ABSTRACT

BLUMENREICH, TODD ERIC. Roles, Relationships, and Tasks: Socialization Among Entry Level School Administrators. (Under the direction of Dr. Kenneth Brinson, Jnr. and Dr. Peter Hessling.)

The purpose of the research is to study the socialization process of entry-level school administrators. A grounded theory approach is used to conduct the study as there has been limited research regarding assistant principals and public school administrator socialization. The study’s philosophical perspective is rooted in social constructivism, with the assumption that an individual constructs reality through social interaction and that individuals choose to give meaning to their own experiences. Use of ethnomethodological processes for gathering information from participants is additionally a component of the study. Participants examined their interview transcriptions for accuracy; coding of interview information used grounded theory coding levels and processes. Emergent themes that participants discuss concern the roles related to the assistant principal’s position, the relationships of assistant principals with others, and the tasks that assistant principals need to perform. Additional interview data includes information related to subcategories of “Roles,” “Relationships,” and “Tasks.” The study concludes with tentative theory advanced for examining entry-level school administrator socialization.
ROLES, RELATIONSHIPS, AND TASKS:
SOCIALIZATION AMONG ENTRY LEVEL
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

by
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BIOGRAPHY

Todd Blumenreich was born in New York City in December 1963. He attended Florida Atlantic University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and his Secondary Education Certification; he also attended the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, where he earned a Master of School Administration degree.

He made his home in Wilmington, North Carolina, and taught at the middle and high school levels for four and one half years in New Hanover County Schools. He then worked as a high school assistant principal in Onslow and Brunswick County Schools for over five years.

In 2003, he left the site level to take a position as an education consultant with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. He currently is the High School Testing Policy and Operations Consultant for the state, working for the Division of Accountability Services at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction of North Carolina. He is married with no children.
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CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW

I began my doctoral studies during my second year as an assistant principal at a small rural high school. The school had approximately 500 students and served a close-knit community. At the time, I was still considered an outsider by the staff and the community, and the teachers and parents of the children I served questioned all my actions. That January, I drove home from class one Monday evening while it was raining. What was rain became ice, what was normally a two-hour journey turned into three, and the roads became more treacherous as I continued. My arrival at home was a lesson in humility: There are things in life that I cannot control, and inclement weather is one of them.

The next morning, I was rudely awakened at 4:00 a.m. by the ringing phone. I grunted “hello” into the handset, trying to think who in my or my wife’s family was elderly, sick, or both. As I sorted through that fog, I was greeted by an overly enthusiastic “Good! You made it home! We were worried about you. We’ll see you in three hours!” The disembodied voice on the other end hung up, not waiting for the nasty retort I felt rising. Before anything came out, I realized that the voice belonged to one of my most adversarial teachers, the one who led the questioning of my directives. I later found out she had been communally selected by a group of the “old guard” to see if I had made it home in one piece. I realized that I was becoming an insider, one of them. I wondered about the transformation that I was undergoing: was I changing, or was it the perspective of others? I certainly did not feel different, but it was obvious that my most ardent detractor treated me differently. I was perplexed but intrigued.
In my fifth year as an administrator, I transferred to another county and consequently another high school. The organization I entered was in a chaotic state, having lost one-third of its staff (32 teachers either terminated or transferred), and was currently in the first year of a three-year complete renovation and expansion process—the place was a physical mess. There were three new assistant principals (I was one of them); the only stable factor was the returning principal. The average “shelf life” for staff at the school was now less than five years, due to the wholesale turnover that had occurred the year before.

Not long into the school year, it became apparent that many of the teachers relied upon me rather than the other assistants for discipline, resources, and support; the staff told me so. The teachers considered me to be the “insider” among the administrative staff. Considering that one of the “new” assistants had been at the school for 11 years, the other had been in the county at the middle school next door for six years, and the returning principal embodied the organization, it was interesting that I was welcomed so completely. By all rights, I should have been an outsider to the organization, but just the opposite was true. I was still perplexed but further intrigued.

Situating the problem

I was interested in studying the socialization process of entry-level school administrators. Based upon my experiences, the first year of an assistant principal could be challenging. With a multitude of tasks to learn, behaviors to develop, and needs of others to be met, a new administrator is pushed in many directions. Even after gaining experience and going to another site in the same position, one may still be subject to many of the same organizational pressures. Information gathered from personal experience and informal conversations with colleagues revealed that they had similar occurrences and experiences.
Despite this seeming commonality of experiences and incidents with entry-level school administrators, a cursory review of the literature revealed almost no information regarding their organizational socialization. Hartley (1992) indicated that there is almost no literature on the communications component of organizational socialization: rather, it consists mostly of the building of theory. The research completed on the organizational socialization of school administrators has focused on quantitative studies of principals and has used relatively untested instruments with regards as to reliability and validity (Hurley, 1990; Norton, 1994).

Upon reflection, examination, and discussion, the initial socialization process of entry-level school administrators appeared to have multiple components, with many phenomena. Various social forces seemed to be at work in sensitizing an administrator to an organization’s culture and to the expectations of various groups and individuals within a school. This study examined that process and its implications.

Purposes

The purposes of this study were four-fold. The first purpose was to explore the socialization process of the entry-level supervisor from individual and organizational perspectives at the site level. The second purpose was to identify and describe patterns that emerged that were of interest, had meaning, and pertained to sense-making practices regarding socialization processes. The third purpose was to take the site-specific patterns that had been identified and described and make sense of the systemic-level process of organizational socialization. These processes ultimately led to generation of a theory regarding entry-level administrator socialization. This method consequently transformed this study into a grounded theory inquiry.
Theoretical Perspective

Framework

The framework for examining socialization is social constructivist in nature (i.e., that reality is socially constructed). Participants communally negotiate this ontology (view of reality), continually constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing their realities based on interaction with others. At various points along the multiple individual reality continuums participants share enough commonalities to establish routines and take on roles demanded by these mutually agreed-upon patterns of interaction. Socialization, or the acquisition of identity (primary socialization) and social identification (secondary socialization), is accomplished through interaction with others and is symbolically conveyed. Language, both written and oral, is a singularly critical symbol component and transmits large amounts of information. Actions, combined with the language component, become exhibited informational phenomena that assist in the socialization of individuals.

If reality is individually constructed, and we create our own meanings and connections based on events that occur, how do we understand other participants’ points of view? It is through the sense-making process that we come to commonly agreed-upon realities without truly understanding the perspective of others. We give our experiences degrees of meaning if we choose, and they may not have significance for others. This view provided a strong ethnomethodological process component that helped guide this study.

Closely linked to the theoretical perspective were the processes regarding sampling, data collection and analysis, and the researcher’s role. Sharrock and Anderson (1986) contended that an ethnomethodological process is foundational, providing an entry point to a study by examining social assumptions. Therefore, methodological components such as
sampling, data collection and analysis, and the researcher’s role become extensions of the perspective to operationalize the research process.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a research framework that emphasizes discovery and generation of theory directly from acquired data. As an inductive process, it uses comparisons between individuals or groups for analysis, and attempts to draw qualitative correlations, similarities, or generalizations between those components (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This comparative analysis is firmly rooted in the idea of the phenomenological—that all acquired observations of data can be reduced to describing and analyzing phenomena. This not only includes specific actions displayed by individuals, but also interactions based on exchanges of symbols or language. In fact, Glaser and Strauss (1967) indicate that Goffman (the preeminent Symbolic Interactionist) is intimately linked to the grounded theory research framework, and use descriptions of his work to illustrate their theoretical methods. It is important to note that grounded theory is not a theoretical perspective unto itself; it is a research framework that has its own set of methods, methodology, and characteristics. Glaser and Strauss (1967) further indicate that it is critical for the researcher to have a theoretical perspective in which “to see relevant data and abstract significant categories from his scrutiny of the data” (p. 3). Grounded theory is for framing a study and analyzing the data, not for placing interpretive meanings on the information. Interpretation is rooted in the theoretical perspective.

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is a major school of sociological thought. It is a perspective that dates to 1967 with the publication of The Social Construction of Reality by Berger and
Luckman. At its most basic, the perspective emphasizes the importance of culture and its context in the understanding an individual develops of his or her own specific reality; construction of all knowledge is therefore based on this individually developed understanding. The three basic assumptions of social constructivism are that (a) reality is a construction of our activities, therefore and cannot be discovered due to its lack of existence prior to our social invention of it; (b) knowledge is a product of humans and therefore is socially constructed; and (c) learning is a social process (Kim, 2001).

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is an offshoot of symbolic interactionism and consequently has an inherently strong phenomenological tradition about it. Sharrock and Anderson (1986) indicate that Harold Garfinkel is considered by others to be the primary theorist of this perspective. His primary research intent was to deconstruct interpersonal interaction to uncover assumptions in communication. At its most basic, ethnomethodology seeks to operationalize studies (Sharrock and Anderson, 1986). For instance, if we assume that the people involved in any given social act share the same culture (values, beliefs, and norms of behavior), then all players are able to identify with each other and with each other’s actions and exchange of symbols. Understanding what occurs next is implicit in context—the actors share the same locus operandi (origin of operation). If, however, the actors do not share the same culture—ethnomethodology presumes that no one does—how do people construct an understanding of the occurring social interaction, and further, comprehend its meaning (Sharrock and Anderson, 1986). The ethnomethodological process, then, involves understanding and making sense of those assumptions.
Research Questions

As stated earlier, the purposes of this study were four-fold: exploring a process, identifying and describing patterns of interest, making sense of a process, and generating theory. To remain consistent with these objectives, this study used the following research questions regarding organizational socialization processes:

1. How is an entry-level school administrator (in terms of individual experience and/or placement) socialized?
2. Is there a difference in the process between the individual and the organizational perspectives?
3. Do socialization practices and processes vary from person to person, and if so, how?
4. What are the bases or variables for these differences?
5. Are there definitive turning points when one becomes an insider (socialized) to the organization?
6. How do individuals make sense of the socialization process?
7. How does time (as the dominant theoretical construct) play a role in the socialization process?

Based on the results of a field study I completed May 2001, I had some preliminary hunches about what my research would reveal. First, the field study suggested that socialization may not be a linear process as assumed by a time-oriented construct. Second, the field study suggested that the individual’s culture (values, beliefs, and norms of behavior) would strongly influence the course of the organizational socialization of the participants. Last, I had a hunch that what the assistant principals felt they were undergoing would be very
individualized and situational, with no relationship to what other assistant principals were experiencing.

Summary of Possible Limitations

At the outset of the process, there appeared be five possible limitations to the study and its associated processes. First, no one had yet attempted to operationalize theoretical models regarding organizational socialization. To be precise, studies had not proved or disproved a hypothesis—much theory had been generated, supported by little research. I chose to pursue the information inductively for this reason. A grounded theory approach would cast a critical eye towards examining these processes.

A second possible limitation was the sampling technique that a grounded theory dictated. Using a theoretical (purposeful) sampling technique might remove the neutrality that is sometimes associated with quantitative types of sampling that control for bias—skewing of data could occur. This might minimize the perceived validity of the study and raise questions of contaminated data.

The third limitation concerned my understanding of ethnomethodological process components. Specifically, I had concerns at the outset about the interviews’ ability to get at the information and the analyses’ ability to portray an appropriate understanding of the acquired information and, consequently, of the socialization process. That is why, as stated in the methodology, I provided a verifying mechanism for the acquired information. However, I questioned whether it would be enough to have the participants examine the transcripts for accuracy. Further experiences with the data might show that the participants should review the analyses of the transcripts.
The fourth concern was that of time: although I had allotted months for the data gathering and analysis processes, I initially felt that a longitudinal study that ran over the course of years was possibly a better format for studying this process. Time is still the dominant theoretical construct of organizational socialization studies; there may be some reason why many theoreticians utilize this concept. For example, Blezek (1998), Gmelch (2000), Jablin (1982), Norton (1994), and Tierney and Rhoads (1993) all use some type of time referent schema. Was this due to acquired data, or was this their own way to organize their own thoughts?

Finally, I had a concern regarding the perceptual nature of information. The social constructivist perspective dictates that reality is situational, and so is our understanding of occurrences. In this case, time was of the essence. Study participants relied on recall of past events; however, is it possible to reconstruct a true or truer understanding of any time-situated process, working from the premise that our understanding of events can change over time?

Summary

The theoretical perspective discussed was constructed from multiple sociological traditions. Such seemingly different components as grounded theory, social constructivism, and ethnomethodology allowed me to build and employ a composite framework for (a) determining a philosophical grounding for the study, (b) conducting a study with no such antecedents, and (c) using specific methods and processes to conduct such a study.

Chapter Two follows with a review of pertinent literature. The literature review was an ongoing process during the study, contributing significant avenues of theoretical exploration.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As I continued to read in the subject area, I became further perplexed at the lack of research. In fact, Hartley (1992) indicated that what little research has been completed is more rightly theorizing, not operationalizing. What is called the socialization process is actually a collection of theoretical constructs based on what sociologists and other theorists think occurs. There is no extensive research in the area, with the exception of studies of manifestations of processes or meanings of communications (Bedore, 1994; Blezek, 1998; Garfinkel, 1967; Geertz, 1973; Jablin, 1982; Lambrecht, Redmann, and Stitt-Gohdes, 1997; Norton, 1994; Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo, 1973). What has become apparent from the literature is that socialization, as we can best understand it, is an individually centered social construct. The manner in which we acquire values, beliefs, and norms of behavior varies from person to person, and is entirely dependent on the social context from which a specific reality is constructed.

While socialization research has centered strongly on the process generally called enculturation, it is specifically from a life-long perspective–more like a sensitization to one’s own culture, peers, and family–that it has examined. This comes from the core work of sociology proper. In this case, socialization is the process by which a human being learns attitudes, values, and behaviors appropriate within a particular cultural context. Additionally, socialization includes the development of a distinctive personality, individual-specific beliefs, and norms of behavior. Included within this context is the idea of learned roles, especially formed by external expectations. We generally conform to established expectations based on our gender, age group, social class, level of education, and other pertinent factors.
I proposed viewing the process from an organizational context, constructing a coherent perspective for viewing socialization events. Literature and research regarding organizational socialization processes have focused specifically on four areas. They are: (a) theoretical constructs of why and how groups interact (cultural vs. systemic processes); (b) time as a schema that dictates the progression of socialization events; (c) extensive study on the top leadership positions of organizations and their experiences; and (d) the communications component imbedded in the processes described.

Theoretical Constructs of Group Interaction

Weick’s (1969) information systems approach provided one of the primary pieces of literature regarding organizational socialization. His theoretical model involved the interaction of an individual and an organization, and the effect that each has upon the other. It is firmly rooted in the use of communication, exchange of information, and an open-systems approach (Weick, 1969). It was his contention that groups and individuals interact in an organization, and attempt to make sense of “the information they receive from others in order to accomplish goals” (University of Kentucky-Information Systems Approach, 2001, p. 1). This perspective is of the social psychology tradition, and therefore centers on how an individual attempts to define their place within a group context. This piece of literature was important because it initiated a focus for the study on how an individual makes sense of organizational communication. At the core of this perspective is how individuals interact with institutions, and this outlook provided, in hindsight, the shift in the study from viewing socialization as a multi party to an individually oriented perspective.

Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo (1973) examined and articulated the cultural approach to organizations. Their writings framed the organization in terms of the sociological
context of culture (values, beliefs, norms of behavior) and the theory that organizational
culture is learned and communicated using stories of various types (corporate, personal, and
colliegial). While not overtly rejecting the systems theory approach to organizational studies,
Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo argued for a substantive examination of organizational
communication. Their viewpoint was rooted in the perspective of symbolic interactionism,
describing individual interaction in theatrical terms. Members within an organization have
roles they play, with public action described as performance. This performance “brings to
completion” the “significance or meaning of some structural [e.g., organizational] form–be it
symbol, story, metaphor, ideology, or saga” (p. 129). Consequently, Pacanowsky and
O’Donnell-Trujillo state that the reality displayed is not superficial, but is the drama that
constitutes reality as we interpret it to be. This view furnished one argument for
unconditional acceptance of the veracity for what participants stated during the interview
process. While the interview process and the examination of the data were not framed in
dramaturgical terms, the information they recounted was real, and constituted reality as they
understood it to be.

Geertz (1973), like Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo (1973), described
organizations in a cultural context. His view was that an organization is not just what it does,
but also its image, climate, and how it expresses itself to its members (University of
Kentucky-Cultural Approach to Organizations, 2001). His theoretical construct described
organizational communication to its members in the form of three types of stories: corporate,
personal, and collegial. Corporate stories concern information that flows from management
to the employees; employees share personal stories between each other, and assist in defining
an individual’s place within the group; collegial stories are told about other employees within
the organization. Although this theoretical construct was not directly applicable to the present study, it provided some insight for the field study as to how an individual defines themselves in relation to a group. Just because a person works within an organization does not necessarily mean they choose to be included as a member of the group. This has implications as to insider or outsider status of a person, however the focus in this study was on the individual rather than the group perspective.

Deetz’s (1982) critical approach to organizations derived its title and perspective from critical theory, with emphasis on the nature of communication within an organization and an individual’s construction of the meaning of communication and reality. This perspective had important implications within the social constructivist framework used for this study. It was Deetz’s contention that communication does not reflect reality. Rather, reality is constructed from communication, and that “the individual meanings we come up with are shared” (University of Kentucky-Critical Approach to Organizations, 2001, p. 1). This information led to investigation of the social construction of reality, and therefore the social constructivist tradition. Deetz asserted, “Communication was irreversible” due to the individual construction of reality, and thus created new meanings and connections with individuals within an organization (1982, p. 135). Furthermore, it was an active and ongoing process, with individual realities undergoing constant reconstruction as the meaning of communication is redefined. This view provided one of the cautionary concerns of this study, namely that of correctly interpreting from the participant their view of reality. Accurate recounting of information from the participants determined the construction of a coherent argument regarding socialization, especially of an unstudied group. Indirectly, this view also led to the process of repeated probing of participants, trying to confirm their view of events
discussed during the interview process. Deetz’s emphasis on relationships additionally being the object of study rather than only the communication in them provided further depth of perspective to the study.

Tierney and Rhoads (1993) examined the socialization process of university faculty concerning the cultural component (adoption of values, beliefs, and attitudes), with use of Jablin’s (1982) time-oriented framework as an organizing methodological perspective. It was their contention that organizational socialization is an ongoing and continuous process, with members constantly learning and relearning roles. Additionally, they indicated that the process is bidirectional. It does not focus just on the individual adapting to the institution, but also adaptation of the organization to individuals. The weakness of this view is, among other things, the reliance on a linear construct. Additionally, this piece of literature is very much a meta study, with a high degree of reliance upon previously completed research. Tierney and Rhoads did not conduct any specific research, and by wholesale adoption of an unoperationalized model, cause the questioning of the strength of the model.

Ultimately, it was Tierney and Rhoads’ (1993) goal to produce tactical suggestions that could correct inadequacies in the socialization process, while also rethinking the process at the institutional level. While this study was worthy of examination for its use of a theoretical construct, the fact that it focused only on university faculty minimized its usefulness to this study. Additionally, one of the purposes of my study was to examine processes that had not yet been operationalized, not to ease the trauma of organizational entry and socialization of assistant principals.

Hartley (1992) examined organizational socialization through elements of culture theory, using symbolic interactionism as an organizing perspective. She detailed five
commonly accepted elements of organizational culture–values, stories, rites, roles, and language–and defined each in terms of symbolic interactionism. This was an interesting component of her paper because, depending on one’s theoretical or philosophical perspective, these definitions may vary. She also redefined the socialization process, breaking it down into two components: socialization (organization oriented) and individualization (individual oriented). Additionally, she articulated the bidirectional component of socialization, as did Tierney and Rhoads (1993). In her call for further research, she indicated that the communications component of organizational socialization studies has been the focus of little research and strictly theoretical in basis. Her paper was informative and assisted in the construction of the theoretical framework for this study. However useful, two points kept emerging during the examination of this piece of literature. First, while the information presents a socialization model, it has not been operationalized by research. This information is therefore in contrast to the purposes of this study. Second, by representing socialization as a model–in this case, symbolic interactionism–it presents a filter, if used, for all acquired information. This study is an exercise in grounded theory, and as such rejects a model that must be proven or not.

Lambrecht, Redmann, and Stitt-Gohdes (1997) discussed individual employee perceptions regarding organizational socialization. It was their contention that a “clear understanding of the organizational culture is critical to the success of any employee” (p. 11). They argued that it is due to this organizational learning process that individuals become functional members of an organization (i.e., socialized). Using an interview process that examined significant experiences, their study scrutinized the process from the individual perspective. The structure of the interview questions elicited specific information regarding
the roles that employees engaged in, but not other elements of the individual’s perspective that could be important.

Time as an Underlying Conceptual Vehicle

Jablin’s (1982) organizational assimilation theory is considered a classic on organizational studies. He divided organizational socialization into a three-stage process to describe the assimilation of individuals into organizations. In this context, the communication process dictates transmission of culture within an organization, with socialization embedded in the process. For the purposes of the field study, Jablin’s organizational assimilation theory was useful as an organizing schema to provide an initial linear perspective. Although this theoretical perspective is organic in the sense of having many inter-related components, the one element specifically utilized is the time factor. This is because organizational socialization is often perceived as (a) a time-oriented process (in that the process occurs over a time span) and (b) having a definitive beginning and end (either assimilation or non-assimilation). In brief, the process has three stages:

1. Anticipatory Socialization
2. Encounter
3. Change and Acquisition

The anticipatory socialization stage concerns itself with the initial perceptions of the anticipated work experience. The encounter stage deals with the initial encounters and the ensuing interaction between the individual and the organization. This occurs in terms not only of verbal communication and actions, but also of the contact of differing cultures (values, beliefs, and norms of behavior). The last stage, change and acquisition, is where the individual acquires the culture of the organization and becomes socialized.
While organizational assimilation theory (Jablin, 1982) laid the groundwork for multiple important studies completed after its articulation, this theoretical construct has a weakness in that it distills socialization to a singular, linear event with multiple stages. This imposition forces a researcher to interpret all information from this linear perspective, not allowing for multiple differing viewpoints that do not coincide with specific stages. For example, a participant may view himself or herself as being within the encounter stage, while another may view the same person as being in the change and acquisition stage. This model does not allow for articulation of multiple viewpoints of the same event, and certainly cannot be used for addressing other elements of socialization.

Blezek (1998) used Jablin’s (1982) organizational assimilation process as an organizing schema for her study of a campus organization for Jewish students. The study details her progress as a participant-observer, attempting to go from outsider to insider within the studied organization. Most interesting about this qualitative study are the researcher’s experiential encounters with a different culture using a time-based referent for the processes. While interesting, the study reads much like self-ethnography in that experiences are recounted and explained. The weakness in this study is its very use of Jablin’s organizational assimilation process. If read appropriately, Blezek’s acceptance by the group is less predicated on time and based more on her enthusiasm and willingness to engage others in dialogue and relationships. In fact, she states that she “became a full-fledged member of the group because of participation” in group activities (p. 21). Therefore, this study can be more correctly thought of as a case study, rather than an operationalizing of Jablin’s model.
Leadership Experiences Regarding Socialization Events

The studies of Hart (1994, 1993, 1991, and 1987) emphasized the process of socialization that an organization exerts on new school principals. The process may be framed in terms of an individual’s defensive response to a perceived threat. In this manner, leaders become responsive to the needs of the organization and are able to lead it effectively. She contended that the tactics of organizational socialization are context (degrees of formality), content (what is learned), and sociality (the environment) (Hart, 1991). Her rejection of a linear model and acceptance of a multi-directional conceptualization helped originally create an interest in this area of research (Hart, 1994).

As with other, previously discussed studies, Hart (1994) used stages to describe the socialization of public school principals. Although my interest in her multiple studies led to incorporation of her literature in this study, assistant principals were not the focus of her research. Consequently, completing a study in the area targeting that group would be necessary.

Gmelch’s (2000) study regarding organizational socialization focused on postsecondary education, with emphasis on how the leadership (the new dean) within an educational organization takes charge and learns the job. An important component of this case centered on the metamorphosis of faculty into administrators. The study also emphasized time as an organizing component, with phases labeled:

1. taking hold;
2. immersion–primary action stage;
3. reshaping–secondary action stage;
4. consolidation–tertiary action stage; and
5. refinement (p. 6-9).

Taking hold occurred during the first semester, where the new leader’s inexperience regarding “traditions, obligations, and patterns of the academic year at the new institution as well as unfamiliarity with the faculty, staff, students, clients, and other university administrators” profoundly influenced their perspective (p. 6). Immersion occurred in the second semester as the “quiet after the storm”, when the new leader had time to process acquired cultural information (p. 7). Reshaping took place at the beginning of the second year, where the immediate environment (i.e. department, college) was impacted by the decisions of the leader. The Consolidation period concerned itself with the identification and action necessary to “diagnosing problems, then correcting them” (p. 9). Refinement was the period when little organizational change came about, and “marks the end of the incorporation stage. It is the point when the dean no longer feels new” (p. 10).

