited them, as well as future assistant principals. There were also supports that the district already had in place that the assistant principals found to be beneficial. Both sets of supports will be shared with the assistant superintendent of the county in an effort to continue to grow and support the assistant principals so that when the opportunity to move up to principal is placed before them, they will be fully prepared for that momentous transition.

The researcher has gained a better understanding of the transition which she, herself, went through, as well as ways in which she can be a support to her peers, especially those who have just begun their transition into the assistant principalship. Through the interview process, the researcher realized that the county was supporting assistant principals in some capacity; however, there is always room for improvement and the main area noted was that mentoring is lacking. The researcher has extensive training in the mentoring process and believes she will be able to contribute in this area. The researcher also realized through her research that she is at the point in her career where she has been fully socialized into her role and will therefore be able to serve as an advocate for herself in regards to moving into a principalship.

Conclusion

The results of this study confirmed that when females and males are socialized into their role as assistant principals, there are distinct characteristics that accompany that transition. Although women and men are different, their experiences did not prove to be very different, as only one of the themes that emerged was different between the two. The results also led the researcher to be able to confirm Armstrong's (2010) Epicycle of Transition Model with elementary and secondary assistant principals. The researcher identified support structures that could benefit an individual considering moving into administration or currently starting out in administration. The results of this study will contribute to a scant body of research pertaining to assistant principals, challenges they face in their role, and how to circumnavigate through those challenges. The researcher revealed the various emotions, struggles, and trials that are associated with the role at each phase for the first three years as an administrator. The researcher believes the findings paint a clear picture of the positives and negatives of the roles and how assistant principals can prepare themselves for all it entails, in order to transition smoothly, mature in skill acquisition, and move into senior principalship successfully.

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Appendix A
Guiding Interview Questions

Introduction

I would like to hear the story of your transition from teacher to assistant principal

I am going to ask you to remember as best and as honestly as you can what you thought, felt and experienced as you moved through the transition.

Questions added to Dr. Armstrong's protocol by researcher:

How many years were you in teacher role?

Were there any teacher leadership experiences that you had? If so, what were they?

Were there mentoring experiences in which you participate as a teacher? If so, what were they?

How did you get from being a teacher to an assistant principal?

Was being an administrator your goal for a long time or always had aspirations? If so, why?

Did anyone encourage you to go into administration? If so, who and what capacity did they serve in?

Did you have any role models you were watching to learn from? If so, who and what capacity did they serve in?

Research Question # 1: What is the nature of the transition from teaching to administration as experienced by newly appointed secondary school assistant principals?

- How long have you been an assistant principal?
- What was your position prior to becoming an assistant principal?
- What are the differences and similarities between your current and former role?
- Why did you choose this position?
- Describe your thoughts/feelings as you made the change from teaching to administration?
- How did your experiences as a teacher prepare you for this role?

- Describe your mentoring experiences
- What were your feelings/perceptions of the role prior to your promotion?
- How do you feel about the role after becoming an assistant principal?
- How has this change influenced your perception of the system and school operations?
- How has it influenced your interactions with students, parents, staff, community?
- What do you like most and least about the position/role?
- How has it affected how you perceive yourself?
- Are there any identifiable stages in the transition from teacher to assistant principal?

Research Question # 2. What people, structures and events do assistant principals identify as significant, facilitating or hindering to their transition from teaching to administration?

- What people, resources, experiences have been helpful in the transition?
- What people, resources, experiences have hindered your transition? What was the most difficult/easiest aspect of the transition?
- What supports were particularly helpful in the transition?
- What impact has it had on your life outside of school?

Research Question # 3. What challenges, dilemmas and tensions do assistant principals report encountering as they make the transition from teaching to administration?

- What challenges did you encounter at various stages of the transition to assistant principal, e.g., first year versus second or third year?
- What has been the impact of secondary school reform on your position as assistant principal? What supports do you need to deal with the changes?

- What supports would be helpful to you at this stage of your career?
- What strategies do assistant principals use to respond to the challenges, dilemmas and tensions associated with the transition from teaching to administration?
- What strategies did you use to overcome these challenges/obstacles?

Appendix B

Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

The Auburn University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
Document for use from
01/24/2017 to 01/23/2018
Protocol # 16-497 EP 1701



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

INFORMED CONSENT

For a Research Study entitled:

"Socialization of Male and Female Assistant Principals"

You are invited to participate in a research study to assess the capacity of assistant principals to be instructional leaders, to identify the rites of passage that they have experienced through socialization into their role, to determine what support structures have supported them through their socialization experience, and to determine if male and female experiences differ in relation to one another. This study is under the direction Alicia Daugherty, PhD candidate in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an assistant principal in a K-12 school with four or less years of experience.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in an interview and will be audiotaped during after work hours at a central location in your region of the state. The audio recordings are for transcription purposes only and the recordings will be destroyed upon completion of defense of the dissertation. Your total time commitment for the interview will be about 60 minutes.

Are there any risks or discomforts? The risks associated with this study are that you will be audiotaped as you are interviewed by Alicia Daugherty. What you share is totally voluntary, and you will not be forced to answer any question if you choose not to do so. No one but Alicia and her dissertation chair, Dr. Linda Searby, will hear your responses, and your name will not be associated with your responses at any time. If you are quoted in an article or presentation later on, a pseudonym will be given to your response.

Are there any benefits to you? If you participate in this study, you will be given a list of support structures that could help you navigate through the stages of socialization.

Will you receive compensation for participating? No, there will be no monetary compensation for participating in the study. However, you may receive a copy of the results of the study, if you desire.

Are there any costs to participate? The only cost to participate is the cost of your personal transportation to the interview site.

Participant's Initials _____

Page 1 of 2

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