Gmelch (2000) also articulated the socialization practices carried out at the organizational level by coding six specific bipolar practices. In order, they are:

1. individual vs. collective tactics;
2. formal vs. informal tactics;
3. sequential vs. random tactics;
4. fixed vs. variable tactics;
5. serial vs. disjunctive tactics; and
6. investiture vs. divestiture tactics (p. 12-14)

Individual vs. collective tactics are where one individual experienced the induction event as opposed to being “processed collectively as would be a class of police recruits” (p. 12). Formal vs. informal tactics referred to the new leader undergoing “a set of learning
experiences whereas informal tactics involve no formalized training: (p. 13). Sequential vs. random tactics addressed socialization steps directed towards individuals, and whether or not they were in sequence, “discrete and identifiable” (p. 13). Fixed vs. variable tactics provided a time orientation to his model, and referred to how long of a period the process went on; his example cited teacher induction and internships as models of fixed socialization tactics. Gmelch further expounded a plan of action for the first 90 days (taking hold phase) to help ensure success. Serial vs. disjunctive tactics referred to the existence of prior role models for the new leadership, whether there was or was not any. Lastly, investiture vs. divestiture tactics are actions that reinforced or took away the personal characteristics of those socialized, providing the opportunity for the individual to assume the values, beliefs, and norms of behavior appropriate.

While Gmelch’s (2000) study provided insight as to the possible phases and socialization tactics a new college dean might experience, his study does not address public school administrators nor take the approach of a multi-site case study. Additionally, the use of time referent for determining socialization and the lack of information pertaining to the voicing individual perspectives necessitated further examination of literature.

In Norton’s (1994) study of the organizational socialization process, he examined the perceptions of beginning principals in Louisiana. Using a quantitative process and instrument, his study focused on acquiring information regarding principal socialization experiences. In addition, Norton attempted to establish relationships within the socialization context based on the variables of community type served, age of principal, ethnicity of principal, gender of principal, and school size. These variables were based on the Professional Socialization Hierarchy developed from a study performed by Parkay, Currie,
and Rhodes (1992). This hierarchy detailed a professional educational socialization process through which a principal moves. The process is sequential, with an administrator going through the stages of:

1. survival;
2. control;
3. stability;
4. educational leadership; and

While these stages are self-explanatory, it is interesting to note that they closely mirror the stages articulated by Gmelch (2000) previously. As with other studies, a time based referent dictated socialization.

Norton (1994) clearly pointed out that the instrument used is new and consequently did not have much information regarding its reliability. That notwithstanding, it is thought provoking that an instrument exists that may capture information regarding new principal socialization. Of interest also is that while the study provided data regarding the demographic disposition of the administrators studied, Norton’s conclusion indicated that socialization is experienced individually, and is attributable to the “personal characteristics of the individual and the organizational characteristics of the school” (p. 22). While the use of an instrument is attractive in that it can obtain topical information from large numbers of people, it cannot acquire the depth or breadth of data necessary for this study. Additionally, the grounded theory framework used for my study demanded a qualitative interview-based approach.

Hurley (1990) also studied the organizational socialization process as it pertained to newly hired principals, using a three-tiered interview process that triangulated data from
multiple interviews within the organization. He contended that the socialization process as it pertained to the studied sites is a multi-level event influenced by (a) employees above and below the affected person’s position (supervisors/teachers), (b) attempts to direct the new principals towards action regarding students, and (c) curriculum and staff development issues. This study’s main importance is that it indicates that the educational organizational socialization process is a multi-level event even when aimed directly at one person, with superiors and subordinates contributing to the process. This had important implications in the construction of the interview questions for my study.

Communications Component Embedded in Socialization Processes

Another appropriate area of research has been the communications component that is an inherent part of the socialization process. If approached from the broad perspective of social constructivism, how communication takes place and what is communicated have the potential to be the most important components of the socialization process. If our reality is based upon and constructed through our social interactions, then the entire process, regardless of which form the interaction takes, is completely dependent on communication.

Jablin’s (1982) work concerning organizational assimilation theory was based wholly on individual interaction and communication. He felt that communication was the means of conveyance by which an individual divests him/herself of an existing culture, and acquires the values, beliefs, and norms of behavior of the organization in question. An individual becomes a member of an organization by the primary means of organizational communication. As stated earlier in the literature review, while his research in this area is considered very important and was even used for the initial field study, his model was ultimately rejected for this study due to its time-based referent for analyzing socialization.
The work of Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1973) was firmly rooted in multiple sociological traditions. They suggested that there is a dynamic linkage between organizational culture and communication within an organization. They referred frequently to the idea of organizational performance, citing theoretical elements of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology (i.e., indexicality: the contextual nature of communicative interaction), with the “theatricality of performances” being of singular importance in conveying information (p. 130-132). This communication is in the form of dialogues, with members exchanging information and interacting with each other to bring an idea of “organizational reality to completion” (p. 131).

Although her study was not specific to educational organizations, Bedore (1994) examined the communications component within organizational culture. Her study centered on prisons as organizational entities, with organizational culture (values, beliefs, and norms of behavior) conveyed through a variety of communicative means. Within this context, individuals were socialized through role and role adoption with oral and written language components. This provided an interesting impetus to this study in that it provided information about organizational communication about other types of groupings.

Deetz (1982) discussed meaning and interpretation in organizations, with those aspects being types of communication that describe activities within an entity. It was his contention that reality is composed of highly derivative and personal “consensually shared subjective meanings” and that textual analysis is the preferred form by which to examine organizations and their contexts (p. 134). An interesting part of this study was his call for rejecting conventional methods for conducting interpretive research. He advocated for
methods to focus on “the object of analysis” and suggested that a priori hypotheses and concepts not be utilized; in effect, he issued a call for grounded research in this area (p. 143).

Weick (1979) put forth a similar view: that an organization is a social construct brought into being by the people who think of this entity as a discreet unit. Additionally, he thought that organizations and their members are in a process of constant re-formation. They are continually reconstituting their collective and individual realities and meanings. The organization itself is socially constructed; its means of conveyance are written and oral language and actions. It is therefore an expression of its culture and climate, and therefore has no defining characteristics unto itself as a tangible system. While his construct has not been operationalized, it has important implications for this study. The logical consequence of this line of thought is that studying the communication of an organization’s members is more important than studying the organization itself. Therefore, capturing the communication of the members of the organization in the form of interviews rather than studying the organization itself was determined to be much more important.

Summary

There has been much study regarding organizational communication and the various components that constitute the specific phenomena of that act or process, and some researchers clearly consider communication to be a crucial component of the socialization process. Specific study in the field of public education has focused on group and individual interactions, how individuals in leadership positions view the socialization process (exclusively from the principal’s perspective), and the types or qualities of communication elements. Other literature concerns itself solely with generating theoretical constructs focused on the nature of the communication process, sense making by individuals engaged in
communications processes, and the time-delineated division of socialization practices. While all theories are applicable to this study, these theoretical models have not been verified through research. Because of this outstanding situation, this study will provide valuable research into the applicability of these models.

Grounded theory views all data as possible sources of information in a study. As this study focused on the socialization process of entry-level school administrators, the previous literature review framed what has not been done. It was not within the purview of this study to construct how and why groups interact; the focus was on individuals and their perspectives of an event. It was also not in the plan to use time as an underlying conceptual vehicle to describe the socialization process, although time was a component with some of the participants. Additionally, there was no wish to examine the top leadership position within the organization; the attention was on the initial step in supervisory authority. Finally, although the communications component embedded in the process was important, it was not the focal point of this study. However, as per the perspective of a grounded theory study, the literature was a starting point to frame the study, assisting in the analysis of data and generation of theory.

Chapter Three follows with the methodology used to conduct the study. Also included is information pertaining to the field and pilot studies, philosophical and ethical considerations, and process components of the study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The perspective used for examining the socialization process was social constructivist in spirit, meaning that the specific organization, social group, or positional status of each individual was embedded in observed phenomena. Predicated on this perspective are specific socially constructed meanings and sense-making practices. Because of the importance of the theoretical perspective and framework to this study, methodological components such as sampling, data collection and analysis, and the researcher’s role became extensions used to operationalize the research process.

Upon partial examination of the literature and conclusion of a field study, I decided to use a grounded theory approach in studying assistant principal socialization. Due to the lack of information regarding this area of research, a theoretical sampling technique was used rather than a predetermined sample group. Once interviews began and themes emerged, it became necessary to include more participants. Data saturation occurred relatively quickly, with themes and subcategories of behaviors being repeated in multiple interviews.

Timeline

The general sequence of events that comprised the study was as follows:

1. A field study was conducted in Spring 2001.
2. The formal proposal completion and defense took place mid-December 2003.
3. Pilot study interviews were completed in January 2004.
4. Pilot study structure and process analyses were conducted by the end of January 2004.
5. The Institutional Review Board application for study proposal was submitted by the end of February 2004.

7. Institutional Review Board approval was secured in mid-March 2004.

8. Principals were sent letters requesting permission to conduct interviews onsite in mid-March 2004.

9. Contact and interviewing of assistant principals was completed by the end of May 2004.

Field Study and Results

Completion of a field study in 2001 focused on one site: a middle school in the same region where the pilot and formal studies occurred. The purpose of the field study was to determine whether the topic of interest could withstand scrutiny in a field setting. I used Jablin’s (1982) time-oriented framework as an organizing theoretical perspective, working under the presumption that the assistant principal who participated would have become an insider to the organization. In fact, the field study brought out three interesting findings not related to a time construct: namely, that (a) socialization is not a linear process, (b) there is a difference between professional and personal socialization, and (c) socialization is not limited to the individual.

First, the socialization process is not linear. Depending on one’s perspective, the progression might have many different meanings. The basis for determining insider/outsider status could not be deduced based on a viewpoint. Specifically, a participant’s status was different from group to group, and could even vary among the individuals within a particular assemblage. Consequently, one could move in multiple directions without socialization being
an issue. An administrator experiencing this process nonlinearly could progress from the anticipatory stage to the encounter stage, only to loop back to a modified anticipatory stage.

Second, one’s insider/outsider status seemed to be based on one’s professional or personal socialization. The assistant principal in the field study was accorded insider status because she shared the same professional culture as a portion of the staff. The portion of the staff that was focused on instructional beliefs, values, and norms behavior accepted the new administrator as one of their own regardless of linear time. The other members of the staff, who chose to view the assistant principal as an outsider, did so because of an aspect of personal socialization. In this case, the personal values of the assistant principal and their failure to coincide with the personal values of this group determined her level of acceptance. The staff never mentioned any lack of professional quality, or any mismatch about professional culture. This group’s failure to accept the assistant principal seemed solely based on personal circumstances.

Last, the socialization process affected not just the individual undergoing it. In the field study, the organization was as affected by administrative succession as was the participant. As indicated by the findings, the organization underwent some level of socialization in relation to the individual in question. Consequently, organizational socialization had (in this case) multiple perspectives that needed to be addressed.

Pilot Study

In the remainder of this narrative, LEAs and specific people involved in the study are referred to using pseudonyms due to concerns about to the preservation of anonymity and confidentiality.
A pilot study was conducted prior to approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to verify the viability of the study’s basic structure, data gathering processes (interviews and reference information), interview guide, and analysis matrix, although I eschewed any formal analysis of information gathered at that time.

_Pilot Study Participant Selection and Process_

I chose five assistant principals as an initial sample for the study proposal. One potential contributor refused to participate after agreeing, and another could not participate due to logistical reasons, limiting the initial participant group to three. This limited participant sample was used to establish the viability of the processes previously listed. The field study took place in LEA IV–Dry Lake County, and the three selected participants were colleagues with whom I had had varying degrees of contact. Familiarity gave me greater access to the participants; I could draw on my previous experience as a site-level administrator and on my previously established professional network to engender a degree of trust with the assistant principals. At the same time, I was an outsider to the sites in terms of socialization, which provided a buffer. The assistant principals came from the elementary and secondary levels, and described a range of public school educational levels in the same school district. Their diverse backgrounds also offered a degree of triangulation in the qualitative sense. With the exception of gender, the participants represented not only diverse backgrounds, but also different ethnicities, educational and administrative experiences, and other disparate factors (see Table 1).
Table 1

Pilot Study Participant Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total Exp.</th>
<th>Admin. Exp.</th>
<th>Time at site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Creek</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I contacted pilot study participants to establish a time and place for their interviews. Interviews for Sue and Jane took place at their schools on the same day, in sequential time slots; Marie preferred that the interview occur at her private residence. The methods used in executing the interview were the same for each participant; I recorded their responses to the interview guide questions, and probed for clarification when necessary. Each interview was digitally recorded, and later transcribed using voice recognition software. I then examined the interview transcriptions for completeness and suitability for content analysis.

The pilot study confirmed the viability of the sampling mechanism, interview guide, and data analysis instrument. After IRB approval, I contacted the pilot study participants again because of the richness of the data I had previously obtained. I then re-interviewed the participants, verifying and analyzing the previously obtained information.

Sample Selection

Grounded theory strategies indicated that theoretical sampling was the appropriate method for determining the study group. Specifically, Glaser and Strauss (1967) contended that the theoretical sampling process should be “done in order to discover categories and their properties and to suggest the relationships into a theory” (p. 62). Rejecting quantitative sampling techniques was therefore appropriate; this qualitative study demanded a different
sampling process. According to Bogdan and Biklin (1998), the sample should have some specific characteristics, such as title, job duty, or positional authority; as this was an inductive process, augmentation of the pre-determined sample occurred as the data demanded and the study continued. Theoretical sampling was conducted in two distinct stages: a first stage for local educational agencies (LEAs) and a second stage for assistant principals.

**LEA Selection and Process**

Originally, six LEAs were considered for participation in the study. One LEA was removed from consideration due to their process for conducting research. The rigor of their research application procedure and the level of information they required raised concerns about the study’s time schedule and maintaining the confidentiality of study participants. A second LEA was removed from the study because the superintendent was new to the area, and would not permit studies in that county at that time.

These developments necessitated re-examination of the remaining four LEAs for participation in the study. They were chosen for participation based on one or more reasons: (a) professional affiliation of the LEA leadership and the researcher, (b) varying geographic locale, (c) accessibility, and/or (d) school system demographic information. The LEA superintendents were contacted by phone and email, asking them for permission to perform the study in their LEAs. Information was forwarded regarding the purpose, methodology, and possible implications and benefits of the study. Further contact with the superintendents and their designees sought to ascertain their interest in participating in the study.

A pilot study took place with colleagues in LEA IV–Dry Lake County, testing the interview protocols prior to Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The superintendent gave permission for the study take place in the LEA. For logistical reasons, it was decided
that formal interviews could be carried out in Dry Lake County later. After IRB submission of the study, but prior to approval, the superintendent of LEA I–Zebulon County was contacted first by telephone and then by e-mail to determine his interest in hosting the research (see APPENDIX A); he gave permission to conduct the study. Next, the superintendent of LEA II–Grant County was solicited by e-mail. He requested that all available information regarding the study process be forwarded to him. Shortly thereafter, he gave permission to perform the research in the LEA (see APPENDIX B). At the same time, a director in LEA III–Smith County was contacted to determine the superintendent’s interest in participating in the study. Upon the superintendent’s receipt of the forwarded study information, he agreed that they would participate. Descriptions of the participating LEAs follow.

**LEA I–Zebulon County**

Zebulon County is a mostly rural county in the upper central portion bordering another mid-Atlantic state (see Table 2, Column 1). It has a population of approximately 43,000 (as of the 2000 census) and sustained a population growth of 10.4% in the 10 years after the 1990 census (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37181.html). It has ten elementary schools, two middle schools, and three high schools, serving a school-aged population of approximately 8,000 for the 2002-2003 school year (Best 1 of 2 Months Average Daily Membership [ADM] 2002-2003, 2003). As of the 2003-2004 school year, the district had 581 teachers, nine assistant principals, and 15 principals, for a total of approximately 600 certified school personnel (Statistical Research Section-Financial Business Services-Public Schools of North Carolina/2003-2004 Local Salary Supplements, 2004). Supplements were well below the state average, especially for assistant principals,
who received approximately one-fifth of the state average (Statistical Research Section-
Financial Business Services-Public Schools of North Carolina/2003-2004 Local Salary
Supplements, 2004). The county is located to the north of a major metropolitan area in the
state.

**LEA II–Smith County**

Smith County is a mostly rural county in the eastern portion of one of the mid-
Atlantic States (see Table 2, Column 2). It has a total population of approximately 10,000 as
of the 2002 projections, and sustained a population growth of 10.9% in the past 10 years after
the last census (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37103.html). It has four elementary
schools, one middle school, and one high school, serving a school-aged population of 1,388
as of the 2002-2003 school year (Best 1 of 2 Months Average Daily Membership [ADM]
2002-2003, 2003). As of the 2002-2003 school year, the district had 111 teachers, three
assistant principals, and six principals, for a total of approximately 120 certified school
personnel (Statistical Research Section-Financial Business Services-Public Schools of North
Carolina/2003-2004 Local Salary Supplements, 2004). Supplements were significantly below
the state average, especially for assistant principals, who received less than one-tenth of the
state average (Statistical Research Section-Financial Business Services-Public Schools of
North Carolina/2003-2004 Local Salary Supplements, 2004). Bordering the county on both
sides are beachfront cities that are popular tourist destinations.

**LEA III–Grant County**

Grant County is a mostly suburban county in the central portion of the state (see
Table 2, Column 3). It has a population of approximately 49,000 as of the 2000 census, and
sustained a population growth of 18.5% in the 10 years following the 1990 census.
It has seven elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, and one school for grades 7-12, serving a school-aged population of approximately 8,500 for the 2002-2003 school year (Best 1 of 2 Months Average Daily Membership [ADM] 2002-2003, 2003). As of the 2003-2004 school year, the district had 581 teachers, nine assistant principals, and 15 principals, for a total of approximately 600 certified school personnel (Statistical Research Section-Financial Business Services-Public Schools of North Carolina/2003-2004 Local Salary Supplements, 2004). Supplements were approximately half the state average for assistant principals (Statistical Research Section-Financial Business Services-Public Schools of North Carolina/2003-2004 Local Salary Supplements, 2004). The county is located approximately halfway between two major metropolitan areas and serves as a bedroom community for them both.

**LEA IV–Dry Lake County**

Dry Lake County is a mostly rural county in the southeastern corner of the state (see Table 2, Column 4). It has a population of approximately 77,000 as of the 2000 census, and sustained a population growth of 43.5% in the ten years following the 1990 census (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37019.html). It has nine elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools, serving a school-aged population of 10,591 during the 2002-2003 school year (Best 1 of 2 Months Average Daily Membership [ADM] 2002-2003, 2003). As of the 2002-2003 school year, the district had 762 teachers, 22 assistant principals, and 16 principals, for a total of approximately 800 certified school personnel (Statistical Research Section-Financial Business Services-Public Schools of North Carolina/2003-2004 Local Salary Supplements, 2004). Supplements were approximately
50% lower than the state average for assistant principals (Statistical Research Section-Financial Business Services-Public Schools of North Carolina/2003-2004 Local Salary Supplements, 2004). Bordering both sides of the county are cities that are popular tourist destinations.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEA Geographic and Demographic Data</th>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEA I (Zebulon)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LEA II (Smith)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA III (Grant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA IV (Dry Lake)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>43,622</td>
<td>10,392</td>
<td>49,279</td>
<td>77,058</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population growth</td>
<td>+10.4%</td>
<td>+10.9%</td>
<td>+18.5%</td>
<td>+43.5%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of schools</td>
<td>10 elementary 2 middle 3 secondary</td>
<td>4 elementary 1 middle 1 secondary</td>
<td>6 elementary 2 middle 1 secondary 1 K-12 1 7-12</td>
<td>9 elementary 3 middle 3 secondary 1 K-12</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children served</td>
<td>8,186</td>
<td>1,388</td>
<td>8,476</td>
<td>10,689</td>
<td>1,327,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>95,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of APs</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of principals</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Average Supplements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>$2,218</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$2,230</td>
<td>$2,334</td>
<td>$2,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asst. Principal</td>
<td>$1,104</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$2,771</td>
<td>$2,892</td>
<td>$5,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>$1,125</td>
<td>$2,133</td>
<td>$5,917</td>
<td>$5,677</td>
<td>$8,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Geographic location in the state</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assistant Principal Selection and Interview Process

The initial proposal recommended that only new assistant principals with one to three years of experience would participate in the study and that the methodology would reflect a multiple perspectives event. The reasoning behind this was that socialization processes might be unrecognized during the first year; beyond the third year of organizational entry one may not recall details with a desired level of clarity or insight or might have “rosy recollections,” also known as the Rebecca Myth (Fauske and Ogawa, 1983).

However, as the study progressed, the proposed sample criteria were changed. This change was documented subsequently in the memoing component thus:

3/12/04-As I’m thinking about this process, the more I’m convinced that not just new (1-3 years) APs should be interviewed. What has gotten me thinking about this is that I remember vividly the things that occurred at my first school, and that is 6 years ago. Also, when the principal of [a school] called me, he started discussing his socialization processes when he was an AP–this may be an avenue for future discussion. Anyway, his AP had been a principal AND a Director of EC progs. He’s bound to remember his experiences well.

Further informal discussions with principals, results from the pilot study, and my own experience suggested that the recollections of participants who had been in the assistant principal’s position for longer than three years still provided valid and usable data. Grounded theory methodology also dictates that researchers try to find exceptions that prove initial theorizing incorrect. After re-evaluating the initial criteria, the limitation of participants to those with one to three years of experience was discarded in favor of a larger possible sample pool. As Brinson (1997) stated, “It is the researcher’s connection with his background that
translates less into bias and more into insight” and that use of “empath[y] and experience may [enable one to] be aware of these events and able to investigate them” (p. 10-11).

The initial submission of material to the IRB was incomplete, necessitating multiple iterations to complete the appropriate information (see Appendices C–E). The IRB was assured about the anonymity of the participants, confidentiality of imparted information, and ease of participant entry and exit from the study. Upon IRB approval of the study processes (see Appendix F), principals of the participating counties were sent letters (a) articulating the purpose and scope of the study, (b) describing the research framework and methods to be employed, and (c) asking their permission to conduct interviews on the school campus. The letters also made it clear that all information would remain confidential and anonymous. As a result, principals began volunteering their assistant principals for the study before the assistant principals themselves were asked to participate; the preliminary participant sample was drawn from the pool the principals volunteered. Descriptive demographic information pertaining to the assistant principals appears in Table 3.

The original sample consisted of four participants from LEA I–Zebulon County. Interview dates, places, and times were established, taking place as planned. The first group of participants included Les, an African American male with nine years of educational experience (five years administrative); Josephine, a Caucasian female with twenty-six years of educational experience (five years administrative); Jessica, an African American female with nine years of educational experience (two years administrative); and Stacy, an African American female with seven years of educational experience (one year administrative).

Three more participants from the same LEA were then invited to participate. This group consisted of Eleanor, a Caucasian female with seven years of educational experience
(three years administrative); Claudia, an African American female with 28 years of educational experience (four years administrative); and Nancy, a Caucasian female with 25 years of educational experience (four years administrative).

The next round of interviews took place in LEA II–Smith County. According to information forwarded by the superintendent’s designee, there were two assistant principals in the county. One of the assistant principals agreed to participate and was interviewed for the study: Kathy, an African American female with 11 years of educational experience (one year administrative).

With emergent themes now established, re-evaluation of the pilot study data from LEA IV–Dry Lake County indicated that further interviews would benefit the study. The three participants from that LEA were re-interviewed, expanding on previously acquired data for ranges of behavior within the established themes and categories. The participants from this LEA were Sue, a Caucasian female with 24 years of educational experience (six years administrative); Jane, an African American female with 19 years of educational experience (one year administrative); and Marie, a Creek female with 25 years of educational experience (four years administrative).

The last participant was from LEA III–Grant County: Will, a Caucasian male with five years of educational experience (one year administrative).

Interviews occurred in person and were digitally recorded; after participants verified the written interview transcripts, the recordings were destroyed.
Table 3

Participant Descriptive Demographic Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total Ed. Exp.</th>
<th>Admin. Exp.</th>
<th>Time at Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Les</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josephine</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>&gt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>K-2</td>
<td>Creek</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

The presumption that participants cannot participate in the same culture and therefore cannot really understand one another’s exchanges of symbols was the foundation of the study (i.e., we do not understand, so we must ask). Specific socially constructed meanings and sense-making practices within a site unit or specific organization may or may not have commonalities with other organizations; therefore, a multi-site case study was appropriate. The rationale for choosing a multi-site case study was consistent with the social constructivist and grounded theory perspectives. Furthermore, performing a case study at
only one site would not have provided the breadth and richness of data that are required for triangulation purposes. Conversely, casting the net too widely would have allowed only for a topical examination of the processes revealed.

The fieldwork provided access to multiple individual perspectives regarding socialization. Following grounded theory methodology, study participants articulated various points of view. Additionally, determining a specified group to work with did not interfere with further widening of the sample; as coding of data commenced from the outset, further participants became necessary to justify progressive levels of coding and tentative theorizing.

Degree of Researcher Involvement

At the outset of the study there was a high degree of personal and immediate involvement with the participants, which tapered off quickly. The goal was to be as truthful as possible in purpose and process; I wanted to tease out information and have the participants re-examine their experiences within a short amount of time. It was my opinion that one must be able to perceive before understanding; placement within an individually constructed framework of cognition begins with recognition of phenomena that were out of place or different from previous experiences. An added consideration linked to the theoretical framework was that of the researcher’s role. My role as researcher had varying degrees of involvement concerning participant-ness and revealed-ness. I entered the process with insight (not bias) gained from prior experience; I already viewed the data through the lens of my own perceptions (Brinson, 1997). The intent was to have the participants re-examine their previous experiences in light of their present perspectives. As far as revealed-ness is concerned, it was prudent to rely on full disclosure from all participants. At the core of the social constructivist tradition is the desire to understand the individual’s construct of reality.
Inherent in that conception is the unconditional acceptance of the situational viewpoint of the other, an exchange of trust. There is no substitute for complete and unreserved honesty. Full disclosure embedded in the theoretical perspective was a critical component to the process, especially in terms of triangulation and validity.

**Interview Guide**

The interview guide is a series of questions that gathered information from the participants. The questions were designed to recover information in an organized and linear manner, ascertaining the participants’ preconceptions, perceptions, and experiences with public education. Additionally, the questions sought to have the participants recall their perspective on these areas as students, teachers, and as administrators. In this way, the study would gain insight regarding the participants’ frames of individual reference that guided their actions and perceptions of specific social processes. I composed the questions based on personal experience with socialization, discussions with colleagues, readings of literature in the area, the initial pilot study questions and conversations with both previous supervisors and previously supervised staff.

The interview was divided into three sections, addressing such aspects as previous educational experiences, personal and professional values, internal locus, external locus, and variations on the guide questions. At the beginning of the interview process, specific information including the name and position, date of interview, location of school, location of interview within the school, and time of interview were recorded. The section explanations are below, although the full guide may be found in Appendix G:


Previous educational experiences

Information obtained in this section of the interview guide addressed core values, beliefs, and norms of behavior acquired via primary socialization.

Internal locus

This section specifically addressed the individual construction of what the primary participants believe to be reality.

External locus

This section of the interview process focused on how the participant perceived external cues that may or may not be part of the socialization process. Working from the presumption embedded in the theoretical frame that reality is a social construct, any meaning must have some level of interaction with external (outside of the participant) information, be it interactions with individuals, groups, or organizations.

While the questions were constructed to obtain information essential to the study, the guide proved to be limited in some respects; it evolved slightly during the course of the study, although it did not incorporate any major revisions, additions, or deletions. There is therefore no documentation of these changes.

Data analysis

Grounded Theory

As articulated earlier, there was a lack of existing research regarding the organizational socialization of educational administrators and the processes associated with it. After performing a multi-site study, the information was transcribed, themes were developed, and constructs could be tentatively developed. The intention of this study was to fill a theoretical gap and inform the research community. Bogdan and Biklin (1998) referred
to this as a qualitative interpretation of generalizability. It was their assertion that for grounded theory data analysis to be generalizable and therefore legitimate, it must (a) be faithful to the participants, (b) provide the reader with the experience of organizational socialization, and (c) be able to be used for further research of organizational socialization. Analyses that meet this criteria are then grounded in the study data.

Data Coding, Categories, and Analysis

Coding commenced with the initial acquisition of interview data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) discussed three levels of coding as part of the grounded theory methodology. Ranging from the general to the specific, coding processes are known as open, axial, and selective. All three levels were used throughout the study.

Open coding takes place at the beginning of the analytical process, when initial “concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 101). At this point in my study, observed phenomena formed broad categories. By using concepts taken directly out of the interview data, I was able to define the properties and dimensions of the categories. Strauss and Corbin (1998) mentioned multiple ways of performing open coding, including line-by-line analysis, sentence or paragraph analysis, and analysis of the entire document. For this study, the open coding process stage involved paragraph and whole document analysis. This process allowed themes to develop and emerge from the data. A parallel process of memo writing assisted me in the development of the themes.

Axial coding occurred when developed categories of phenomena (emergent themes) linked to developing subcategories. Axial coding is a more specific subdividing of established categories, thereby achieving a greater degree of specificity of analysis. This
analysis provided an opportunity to delve into the various shadings of meanings of phenomena and allowed me to determine the links between categories and subcategories.

Selective coding was the last stage of the process, which integrated and refined developing theoretical concepts. An important component of this stage was the concept of saturation. Saturation occurred when analysis of the data no longer yielded information from the categories or subcategories. I planned a multi-layered analytical process in which preliminary coding and analysis took place as soon after data acquisition. Coded data were placed into generated categories and subcategories as information was obtained. In keeping with grounded theory, embedded themes in the data were soon recognizable. Grounded theory methodology requires that researchers acquire the information before generating hypotheses.

There is much to articulate regarding the theoretical perspective in the context of categorization: If what we do is construct knowledge from our social interactions, and reality construction results from aggregations of this process, then what we do is construct an individual framework for filtering all incoming information and placing it into context. This framework informs us and guides our responses and reactions to all incoming data. Once we filter incoming information, we find a spot to place it within our defined experiences; the framework then takes on a predictive quality. By fully analyzing the information, we construct meaning grounded firmly in our experiences, whether we understand the data or not.

Based on personal experiences with previous socialization events, it was natural for me to construct a set of data categories as information emerged, seeking patterns or regularities, and comparing it to my internal framework. This would also be an established
practice within the grounded theory perspective. Adherence to an ethnomethodological process dictated that I attempt to strip away layers of assumptions to get to core meanings of actions and events, so I asked repeated, probing questions (e.g., “How do you know this?”). The resulting data led to further compartmentalization and categorization of information. This process of data analysis is thus appropriately characterized as a form of the Constant Comparative Method (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; Schram, 2003). As themes emerged, I created broad categories for data analysis and coding purposes.

Memos to Self

An important component of data analysis was my process of memo writing. I tend to think through processes by discussing them with people close to me, usually committing those thoughts to paper at some point. For this study, I created a file for the multiple, study-related scraps of paper I was generating. Another important aspect of the memo writing behavior was that the study changed over the course of its life. By documenting the process flow, I provided a further triangulation mechanism.

Triangulation

According to Patton’s (2000) argument regarding triangulation, its purpose is to test for consistency rather than increasing credibility. Reliability itself is not so much a consideration in the traditional, quantitative sense; due to the situational specificity of the study’s focus, qualitative methods were more attuned to the idea of consistency. In the case of this study, it was preferable to conceive of triangulation as having an internal (within the study) rather than an external locus. This aspect lent a process-oriented component to the idea of triangulation, firmly grounding it within the theoretical perspective of this study.
Ethical considerations

*Disclosure and Exchange*

An important component of the methodology dealt with how much and what types of information were shared with the participants, and for what reasons (Schram, 2003). Although the data collection processes during the study entailed more than one interview with some of the participants, I did not significantly intertwine my life with those of the researched. It was not my intention to withhold information or to misrepresent myself. In fact, I was sincerely concerned in understanding a sociological process and needed the help of the participants. The only people who could help me were administrators in the assistant principal’s position; their honest and undisguised responses were critical to my understanding and the study’s success. I intended to further the disclosure process by making each completed, transcribed interview available to the participant interviewed, soliciting feedback about its degree of correctness.

*Making Public the Private*

I was mindful of the issue of betraying the trust of the participants. This study generated information that might have been potentially harmful to participants on a personal and professional level. A related issue dealt with how I should handle information that I did not intend or want to learn (Schram, 2003). I had no intention of harming anyone’s career or intentionally hurting anyone’s feelings. The IRB approval process assisted greatly in establishing confidentiality and anonymity practices, especially in establishing criteria for communicating the information.
Validity Issues

One core issue that is difficult to come to terms with in qualitative research is that of validity. Furthermore, the philosophical perspective that I used for this study made it even more difficult to verify and validate the findings in the traditional quantitative sense. A better aim was to ensure that I understood the situations discussed. I used the following questions as a logical means of determining the study’s validity: (a) How do I know if I interpreted the results in the “correct” way? (b) Is the account plausible? and (c) Is the account convincing? (SW132 Research and Evaluation for Social Work Practice, 1997, p. 3).

Correctness

Copies of the interview transcripts were provided to the participants; this act furthered correct interpretation of the data, as participants could comment on the content and accuracy of the transcripts. On multiple occasions, participants made corrections to the transcripts, indicating items they wanted emphasized. Without being able to ascertain whether the participants were telling the truth or intentionally misleading the process, I had to trust that their accounts were true. By providing the participants with transcripts of their interviews, I gave them the opportunity to elaborate, amend, or deny information, enhancing the correctness of the data interpretation.

Plausibility

Information that recognizably stemmed from original thoughts and words but outside the participants’ purview was considered plausible; it was the result of building a convincing and coherent argument. Accurately transcribing information during the course of an interview, asking participants to clarify their thoughts when necessary, and seeking deeper meanings during the interview process added significantly to this process.
**Convinced-ness**

My presumption was that if the interpreted results were correct and plausible to the participants, then they would also be convincing to readers outside of the study. Building a systematic argument for interpretation of the data established their veracity and made the study convincing.

Because they meet the previously stated conditions of correctness, plausibility, and convinced-ness, presumably the study results are grounded in the data. The participants have reviewed the data and verified the results from their individual interviews. This information process is in keeping with the established theoretical framework; issues regarding the validity of the results should be limited due to the grounding of the data.

**Selective Experience**

Schram (2003) stated that selectivity is purposeful, circumstantial, intuitive, and empathetic; it functions as a filtering mechanism. For example, during the field study I acquired some data that I did not consider important, but that the participant strongly emphasized during the interview. I consequently saw that I needed to re-evaluate the importance of the information. I would have been remiss in my obligations to the theoretical perspective if I had not considered all data pertinent.

In terms of its intuitive component, if the study informed the participants and assisted them in the understanding and interpreting their socialization processes, then a specific element of selectivity would be achieved. Although transformational components are articulated more overtly in the feminist and critical theoretical perspectives, the constructivist perspective also has such a component. In keeping with the theoretical framework I chose for this study, one of my important considerations about the interpretation of what was real or
important was the shifting nature of perception. As stated earlier, I was mindful that my own perceptions and that of the participants might change as layers were uncovered, especially in light of the emergent themes. As we construct what we know through social interaction, we construct a frame of reference for placing all incoming data in context. This construction becomes the lens through which we view the external world and frame our experiences. As experiences continue and our framework becomes more articulated, our understanding may also change. Hence, this philosophical stance implies that understanding our framework provides the possibility for growth and transformation.

Generalizability

Generalizability in a qualitative study is strongly rooted in the personal experience of the researcher. Social constructivist thought indicates that our whole schema is a result of our experiences, with Donmoyer (1990) adding that social interactions and accommodations are also critical components. The aggregations of these interactions inform our framework, dictating the construction of our individual and group-specific realities. This concept of generalizability agrees with the argument of “transferability” being a more useful conceptual tool (p. 185). With this in mind, this study used (a) thick description and (b) a multi-site design to enable readers to superimpose its findings on other similar situations—what Schofield (1990) calls “fittingness” (p. 207). This addresses the degree of overlap that ultimately will inform the applicability of the research.

Summary

For this study, I used a theoretical sampling strategy to determine the participant sample, both for the LEAs and the individuals. The LEAs varied regarding total population, population growth, number of schools, number of children served, number of certified
personnel, average annual supplements, and location. This allowed for a constant level of comparison between the areas. This strategy also assisted in the construction of the individual participant sample. The grounded theory framework supported the selection of a small initial group of participants; the needs of data acquisition dictated expansion of the sample. The sample evolved into a balanced group of 12 assistant principals that varied concerning school level, ethnicity, gender, total years of educational experience, years of administrative experience, and the amount of time at their present site.

After receiving the appropriate approvals and permissions, I completed interviews with the assistant principals. Data acquisition relied upon a developed interview guide, with transcripts of the material sent back to the participants for verification. I then began data analysis using open coding of the interview information, which allowed three themes to emerge. Axial coding followed, in which I sub-categorized the acquired information into a range of phenomena. Concerns regarding ethical considerations, validity issues, and generalizability were addressed directly as the study progressed, as documented in this section.

In Chapter Four, the emergent themes and the results of the participant interviews organized by those themes are detailed.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

A grounded theory framework guided this study’s methodology to escape the limitations associated with other socialization constructs. In light of the previous literature review, current organizational socialization constructs imply that all socialization events have a linear process and set stages that participants go through that end in socialization every time. This perspective may only be useful in initially sensitizing a researcher to viewing an event in its totality. A linear construct does not take into account (a) the individual-specific nature of an event, (b) the processes that transcend linear socialization models, and (c) what occurs if socialization is not the product or output. Grounded theory allowed me to acquire and analyze data to determine what might really be happening during socialization.

I conducted personal interviews over a two-month period, during which 12 participants in four LEAs contributed data. While additional individuals expressed interest in participating in the study, data saturation of the themes limited the sampling process. Examined for major themes, initial interview transcripts indicated three consistently emerging categories of information generally evident by the third interview. Participants spoke in strong terms about the roles related to the position, the relationships they engaged in with others, and the tasks that assistant principals needed to perform. Therefore, the three themes of “Roles,” “Relationships,” and “Tasks” became the central categories into which all subsequent data were placed. The initial data gathering and coding fit within the parameters defined by Corbin and Strauss (1998): in open coding, reoccurring phenomena were identified and categorized. Further interview data explored the themes in detail, which provided for additional sub-categories of concepts through axial coding. I examined each category on a case-by-case basis of constant comparison, looking for a range of concepts
within each theme. Within each thematic section, I have discussed the range of behaviors that comprised it. In keeping with the transformational purposes of reporting results, a case-by-case thematic recounting of the results is used. (see Figure 1).

*Figure 1.* Study process structure.
Roles: Role Recall, Role Identification, and Motivation for Role Adoption

The first and most overt of the emergent themes regarded the roles educational personnel had played in the participants’ lives. The specific concepts articulated by the participants concerned (a) role recall, (b) role identification, and (c) motivation for role adoption.

In this study, the role recall concept was illustrated by the assistant principal’s memories of being students in school, and the roles their own teachers and administrators played at that time. The participants’ role recall of administrators when they themselves were teachers was generally lacking in their interviews. Regardless of the position discussed, role recall in this study is described as being either strong or weak.

The concept of role identification concerned how participants perceived these roles, and their identification or failure to identify with these roles as children and students. Linked to this concept was their awareness as a teacher of the administrator’s role and their level of identification with that role as adult professionals. Regardless of the position discussed, role recall in this study is also described as being either strong or weak.

Associated with this theme, although discrete, was the issue of what motivated the participants to become teachers and administrators. Data indicated differences in why participants went into teaching and administration; this study describes the motivational differences as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is internally originated and driven and is most often described in terms of being inspired by someone else; by contrast, extrinsic motivation is externally originated and driven and is most often described in terms of being talked into it by someone else. Additionally, it must be noted that emphasis was
added by the author to the recounted information as indicated by the italicized words; in all cases this emphasis was in keeping with the participants interview data.

Case #1: Les

Role Recall

Les is an African American male in his mid 30s. He was a vocational education teacher for three years and has been an administrator for six years. When speaking of his memories regarding education as a child, he stated that for the most part, he had positive experiences. By his own admission, Les confessed that he was “a very challenging child. I had a mouth, and I was the kind of challenging child that would make the A’s in the class and get on your nerves.”

He had fond memories of his childhood teachers, indicating that he had a strong affinity for their role. He stated that “all of my teachers were black” and that “they were older ladies, nearing retirement. Now that I look back on teaching methods, that type of thing, very traditional.” These statements may reflect Les’s familiarity with the roles of older women, based on his personal experiences. Sent to live with his aunt and uncle at age 10, he identified with older females as part of a personal framework for understanding this reality.

The older female teachers he referred to were important in his early education. He stated, “The teachers, some of them I felt, cared about me as a child. Some, I know, I gave a hard time to.” Les laughed at the memory and indicated that he valued the relationships, saying, “If I had a teacher that was willing to work with me, who said ‘Hello’ to me when I walked in the classroom, who tried to strike up a relationship with me, then I bent over backwards for them.” He “definitely remembers the class being very much teacher controlled,” which adds to his identification of the parental aspects of the teacher’s role.
His experiences with administrators were very different from his encounters with teachers. Although he remembers an early principal who was caring, most of his administrators did not have that attitude. In fact, one administrator in particular he remembers as “very stiff, very starched. It seemed to be his way or the highway.” When asked if the administrator emphasized the quality of relationships, Les emphatically stated, “No.”

Role identification

Role identification with childhood teachers was a strong component of the interview data. With one exception, all of the interviewed assistant principals identified positively with educational personnel based on early encounters with them; less pronounced was their identification with school administrators. Les identified one teacher who inspired him “to enter into the area of business education,” and said, “It was because of her that I decided to” become a teacher. His early experiences as a student in school contributed to his role identification with the teacher. He said, “That I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. I always knew that I wanted to teach.” On a personal level, this critical identification early in his life structured and motivated his entry into the profession.

Motivation for Role Adoption

Les’s stories about his early educational experiences indicated that intrinsic motivation guided his entry into the profession. Teachers inspired him in his public school experiences; he wanted to be like them when he “grew up.”

In a completely different turn of events, his entry into the administrative venue was extrinsically motivated. People make choices when they select jobs, and the desire to go from the classroom to school administration is a personal choice. However, this first case set the
tone for the locus of motivation for entry into the role of administrator. Les explicitly stated that a former principal had talked him into it, having “pushed [him] to the area of administration.” An outside factor seemed to be the primary motivator for his move into administration. A summary of Les’s input regarding roles is below in Table 4:

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Recall</th>
<th>Role Identification</th>
<th>Motivation for Role Adoption</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
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Case #2: Josephine

Role Recall

Josephine is a Caucasian female in her late 40s who has spent 26 years in public schools, the last five of which have been as an administrator. She received her master’s degree in school administration in 1982, but continued to teach in the classroom for 16 years. Her memories of her early education are particularly vivid, and she had what she feels to be a significantly different experience than many students today. For example, she said, “when I attended school we had a potbellied stove and a large cart that came around the school during lunch.” She grew up in a rural area and the schools she attended were “community schools.” She had only female teachers during her elementary school period, and stated that there were “no men teachers at all. I don’t think I had any men teachers the entire time I was in elementary school or middle school; I think just maybe one at high school, but all very caring people.” Additionally, she said, “I had the same teacher in first grade as I did in third grade. I had the same teacher in second grade as I did in fourth grade.” According to Josephine, these
teachers “were older. I don’t remember any young teachers. Our school was the first one to have a black teacher, Miss Coleman in seventh grade.”

Her memories of administrators offer a stark contrast. Although she remembers administrators, she “can’t remember their names.” She stated that they would walk the halls—“I was a good kid, so I never saw them that much.” A limited contact with administrators for younger students is a consistent theme in the interview data from all of the participants.

**Role Identification**

Josephine made it explicit that she has a strong identification with the role of teachers and school. She stated, “School was a comfortable place for me, somewhere I felt successful.” From the ensuing discussion, she made it clear that her strong level of identification with teachers became a factor in guiding her towards the field of education.

**Motivation for Role Adoption**

In her role as a teacher, Josephine stated that she “liked teaching children,” and that she “enjoys the classroom, the books. I’ve really thought and still think that teaching is a great way to influence children. I truly think that, over the years, I have made a difference in the lives of children. It may be small, but I have made a difference in children’s lives.” Her initial motivation for becoming a teacher was intrinsic; she felt drawn to the classroom, which she interpreted as a place of comfort. This also later informed her administrative practice.

Like Les, Josephine was “talked into” entry into an administrative program, making her initial motivation for doing so an extrinsic one. She said:

After I finished teaching that one year, [university personnel] approached me and said they were going to offer a master’s degree in administration one can
take in the summer, pick up three hours here and there, fast track. You’ll pick up nine or ten hours in one summer. They brought the professors down from [the university]; there was a select group of teachers in my home county and we were able to get our masters degree in two summers.

Despite this “fast tracked” experience, she “liked the school; after I got my [administrative] degree, I sat on it for 16 years because I liked teaching.” A summary of Josephine’s input regarding roles is below in Table 5:

Table 5

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Josephine and Roles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>role recall</td>
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<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>strong</td>
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</table>

*Case #3: Jessica*

Role Recall

Jessica is an African American female in her 30s. She was initially concerned that her name would be revealed during the research; it took multiple explanations of the interview protocols and reassurances of confidentiality and anonymity for her to tell her story. She was especially energetic in the recounting of her story. Her story began with her fond memories of her teachers; she strongly identified with them as maternal figures. She stated that:

They were nurturing, they were a lot like mothers. I really feel like during that era teachers actually thought that “it takes a whole village”. I really feel like they did. All of the schools I attended were predominantly African American, and in my elementary school all of my teachers were African American teachers. All of my teachers were women in elementary school except for one.
From the outset, Jessica identified deeply with the role and importance of teachers, based on her experiences in public school. For example, she remembers that one specific teacher “felt something unique in each of her students.” Furthermore, her teachers’ importance at the school was apparent to Jessica; she said “to be honest, the teachers pretty much ran school. They knew exactly what to do; they had been teaching for years, so they had a strong command of the curriculum. They just ran the school.” She also identified the teachers in her school as having a strong parental role.

By contrast, with her memories of her teachers, Jessica had less positive impressions of her administrators. She said:

In elementary school, I had two, three administrators. I think that their offices were revered as islands because I did not see them a lot at all. They were very standoffish. When you saw the principal, it was because you were misbehaving. They did not frequently visit classrooms, they did not help with buses after school, and they were not there to greet you when you got off the bus.

Jessica’s lack of recall regarding her administrators added to her general lack of identification with the administrative role.

*Role Identification*

Jessica stated that when she was child, her “elementary school principal could probably just sit back with his feet up and let his teachers do their thing.” In middle school, her experiences were different. She said of her principal:

My middle school principal was very, very visible. When I say visible, I mean he would say that sometimes he was a ghost because he would appear from
nowhere. When we changed classes, he stood in the middle of a hallway and he directed traffic in the hallway.

Despite the principal’s visibility, Jessica did not seem to identify with his role. In her role as a teacher, she did not identify much with the administrative role either. She stated, “When I was a teacher I was really hard on my administrators, only because I thought that [my principal] had time to come to my classroom more than she did.” Additionally, while she understood the need for administrative behaviors she observed, such as directing traffic, she felt no connection to the person. She said, “I guess now that I’m an administrator, I can see the difference; and I can see how important it is to be a lot more visible at middle school, even we’re not as very visible here. But I can see how a middle school principal needs to be more visible.” Further bolstering the data indicating a lack of identification with the administrative role, Jessica stated that she “did not really see my administrators in high school.” The lack of contact with administrative personnel ensured that she would have no framework for understanding and therefore no identification with their role(s).

Motivation for Role Adoption

A strong identification with the role marked Jessica’s motivation for becoming a teacher, and she was inspired to be like a teacher she knew: “One teacher had a tremendous impact on me becoming an educator.” This speaks of Jessica’s profoundly intrinsically driven motivation to pursue the role of teacher. She fondly recalls that she “started out substituting in my hometown and I ended up going back to get my certification in elementary education because that’s where I had the most experience.”

Like the previous participants, Jessica’s motivation for becoming an administrator was extrinsic. A former principal of hers “always encouraged me to go back and become an
administrator. I guess this is something I fell into.” With having no overt plan to become an administrator, and furthermore talked into it, it was obvious that motivations for Jessica’s entry into administration were very different from teaching. A summary of Jessica’s input regarding roles appears in Table 6:

Table 6

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>role recall</th>
<th>role identification</th>
<th>motivation for role adoption</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>intrinsic</td>
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<tr>
<td>admin</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>extrinsic</td>
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Case #4: Stacy

Role Recall

Stacy is an African American female of about 40, modest and professional in the recounting of her story. Her memories of her teachers indicated a strong familial identification with the role. “What I remember most is that the teachers I had were motherly,” she stated. She continued, “They were like a surrogate mother when I had to go away from my home; I remember feeling quite comfortable with them.” These feelings and perceptions extended to her school as a whole. She said that her experiences were:

- Very nurturing. The school was very close-knit. There were a lot of contact with parents; in fact, we knew some of the teachers from the neighborhood and we often saw them in other settings. I remember being comforted by that relationship.

Her memories of administrators were not as clear. She did not recall her administrators being active in the life of her school. All she remembered was “for example, announcements being made, being gathered together in an auditorium for assembly, those
kinds of things.” Furthermore, she remembered a lack of identification with that role, as opposed to the role of her teachers. “I recall it being very different. I don’t recall them ever taking a part in instruction; I just remember them as being somewhat of an encourager, a motivator.”

Role Identification

While Stacy reminisced fondly about her teachers and early public school experiences, she did not have such memories of her administrators. Her lack of identification with administrators was evident:

When I was a teacher, I had a very different perception of administration. I looked at the assistant principal and the principal as being something that seemed overwhelming for me personally. I almost doubted in my ability to even do the job, that things seem like such big tasks, and was I really ready? I still had some fears of doing all of this, trying to get into it, and if I really would have what it takes to be administrator.

Stacy made it clear that she did not identify with her administrators even as teacher, and that lack was carried into her initial internship experiences.

Motivation for Role Adoption

Stacy’s motivation for becoming a teacher was intrinsic. She indicated that many people in her family were teachers, and therefore had a sense that being a teacher was a familial vocation. She said:

I became a teacher because I came from a long line of educators. At the time, it was forming in my being, but I was not really aware of it. It was just that
folks in my family grew up, went to a college and became teachers. It just
played out that way for me as well.

When questioned further about this perception, she stated again that she had relatives who
were teachers and that she “was inculcated with that” as a proper and good career choice.

By contrast, her decision to become an administrator was extrinsic in nature; an
arrangement with a principal was the motivating factor for her entry into school
administration. She said:

They put an autistic program into the school. He [the principal] was very
uncomfortable with that. I had a reputation in [the county] as a person that had
some degree of expertise with autistic students, because those were the
students that I taught for the five years. So it was like “if you’ll just come to
our school and be the teacher for this classroom that we’re getting, then. . .”

Because of the quality job she performed, the principal targeted her as an administrative
candidate. Consequently, she was routed towards public school administration, with the
principal convincing her that it would be a good career choice. A summary of Stacy’s input
regarding roles is below in Table 7:

Table 7

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<tr>
<th>Stacy and Roles</th>
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<tr>
<td>role recall</td>
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<td>strong</td>
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<tr>
<td>intrinsic</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

63
Role Recall

Eleanor, a Caucasian female in her late 30s, remembered selected teachers from her childhood with fondness. For example:

The best teacher I ever had was in third grade, and she was just wonderful; but the poor thing, she only taught for one year: could not pass the NTE. She was just very loving; if you couldn’t understand something, she would make sure the whole class understood it. She never yelled; of course they are going to get mad at some students. She had high expectations for us, and she pushed us.

Although Eleanor’s experiences in high school were different–she said, “A lot of them were very lecturing, not a lot of hands on”– she had fond and distinct memories of a few teachers from that period in her life. She said:

I had a history teacher who was absolutely wonderful. He was wonderful because he was really into World War II, and he had lots of stories; he taught history to us by telling us the real stories.

It was obvious during the course of the interview that Eleanor recalled her teachers with fondness. Unlike previous participants, however, she remembered her high school principal well. She said:

My high school administrator had been there for a very long time, probably 20 years. He was a fixture there, he was always around and he was there. Since he’s retired, there has been somebody new there every other year; it hasn’t been the same since he left. Everyone knew him in town; he had their kids and parents at one time or another.
Eleanor had a strong recall of her teachers from when she was a student. Unlike the other participants, she also had strong recall of her administrator. While vivid memories do not translate in identification with roles, having positive recollections of a person in a specific role seem to assist in that association.

**Role Identification**

Eleanor had a strong identification with teachers, because her parents taught in public schools. Her entry into the administrative arena was interesting because of her teaching experience. Hired into an operational role due to her experience with instruction, she stated:

I got hired because of my knowledge of curriculum, very strong curriculum.

That’s one of the things he’s [her current principal] put me in charge of. Of course, [I am also] doing things like discipline, schedules, that kind of thing.

Her obvious identification with instruction is a strong indication of her lack of identification with the operational aspects of school administration. Although her principal has her focus her time on instruction, he also ensures that she has operational tasks.

**Motivation for Role Adoption**

Eleanor’s motivation for going into teaching was intrinsic and inspired by her experiences with family. Although her mother advocated against her entry into the profession, Eleanor said:

I became a counselor for a weekend retreat during my last semester at State for my business degree. I realized at that time I would much rather be a teacher than go into business. So I graduated with my business degree and stayed in at school and got my teaching certificate for elementary education.
Also unlike the previous participants, Eleanor’s motivation for going into administration was intrinsic. Her own recognition that she needed a change drove her to enter the position. She stated, “I needed a change.” However, there is some wistfulness in her attitude about her operational role. Even now, she creates opportunities to perform in an instructional role:

I loved the classroom, don’t get me wrong. Every chance I get I get into a classroom, very curriculum oriented. I’ve wanted to make sure that every teacher is teaching what they’re supposed to be teaching, because with the ABCs they have to. I love being around the kids, and teaching them; I love showing teachers different ways of doing things.

For Eleanor, the move to administration was intrinsic, but with a twist: she a needed a greater challenge than the classroom and she wanted to instruct teachers. A summary of Eleanor’s input regarding roles is in Table 8:

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eleanor and Roles</th>
<th>role recall</th>
<th>role identification</th>
<th>motivation for role adoption</th>
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<td>teacher</td>
<td>admin</td>
<td>teacher admin</td>
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<td>strong</td>
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<td>weak</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intrinsic</td>
<td>intrinsic</td>
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Case #6: Claudia

Role Recall

Claudia is African-American female of about 50 with vivid memories of her early school experiences. She is a product of segregated schools and was affected by those experiences. She stated that her school “had no facilities and I walked to school for about six years. When I got into seventh grade I went to a school with a bathroom. I thought I had it
made!” While we laughed about this circumstance, it was obvious that this experience influenced her. She indicated that she became less apt to expect privileges and to be able to perceive inequality. She remembered:

Oh yes, at the middle school–eighth grade–there was lots of corporal punishment. The teachers used to say that we were going to have to try twice as hard. They told us that “it was twice as hard, and you will see yourselves treated differently.” The teachers at the integrated school didn’t do a lot of talking about us going to have to try harder. They did not have that comparison to make. I found that teachers were a little different, and I experienced some prejudice.

That these experiences affected her profoundly is apparent, but she recalled them fondly. For example, she stated:

I remember there were only 12 children in our seventh grade class. Our teacher was the principal there. This was the first school where we had running water, a rural community; our principal was the bus driver–that kind of school.

I could not help but think that the small, rural setting creating a close-knit school setting. I was also obvious that Claudia was warmhearted in the recounting of the memory.

*Role Identification*

Claudia’s identification with the teacher’s role was personal and associated with her family. She recalled:

I was 12. While he [the principal] was out there, we would do different things. We taught everybody how to dance while he was gone–I enjoyed that. That’s
one reason I thought this was nice, teaching people how to dance. The second thing was my mother was the bus driver. She was also a teacher assistant for a while. She encouraged me to apply and go to college; she also told me to major in something that could get me a job. I told her that I wanted to be a secretary, and she never said anything. The principal called her one day and told my mother to “come down here, I need to talk to you.” She never said anything to me, but the principal told her that he needed to talk to her about me. She asked me if I had been doing anything wrong at school, and I told her no–she never said anything else. So she was wondering what had I done now. Then the principal told her that I had a lot of potential in me, and that I had said that I wanted to be a secretary. He said I had much more potential than to be just a secretary. He encouraged me to do something else. She told me many years later what he had said.

As opposed to her teachers, her identification with her school administrators was minimal. She stated that “after we integrated, I saw him [the principal] mingling with the students when he walked up and down the halls; we [the African American students] were used to getting into place, being invisible. There we were visible, but we could not laugh and joke with them.”

**Motivation for Role Adoption**

Claudia’s motivation to become a teacher seemed to be intrinsic. She stated that she “had some really good teachers. They influenced me to go into education; you remember those certain teachers, remember somebody who had a good impact.” These positive role
models, combined with her early experiences of teaching others to dance and her familiarity with the role of teachers in her life, naturally led her to become a teacher in her adult life.

By contrast, her motivation for going into administration was extrinsic; Claudia was talked into the role. She recalled:

[Her present principal] was the summer school principal; I was a summer school teacher . . . . So the next time she had to do summer school, she asked if she could pick a lead teacher for an assistant, and they told her “yes”. That’s when she asked if I would do it . . . . The next year in October, October 18, I was on the playground. They came to get me and told to come to the office. I kept on thinking now what have I done? Why do they want to see me? She told me that she was going to be the principal, and would I consider being her assistant? I said “No, I will not leave my kindergartners at this point, thank you. I appreciate it, but no.” The conversation continued; I told her about my national boards, that I just couldn’t leave these children right now, the parents, etc. After talking and talking, she asked if I knew that they were offering me an opportunity. I asked her “well, only if I can come back to my classroom next year if I don’t like it.” And they said yes; that’s how I got up there. I wasn’t trying to, it just happened.

The recounting of the circumstances surrounding Claudia’s move into the assistant principalship made it clear she had not considered the move into administration previously. In this case, as it was with all but one of the participants, the motivation for the move into administration was extrinsic. It was through the intervention of others that the participants
either began to consider or entered the administrative role. A summary of Claudia’s input regarding roles appears in Table 9:

Table 9

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<tr>
<th>Claudia and Roles</th>
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<tr>
<td>role recall</td>
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<td>teacher</td>
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Case #7: Nancy

Role Recall

Nancy is a Caucasian female of about 50 who remembers her childhood teachers well. She stated:

In elementary school, I had several older ladies who were just like grandmas; they taught me a lot. I’m not saying anything about their age, but I remember the first through fourth grade; I remember they were older. I don’t remember ever having a brand-new teacher in elementary school. In junior high, they did have some younger teachers, and in high school I had both extremes as young adults. I remember them trying to teach us English, Math, Social Studies, and Science; I remember them being not being friends but taking care of us. I remember some of them as if they were sitting right there, and that’s been many years ago.

When asked whether she remembered any of her administrators, Nancy immediately replied, “No, I could not tell you.” When questioned further, Nancy made it clear that although she remembered one or two administrators, she could not recall anything about
them and with any degree of clarity. Additionally, she had no memory of any assistant principals from any of the schools she attended.

Role Identification

Nancy implied that she strongly identified with the school environment, even as a child. She said:

I had a good time when I was in school; I don’t remember too many bad experiences. I loved being at school, I loved what it did and I was involved in it a lot.

Nancy also remembered her teachers making it clear that schooling did not end with a high school diploma. She said:

I remember my teachers back then telling me things like that, that I was being prepared for something else, and what I was going to do. I’m very grateful to them for that. I had a lot of really good teachers, and we got a lot of wonderful things. If I had to pick one incident where I remember it better than anything else, it was my senior English class. It was almost at the end of my public-school student career, and Miss Emily Jones was having us write from some sense of smell. It was a Thursday afternoon, and she was having us to remember a fragrance as a child and write about it. Well maybe other people have a problem writing, but I didn’t. Whenever I smell that smell, I think of her and all that she taught us in senior English.

These positive experiences caused her to identify strongly with the roles that teachers play in students’ lives. As a teacher, Nancy took responsibility for conveying the same types of positive experiences to her students. Nancy made it apparent that she still identified strongly
with the teaching role. Even now, as an administrator, she still had instructional functions as part of her job; her continued contact with teaching strengthened her identification with that role as opposed to the administrative role.

Motivation for Role Adoption

Nancy’s motivation for becoming a teacher was intrinsic, although a negative experience initially spurred her on. She stated:

With all of the wonderful teachers I had when I was in school, I had a teacher in senior math that really could not teach. I could not understand the material in the class and was very frustrated. We were the brightest in that school—I graduated number one and I knew my stuff, but I could not learn what [the teacher] was trying to teach me. Every day I would go home and cry, and my mother would say, “Go upstairs and learn it.” The next day I would go back to school, we would meet in the commons area, and I would teach the others what I learned the night before so we would all be ready for class. That is what led me to become a teacher, because they taught me then when I was an 18-year-old, that I could teach when he could not, and I did not know the material, but I could teach them.

While this incident went far in motivating her to become a teacher, it was also Nancy’s familial identification with the role made for an easy transition to the role of teacher. She said:

When I started college, my mother was a teacher. . . . Mother taught second grade, so I was around teachers and I knew what it was about. I was playing teacher when I was a little girl because Mommy was one. Maybe it was just a
natural thing, a progression, that I was to become a teacher, but I thought that I would be good at it and I have been. My daughter is 23 and is also a teacher; she teaches tenth grade English, so we’re just following in this line.

Nancy’s identification with her mother’s career and the experience of teaching math to her classmates in high school were the key components that intrinsically motivated her towards teaching.

By contrast, Nancy’s motivation for becoming an administrator was extrinsic. She stated that becoming “an administrator [was] a different thing.” She said, “Somewhere towards the late 1990s, people began to say, “You’d be a really good administrator.” On the outside I would tell them that I could never leave my classroom.” However, she eventually made the transition because of others telling her that she would be successful in the administrative role. Consequently, her entry into administration was extrinsically motivated.

A summary of Nancy’s input regarding roles is below in Table 10:

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nancy and Roles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>role recall</td>
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<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
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<td>strong</td>
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</table>

Case #8: Kathy

Role Recall

Kathy is an African American female in her 30s with fond memories of her early teachers. In fact, of all the participants, she remembered more of her teachers with more specificity. She said that she “actually remembers my first grade teacher, because she was a very, very strict teacher. But I thrived in that environment. I remember having timed
multiplication table tests.” Laughing, she continued, “I really remember me and another student competing to be the first ones.” Kathy also remembered her fifth grade teacher and others well:

Because that’s the only time my sister and I had the same teacher, because we had been moved around so much. What happened was we moved to Germany and my sister was in the first grade. The next year my fifth grade teacher moved down to second grade and inherited my little sister. That’s the only time that ever happened. She was just so nice, she encouraged me to be in the gifted program, and I remember that. I remember my sixth grade language arts teacher, because he was so in love with books. That’s the first time I had ever seen that, I mean for him, when we would be reading. I remember one day he was involved with what he was reading, that we were all just reading for the entire class., and didn’t realize that that much time had passed. That is why I am an avid reader and love to read; I think that’s where that came from. When I was in tenth grade, I was in Missouri, and they had an interesting way of teaching Spanish. We were in a full immersion environment—we spoke no English at all. That was really different, but we enjoyed it a lot.

Kathy’s love of learning contributed strongly to her vivid recall of various teachers. She also had keen memories of the methods that they used to deliver instruction.

Kathy’s memories of administrators are vague by comparison. She said, “I don’t remember [them] honestly. I don’t think that I remember any of them, except at high school. I remember Mr. Griffin; his son was one of my classmates.” This was her only reason for remembering her high school principal: “his son was my classmate, and we were good
friends at that time. It may have just been that.” In fact, Kathy was surprised by her failure to remember her administrators, saying, “That’s amazing–I can’t think of any other administrator.”

Kathy’s lack of recall for her administrators may have contributed other components regarding the administrative role. Her lack of identification and preparation for the assistant principalship may have its cause in that lack of recall regarding administrators.

**Role Identification**

Kathy identified strongly with the role of the teacher. By her own admission, she was able to “thrive in that sort of environment” of high academic expectation and structure.

Kathy did not mention any identification with the role of school administrator, and in fact considered counseling as her next career move. She felt that counseling might provide her with “the challenges I’m looking for in teaching. And then I thought that I really didn’t want to teach anymore–that’s what I was thinking at the time. I enjoyed solving problems, that’s just my nature, so there were lots of things I could do in education.” Regardless, at the time she did not consider administration to be the next move that could fulfill her needs.

**Motivation for Role Adoption**

Kathy’s motivation for going into teaching was intrinsic. She stated:

My whole life I thought “I’m either going to become a pediatrician or a teacher.” And I think that’s because all of the college-educated women in my family were either teachers or doctors. The ones that I associate most with are teachers or doctors. . . . It was always going to be either teaching or health-related. They were very strong influences for me.
Kathy made it clear that she had expected to become a teacher from the time she was a child. Identification with her family members and her good experiences in school motivated her intrinsically. Continuing, Kathy said, “I loved school, always have. I just love learning, and that, I think, came from my dad. “I’m a nerd,” she laughed. “Truly, self-proclaimed, I am a nerd. That’s why I’m in graduate school; I just love school and I just love learning.”

Interestingly enough, Kathy was motivated to go into administration because of the instructional possibilities she saw there. She said:

I was at a point in my teaching career where I said to myself, “I don’t think that I can do this for 30 years.” I was in a place where I felt like professional growth wasn’t really valued. I was learning new things, wanting to use them in the classroom— I felt like that wasn’t really valued.

Kathy first applied for and received National Board Certification, but that did not keep her from considering leaving teaching. She said:

I thought, “I don’t want to take home that emotional baggage with me every day.” . . . I started thinking about administration, that I’m a good problem solver, I have a level head, and I’m a strong teacher. I could really help new teachers coming along.

She therefore approached administration as a career that could help inform instructional practice, saying explicitly, “I’m very curriculum-minded and felt that I could really help new people coming along.” Kathy’s motivation for entering administration was intrinsic in nature, but her understanding of the administrative role seems to be different from the other participants. Kathy’s desire to put her instructional expertise to use as an administrator
speaks to her perception of how the positional authority of administrators should be used. A summary of Kathy’s input regarding roles appears in Table 11:

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kathy and Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>role recall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #9: Sue

Role Recall

Sue is a Caucasian female in her late 50s who has extensive memories of her schooling and teachers. She says she attended “four different schools: two elementaries, a middle, and high school.” By her account, her teachers were strict by today’s standards, “but they had command of the class, stricter in expectations and in penalties.”

By contrast, her memories regarding administrators are few. When asked if she had much contact with them, she said no. When questioned further, she said, “The only time that I ever really saw the principal was when he presented me with an award. The only time I ever saw the assistant principal was . . . because I wanted him to write me a recommendation.” Sue made it clear that she had no contact, and therefore very little recall of her school administrators.

Role Identification

For Sue, school was a place where the values instilled by her family were reinforced. She said:

The values of ambition and determination and, hopefully, responsibility, were instilled in me at home and reinforced in me at school. There wasn’t the
excuse-driven attitude of “Well, I’ll turn it in tomorrow and take a few points off, or alternately next week.” The kids knew what their assignments were, what their charge was, and they had to do it or there was this expectation that they’d get no credit.

As a child, Sue identified with the strict discipline and values she felt were transmitted in school. That identification carried over into her adulthood and into her teaching career. Sue thus saw school as an extension of the social climate she grew up in, and said:

It’s very different from the way we view that sort of atmosphere today. But the parents were supportive. The students did not question; students tended to hold back more then. They accepted things more willingly, and that was an age of experimentation because that was the 1960s.

By observing the teachers and her fellow students in school, Sue had opportunities to experience behaviors that affected her future instruction. She said of one of her teachers:

Integrated learning was not really the buzzword then—she was doing it. She was bringing in history and science; we were always researching things. I just feel like she really pushed me, pushed my potential. It was just a very positive situation, and I knew from then on that I just needed to be teacher.

It was at this point in her life that Sue decided to become a teacher due to her level of her identification with the role.

In strong contrast was Sue’s lack of identification with administrators during her teaching career. She said:
I wondered why administrators didn’t do certain things at certain times. So as a teacher, I really didn’t see administrators doing very much, except walking around in a suit, and being a speaker at assemblies and graduation.

Sue stated, in direct terms, that she had no identification with administrators as a teacher. With low levels of contact and seemingly not contributing to the life of a school, administrators appeared to be different from teachers for Sue.

*Motivation for Role Adoption*

Sue’s motivation to go into teaching was intrinsic, sparked by her admiration for a high school teacher:

My 11th grade English teacher, who by the way failed my future husband but inspired me. She knew her stuff—her pedagogy was incredible. She was so well read. She knew grammar backwards and forwards, and that was the day when spelling, vocabulary, and grammar and diagramming sentences were so important. I just appreciated the fact that she was so very smart.

Sue’s motivation for entering the administrative field, on the other hand, was extrinsic. She explicitly stated, “I was talked into it. I did not have the same fervor about being an administrator as I did about teaching.” When asked why she became an administrator when she did not have the same level of interest, she replied:

I guess one of the things that was the impetus was my principal . . . he had a lot of confidence in me. He told me that he felt like the profession really needed people that cared about kids and wanted them to succeed. And he knew that I did care and so he had a lot of faith in me. So he encouraged me.
Clearly, her motivation for becoming an administrator was due the influence of her principal. Later in the interview, Sue indicated that she wanted other challenges when she was a teacher, but that the impetus for going into administration was extrinsic. A summary of Sue’s input regarding roles is below in Table 12:

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sue and Roles</th>
<th>role recall</th>
<th>role identification</th>
<th>motivation for role adoption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>intrinsic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>admin</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>extrinsic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #10: Jane

Role Recall

Jane, an African American female of about 50, remembered her teachers as “caring people. I can remember my first grade teacher, whom I still see today. To this day, yes. I run into her in the grocery store every now and then. She was so nice. This was a lady that you just fell in love with, just like your mom.” Jane spoke extensively about how much her teacher reminded her of her mother. This may have contributed strongly to her identification with her teachers, and ultimately, with the profession.

Interestingly enough, and in variance to most of the other participants, Jane also remembered her administrators well, especially her elementary school principal. She stated:

We had Mr. Greene. Mr. Greene was more like your father. Mind you, when you went to school, Mom and Dad already said that “whatever the teacher said, Mr. Greene said, that’s what you do.” So you had no reason to doubt that these were people you could trust and love, and that you were going to be
loved by them. Mr. Green was a big, tall man; he was a tall man, but he was so gentle with you.

Although Jane’s high school administrators seemed more imposing, she remembers them as being just as kind as her elementary school administrator. Jane said:

When we went to the ninth grade before integration, I had Mr. Hankins, who was very stern. You feared him because if you were caught in the hall, he just put *that look* on you, you know. Or he said to you, “I *know* I don’t see you,” so you got wherever you were supposed to be. And then of course, after we integrated, there was [an assistant principal]. I think that was my first experience with having an assistant principal . . . . But remembering these people, they were people that I looked up to.

Jane’s fond recall of these individuals contributed to her overall identification with the role of educators.

*Role Identification*

Jane had identified with the role of the teachers she encountered. She stated that:

I can remember the English teacher that I had my senior year; I thought he couldn’t teach and I told him. And he said, “Do you think that you can do better?” I said, “I *sure can!*” I taught the class for one semester. I actually *taught* the class. *That* was my first teaching experience.

It was from that point Jane began to think about teaching as a future vocation. She identified with the teaching role, and provided the basis for her motivation to go into education.

Jane linked her identification with administrators closely with her memories of teachers. In fact, her interview left the distinct impression that her school was an extension of
her family, with teachers and administrators working towards the common goal of educating the students.

Motivation for Role Adoption

Jane was humorous and unambiguous about why she became an administrator. As she said, her motivation was extrinsic. She said, “[They] twisted my arm . . . The true reason that I took this job was because the job that I wanted I was given. I say was given because the other person did not want it.” Jane took a job as an administrator because supervisors asked her to. At the time, she was in a central office position. Clearly, her motivation was extrinsic; she wanted a specific position but was asked to become a site level administrator. A summary of Jane’s input regarding roles is in Table 13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jane and Roles</th>
<th>role recall</th>
<th>role identification</th>
<th>motivation for role adoption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>admin</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>admin</td>
<td>admin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>intrinsic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>extrinsic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #11: Marie

Role Recall

Marie’s memories of her formative experiences were profoundly different from those of the others. She is a Creek female in her 50s, originally from another state to the south. Prior to integration, she was educated both in the American South and in New England. She recounted:

At that time only the white children were allowed in the school, so my brothers and sisters were not allowed to go to school with me, but my mother kept me in school because she valued education, you know, because that was
the only way out of the poverty. So we moved from there to Jacksonville, Florida. When we moved to Jacksonville, Florida, I found out that everybody went to school . . . . [My] kindergarten teacher took me under her wing and taught me more about reading, writing, and arithmetic—in the fifties we called it those things—and social skills, which I was in great need of.

Other than Marie’s kindergarten teacher, her memories of other teachers are not as positive. She remembers another teacher very well:

A math teacher who picked his nose constantly irritated me to death. He didn’t think girls should learn math. Told me that I was to fulfill my dreams by getting married early like everybody else did in our tribe or whatever, you know; anyway he just constantly said it, picked his nose, and was not much of a math teacher.

Her recall of the administrators was not positive either. From the same incident, she recalled that when taken to the principal’s office, the principal “read [a passed] note and was greatly appalled at what he read, beat my butt with a paddle, jerked me up by my shirt collar, and took me in his car to my mama.” She subsequently left school at the age of 13, and did not return until she was much older.

Role Identification

Due to her experiences and the fact that Marie left school at a young age, it was possible to surmise that her identification with both the teacher and administrator roles was profoundly negative. As the next section describes, she was not motivated to enter the classroom, until her son started public school.
Motivation for Role Adoption

Despite Marie’s early experiences, her motivation for becoming a teacher was intrinsic. She was 40 years old before she returned to school for a post-secondary education. She said that she “always wanted to do something with teaching” and “eventually I went to [the community college] and got a two year degree.” She also had substantial interaction with “a principal in [Dry Lake County], my son’s principal.” This interaction convinced her that going into teaching was a good choice.

Others’ failings drove Marie to become an administrator, and she was extrinsically motivated to make the change. While working under a competent administrative team, she was willing to continue working in the classroom. However, she later had a very negative experience with her school’s administrative personnel:

The next four people that came through—that we had that came in as administrators, assistant principals and principals—were inadequate in their ability to work with people in general. They were inconsistent with what they said to one and then how went to another.

During this period of administrative turnover, Marie assumed leadership in the school. She was subsequently tapped to become a member of a Principal Fellows cohort group, hence her extrinsic motivation. A summary of Marie’s input regarding roles is in Table 14:

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Recall</th>
<th>Role Identification</th>
<th>Motivation for Role Adoption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case #12: Will

Role Recall

Will is a Caucasian male in his late 20s. Although he did not speak about specific teachers, he recalled them as group from both his private and public school. He said:

The teachers in private school were very similar to the teachers I had in public school, oddly enough. The expectations may have been a little bit higher, but not much higher than what I remember in public school. I do believe that they had more interaction with me as an individual but that’s not necessarily a benefit, depending on the type of teacher that you have.

Will’s memories of administrators were somewhat limited. When asked if he remembered his administrators at all, he said, “I remember one.” He went on to say that he did not have that much contact with administrators, and that he did not “remember ever seeing them at all,” including in the classrooms.

Role Identification

When attending school, Will identified closely with his teachers and this influenced his practice. He recounted:

My teachers were very positive; they had a positive outlook on my life. They pushed me to be the best; they saw what everybody saw that I didn’t see, the potential that I had. They focused on that while I was there, and at the same time . . . it’s the same thing that I tell students every day, that you’ve got more potential than you could ever imagine; you’ve just got to see it.

As a result, Will’s teachers strongly impacted his life, which led to a strong identification with the role that they played in his life.
Because he had little experience with administrators, he found it difficult to identify with their role. The only administrator that he remembered at all was an assistant principal:

A young lady, I don’t remember her name, and the reason I know her so well [was] she always came shopping at the store I worked at when I was a kid . . .

In fact, she got me out of trouble once or twice, because she had that relationship with me at the store.

Will’s experience with this administrator affected him profoundly and informed his practice later in life. He said, “If you ever sit in that chair”—he pointed to the administrator’s chair behind the desk—“and don’t take into account the individual sitting in front of you—for some offenses—I think that you’re doing the kid a big injustice.” Obviously, his experience with the administrator getting him out of trouble profoundly affected him.

Motivation for Role Adoption

Will’s motivation for becoming a teacher was intrinsic. He said:

I became a teacher because, when I was 17 years old, for a class project, my history teacher said, “You can write a paper or you can teach class.” I already said that I wasn’t a good student at the time, so teaching the class was the best option for me. I stood up and I did it. I did the Battle of Zama; I believe it was the third Punic War. And not just the teacher said ‘wow’, but all of my classmates said ‘wow’. As I sat down, they all said, “That was unbelievable.”

His experience was transformational, and he was accordingly intrinsically motivated to become a teacher.

Although Will was asked why he became an administrator, he did not directly answer the question. However, he did indicate that he still has a very strong identification with the
classroom, although a primarily operational role dominates his workday. A summary of Will’s input regarding roles is in Table 15:

Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Will and Roles</th>
<th>role recall</th>
<th>role identification</th>
<th>motivation for role adoption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>intrinsic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>admin</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>not addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Roles Theme

Within the first emergent theme of roles, three primary concepts were identified for all twelve participants: (a) role recall, (b) role identification, and (c) motivation for role adoption. While the importance and articulation of each concept varied from one individual to another, it is interesting to note that the variance is attributable to a range of expressions within the concept, rather than to different and discrete components.

Role recall concerns the participants’ memories regarding their teachers, administrators, and general school experiences. These perspectives focused mostly only on the participants’ experiences as students. Although there were few exceptions, there was no focus on the participants’ experiences as teachers concerning administrators.

Role identification concerns the degree to which the participants identified with school personnel as students and as adults. Although a large range of behaviors was discussed, the interviews made it clear that participants identified more with teachers than with administrators.

Motivation for role adoption directly concern why the participants entered the field of education. There were two distinct threads to this component. First, it became evident that the participants entered the teaching field due to an intrinsic motivation, or being “inspired
by” someone else. Second, they entered the administrative field for widely varying reasons, but one common component to their decisions was being “talked into it” by someone else. A summary of the participant’s input regarding roles appears in Table 16:

Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants and Roles</th>
<th>role recall</th>
<th>role identification</th>
<th>motivation for role adoption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>admin</td>
<td>teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josephine</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationships: Expectations of Others and Positional Authority

A second and more subtle theme that emerged during the interview process was the assistant principals’ social context as it related to relationships. As members of a defined and organized social group, the assistant principals could not avoid interacting with other members of the same organization. Accumulations of these interactions eventually established relationships; these relationships established parameters and bounded the social environment in which interaction took place. As shown by the interview data, the relationships that the assistant principals established with others in the school environment dictated the ebb and flow of their socialization. Specific concepts articulated by the
participants within this theme concerned (a) the expectations of others and (b) positional authority, with the secondary thread of turfism: the definition of roles and responsibilities or the lack thereof.

The expectations of others dictate much of our acquisition of values, beliefs, and norms of behavior. When these expectations guide us early in life, it is termed “enculturation” or “primary socialization.” When this occurs in an organizational or professional context, it is termed “secondary socialization.” The culture we internalize and participate in dictates the social environment we inhabit. As we acclimate ourselves to a social environment in a professional capacity, we adopt socially appropriate norms of behavior based on the expectations of others, as prompted by social cues. Adoption of socially appropriate behaviors, as determined by the organization or profession usually dictates whether one is considered a member of an established social group—an insider or an outsider.

Assistant principals are in an interesting but constrained position, as the study shows: although they are licensed and trained as administrators, the positional authority accorded them is based solely on what the building principal allows them to have. Therefore, unless all parties with an interest in the situation communicate about specific duties and authority, turfism may be the result.

Case #1: Les

Expectations of Others

Punctuating Les’s early encounters in his administrative career were “a lot of communication” and shared experiences. These shared experiences contributed to his overall professional socialization. In his first assistant principal’s position, he and the principal went
to their new school together, entering the organization as outsiders. This afforded them the opportunity to establish their own goals, both as individuals and as professionals. As Les said:

> We were new there together, so we sat down, and together. Our goal was to move the school from a school of distinction to a school of excellence. So we talked about the areas that we needed to work on, both of us, and went from there. My principal, from having been a principal before, she knew that assistant principals—and I knew that assistant principals—handle certain things, so I took on certain responsibilities—no questions asked.

Les’s relationship with his principal guided his professional growth. Les said, “It was a very mutual type of setting that we had, a lot of things we handled together.” He did not have such a close relationship with the staff. Although he did not recall any organizational expectations, his teaching staff did have their own expectations and “did not expect [him] to be as strong as [he] was” in terms of job performance. When asked how he knew that, he replied:

> I know that because of all of the comments that came out. I guess that they were a good elementary school, and they knew it. But the principal and I knew that we could be much better. So our attitude was “we’re a school of distinction, but we can be a school of excellence.” They [teachers] wanted to know what I brought to the table. I was able to provide them with strategies for some students.

This illustrated what Les perceived to be his personal skill set (acquired behaviors) in relation to the needs and expectations of the organization (the social grouping). Once
he acquired the appropriate information, he used it to improve the quality of
instruction at the school by assisting teachers with instructional strategies.

He also enhanced the quality of the newly established relationships by supporting the
staff, thereby increasing his level of acceptance among the social grouping. He said, “Right
or wrong, I will always support a teacher in the face of a parent, but I’ll chew them [the
teacher] out after the parent leaves. But in the face of a parent I will support them.” Les saw
the value in establishing these relationships, saying, “I really believe in good relationships. I
guess I don’t know necessarily what they expected, but I know that once I started
demonstrating that I really cared about them that they responded positively.”

**Positional Authority**

While Les was able to establish substantive relationships with the principal, teachers,
and students that helped guide his acceptance into the social group, issues of positional
authority delayed his full acceptance as an insider. His initial encounters with school
administrators was marked by conflict, particularly with the school’s Student Information
Management Systems (SIMS) operator, who arguably held one of the more powerful school-
level positions because she controlled the flow of information. Les talked about those first
encounters:

In my first experience, I found, unlike high school, elementary personnel are
very territorial. When I asked for access to SIMS, she told me that I didn’t
need access to SIMS. She said her last assistant principal didn’t need access to
SIMS . . . . I was met with hesitation.

Support personnel in the school initially challenged his positional authority, based on their
perceptions of previous staff members and their range of authority. He further stated that
while it was difficult at first, he was later able to negotiate successfully those authority
issues. A summary of Les’s input regarding relationships is shown in Table 17:

Table 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Les and Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>expectations of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positional authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #2: Josephine

Expectations of Others

When I spoke with Josephine, she indicated that there were no organizational
eXpectations of which she was aware. She, with her principal, therefore had the opportunity
to create a school-wide culture. She stated:

We had a staff that left after a couple of years, high teacher turnover. We had
no community involvement, we had little organization . . . We wrote the
[school] handbook, we wrote a lot of the literature here, so from the start we
already bonded with at least half a dozen of the staff members.

Josephine and her principal set new levels of expectation for the teachers, and the staff’s
responses were rewarding. In addition, her good working relationship with the principal
helped her to understand his expectations for her:

He wanted me to take care of the curriculum, he wanted me to work with the
teachers, he wanted me to make sure that the teachers were aware of the best
practices in teaching—to get the resources they needed to teach, to make myself visible to them, to involve the community, and to get the children motivated.

When asked whether the office staff had expectations of her when she came to the school, Josephine replied, “The office staff turnover has been high . . . The people that work in the office now we have hired.” I then asked her about teacher expectations, and she said, “I think they welcomed me because of the person who had been here in the position previously.”

When asked to explain what she meant by that statement, she said:

They had a [previous] principal who was not willing to take control of school and did not want to be here—he was assigned here, that kind of thing. The assistant principal here before me had been a part-time teacher. The next year they put in an older lady, and the feeling that I got was that the assistant principal wanted to do things, but the principal would not allow her to do what was needed.

When asked about students’ expectations, Josephine was blunt in her response. She and her principal shaped the students’ expectations by their actions:

The children, at the beginning, did not know what to expect from me because they did not have anybody as visible as I was. I was a good person, but in the long run they found that I was a disciplinarian also, because I would tell a student to stop wasting everybody’s time by not doing their lesson . . . . The children and teachers expect me to support them as far as what they need, to be successful on the end-of-grade test.
Josephine’s last comment regarding expectations was telling. When asked if members of the school community considered her an insider or outsider, she replied, “Oh, I’m one of them. If I leave, we will have an uproar and they’ll get very upset—which is kind of bad.”

*Positional Authority*

Josephine indicated that her present principal had defined expectations for her and for himself, which minimized potential conflicts regarding positional authority. She said, “He leads. Me, I have high-priority surveys; teachers hand in objectives every Monday morning; your staff meetings, he leads; I try to get ready for the end-of-grade test, things like that.”

When dealing with teachers, she made sure that they knew that she was there to help them:

I became very visible, I became whatever you wanted to call me. You have very independent teachers. I thought administrators didn’t do much; they were just there. Just get out of my way, let me teach, that was my attitude: you do your job and I’ll do mine. But when I became an administrator, because I was so cognizant of my role, I put myself in that position where I was useful to everybody. I made sure that teachers knew I could put up bulletin boards, knew that I could run off papers, they knew I could read to the children.

Josephine ensured that her authority was rooted in the contact she had with members of the school community. By making herself visible and available, and using her previous perception as a teacher guide her actions, she was able to be thought of as “the best of us.” A summary of Josephine’s input regarding relationships appears in Table 18:
Table 18

Josephine and Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>expectations of others</th>
<th>organization</th>
<th>principal</th>
<th>teachers</th>
<th>support staff</th>
<th>students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Shared leadership, task differentiation</td>
<td>Convey resources, instructional strategies</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Assist with instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positional authority</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Ensured through visibility and tasks</td>
<td>Ensured through position</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #3: Jessica

Expectations of Others

Jessica did not know what to expect when she began her job as assistant principal. She said, “Not only was I new to this position, but the whole county schools’ culture was new to me; I taught in a different school district.” When probed further about that circumstance, she said:

A lot of things were just done differently here, so [I was] learning to respond to that and in my whole new role, if that makes any sense….It’s like I came in and I had some teachers to be very welcoming, to say, “You’re not from this county, so now we get some new insight.” But then I had other teachers who in a subtle way said, “I’ve been here for so-and-so many years, through so-and-so principals; this will be just the way we do things here.”

The expectation that Jessica’s staff had for her was that she would not interfere with their way of performing their duties.
When I asked if her principal the previous year had specific expectations for her and if they were clear, Jessica replied, “No, actually what my principal told me was, ‘I wanted to hire someone who knows the elementary curriculum.’ When he hired me, he wanted me to concentrate on curriculum.” Instead, she said, she ended up:

Arranging staff development, lesson plans, model lessons, because we did not have an instructional resource person on staff, so I was that instructional resource person. I was the liaison between our curriculum department and so my responsibility was curriculum—that’s a task within itself. On top of that, towards the end I had to do EC. All EC things came to me. I had the student support team chairperson and, on top of that, the discipline. It was just a lot, and of course I’m an overachiever. So my first drive was to be everything, and it was hard for me. It was hard for me to prioritize and to say, “You’re putting too much on my plate.” Did I mention testing? It was all so overwhelming. Towards the end I felt like I did not get support that I had initially started out with from teachers, as well as from my principal.

The expectations of her principal and teachers drove Jessica’s acquisition of responsibilities. As she conformed to the needs of others, her ability to meet a multiplicity of needs increased others’ expectation for her even more.

*Positional Authority*

Initially, Jessica’s administrative experiences led to confusion regarding her tasks and responsibilities. This resulted in turfism issues with the school secretary. She said:
Prior [to] my coming, I think the secretary, for all practical purposes, was the assistant principal. She did not have the title, but she did everything that an assistant principal was supposed to do. When I came in, my principal never redefined those roles, so initially we clashed about things like I wanted SIMS on my computer. I felt like every time I needed information on a student I should not have to go to the secretary; I should be able to get that information. That was a big deal. Whenever I needed materials, something as simple as staples, the secretary was used to distributing all of these things. Why should I have to go through the secretary to get something as simple as staples? And so there was a problem about the principal’s giving the keys to the supply rooms. Just little things like that, things that I thought were an assistant principal’s role, she did not think they were. Things like, if a copying machine broke, even if she wasn’t in the building, she was the only person who could call in a repair. In a way I think the hidden culture was, “This was the way we do things, so come in, look, and do things the way that we do them.”

The importance of this circumstance was that the lack of defined responsibilities contributed to issues regarding Jessica’s authority. This established the precedent in which the school secretary questioned Jessica’s future directives. Additionally, the thread of turfism became a more prevalent sub-theme that emerged in the other interviews from this time forward. A summary of Jessica’s input regarding relationships appears in Table 19:
### Table 19

**Jessica and Relationships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>expectations of others</th>
<th>organization</th>
<th>principal</th>
<th>teachers</th>
<th>support staff</th>
<th>students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Initially curriculum-focused, assumed operational duties</td>
<td>Allow instructional autonomy</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| positional authority | Not addressed | Not addressed | Initially challenged, slow acceptance | Challenged by secretary due to task overlap, lack of defined responsibilities | Not addressed |

---

**Case #4: Stacy**

*Expectations of Others*

Before becoming an assistant principal, Stacy was able to ascertain some of the expectations that others had of the position. She stated:

> It became clear to me that there was definitely a defined role for assistant principals. I immediately found out that assistant principals played a large role in discipline, and that they were primarily responsible for school buses, bus drivers. They were over the maintenance of the building, and the custodial staff, that kind of thing. I started to see a pattern that was emerging

With these expectations, and the principal guiding her entry into administration, Stacy was able to begin her administrative career. Stacy further indicated that there were strong expectations from the staff for her when she started. She explained:
Everything that they had remembered that he [the previous assistant principal] had been responsible for, they would automatically send those things my way, for direction, leadership and I can truly say that their expectation of me was to be as tough of a disciplinarian as [my principal] was last year.

As for the students’ expectations, she felt that:

They were looking to me as someone that could provide that their nurturing that they had gotten in the years past. The last principal had been a female. She was the one that they would run to get hugs and to say good morning. [My principal] is not a warm fuzzy kind of guy, he’s more, “Take your hat off, get to class.” So they were wondering, “So who is the person that’s like [the former assistant principal] was?” [The former assistant principal] was the principal, but she was . . . it was reminiscent of what I recall from when I was younger, the motherly one. They would always come in and talk to me, see if they were saddened about something that happened at home, they could get that reinforcement they needed. They wanted to make sure that there was still a mother and father balance here, the kids who tried to find that.

Clearly, the staff and students had expectations for Stacy. Although based on the people in her position previously, expectations of others had a way of directing her behavior.

*Positional Authority*

Stacy indicated that issues regarding authority and turf were present from the outset of her work as an assistant principal. She said:

At the beginning, some of the veteran women teachers—we only have one male on staff—definitely made me work to go from being an outsider to an
insider. Some of them were very rejecting at the beginning . . . It was difficult in the beginning because I did not have a lot of experience; they didn’t trust that at all.

Additionally, not all the encounters concerned professional matters. She said:

There were other issues, female-to-female kind of stuff, that was distracting. They want to get inside to see who you are, and I think that at the beginning that was a little tough for me . . . . I made a statement in a faculty meeting about collecting lesson plans, and the veterans from the staff said, “Well, you won’t collect them from me; I think they’re stupid, and I’m not doing them.”

It is clear that issues of authority and control punctuated Stacy’s initial administrative experiences. She seemingly bore those incidents with grace and humor. With this interview, issues of turf became well established within the positional authority sub-theme. Stacy’s experiences indicate that those issues were present from the beginning of her administrative career. This became clearer as the interviews continued: turf issues became associated with assistant principals with less experience compared to those with more time in the profession.

A summary of Stacy’s input regarding relationships appears in Table 20:

Table 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stacy and Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>expectations of others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case #5: Eleanor

Expectations of Others

The expectations of others dictated Eleanor’s initial encounters as an administrator.

She said:

When I got here, teachers took care of their own kids during their own lunch.

The first summer we changed the lunch schedule, we [changed] the art and music, and how that worked. I tried to get it so that teams had their time to plan together. We changed all sorts of things.

According to Eleanor, although the staff did not expect changes in the academic schedule, these interactions were positive for the most part. Others had to get used to the idea of change. These actions and interactions had effects that “trickled down”:

This gave the teachers a little bit more respect from all kids. When [my principal] and I got here, pretty much the assistant principal and secretaries were in control. [My principal] was here one year before, and the lady whose place I took had been here forever.

In further conversation, Eleanor indicated that the expectations of others modified many of her actions. Her classroom teaching experiences, combined with input from the staff assisted in stabilizing her positional authority.

Positional Authority

It was difficult for Eleanor to overcome the effects of organizational inertia, the way things were done at her school. Perceptions of power, of who has control and is rewarded for specific behaviors, may affect a new assistant principal. For example, Eleanor said the
counselor thought that she and the new principal “both were crazy, totally crazy” for changing an academic rewards program.

Eleanor’s early experiences were influenced by the expectations of individual teachers and not all staff members welcomed her. For example, she said:

We changed the way we are doing supplies this year. The way they used to do it before we got here was very interesting. It was a change, and she [the SIMS/bookkeeper] wasn’t used to that, so it was very hard for her. Me taking over parts of the budget was very hard for her, because she was always in control of the money. That was very difficult for her. She had been here a number of years, and this was [the] way things were going to be done; this was the way she was going to do those things.

Grievances like this one became a common thread in the research. While questions of power and positional authority were inherent in all of the interviews, issues of turfism punctuated the relationships that many of the assistant principals established with office staff. As such, they are an important component of the concept of positional authority. A summary of Eleanor’s input regarding relationships appears in Table 21:

Table 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eleanor and Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>expectations of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To perform in same manner as previous AP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case #6: Claudia

*Expectations of Others*

Claudia indicated that there were definite expectations for her when she went from being a teacher to an administrator, and that there were both positive and negative aspects to that situation. She stated:

The parents already knew me, because I taught kindergarten. Because I had already been here for five years, they had already dealt with me: I had already taught their child—they trusted my judgment. . . . One of the disadvantages is to know who is competent and who is not. You already know who’s going to go the extra mile and who’s not—you work with them in the same building.

When it came to the expectations of teachers, Claudia said:

You are the same person, but you’re playing a different role—others have to recognize that. I have to do everything for everybody, and I have to be consistent, or you don’t get any respect.

Others’ expectations for Claudia bounded her relationships with them and dictated the course of their interactions.

*Positional Authority*

For Claudia, the teachers posed paradoxical issues related to her assumption of the administrative role. On one hand, she said:

Some of them [teachers] did not want to recognize the fact that I had a master’s degree in elementary education and not in administration, even though I was working on it. But those teachers were teachers that came from
somewhere else . . . . The majority that were here knew me and my standards,

knew what I was about, and the [new] people that came in saw me as the AP.

Because Claudia had been a teacher at the school prior to assuming the position of assistant principal, she had pre-existing relationships. In the new circumstances, these relationships needed to change and issues of power and control had to be resolved. A summary of Claudia’s input regarding relationships appears in Table 22:

Table 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claudia and Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>expectations of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positional authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #7: Nancy

Expectations of Others

When I asked Nancy if there were a set of organizational expectations for her to adhere to when she went to her first school as an administrator, she replied:

I was given a list of duties and responsibilities, things that I would be in charge of, where the duty stations would be. It wasn’t like someone gave them to me; all of us APs sat down with the principal and discussed it.
The lead administrator set the expectations, not adherence to an organizational norm.

When asked if the office staff had specific expectations, Nancy replied that there were. She said she could not “remember specific incidents, but I can remember this: I felt like I knew what I was doing. Even in the first two weeks, I felt like an administrator, and this was the role I played and this is what I needed to do.” She continued, saying:

If had to sum it all up, they expected us to handle stuff: kids, crises, to take care of it. We would get calls all day long, [staff] wanting to talk to us about this and that. We would tell them that we would deal with it after school . . . .

Even there, we would get into debates of us vs. them, and I never wanted to get into it.

Regarding the expectations of others, Nancy indicated that they existed but were poorly defined. As a new administrator, she was expected to deal with situations as they arose.

*Positional Authority*

Nancy recalled that there were issues regarding positional authority and turfism when she became an assistant principal. She said:

There were two people in the office who thought they knew everything, and thought that they knew what I should be doing and how I should be doing this, but it did not take me long to tell them otherwise. I was here to be an administrator, and I really didn’t need them to tell me where to be and where to do it and how to do it; I felt like I could do it on my own. We did not argue; it was just perhaps that these two mother figures— as they turned out to be—felt like because I was new, I needed to be sort of wooed into it, told what to do.
Nancy further indicated that the office staff was used to telling previous assistant principals what to do. In a sense, the new person needed to get “broken in,” with the staff performing the functions necessary to make the person an insider. In this case, it was the assistant that could perceive their actions as turfism; the office staff could be viewing their actions as not challenging authority or position. A summary of Nancy’s input regarding relationships is in Table 23:

Table 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nancy and Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expectations of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiated among admin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>team, principal set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existed but poorly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle discipline,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positional authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #8: Kathy

Expectations of Others

The expectations of others guided Kathy’s relationships at her new school as she learned its culture and organizational expectations. She said:

The strange thing is, the principal and I came in new together. So [although] I’m quite sure that there was an expectation of “how we do it here,” neither one of us had any understanding of what that was. They have their own traditions, and we didn’t know—Oh my gosh, some of the mistakes we must have made because we had no clue. I guess we just assumed things.
Kathy elaborated that sometimes the smallest expectations of others created the biggest demarcation between “us” and “them.” One of the issues regarded the school schedule and the way it was to be constructed for the coming school year. Of it she said:

As we’re approaching that point where we are getting ready to schedule, we’ll just say, “This year, when you get together to do your seventh graders, we’ve got this expectation one way and it makes sense.” It caused all this upheaval because of, “Whoa! This is not what we do! You’ve got it backwards” That’s just one thing that has come up lately that has been huge.

One unusual expectation for Kathy came from the principal:

He has said that he wants me to be another principal. He wants me to experience everything, but that’s been kind of difficult . . . . I need to know what it is you [the principal] want me to do.

In this case, for the expectations of the principal to be understood, they must be conveyed effectively. Kathy indicated that the principal’s expectations were not communicated at all.

Because of Kathy’s previous experience in the county as a teacher, students and parents alike had expectations for her in her new role. She said:

I had worked with them in elementary school, [they] had seen me in the classroom. So they knew me, a little bit, and they knew me as a teacher. And then the parents as well. They were looking to me to protect their little babies.

In the case of teachers and parents, their expectations of Kathy were shaped by their previous experiences with her as a teacher, in addition to their experiences with others previously in the assistant principal position.
Positional Authority

For Kathy, her failure to adhere to organizational norms and cultural components contributed to difficulties at the outset of her new job. Without an effective vehicle to transmit the norms of behavior to new personnel, Kathy could not know the existing social dynamics at the school. For example, she told two teachers:

“I’m going to put you two together to work on this.” Well, I don’t know that they can’t stand each other, because 3 years ago they were on a team so it was like I had made a big blunder there, but I didn’t know that.

Kathy attributed these and other issues to “growing pains.”

The office staff generated further concerns regarding issues of authority and turfism. Kathy recounted:

The other thing that changed was our secretary; we had a new secretary. She was a part time receptionist, and now she is a full-time secretary. The old secretary now is the SIMS/bookkeeper, but she also has some additional responsibilities. It was just a lot of change at one time; their expectation of us was “When we need to talk to you, you just better drop everything, close the door and we’ll talk.” Well, I can’t do that if there are students here, because I need to see students first. That seems so small, but I hurt some feelings and didn’t even realize it.

Moreover, Kathy was coping with an underlying communication problem; she said:

Sometimes he [the principal] relies upon the old secretary instead of the new secretary, and that causes some issues. I guess communication is a big issue,
making sure that we meet with every team each week, but we don’t meet with the office staff.

What Kathy was indicating was that the principal did not meet separately with her. Therefore, because the office staff met as a large group that include the administrators, the perception was that all were had the same level of positional authority.

Unlike other participants, Kathy spoke of the principal’s reliance on other staff, rather than on her, the assistant principal. In this case, the principal’s actions contributed to turfism. Kathy recounted that he relied heavily on the SRO [school resource officer-law enforcement] for many administrative duties, and sometimes found significant overlap between her administrative duties and what the resource officer was asked to do. She also pointed out that her testing and test coordination responsibilities overlapped with those of another staff member, creating further problems regarding her positional authority. Any authority delegated to her was undermined by the principal’s refusal to communicate effectively with the staff, and by not defining responsibilities with the appropriate personnel. A summary of Kathy’s input regarding relationships is found in Table 24:

**Table 24**  
*Kathy and Relationships*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>expectations of others</th>
<th>organization</th>
<th>principal</th>
<th>teachers</th>
<th>support staff</th>
<th>students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>positional authority</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Undermined authority by not communicating responsibilities</td>
<td>Undermined authority by not communicating responsibilities</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Existing traditions but not understood</td>
<td>Shared responsibilities, but not communicated</td>
<td>Keep structures same as previous AP</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Challenged by staff, same level of authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case #9: Sue

Expectations of Others

Sue seemed eager to speak about the expectations of others, especially those of the principal’s:

The [principal’s] only real expectation, and I do think that this was a positive one, was to develop documentation in the form of binders . . . . The responsibilities that were shared by assistant principals in his school, and the expectations that were of me, in the form of binders and keeping copies of every single little thing, can be tedious when I’m told to do [it a]certain way, whereas I might have done it a bit differently.

While Sue cited this as an appropriate way for documenting tasks, and therefore school progress, it eventually became an overwhelming expectation. It ended up creating more work than was intended. When asked if the expectations were primarily from the organization or the principal, Sue answered, “They were supervisory; they were asked of me by [the] principal of the school.”

An interesting thread from this theme concerned the expectations of teachers. Sue had been at other schools as an administrator, so she spoke with some authority when she said:

I quickly learned that what they needed was what any teacher needed: a support person, calling someone that will listen, someone that will model, and that when you critique, that it is constructive and that there are ways of helping that person get the resources needed to be better.

She knew that she said, “Because my door is an open door. They know that they can come in here and talk, and I think that it’s healthy that they have a rapport with someone that they
know is willing to listen.” She added, “I think in the past there has been a turnover in people because of previous personality problems” with the administration.

Sue said that any office staff expectations for her concerned her leadership and clear communication of her own expectations to them. She said, “They wanted someone to help them know what to do, to let them know what they could do to help the assistant principal and the principal.” The office staff communicated these needs because she made a habit of “going to them, asking them what they could do, if they were aware of various forms and knowing what they had done the past.”

When asked whether the students had expectations of her, Sue said:

I knew virtually all of the students—except for [the] first year I was here in the senior class—in one way or another, because I’d been at the middle school previously. I think [that knowledge] helped more than hindered, but [I] think that was both.

I asked her to articulate that further, and she added:

I knew in many cases where they were coming from. I had met the parents… I had been able to watch them. I knew some of the habits that they had, and these were usually the ones I had to deal with on a discipline issue in the middle school . . . I wanted to be able to give the student a clean slate, and realize that these kids were older and hopefully wiser.

Her previously established relationships with some of the students ensured that they had expectations of her.
Positional Authority

Although Sue made no direct references to issues of positional authority or existing turfism problems, she indicated that the responsibilities of the job could be overwhelming at times, especially with a lack of clerical personnel to assist:

You have mammoth responsibility with paperwork, all sorts of analysis, all sorts of forms and reports. As in other schools, there’s no one, you do it yourself. That can be a real factor for [me] in being time efficient. The constraints of being an assistant principal can almost imprison you sometimes.

A summary of Sue’s input regarding relationships appears in Table 25:

Table 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>organization</th>
<th>principal</th>
<th>teachers</th>
<th>support staff</th>
<th>students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>expectations of others</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Perform duties, develop documentation</td>
<td>Wanted instructional support</td>
<td>Leadership, communication of expectations for them</td>
<td>To act as she did in previous role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positional authority</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #10: Jane

Expectations of Others

Our interviews took place at the beginning of Jane’s second year of school administration, and she therefore confided that her experience with determining others’ expectations for her was somewhat limited. When I asked what the principal’s expectations were, she was initially hesitant to answer. I clarified the question by asking what she thought the principal’s expectations were. She responded by saying, “I think just to be a part of the
team and to help with the mission that he had set forth.” When asked what his mission was, she answered:

It was his mission, and that of the school. When you’re asking me what I feel were his expectations, at this point I could only say to be part of the team and to handle those responsibilities as given, and then anything else that might come your way. He’s not that kind of person that would just come back and say “This is what I expect.” I guess once you get it, then you just kind of decided to say “Okay, self, these are the things I’m responsible for.”

The principal’s lack of communication did not clear up misconceptions regarding Jane’s responsibilities. She was not clear on what his expectations were except when given explicit instructions.

Students, on the other hand, clearly expressed their expectations for Jane. She said:

A lot of the students I was assisting with things like internships. These were things that helped them . . . . They were not expecting me to be the one that dished out punishment. They looked on me as the person that brought them, you know, rewards more or less.

The expectations that others held for Jane’s behaviors were communicated in a variety of ways, sometimes clearly and sometimes not. Regardless, she indicated during the interview that the expectations were based on what others thought she should be doing. These expectations derived from either what (a) previous assistant principals did in her position or (b) the same behaviors she displayed in previous positions.
**Positional Authority**

As Jane indicated, because she was new to her position, others challenged her positional authority frequently. These challenges could be overt, but were more often subtle and passive. When asked about her encounters with the office staff, Jane’s reply was cryptic:

“We’re talking the secretary and all those people? I think that [following directives] was kind of unspoken. They’re going to look at you and think, “This is part of the administration, so we’re here to assist, maybe . . . or maybe not!”

Because she was the newest administrator with the least amount of experience, clerical staff sometimes ignored or contravened her authority by not adhering to her directives appropriately, or sometimes not at all. A summary of Jane’s input regarding relationships appears in Table 26:

**Table 26**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>organization</th>
<th>principal</th>
<th>teachers</th>
<th>support staff</th>
<th>students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>expectations of others</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Be a part of the team, complete specified duties</td>
<td>To do as previous APs</td>
<td>To do as previous APs</td>
<td>Act as in previous role, no discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positional authority</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Limited her authority</td>
<td>Have limited contact</td>
<td>Challenged her authority</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case #11: Marie

Expectations of Others

Marie’s initial administrative encounters were affirming interactions. Her previously established relationships and experience with elements of the school population enhanced the interactions. For example, she said:

[My encounters during] the first year at the first school I went to were more positive than they were negative, because that’s the school I worked at for 14 years. I knew what those teachers needed from an administrator—the principal or assistant principal, it didn’t matter . . . I did not have control of the budget; I didn’t have control over any of that and I realized and accepted that. That was one of my saving graces, I think. But I had a lot of respect for the principal that I worked with. I had also worked with her at the last school I was in, before she moved from that school back to the school that I had been working in for 14 years. And then, the year after she moved there, she brought me back with her. She needed my expertise in instructional leadership.

When asked whether the expectations for her originated within the organization or with her supervisor, Marie replied in a manner different from the other participants, saying, “It’s just there. It’s embedded in the expectations before you ever get there. It’s not a principal, it is the school system, the whole educational system, though, that needs to change. I can’t blame these things on a principal.” Her comment implied that the expectations of others are not site- or person-specific, but inherent in the way schools are organized as systems. In Marie’s opinion, expectations are based on the way the system does things, and there is little that individuals can do change organizational processes.
**Positional Authority**

Marie had little experience with others challenging her authority, as well as overlapping responsibilities with others. However, she did note how important it was for others to follow her directions. For example, in speaking about a school secretary, she said:

There’s a lot of conflicts going on in the office, in the main most important place that we have right now, which is difficult for me because I’m not really the principal. As hard as I try to pull it all together and keep them all cordially involved, it’s difficult at times.

Even though others have not challenged Marie’s positional authority, her lack of power has made it difficult to effect change in the school. As an administrator, she spoke about the need for the team (principal and assistant) to be perceived as a single entity that works together to make the school better. With this concept in mind, staff members should be able to take direction from any member of the team. A summary of Marie’s input regarding relationships appears in Table 27:

Table 27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>expectations of others</th>
<th>organization</th>
<th>principal</th>
<th>teachers</th>
<th>support staff</th>
<th>students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Embedded, systemic</td>
<td>Limited her authority, access to operational duties (i.e., budget)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positional authority</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Act as intermediary with staff</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

116
Case #12: Will

Expectations of Others

When Will was asked about the expectations that others had of him, he indicated that there were multiple sources of expectations, and they varied by group. He also indicated that those expectations were clearly structured and conveyed:

I’m going to address that from my position as maintenance/facilities [contact person] first, and then I’ll go into more. With maintenance and facilities, I was told that the janitors always clean the areas that they had, and that’s what it is. I was told that maintenance has a certain way of dealing with things, and I needed to understand that. . . As far as the overall school, I was told that the way things work at this school was that the assistant principals do most of the legwork. Three specifically do most of the legwork for him [the principal]; we run the show, and we report to the principal. I was told that the expectations of me were to be tough on the kids, be firm. I was told that it was a divided team; I had to be prepared for that.

Will explained that he had entered a situation with varied expectations from various groups that conflicted often. As such, he had to learn to balance the competing demands of others.

Will affirmed that the school principal had expectations for all of his staff. When asked to clarify what kind of expectations, he responded that although these expectations were present, “I was unaware of them.” I then asked if the expectations were communicated clearly, and he replied:

No, they were not. I walked into a fairly difficult situation. I knew a little bit about it when I came in, but those that were here did not tell me much,
because they said I would figure it out for myself. I was very much on my own most of this year. I’ve had to learn everything on my own. So I did not understand the expectations of the principal, nor did they really tell me.

Will’s situation speaks to a common complaint among the participants: that even though communication is of vital importance between administrative team members, it is frequently “the dropped ball.” More specifically, the principal often fails to communicate his or her expectations for others and the expected division of roles and responsibilities. This can create issues regarding positional authority and turfism.

Will was fortunate because he had a secretary to assist him with some of his tasks; he was the only participant to have a dedicated staff person working only for him. He said of the situation, “As I’m sure you know, it is very rare for an assistant principal to have a secretary.” He indicated that he had asked his secretary what her expectations for him were, and she told him “that she expected me to be honest with her, timely, that I [be] organized.”

Will was emphatic about the teacher’s expectations for him. He said:

The good thing about me going in and observing teachers here: If I give a teacher of bad evaluation, there are still a large majority of staff here that saw and heard my work. They know what kind of teacher I am. They know that I was a good teacher, so if somebody would say something like, “How does he know,” they would say, “I’d seen and heard him teach.”

Will had taught at the same school prior to becoming an assistant principal there, and felt students had specific expectations for him as a result:

The students had their expectations just about [the] same as the custodians. They want to [be] treated fairly, they want somebody to listen to them, and
they want someone to be firm with them when they have to. They are not going to tell you that, but that’s what they want.

Because Will’s job responsibilities focused on facilities and maintenance, the custodial crew fell under his supervision. In his words:

The custodians expected a little bit more. They expected me to fight their battles; that’s what they wanted. And that’s what they expected from me, and I have done some of that. I have kids cleaning up their spills when I see them spill it. Teachers were spilling drinks of their own in the classroom and calling a custodian to come clean them up. I said that that will never happen again, never.

As with other participants, Will experienced multiple expectations from a variety of groups within the school. These expectations were sometimes competing, but more frequently just provided added tasks for him.

*Positional Authority*

For Will, who had previously served in the armed services, the idea of chain of command guided his conception of positional authority. From his point of view, the position that one occupies (e.g., teacher, principal, custodian) dictates his or her authority and job responsibility. He said:

I am the head of the team. I make the decisions, but I should never once in this job have to look somebody in the eye and say, “I’m the boss, this [is the] way it’s going to be.” If it gets to that point, then something has been done wrong from point A to point Z. In the military, you have a chain of command. We are a member of the team and we understand that, but also having a chain of
command makes it a little bit different. If a staff sergeant—I was a lance corporal at the time—walked up to me and said “Here’s what I want you to do,” I would never look up at him and say “I don’t think I’m going to do that.” They [teachers] don’t understand the chain of command.

Will indicated that teachers frequently attempted to gain power over him and control his actions. For example, he said:

I had a teacher tell me this week that I wasn’t doing discipline as heavy as I should. I make decisions every day that not everybody’s going to be happy with; some will come to terms with me and say “Yeah, great job,” and this other person is going to say “You idiot, what were you thinking.” And sometimes both of them saying “Idiot, what were you thinking?”

Frequent challenges to Will’s positional authority taught him not to take things personally and use the opportunity to teach others about chain of command. A summary of Will’s input regarding relationships is in Table 28:

Table 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Will and Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>organization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expectations of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positional authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Relationships Theme

The second theme of relationships emerged from the open coding process for the initial data set. Axial coding of the theme data enabled me to conceptualize the acquired information into the two groups of (a) the expectations of others and (b) issues of positional authority.

Within the concept of expectations of others, the range of phenomena included information regarding principals, teachers, support staff, and students. Conspicuous in their absence were the expectations of the central office staff. While superintendents and directors do not have daily contact with assistant principals, it is plausible to speculate that upper-level supervisory staff would consider the entry-level administrative positions important enough to merit some attention.

Positional authority was a consistent issue that continued to emerge in the interviews. With few exceptions, some group or individual within the organization had challenged the assistant principal’s authority at some point in time. Informal conversations with some of the participants after the “official” interview had concluded indicated that they continued to struggle to define their roles and responsibilities through their relationships. Their lack of understanding may have contributed not only to the problems previously discussed, but also to the matter of turfism that become apparent in some of the interviews. A summary of the participants’ input regarding relationships appears in Table 29:
### Table 29

**Participants and Relationships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Org.</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Support staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Les</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>C&amp;I, Disc</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josephine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>C&amp;I, Res</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>C&amp;I, Ops</td>
<td>Autonomy Challenged</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ops</td>
<td>As prior A.P. Rejected</td>
<td>delegate tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Challenged</td>
<td>As prior A.P.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>As prior A.P. Accepted</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>Act like them Challenged</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Parental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>Unknown C &amp; I, Disc</td>
<td>Disc, Ops</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Challenged</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>As prior A.P. NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Challenged</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>C&amp;I, Disc</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Parental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>As prior A.P. Autonomy</td>
<td>As prior A.P.</td>
<td>As prior role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Challenged</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
<td>Syst.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediary</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. of others</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ops</td>
<td>Discipline Challenged</td>
<td>Protection Leadership</td>
<td>Treated fairly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos. Auth.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA-Not Addressed  
SR-Shared administrative responsibilities  
C&I-Curriculum and instructional support  
Res-Resources  
Ops-Operational tasks  
LA-Authority was limited  
Disc-Discipline  
Syst-Systemic

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Tasks: Orientation to Tasks and Task Management

The third theme that emerged during the open coding process was the most understated and related to task behaviors. Much of the data concerned the preconceptions of job tasks as compared with the task realities of the job. The axial coding process allowed the theme to be broken down into the two discrete concepts: (a) orientation to task, and (b) task management.

As one of the components of the task theme, the concept of orientation to task had a range of nuances that depended on what tasks the principal assigned to the participants. The orientation varied among the participants, but often seemed to be focused on operational tasks. An additional issue regarded the length of time the participants had served as assistant principals: for those newest to the position, going from instructional to operational duties seemed to be an exhibited difficulty factor in their orientation to task; In this context, orientation to task for the participants may be conceptualized as engaging in operational or instructional tasks.

Task management and associated issues emerged during discussions with all of the participants. How the participants coped with their responsibilities was a conceptual thread in all of the interviews. In this context, task management concerns either what tasks need to be completed or how one needs to perform a task.

Case #1: Les

Orientation to Task

Les initially had difficulty adjusting to an operational position. When he was a teacher, his work focused on instruction and delivery. Les’s task set was decidedly different as an administrator. He said of this situation:
I had to let go of my high school mindset . . . I was looking at things, thinking that kids needed to be in class all of the time, teachers teach, the bell rings, and instruction starts. I didn’t have any idea that we started with morning work; you know, that type of thing. I mean, where’s the instruction?

In addition to the shift from teaching to administration, Les had to adjust to the shift from a secondary to an elementary school. He recalled:

And then discipline. A kid comes to me for doing something in the class. No problem: three-day suspension. Well, not at the elementary, not at THAT elementary school. So you talked to the kids more; you were more of a counselor.

Over time, Les grew into an understanding of his operational role, and looked for reasons why he initially failed to understand certain administrative issues. Although Les had difficulty adjusting to the new tasks his administrative job required, he found consolation in his instructional background and the fact that he felt that he assisted teachers.

*Task Management*

When the interview took place, Les had previously served as an administrator in three other school systems. When asked about task management, he commented that processes varied from school to school, not the tasks themselves. However, he did have problems adjusting to how things were done in different schools. He said:

Going to the elementary school, there was a slower pace that I didn’t expect. I may have needed some clue or detail as to how we do things in [one school district], as opposed to [another school district].
Les had problems coping with how tasks were completed in the school district, not necessarily what needed to be done. During the course of the interview, he stated that if others had told him how to complete tasks rather than expect the tasks to be completed a particular way, his entry into the district would have been more productive. A summary of Les’s input regarding tasks is in Table 30:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Les and Tasks</th>
<th>orientation to tasks</th>
<th>task management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>operational, instructional</td>
<td>How to perform tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30

Case #2: Josephine

Orientation to Task

By Josephine’s own admission, she “didn’t want to be an assistant principal and deal with books and butts.” She was one of two study participants who said they were able to focus exclusively on curriculum and instruction, rather than on operations (tasks dealing with the physical plant and operating of the school). Interestingly, she indicated that her instructional tasks were operational in nature. When asked further about her task orientation, she replied that she did some operations. Despite her curriculum and instruction focus, her tasks were still centered on operations, such as preparing materials for instructional delivery and getting students ready for end-of-grade tests.

Task Management

I questioned Josephine further about her tasks, and asked whether it was easy to become an administrator, given her experiences. She replied, “It was a piece of cake, I really [enjoy] it. I told people that it was really easy. I mean, you come in to your job and go home. As a teacher you grade papers 24-7; as an administrator, you’d just walk out the door.”
Josephine also stated that she managed tasks easily. She said:

When I went on interviews, I told them where I want to be. I didn’t make any bones about it . . . I’m strong on curriculum; I know curriculum outside and down; It’s a talent of mine. I wanted to find a good match; so I was very fortunate. I found [my principal]; he understands exactly how I feel. He does the discipline and I do the instructional . . . it’s a switch.

When I asked Josephine about her expectations of task difficulty, she replied her job was what she wanted: “There wasn’t any difference between how I expected things to be and what they were, because I knew what I wanted.” Throughout the course of the interview, Josephine indicated that the type of tasks and the management of them matched her expectations. It should be remembered that she was one of three participants who stated that they function in an instructional role. A summary of Josephine’s input regarding tasks appears in Table 31:

Table 31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Josephine and Tasks</th>
<th>orientation to tasks</th>
<th>task management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>instructional</td>
<td></td>
<td>What tasks to complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #3: Jessica

Orientation to Task

By the third interview, orientation to task had become an obvious and viable concept for inclusion. For example, although Jessica was aware before she took the assistant principal’s position that her role would entail operational tasks, she did not know the extent of these duties:
I thought maybe [administrators] met with parents, sometimes met with business leaders, met with the superintendent, but I guess that was about it. I never thought about memos, newsletters, all of the other responsibilities… evaluations, observations.

She felt unprepared for the types of operational tasks that she would be performing. She said, “The most overwhelming thing was managing people, and that I wanted to be very visible. But at the same time I still had technical tasks that I had to do.” In addition to adjusting to a change in the types of tasks she had to perform, Jessica had to learn a different way of completing those tasks. She said, “A lot of things were just done differently here, so [I was] learning to respond to that and in my whole new role,” which was difficult.

Task Management

For Jessica, managing her new operational tasks was a learning experience, because the tasks were different from her instructional duties. She said, “Initially, I was always in classrooms, because I wanted to see what was going on in [them].” When I asked what was so different about managing her new tasks, she responded by saying, “I consider myself an organized person. Maybe time management? Prioritizing tasks, things like that.” In further conversation, she indicated that learning the new task processes in her present county contributed to her feelings of insecurity when confronted with managing her new task set. A summary of Jessica’s input regarding tasks is in Table 32:

Table 32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jessica and Tasks</th>
<th>orientation to tasks</th>
<th>task management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>operational</td>
<td>What tasks to complete, how to perform tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Orientation to Task

Prior to completing her administration internship, Stacy thought that the administrative tasks “seemed more mysterious, that only a few chosen people could do this thing.” This preconception was because of Stacy’s instructional background; eventually, as she became exposed to the tasks that made up her job, those ideas “started to change.” She said of that experience:

There were definite tasks that needed to be done on a daily basis and there were systematic ways for doing them. It wasn’t a big mystery; it started to feel more real, more like being able to reach out and touch this thing.

Stacy became acclimated to administrative tasks and the performance standard expected of her. Because her present principal was the previous assistant principal and assisted her, she became more proficient at performing her new operational tasks.

Task Management

Although learning to manage new tasks was difficult for Stacy, having a principal who handed over his duties incrementally helped her handle the process. She said:

I think it was optimal for me because he had been in the position last year, and he was relinquishing the responsibilities step-by-step, turning them over to me when he felt that I was ready to take on those responsibilities. It was clearly defined for him in years past, and he clearly defined it for me. A thing I liked about working with him was that he’s not rigid when it comes to tasks; he includes me in other things so that I can learn other aspects of administration and not be pigeonholed to certain tasks.
She clearly had a principal who was willing to train her, easing her entry into site-level administration. His own experiences as an assistant principal the previous year may have motivated him to train Stacy as he did. A summary of Stacy’s input regarding tasks is in Table 33:

Table 33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stacy and Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>orientation to tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>task management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What tasks to complete, how to perform tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #5: Eleanor

Orientation to Task

For Eleanor, learning the operational tasks was difficult—not because of the tasks, but because of her affinity for the classroom. To Eleanor’s credit, her instructional competence as a teacher was what made her an attractive administrative candidate. Consequently, some of the operational tasks were not easy for Eleanor to deal with, and she still maintained a fondness for the classroom. She said, “I got tired of grading papers. Now, I never know what’s going to happen any given day in this job. They are two totally separate jobs, you cannot compare it.” Eleanor went on to articulate how different in her mind the positions are regarding tasks, instructional vs. operational.

Task Management

The team approach emphasized by Eleanor’s principal made management of her administrative tasks easier. Although there were times when these operations left her at a loss, she acknowledged that her general experiences were different from those of other assistant principals:
I knew that a lot of assistant principals did books, discipline, and other things like that—buses, books, and butts. But I have been very fortunate working for [my principal] in that we share everything. We share discipline, we share budget; a lot of other APs don’t. I am responsible for acceleration (Accelerated Reader reading instruction), budget, and Title I, and some of the state stuff.

Eleanor’s additional responsibilities also limited her time outside of school. Teachers generally work as ten-month employees, unless they teach summer school or at a year-round school, and consequently have time off. Now, she says, “My husband will tell me, ‘When you were a teacher, you had two months off, and you used to be home all of the time.’”

During my interview with Eleanor, the concept of lack of time emerged; subsequently, more participants identified time as a factor that limited their ability to effectively perform their operational tasks. Eleanor stated:

As you can see, I did not do my job [gestures at desk full of papers]. Our counselor is our testing coordinator, and last year she was out in April and May, so not only did I do my administrative duties, but I also became the testing coordinator . . . . I didn’t leave here Friday night until 10:30 p.m.

Today is my hard day: try to get my desk clean, get through my mail, all of the other stuff . . . People have no idea.

Eleanor’s solution to completing some of the operational tasks on time was delegating certain duties to teachers. Although she felt it was a logical solution regarding some instructional duties, it was the delegation of the operational tasks which allowed to her to function in her
chosen way. Therefore, for Eleanor, task management was predicated on how tasks needed to be completed. A summary of Eleanor’s input regarding tasks appears in Table 34:

Table 34

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>orientation to tasks</th>
<th>task management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>instructional</td>
<td>How to perform tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eleanor and Tasks

Case #6: Claudia

Orientation to Task

When Claudia was a classroom teacher, she said that she was unsure of administrator duties, and believed they performed minor tasks, such as:

Paperwork, order materials, central office paperwork. I think they did buses, books, and butts. Sometimes I want to think that they didn’t have a whole lot to do. I never sent anyone to the office [as a teacher]; I was under the assumption that everyone else handled their discipline problems like me. I’ve only sent kids down two times in 23 years. I thought everyone did things like that, so I thought they [assistant principals] got to do paperwork . . . and every once in a while did discipline.

Claudia’s first encounter with operational tasks was after she had received National Board certification. She was asked to take over the assistant principalship after the start of the new school year. “They came to get me,” she said. Claudia made it clear during the interview that she initially had no concept of what administrators did. She recounted that it was extremely difficult in the beginning, especially regarding students and parents. They were used to her instructional role, and the move to operational duties was confusing for them. Additionally, the change from instructional to operational tasks after the school year had started continued
to be a difficult transition for Claudia. She spoke about learning *how* to performing the duties she was asked to complete:

> The principal told me what I was responsible for. She said “You’re in charge of this, this, this, 504s, etc.” I had to learn how to write 504s; I had to learn how to do the things she was telling me to do. I was put in charge of these things, but I was just coming up here. I had to learn how to handle other people’s problems, whereas I was used to handling my own. But now I had to handle everybody else’s.

Claudia’s move into administration presented difficulties regarding her orientation to task. The change to operational duties coupled with it occurring into the school year made for a challenging transition.

*Task Management*

Claudia’s task management issues concerned her comparative lack of control as an assistant principal. She said:

> I knew that things could be run better. As a teacher, you have a certain amount of control and say-so. I was one of those teachers that taught the children stay[ed] my classroom, and minded my business. I don’t go looking for trouble–trouble seems to find me, but I don’t go looking for it.

Initially, Claudia thought that administrators “did whatever they wanted. Principals make all the decisions, and listened to you if they wanted to . . . or not.” As an assistant principal, however, Claudia soon realized that she did not gain complete control over certain aspects of the school. For example, she had less control over encounters with parents:
I had no idea about parents. If I had a problem with a child in the classroom, I took care of it. But now the parents bring things here; they appear and say that they can’t talk to the teacher. Communication is an issue. I do a lot of things with the teachers to show them how to communicate with parents.

This was completely contrary to Claudia’s experiences as teacher, where she felt that she had control over most situations. Now she was responsible for the actions of others. Her task management issues concerned how to perform specific tasks and the need to gain control over those tasks. A summary of Claudia’s input regarding tasks is in Table 35:

Table 35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claudia and Tasks</th>
<th>orientation to tasks</th>
<th>task management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>operational</td>
<td>How to perform tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #7: Nancy

Orientation to Task

Nancy’s initial experiences as an administrator proved to be difficult. While the shift from instructional to operational duties caused some problems, these experiences were instructive. Nancy indicated that she had been at a large school, and that everything that could happen that first year, did happen. Her previous experiences as an informal leader contributed to her quick adjustment, but she was not prepared for the shift from teacher to supervisor:

Someone told me, when we were in grad school getting our degree, that teachers cause as many problems as students do. I started laughing because I’ve never heard of that; I never heard of teachers causing problems. Well, I found out real
quick that they bring things to school just like kids that are happening in their lives, and are not functioning perfectly.

In Nancy’s present position, she has the opportunity to work in curriculum and instruction. This puts her in a position to teach teachers instead of students:

Because of my role here as a curriculum and instruction specialist, my role has not been to deal with students. My role here is to deal with teachers, the adults, with ILTs and lateral entry personnel. I’m here to deal with the overall curriculum, what is being taught, and how it is being taught. I know a lot of the students, but I don’t know all of them; the teachers, I know all of them, helping [them] teach, when they have planning.

Nancy’s orientation to task is instructional, but aimed at teachers rather than students. Her task set includes “teaching teachers how to teach.”

Task Management

Because of Nancy’s focus on curriculum and instruction, her task set was different from that of most assistant principals. She structures her time based on the teaching schedule. In fact, our interview cut into that; she said, “If you weren’t here, I would be in a classroom right now. I’ve got required observations done, and now I’m going to get a clipboard.” From her standpoint, she had to learn to manage all of the events that occurred daily. She said:

As the classroom teacher, when I left school, my papers were graded and all things were ready for the next day. About the second or third month that I was an assistant principal, I realized that my desk might be neat but that everything was not finished. Because I could not finish everything before I went home—I
would never get to go home. I finally realized that you had just come back tomorrow.

Nancy further described how she manages her tasks in terms of work that must be completed. She realized that her tasks would not be completed by the time she went home, and that some of them just continued–for Nancy, it is how tasks are completed, not what. A summary of Nancy’s input regarding tasks is in Table 36:

Table 36

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nancy and Tasks</th>
<th>orientation to tasks</th>
<th>task management</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>instructional</td>
<td>How to perform tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #8: Kathy

Orientation to Task

Although Kathy was not exposed to operational tasks during her time as a classroom teacher, she said:

I had a really good internship . . . and I was able to experience all of what I’m experiencing now, but just in little chunks here and there. So I had some experience in doing what I’m doing now.

Furthermore, as assessment has become a more prominent issue statewide, Kathy has picked up test coordinator responsibilities, saying “[The counselor] she used to take care of the testing. For whatever reason, I’m taking care of it. That has been huge [in terms of responsibility].” When I asked Kathy if she thought her tasks would be more instructionally oriented, she said yes, indicating that she has “ended up doing more operations.” She had wanted to believe that administrators
created an environment where teachers thrived. I just had these grand notions about them solving problems, helping the school run smoothly and efficiently. Those were just some general notions . . . I was just really into solving problems. I don’t know why I thought that.

For Kathy, the task orientation is operational in nature. Although learning the administrative tasks and managing the task load were easy for Kathy, the lack of instructionally oriented tasks was disillusioning.

Task Management

Of her ability to manage her task set, Kathy indicated that although the tasks themselves were easy, she has multiple issues to balance: “I guess my challenge has been that I’m the only person now, the only assistant. My hands are in every single thing, so my big challenge has been trying to juggle and balance that so it gets done.” These issues specifically speak to what needs to be completed in a timely manner, not how those tasks are to be completed. A summary of Kathy’s input regarding tasks appears in Table 37:

Table 37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kathy and Tasks</th>
<th>orientation to tasks</th>
<th>task management</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>operational</td>
<td>What tasks to complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Case #9: Sue*

Orientation to Task

Sue stated, “As a teacher, I guess my microcosm did not allow me to really understand all the different roles of an administrator.” While her classroom experience failed to prepare Sue for the switch to operational tasks, they also kept her from seeing the multidimensional role of administrators:
I wondered why administrators didn’t do certain things at certain times . . .
and I was looking at it from a very narrow perspective: my classroom, my
student. I just did not have the total view, that there’s more to it.

Sue did manage to gain exposure to some of the administrative tasks before becoming an administrator, which remedied her lack of knowledge in certain operational areas. She said:

There was a kind of transition stage that one semester when I worked closely
with [a] principal. Then I realized all of the paperwork, all of the forms, local
state and federal forms, all of the parameters, all of the confidentiality issues,
all of the due process sort of things. At least I got a smattering of it then.

Sue feels that she would have benefited from further exposure to other critical elements of administrative and operational tasks:

I don’t think I was trained well in that arena [for operational tasks]. But the
business with discipline, the business with counseling, all the other things like
supervising games and so forth, I didn’t understand the demands that would
be placed on you. It was a . . . challenge.

It was especially difficult for Sue to learn how to handle the task of student discipline,
specifically the doling out of corporal punishment for misdeeds; as an assistant principal in a rural school, parents expected this behavior from her. The expectation to perform the operational task of discipline, according to Sue, stood in contrast to her learned previously learned instructional tasks.

Task Management

Sue quickly learned her tasks and formed opinions about how to manage them: “It is the nuts and bolts, making everything run right with the facilities, with much of the paperwork, with
the things that are sometimes behind the scenes that causes everything else to work right.”

When asked if these “nuts and bolts” were her idea of operational tasks, she replied that they also involved “buses, things like that, as in time sheets, payroll, and all of the legal ramifications in doing things on time and right.” Her thoughts regarding operations also extended to administrative leadership. She stated that her tasks also involved “being a leader and learning how to be a part of the team or being a principal of the school and developing a vision, being a role model, and setting the pace for hopefully a positive culture.” In further discussion, Sue indicated that task management should be centered on what needs to be done, rather than how the tasks should be completed. A summary of Sue’s input regarding tasks is in Table 38:

Table 38

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sue and Tasks</th>
<th>orientation to tasks</th>
<th>task management</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>operational</td>
<td>What tasks to complete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case #10: Jane

Orientation to Task

Jane entered her present administrative position from a less instructionally oriented role than the other assistant principals had. As a career development coordinator, she served a number of schools throughout the county, assisting students in choosing a career path. However, this job still did not prepare her for the operational tasks associated with the assistant principal’s position. Like several other participants, Jane felt she had prepared only for

buses, books, and butts . . . that’s all I heard about [for an] assistant principal.

These were the three things that you did: buses, books, and butts—nothing else.
I never heard anybody say anything about, you know, once you become an assistant principal, oh, this is so grand and glorious. And now I know . . . .

[But] an idea of what it was truly, truly like? No.

When Jane described her introduction to daily tasks, especially student discipline, she laughed and called them “horrid things.” In further discussion, she indicated that she had virtually no instructional duties, and that all of her tasks were operational in nature.

Task Management

Learning operational tasks was quite an experience for Jane partly because her previous position did not prepare her appropriately for the management of her new tasks. As for other new assistant principals, Jane felt the loss of her control over time most keenly:

I no longer had control of my time. For 10 years I worked basically on my own. I was able to determine where I was going to be at 8:30. I’m either going to be at this school or I’m going to be at another school. Then come into this position, you’re here regardless. It’s like, you enter the building between 7:00 and 7:30, and you’re here until whenever. The other thing with the career development coordinator, at 5:00, I’m through, I’m outta there! The day starts out here with this [full desk]. So when I realized that I truly lost control of that time, reality set in.

In further discussion, Jane emphasized her perception that a lack of time limited her ability to learn and execute operational tasks. According to her, there are not enough hours in the day to complete her tasks. Consequently, her task management is predicated on what needs to be done rather than how it must be completed. A summary of Jane’s input regarding tasks appears in Table 39:
Table 39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jane and Tasks</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>orientation to tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>task management</td>
<td>What tasks to complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Case #11: Marie*

**Orientation to Task**

Coming from a classroom, Marie found the multitude of operational tasks required by her new position to be somewhat overwhelming. Like others, she thought that administration would be an extension of her classroom instructional tasks and was pleased to be offered that opportunity:

Basically, the reason that I went into administration is [that] the people that asked me to come in and interview as a Principal Fellow introduced this new concept as, “We are looking for instructional leaders, and you are the best instructional leader we’ve ever seen. You help our interns the best way we’ve ever seen. You mentor teachers and children in the best mode and ways we’ve ever seen. So, we think that you’d be a good leader, a good instructional leader in your school, so we’d like for you to join the principal fellows program.”

She soon found that completing operational duties filled her time with tasks such as, “planning bus routes, to delete bus routes, hire bus drivers, fire bus drivers, to [complete] background checks . . . things that should be done by another part of the organization.” When asked if these operational tasks were consistent with what she perceived to be the duties of an assistant principal, she indicated that she felt the assignment of such tasks was systemic in nature.
In addition to her transportation duties, Marie said, she has “spent a lot of time counseling with children. I feel like a counselor now instead of an administrator.” She also has many other operational responsibilities:

[I’m] in charge of maintenance: all of the maintenance, all of the custodians, all of the cafeteria workers. I have 92 people at the school I am in now that I’m in charge of, responsible for every single one. I’m in charge of all of the ILTs [initially licensed teachers]; that’s an enormous, enormous task with the number of ILTs I have now. I have to do four observations on them a year, do a pre-conference, a post-conference . . . . You have safety grants and meetings; you have committees, you have nighttime duties.

Marie seems to have acquired a large task set, and it was vastly different from her previous instructional role. Regardless of the number of tasks, they are operational in nature, not instructional.

Task Management

Managing her daily task load is a challenge for Marie, something that she works hard at every day just to complete. Ironically, she had hoped to have time for even more responsibilities at this administrative level:

Even as a mentor and an intern supervisor, I still didn’t feel that I was reaching as many [teachers] as I could reach, sadly, because of buses/textbooks/discipline and other things that are dropped on my desk daily–construction mandates. I’m still not able to do what I thought I’d be able to do as an assistant principal. Hopefully, as principal, I will be able to do those things.
Marie looks forward to being able to make more contributions and to have more freedom as a principal. Her ability to manage her task load is predicated on what needs to be done, not necessarily on how the tasks must be completed. A summary of Marie’s input regarding tasks is in Table 40:

Table 40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marie and Tasks</th>
<th>orientation to tasks</th>
<th>task management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>operational</td>
<td>What tasks to complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Case #12: Will*

*Orientation to Task*

This was Will’s first year as administrator, and he indicated that he still had a strong identification with the instructional role. When I asked him about the differences between the task sets for the two jobs, he said that administration “is completely different than teaching,” and much more operationally oriented:

As a manager, you do not have the luxury of being in a classroom all time; you do not have the luxury of knowing it. Yes, you teach teachers a little bit, and yes, you still teach students discipline–there is not a kid that does not leave my office I have not taught something to. But it’s not teaching . . . . It’s a lot more of making sure that something gets done. It’s more like telling others, “This how I want to get it done, tell me what you think,” but it’s not teaching.

Will confirmed that his duties were operational rather than instructional or learning-centered. As an administrator, he also found that he needed to shift to a much broader perspective:
I thought that administrators did just discipline. I thought that administrators planned the year out; but their main focus was discipline. That changed when I got where I am. And the way that changed is that it’s so much more dynamic to be an assistant principal than a teacher. What I mean by that is it [teaching] is very easy; I was guilty of it, teachers do it all the time. When the teacher walks into a classroom to do work, there is nothing else, that’s it. Now, I’m forced to see things as a whole picture, dynamically. I’ve got to see the entire school.

For Will the only instructional component to his task set was instructing his teachers on specific procedures. For example, he recently needed to instruct one of the teacher’s regarding the legal constraints of student searches, despite the teacher’s wishes. Consequently, his orientation to task may be characterized as operational rather than instructional.

Task Management

Learning to manage the flow of tasks was relatively straightforward for Will. his secretary established a system that ensured he could complete his work in a timely and efficient manner. He said of the evolving system:

I’m an organization nut, and she [my secretary] is too. If you look at her desk right now you’ll see two piles; if you look on mine you’ll see two piles. One pile is where she put my mail . . . and she’ll know by the time I leave here today that’s going to be gone. It’s going to be somewhere else; I’m going to have it organized, and I can’t leave [it] on the desk . . . . That really made us click as a team. She knows how my mind works, and I want everything done a
week ahead of time; I want to organize. I want a plan in place, and I want to be able to say what we’re doing and let’s do it. It should work, to be honest.

Due to the narrow scope of Will’s duties, which are limited to facilities and maintenance, and to the assistance of the secretary, Will was able to manage and maintain the flow of his operational tasks more easily than many assistant principals. “I could not do this job without her [my secretary] with a school this size,” Will said. In further conversation with will, he indicated that his management of tasks could be portrayed as what needs to be done for the smooth operation of the school, rather than how it needed to be done. A summary of Will’s input regarding tasks appears in Table 41:

Table 41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Will and Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>orientation to tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operational</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Tasks Theme

The third theme, that of task behaviors, was the most subtle that emerged; data were embedded in the preconceptions participants had about their jobs, in contrast to the realities they found when they began working as administrators. Interestingly enough, the preconceptions participants spoke about invariably focused on task behaviors. Open coding processing of the data thus gave rise to the third theme of tasks. Axial coding procedures revealed the concepts of (a) orientation to task and (b) task management as components of the theme.

The orientation to task component addressed whether or not the participant had adjusted from a focus on instructional tasks to one on operational tasks. For the participants who were newest to the assistant principal’s position, data consistently featured this shift
from instructional to operational job duties; for the other participants, who had previous experience in an administrative position, task execution (how to do a task) was emphasized.

The task management component of the theme specifically focused on how participants were able to complete their tasks and cope with their responsibilities. For all participants, there was some degree of “muddling through,” in learning how to prioritize and manage the most important tasks. After I had used axial coding procedures to determine a range of task behaviors, an interesting subcomponent of time loss emerged. Administrative tasks often affected the participants’ concept of personal time. A summary of the participant input regarding tasks is in Table 42:

Table 42

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Orientation to Tasks</th>
<th>Task Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Les</td>
<td>operational, instructional</td>
<td>How to perform tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josephine</td>
<td>instructional</td>
<td>What tasks to complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>operational</td>
<td>What tasks to complete, how to perform tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>operational</td>
<td>What tasks to complete, how to perform tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor</td>
<td>instructional</td>
<td>How to perform tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>operational</td>
<td>How to perform tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>instructional</td>
<td>How to perform tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>operational</td>
<td>What tasks to complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>operational</td>
<td>What tasks to complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>operational</td>
<td>What tasks to complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>operational</td>
<td>What tasks to complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>operational</td>
<td>What tasks to complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Themes

Three consistently emerging categories of information became evident in the interviews. Participants spoke about the roles their positions demanded, the relationships they engaged in with others, and the tasks assistant principals need to perform, establishing the three themes of roles, relationships, and tasks.

Further exploration and coding of interview data developed the category of roles in greater detail. Components identified within the roles category included (a) role recall, (b) role identification, and (c) motivation for role adoption. While the importance and articulation of each component varied among the participants, each component was present in all of the data.

Exploration and analysis of the second category of relationships yielded information regarding its components of (a) expectations of others and (b) positional authority. Like the first category, these concepts were present in all of the participants’ data, while some interviews yielded an additional thread of turfism.

Analysis of the third category of tasks produced information about participants’ (a) orientation to task and (b) task management. Like the other themes, information about tasks was present in all of the interview data, though it was by far the most understated theme.

In Chapter Five, the resulting data is examined in light of the initially-asked research questions, with tentative theory being advanced regarding the socialization of entry-level administrators. Additionally, insights regarding the emergent themes are reported.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

I was recently reading *Wicked* (Maguire, 1995), a novel that retells the Wizard of Oz story from the point of view of the Wicked Witch of the West. In the book, Dorothy is a minor character, with an almost nonexistent role. The Wicked Witch of the West is revealed as a tragic figure possessing overbearing guilt, a failed love life, and an allergy to water. What made this novel apropos is how a well-known story such as *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) is viewed from another perspective. In this altered outlook, our world is the one of dreams and fantasy. The implied lesson here is if a particular perspective lends a different interpretation to what we think is objective reality, the perspective and its interpretation are not necessarily wrong, just different. Reality, or its closest approximation, is relative to a specific person and situation, and changes in either person or situation will bring about a different perspective on what occurs; consequently, the construction of a different reality occurs.

Answers to the Research Questions

As stated in earlier, the purposes of this study were four-fold: exploring a process, identifying and describing patterns of interest, making sense of a process, and generating theory. This section elaborates on these objectives by providing answers to the research questions regarding organizational socialization processes that were articulated in Chapter One are:

1. How is an entry-level school administrator socialized?

Individual experiences vary widely; participants encountered a wide range of situations and behaviors. The socialization process was not linear, as was contended by previously examined constructs, and adoption of a specific organizational culture (i.e., values, beliefs, and norms of behavior) did not necessarily play a part in socialization. Based
on the findings of this study, the organizational socialization of assistant principals, as a sociological process, is more appropriately described as a sensitization to or growth in perceptual awareness of the roles appropriate for the position, the relationships engaged in with others, and the tasks that assistant principals need to perform. For the participants, socialization can be conceptualized as their individually constructed responses to the situations in which they found themselves; they relied upon their previously acquired knowledge and experiences to determine what they felt to be appropriate responses to these situations. Although the individual responses varied widely, all contributed to the three central emergent themes of roles, relationships, and tasks.

With regard to the roles that assistant principals engaged in, subcategories of phenomena addressed (a) role recall, (b) role identification, and (c) motivation for role adoption. In the theme of relationships, subcategories of phenomena addressed (a) the expectations of others and (b) positional power with regard to others, with the additional thread of turfism issues proving to be a consideration for many of the participants. With regard to tasks, subcategories of phenomena addressed (a) orientation to tasks and (b) task management.

Regardless of an individual’s experiences and situation, socialization of assistant principals seems to be less of a process and more akin to a sensitization or growing perceptual awareness to aspects of the administrative job. The themes of roles, relationships, and tasks are interrelated and as such do not exist without relationships to each other (see Figure 2).
An example of this interrelationship is the stand-alone concept of relationships. It is a core theme that emerged early in the study with expectations of others as a subcategory of phenomena, and it is linked to the Tasks that an assistant principal may have to perform; hence there are connecting links to the appropriate phenomena discussed in Chapter Four. For example, one of the study participants, Stacy, had teachers that demanded disciplinary support in the classroom. Her relationship with the staff provided the means of conveyance for the tasks that she needed to perform. She stated:

Their expectation of me was to be as tough of a disciplinarian as [my principal] was last year. . . They just want[ed] to know that I would support them with discipline.

Her task of performing student discipline was linked to her established relationships, which were dictated by the role that she assumed.
2. *Is there a difference in the process from the individual and the organizational perspectives?*

While the individual perspective was the focus of this study, interviews also probed expectations each site had for its members. In later analysis, it became apparent that the question of organizational expectations addressed the existence and components of organizational culture. With the exception of one assistant principal, the participants invariably stated that they perceived no site-specific organizational expectations. Presumably, then, there was no perceived global, organizational culture from the institutional standpoint. This study therefore indicates that organizational culture should be viewed as a composite culture, rather than as a monolithic set of values, beliefs, and norms of behavior.

In the absence of a defined single set of institutional values, beliefs, and norms of behavior, groups within a school provided multiple sets of expectations to the participants, further attesting to the existence of a composite culture. One repeating pattern from the data indicated that the principal and other staff members often had varying expectations for the assistant principal. For example, Sue was not aware of any organizational expectations but she indicated that there were multiple expectations from administrators above her. She stated that the expectations “were primarily supervisory.”

They were asked of me by [the] principal of the school . . . . There are other expectations that have come out through our superintendent in some of the departments that are still, I think, in infancy stages, as far as knowing where it's all heading, because things have a tendency to change.
Les provided another example of the composite cultural expectations. For him, the cultural expectations at the school ranged from the subtle to overt; the unspoken tactics of students motivated him to adopt behaviors appropriate to their needs. He stated:

   I remember going out and sitting on the swings, playing kickball with the fifth graders, those types of interactions. If I wasn’t in the building and had gone to a conference, and I spoke with my principal, she would tell me that all the kids were asking where I was. I know that once I started demonstrating that I really cared about them that they responded positively.

His teachers had entirely different expectations. Their expectations for his behavior were not rigorous and wanted as little intrusion from him in their classrooms as possible. To summarize, the results of this study indicate that it is more useful and appropriate to conceive of organizational culture in this context as a composite made of many discrete parts rather than as a single institutionally based unit.

3. Do socialization practices and processes vary from person to person?

While individuals related specific experiences that only sometimes had commonalities with those of other participants, all the participants’ socialization or sensitization experiences yielded similar components that became apparent from the interviews, and gave rise to the three emergent themes. The similarity of the subcategories of phenomena provided a range to describe qualities of displayed occurrences, but did not detract from the described themes and subcategories. Thus, unique socialization practices were still reflected in parallel experiences. Although individuals have created their own framework for constructing appropriate responses to phenomena (i.e., their own social construction of reality), they all experience much of the same phenomena in the same way.
4. What is the basis for these differences?

As stated in the answer to the previous research question, there were no discernable differences in the individual interview data attributable to gender, ethnicity, or the level at which the assistant principals worked. The study’s theoretical sampling technique resulted in the construction of a demographically balanced group. Initially, I may have assumed there would be differences in socialization processes based on school level. A common assumption, reinforced by discussions with others, is there seems to be a difference between elementary, middle, and high school teachers and administrators. For example, common jibes among educators include the elementary teacher who says “We’re child-centered instead of content-oriented,” the high school teacher who says “We’re not as touchy-feely as those elementary folks,” or any teacher who says, “You need to be a special breed to do middle school.” These assumptions support the common fallacy that level differentiates teachers and administrators, while the research bears out the opposite in terms of the job. There were no apparent differences in individuals’ experiential phenomena that could be attributed to the level at which they worked.

5. Are there definitive turning points where one becomes an insider (socialized) to the organization?

The interview data provided no specific examples of occurring phenomena that indicated a “turning point” at which a participant became an insider. Even more importantly, there were no time-delineated periods (e.g., probationary period, one year, etc.) during which a participant became an insider. This point further supports the contention that there is no linear process to organizational socialization, in direct contrast with the previously examined theoretical constructs. Linear models suggest insider status or membership to an organization
is accorded after a given period. If socialization is not linear—and this research study suggests that it is not—then individuals need not necessarily adopt the components of an organizational culture. If the contention that organizational culture is a composite rather than a single, institutionally based entity is accepted, then insider/outsider status for an individual would vary between the groups comprising the institution. This would account for the frequently conflicting views individual participants held with regard to their status. When I asked one participant whether she was an insider or outsider at her school, she stated that she was both and “neither. I feel a part of the school, so for that I’m an insider. But there are some lines you don’t cross.” This indicated a secondary perspective of being an outsider. She elaborated, saying that certain groups within the school viewed her as an outsider because of her supervisory status, while the administrative group viewed her as an insider. Based on her experiences and those of the other participants, neither socialization (acceptance of an organization’s culture) nor insider status (being accorded group membership identification) is predicated on turning point phenomena or time-based components.

6. How do individuals “make sense” of the socialization process?

Sense making is a superlatively individual process. Prior to being interviewed, participants had an opportunity to examine the interview questions, and for the most part they seemed to have examined their experiences in some way. What seems to be the mechanism for sense making is the individually constructed framework of reality. The way the study was constructed, there was not an opportunity to examine how each participant constructed his or her assistant principal social identity, then funneled their experiences through that identity. It is enough for the purposes of this study to state that each participant did examine their
experiences through their own constructs of reality, and that those constructs were dissimilar to those found in previously examined constructs.

7. How does time (as the dominant theoretical construct) play a role in the socialization process?

In terms of an organizing structure, time—as the main component of the dominant theoretical construct—was not a theme in the socialization process. What was surprising was the way “time” figured largely in one of the emergent themes: that of tasks. In the subcategory of task management, the concept of time played an important role as a phenomenon that participants had to come to grips with when assuming their administrative functions. The loss of personal control over time caused Jane to question why she chose to go into administration, saying, “I no longer had control of my time.” Still another participant, Jessica, noted how little time she had compared to when she was in the classroom:

It’s just nonstop. From the time I walk in to the time I leave—you see how many times the phone has rang; you see how many people have come to the door—it’s just nonstop, and you don’t get a lunch.

Lastly, Sue had a comment regarding time that could very well be every assistant principal’s lament. She said, “The constraints of being an assistant principal can almost imprison you sometimes, and it will stifle creativity, and in being able to model and do the things [instruction] you feel you do well.”

Insights regarding Roles, Relationships, and Tasks

Roles

Through the course of the interviews, it became apparent that prior to taking an administrative position, assistant principals envisioned themselves as being able to continue
working primarily in an instructional role. While they knew that being an administrator would entail performing tasks such as discipline, most of them did not realize how much their new position would lessen their instructional role. This seems to parallel the fact that participants connected strongly with memories of their teachers rather than with their administrators. Participants’ apparent affinity for the instructional role led to difficulties in adjusting to the administrative role, as articulated in Chapter Four.

*Relationships*

The professional relationships that an administrator establishes with others become the medium for conveying of values, beliefs, and expectations about norms of behavior. This communication is not unidirectional. These components have many origins and may come from many sources. The school is a social unit that has many constituent parts, and these parts make a whole. These discrete components are connected by the glue of relationships, which seem to be at the root of the process. Relationships provide the means for the communication of tasks and roles to individuals and groups.

*Tasks*

It is interesting to note that as far as tasks are concerned, the assistant principalship seems to be (a) whatever the principal wants it to be and (b) focused mainly on the operational functions of the school organization.

The tasks assistant principals performed depended on what the principal dictated, not necessarily on the needs of the organization. For example, two assistant principals—seemingly the most satisfied with their positions—were able to focus on instructional and curricular tasks, while the other, seemingly more dissatisfied assistant principals focused on operational issues. Regardless of how the participants were oriented to their tasks, their principals
dictated what they would be doing, and the needs of other parties within the school followed suit. For example, the principal of one of the participants had her focus her work on instruction; consequently, teachers came to her for resources and her instructional expertise, not for student discipline.

It was more likely, however, for the participants to concentrate on the operational functions of the school. Several participants said they focused on “buses, books, and butts” all of the time. Another participant said her job entailed “discipline, discipline, discipline” and operations. Still another participant said, “So much of your time is just operations, and I thought that I would spend more time working with teachers; that is the least amount of time that I spend.”

The business of operating a school is an exercise in multitasking, and most assistant principals focus on operational rather than instructional tasks. One might wonder at the wisdom of taking competent instructional personnel and placing them in operational positions; the shift from a teaching to an administrative position certainly seems to be an important issue for further examination.

Towards a Theory Regarding Entry-Level Administrator Socialization

1. There is no linear process that guides organizational socialization; organizational socialization can be conceptualized as a network of connections that facilitate sensitization to particular phenomena.

2. The socialization sensitization for assistant principals is a perceptual awareness-response mechanism to phenomena regarding roles, relationships, and tasks and their attendant subcategory phenomena.
3. Although such a thing as insider vs. outsider status does exist, it is not an output of a socialization sensitization. Rather, it is a view of an individual created from a perspective held by a group that resides within the composite organizational culture.

4. Successful socialization occurs when individuals are sufficiently sensitized to be able successfully to navigate and respond to phenomena regarding roles, relationships, and tasks, and their attendant subcategory phenomena.

Implications Regarding the Research

As already stated, there are several important implications to the research. These implications speak specifically to the focus of socialization (i.e., organizational vs. professional), intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation for role acquisition, administrator training (including both pre- and post-entry), and the emphasis of the assistant principal’s role (i.e. instructional vs. operational).

Although the study focused on the individual socialization process, I made little effort to determine where these processes originated. Through the course of the interviews and the study, I have determined that socialization for assistant principals seems to be oriented more toward professional socialization, and not organizational socialization. Repeatedly, when participants were asked about organizational expectations for them, they replied that there were none or that they were unknown. Why did they learn behaviors to complete specific tasks if there was no organizational impetus? In addition, assistant principals who had socialization experiences in other LEAs pointed to differences in how tasks were to be performed in relation to expectations, not in what was done. This indicates that the needs of the organizations do not vary widely from place to place, suggesting that the needs of all organizations are basically the same. The resulting implication is that socialization for
assistant principals is professionally oriented; it consists of acquiring a sufficient sensitization to roles, relationships, and tasks that an assistant principal can do his or her job, not necessarily become an insider to the organization.

All the participants stated that their motivation to go into teaching was intrinsic. Conversely, almost all the participants stated the opposite motivation for their entry into the administrative level—it was extrinsic. Additionally, all of the participants seemed to remember their teaching experiences fondly—with the exception of one participant, who said she could not see herself grading papers for thirty years. Conversely, none of the participants spoke of their administrative experiences with fondness. The implications here are that generally, (a) people do not go into the field of education to become administrators and (b) most teachers do not want to become administrators once they have entered the field.

The study also produced a conspicuous lack of information regarding administrator preparation programs. Only one participant mentioned their university training, and only one participant mentioned that they had been to the Principals Executive Program (PEP, an in-service training program, or APEP for assistant principals). It was not clear whether participants took part any in-service training programs. If these programs are supposed to prepare instructional personnel for the operational world of administration, why did no participants mention them? As it was, only one participant spoke about her professional development in any context, and then only in pejorative terms. These findings imply that preparation, training, and professional programs are not what they should be; if they were, people would have spoken about them, and in positive terms.

Most importantly, although two participants indicated that they had good working relationships with their principal, all of the participants except one indicated that the principal
did not train them, did not make their job expectations clear, or gave them excessive responsibilities. For example, one participant spoke about her initial responsibility being curriculum. As the year progressed, she acquired responsibilities in the areas of Exceptional Children, testing and assessment, discipline, and Student Support Team chairperson, and did not feel that she had support from her principal or staff. These phenomena indicate a lack of training at the school level, and a “sink or swim” mentality that colored the participants’ initial socialization experiences. In another circumstance, because a principal failed to make his expectations clear, another participant suffered through a difficult first year in which he had to teach himself everything he needed to know.

One conclusion drawn from these interview data is that principals should be more cognizant of the needs of their assistant principals. Training in the forms of substantive mentoring and task instruction may alleviate some of these problems.

Implications for Further Study

The following suggestions and implications for further research are designed to extend the tentative theory advanced in this study.

1. Study the socialization process in other areas in terms of region and state.

Although this study constructed an appropriate sample according to grounded theory methods, a different sample could very well generate different results in terms of emergent themes and analysis. Hence, studying socialization in other regions and states could provide different and valuable information.

2. Generate another sample using a different sampling process.

This study utilized a theoretical sampling technique to generate a specific sample. This particular group may now be identified for further study, and a different sampling
technique could be used to generate a sample with different characteristics. With a sample containing individuals who possess different traits from the ones exhibited in this study, new research may glean other valuable information.

3. Study the process from multiple levels within one organization.

Occasionally, this study generated information that I wanted to pursue from other individual sources within a specific site. This informing mechanism would have further explored socialization at the organizational level. That process was not within the scope of this study, but might provide further data concerning other aspects of socialization.

4. Perform a longitudinal study that follows an individual’s progress over time.

Further analysis of individuals who have had administrative experience at multiple sites might prove to be interesting. To further limit the sample to one individual and study the process longitudinally might provide valuable data about the professional and organizational contexts of socialization. Additionally, a different theoretical framework (e.g., life history) could be used to examine acquired data.

5. If possible, replicate the study using a mixed method strategy, using a quantitative instrument to measure other aspects of an individual’s perception of an organization.

While they did not have a place in this study, quantitative techniques could provide valuable and interesting data regarding socialization. For example, use of instruments such as the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) and the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) could provide valuable data to support a study involving organizational socialization.

6. Study the process in private schools rather than public schools.
While this study focused on assistant principals in public schools, private school administrators might provide different information regarding socialization. For instance, two of the participants indicated that they had attended private schools as children; this may have affected their student experiences. Data from private schools might vary significantly enough from data generated in this study to warrant examination.

Summary

When I began to think about conducting this study, I focused on what I perceived to be the plight of assistant principals. Based on my experiences and discussion with colleagues, assistant principals have not been utilized appropriately as a group. I envisioned a grand narrative, a compelling story of assistant principals recounting their difficult journeys into administrator-hood. What I found was something very different: although my perceptions about the difficulty of administration have since been confirmed, other events concerning assistant principals in schools proved to be much more significant. It was not surprising to find no indication of a linear process, but that there was total absence of a process was unexpected. Consequently, further examination of administrator socialization and its components is strongly recommended, especially to verify the findings of this study. Much of the philosophy behind the theoretical framework was grounded in the ethnomethodological tradition; hence, this study was, as much as anything, an attempt to operationalize a study format for examining socialization further. While it was difficult to adhere to a pure and complete form of ethnomethodological process, repeated questioning of the study participants and probing of their interview statements secured more information about their perspectives. It is hoped that further study of socialization will increase our knowledge base.
regarding ethnomethodological study process components, socialization phenomena, and individual and organizational socialization constructs.
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APPENDIX A: COVER STORY

<insert date>, 2004

<insert name>, Principal
<insert school name>
<insert address>
<insert city>, NC  27xxx

Mr./Ms <name>,

My name is Todd Blumenreich, and I am currently employed by NCDPI as the High School Testing Policy Consultant and was previously a high school administrator. I am preparing to conduct research for my dissertation study concerning organizational socialization experiences of entry-level school administrators. I will be inviting assistant principals in <insert county name>, County to participate in this study and, as a professional courtesy, am writing this letter to make you aware of my research. I have already spoken with the Superintendent, Dr. <insert name>, and he is interested and willing for <insert county name> County Schools to participate.

There is virtually no research on assistant principals; I will use a Grounded theory theoretical framework for performing the study. This particular type of research demands an expanding sample group, with no predetermination of participation; that is why I may need to interview one or more of the assistant principals if they are willing to participate.

If one or more of the assistant principals are willing to participate, I will make arrangements with them regarding interview time and place. If appropriate, I am requesting permission to interview your assistant principal(s) on the school campus if so asked. Interview information will be kept confidential, with all identifying data remaining private. For example, a coding structure will be used for anonymity, and pseudonyms will be used for personal, school, and LEA names when the dissertation is written.

Having recently come from the school level, I am aware of the demands on principals and assistant principals, and am willing to do whatever is necessary to not impact you or your school unduly.

Please contact me by phone or email to let me know of your participation status. If you have any questions, please contact me at your convenience.

With Regards,

Todd Blumenreich
APPENDIX B: FOLLOW-UP CORRESPONDENCE

[routing information deleted, name changes for anonymity purposes]
Subject: Fwd: Participation in Research Projects/Policy Code 5230
Date: Wednesday, March 17, 2004 7:45 AM
>>> "Zelda Smith" <zsmith@grant.k12.nc.us> 03/16/04 02:47PM >>>
Mr. Blumenreich,

I am attaching the memo sent to principals approving your request to conduct a study on the socialization process of entry-level administrators.

Zelda Smith
Office of Public Information/Community Relations
Grant County Schools
106 Gordon Street
PO Box 1010
Mayberry, NC xxxx-1010
Phone: 919-xxx-xxxx ext 1219
Fax: 919-xxx-xxxx
e-mail: zsmith@grant.k12.nc.us

All e-mail correspondence to and from this address is subject to the North Carolina Public Records Law, which may result in monitoring and disclosure to third parties, including law enforcement.
APPENDIX C: IRB SUBMISSION QUESTIONS

From: "Debra Paxton" <dapaxton@gw.fis.ncsu.edu>
To: <tblumenreich@nc.rr.com>
Subject: IRB submission
Date: Wednesday, February 25, 2004 3:54 PM

Dear Mr. Blumenreich -

I have looked over your IRB submission, and have a few questions before I proceed with the review of your protocol. First, please tell me where you will conduct your interviews. Second, would you please tell me how you will approach your subjects regarding the study? Your IRB narrative says that you will approach subjects verbally first. What will you tell them about the study? Also, because your interview focuses on the subjects' perceptions of their jobs, there are some risks to participating. If their responses regarding their jobs were negative, and confidentiality were breached, it could negatively impact their employment. This risk needs to be addressed in both your IRB narrative and the consent form, and the various measures you're taking (using a code number, conducting interviews off-site, etc.) described. As for the code number, will it be linked in any way to the subjects' names or other identifying information? Finally, please also include in your consent form information that their decision to participate or not, or a decision to withdraw from the study once begun, will not affect their employment.

Thank you, and please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Deb Paxton

**************************************************************************
Deb Paxton
North Carolina State University
Regulatory Compliance Administrator
919.515.4514
919.515.7721 (fax)
APPENDIX D: IRB SUBMISSION QUESTION RESPONSES

From: "tblumenreich" <tblumenreich@nc.rr.com>
To: "dapaxton@gw.fis.ncsu.edu"
Subject:
Date: Thursday, February 26, 2004 5:48 PM

Ms. Paxton,
In answer to your concerns:

1. I plan on beginning my research in [Dry Lake] County (the LEA in which I was formally employed). I have already obtained the permission of the Superintendent, [name deleted] to conduct research there. It will be necessary to expand the participant sample due to the theoretical framework guiding the study (Grounded Theory). Therefore, I have received the permission of the Superintendent of [Zebulon] County Schools, Dr. [name deleted], to conduct research in his county. Dr. [name deleted], the Superintendent of [Grant] County Schools, has also been contacted regarding my desire to conduct further research. He has asked to review copies of my study proposal and processes to be employed.

2. The initial participants were, until very recently, colleagues of mine. They have been following the progress of my academic career, and are very interested in participating. I have already obtained their verbal and written agreement to participate (very informal), and am waiting upon IRB approval to forward the informed consent forms.

The other counties necessitate a different approach, due to me not being known. I will initially contact a school at each level (elementary, middle, secondary), asking the assistant principal(s) if they would be willing to participate in the study. Once IRB approval has been given, I will forward the informed consent form to the participants.

3. I plan on truthful disclosure as to the nature of the study. This area has not been well studied - in fact, research on assistant principals is almost nonexistent. By apprising possible participants as to the value of their input, complete confidentiality/anonymity, minimal intrusion, and no value judgment of what they impart, I believe that they might be interested in participating. Therefore:
   (a) participants will told of the value, purpose, and goals of the study.
   (b) the recorded interviews will be transcribed, then the transcriptions will be sent back to the participants to be checked for accuracy.
   (c) recordings will then be destroyed; only the completed transcription will exist. That will be destroyed upon completion of the study.
   (d) pseudonyms will be used for the final written dissertation, as they were used for the proposal. This applies to the LEAs, specific schools, and individual participants.
   (e) for coding purposes, a hierarchical coding structure (outline-type format) will be used. LEAs, as the largest units, will be coded as I, II, III, etc.; schools within LEAs will be coded A, B, C, etc.; individuals will be coded 1, 2, 3, m/f (male/female). No person is aware of this coding structure, and there is no need to disseminate it.

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Will you hold your interviews at the schools, or will they take place at a different location?

I will give the participant the opportunity to determine the interview time and location. Because I am anticipating the interviews to be between 30-45 minutes, it might be easiest (logistically) to complete the interviews at the schools, although I will definitely defer to what the APs want. Also, because there are potentially 4 school systems participating at this time, locations outside of the school may vary as to what/where is most convenient for the participants.

When you telephone the assistant principals about the study, what do you intend to say to them to describe the study?

I will first mail out copies of the cover stories to the assistant principals at the schools (attached). This personnel information is listed on the websites for the schools. I will then follow up with phone calls to the assistants to:

1. Explain the purpose of the study, the theoretical framework, and nature of the research.
2. Explain the lack of research in the area, especially in regards to assistant principals.
3. Describe the interview process (with the attached interview guide).
4. Describe the confidentiality aspect, including the use of pseudonyms, coding, and anonymity components.
5. Let them know that they may end their participation at any time, which would include destruction any acquired data.
6. Explain the risk as I understand it to be. This may entail further discussion, but with the confidentiality components in place there should be minimal risk regarding participation.
7. Ascertain agreement to participate/not participate. If they choose to participate, I will forward the consent form (attached).
8. Negotiate a time and place for the interview to occur, with a timetable for getting the transcription back to the participant.

Your descriptions of the confidentiality measures were helpful, but they should be mentioned in the consent form along with the risks of participation that I mentioned in my previous email (rather than stating "there are no risks associated with this study"). Please see the attached.

Thank you for describing your coding structure; will you have those codes linked to subjects' names or other identifying information in any way - even in your study notes and other pre-publication materials (for example, you know that subject IIA2f is Sally Jones, so you can contact her for additional questions if necessary)?

Any coding linked back to identifying information will be found in the memo-ing component, nowhere else. That component is a running dialogue to/for the study, and allows for open analyses and musings. It is not for dissemination, and is separate and apart from any formal analyses. It is on one computer disk, and no other person has access to it.

Finally, even though the consent form states that participation is voluntary, etc. that's from our on-line template, and while it's fine for some studies, studies that involve employees or students need to reinforce that the study is not associated with their
employment (or schooling). Simply add a statement to the one you cited for me; "A decision to decline participation, or to withdraw once the study's begun, will not affect your employment."
The above statement has been added to the consent form for this study. Please see the attached.
From: Debra A. Paxton, IRB Administrator  
North Carolina State University  
Institutional Review Board  

Date: March 30, 2004  

Project Title: The Organizational Socialization Processes of Entry Level Public School Administrators  
IRB#: 062-04-3  

Dear Mr. Blumenreich;  

The project listed above has been reviewed in accordance with expedited review procedures under Addendum 46 FR8392 of 45 CFR 46 and is approved for one year from it’s date of review. This protocol expires on March 24, 2005, and will need continuing review before that date.  

NOTE:  
1. This board complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429; the IRB Number is: IRB00000330.  
2. The IRB must be notified of any changes that are made to this study.  
3. Your approval for this study lasts for one year from the review date. If your study extends beyond that time, including data analysis, you must obtain continuing review from the IRB.  

Please provide your faculty sponsor with a copy of this letter. Thank you.  

Sincerely,  

Debra Paxton  
NCSU IRB
A. Previous educational experiences

1. Where are you from? Where did you attend public school/what schools?

The purpose of this question was to obtain information that was personally relevant to the upbringing of the participant. This question assists in the determination of core personal culture attributes, such as regional and ethnic factors, familial socio-economic status, and other features (e.g., public/private school differences).

2. What were your teachers like? What were your administrators like?

Schools are one of the primary socializing agents that determine our core values, beliefs, and norms of behavior. This question reveals information that forms the basis of core social perceptions outside of familial constraints.

3. Why did you become a teacher? Tell me about your teaching experiences.

This question articulates the core professional beliefs, values, and experiences with which the participants entered the profession. Additional information obtained addressed the participants’ preconceptions of socialization.

4. Why did you become an administrator? Tell me about your administrative experiences.

My teaching experiences led me to becoming an administrator; consequently, those experiences dictated my administrative behaviors and provided the basic lens through which I viewed my initial administrative experiences. Based on discussion with colleagues, the shift from teacher to administrator may also involve a perceptual shift from supervisee to supervisor. This question seeks to obtain information regarding that shift.
B. Internal locus

5. What preconceptions did you have of being an administrator in terms of rights and responsibilities?

Multiple research models use Jablin’s time-oriented model regarding organizational socialization (1982). Although this question does seem to use that schema for obtaining information, its purpose is more for examining variances between participants’ beliefs prior to entering an organization and after entering. Construction of personal perspective and reality is from experiences, especially through social interaction. Preconceptions are beliefs constructed from previous experiences, but not tested; this question uncovers that information.

6. What preconceptions did you have of being an administrator in terms of tasks and task behaviors?

The basic task set for teachers and administrators is different, although, depending on what one does, it is more of a continuum than a division. However, due to the differences in tasks, one’s perspective might change with regard to division of tasks.

7. What actually occurred in terms of rights and responsibilities?

This question tries to determine the variances between perceived preconception and perceived reality.

8. What actually occurred in terms of tasks and task behaviors?

This question also tries to determine the variances between perceived preconception and perceived reality.

C. External locus

9. What were the organizational expectations? How do you know that?
This question obtains specific information about the participant’s perspective regarding organizational culture and communication processes. Additional information targeted by this question regards the degree of supervisory control, climate, and collegiality.

10. What were the principal’s expectations? How do you know that?
The degree to which the primary school leader articulates his or her expectations may affect the training and adoption of professional values by assistant principals.

11. What did the office staff expect of you? How do you know that?
How one supervises (expresses leadership) may be a combination of multiple factors, one of which may be the perceived needs of those supervised. This question elicits information regarding that aspect of positional authority.

12. What did the teaching staff expect of you? How do you know that?
Again, this question seeks information about those supervised. Based on informal discussion with colleagues, the needs of teachers seem to be different from those of classified (support) personnel; therefore, this question will target that information.

13. What did the students expect of you? How do you know that?
Teachers and administrators have different functions regarding students, and the needs of students may in part dictate those functions. This question aims to determine that information.