

1995

# Being an Assistant Principal, Becoming an Administrator: an Organizational Socialization Study

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BEING AN ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL--BECOMING AN ADMINISTRATOR:  
AN ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION STUDY

by  
CONNIE DICKMAN

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION  
in  
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:  
ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

Portland State University  
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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

The abstract and dissertation of Connie Dickman for the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership: Administration and Supervision were presented December 5, 1994, and accepted by the dissertation committee and the doctoral program.

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## ABSTRACT

An abstract of the dissertation of Connie Dickman for the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership: Administration and Supervision presented December 5, 1994.

Title: Being an Assistant Principal--Becoming an Administrator: An Organizational Socialization Study

Many school administrators begin their careers in educational administration as assistant principals. The literature on assistant principals contributes very little to an understanding of the perspectives that assistant principals develop during their organizational socialization experiences and of the conditions and processes that influence the development of these socialization outcomes.

The purpose of this study was to develop a theoretical understanding of the perspectives that emerge from assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences. Symbolic interactionism established the theoretical and methodological foundation for this study. The sensitizing concepts of perspective (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961), situational adjustment (Becker, 1964), and organizational boundary passages (Schein, 1971; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) provided the analytic framework.

The Glaser and Strauss (1967) constant comparison model guided the process of collecting and analyzing data. Six assistant principals with experience from three months to three years were interviewed. The study resulted in a grounded theory that describes the perspectives that the assistant principals developed and explains the processes and conditions that influenced the development of these organizational socialization outcomes.

The results of this study suggest that assistant principals develop a common set of perspectives in response to a common set of problematic situations. These perspectives include: "it takes time to learn," working for the principal, working with other assistant principals, doing tasks, working effectively with teachers, and an integrated perspective. Assistant principals appear to develop these perspectives using a situational adjustment process that includes assessing the requirements of problematic situations, experimenting with ideas and actions to determine how to behave, and choosing strategies that enable them to respond successfully to the situational requirements.

The requirement to pass through the functional, hierarchical, and inclusionary boundary passages appears to be the most important organizational factor influencing the development of administrative perspectives. The quality of assistant principals' preparation experiences, their styles

and longevity as teachers, and their motivation appear to be the most important individual factors influencing the development of administrative perspectives. Teachers appear to be the most powerful socializing agents. The assistant principal's role may provide essential preparation for a principal's role and may have the potential for developing leadership.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to  
Marjorie and Henry Dickman.

They taught me to value learning  
and to persevere.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to give special thanks to William Greenfield for his wisdom, patience, and belief that efforts to construct knowledge are important. I also wish to thank Drs. Robert Everhart, Kelly Hancock, Joseph Jones, and Betsy Steinberger for their critique of the manuscript.

I am indebted to David Campbell, Diane Shew, and Pati Sluys for their support and assistance. Each contributed immensely to the completion of this project.

Finally, I extend my appreciation to the assistant principals who participated in this study. Their personal understandings of what it means to be a school administrator have had a profound impact on my approach to educational leadership and administration.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to develop a theoretical understanding of the perspectives that emerge from assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961). Two interrelated questions guide the inquiry process: one, what perspectives emerge from the assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences; and two, how do the orientations of the individuals being socialized, their experiences in socialization settings, and their experiences of socialization processes, influence the assistant principals' emerging administrative perspectives? In this study, an assistant principal is an individual who holds an administrative license, is employed by a school district, is on an administrative contract, is supervised directly by a school principal, and is responsible for carrying out administrative role responsibilities.

#### Background

Images permeate the literature on assistant principals. Images illustrate the assistant principals disciplinary role: "the hatchet man" (Hurley, 1965, p. 12), "the fire

fighter" (Laughery, 1959, p. 112), "the counselor and mediator" (Mitchell, 1980, p. 29), "the detective" (Mitchell, 1980, p. 29), "the enforcer" (Potter, 1980, p. 9), "the father confessor" (Reed & Himmler, 1985, p. 64), and "the policeman" (Reed & Himmler, 1985, p. 64). Images show the assistant principal's managerial role: "the technician" (Bates & Shank, 1983, p. 111), "the jack-of-all-trades" (Black, 1980, p. 38), "the operations director" (Nickerson, 1980, p. 47), and "the right-hand person" (Valentine, 1980, p. 40). Images portray experience in the assistant principal position essentially as role preparation: "the proving ground" (Austin & Brown, 1970, p. 22); "the stepping stone" (Austin & Brown, 1970, p. 22; Gross, Shapiro, & Meehan, 1980, p. 27), and "the training ground" (Spady, 1985, p. 120).

These images both shape and emerge as an outcome of implied and frequently explicit assumptions that professors of educational administration and educational administrators make about experience as an assistant principal: the role does not prepare individuals to fulfill role responsibilities as principals (Austin & Brown, 1970; Brown & Rentschler, 1973; Fulton, 1987; Howley, 1985; Kelly, 1987; Spady, 1985; Valentine, 1980), and the role does not prepare individuals to respond to the challenges of instructional leadership (Austin & Brown, 1970; Brown & Rentschler, 1973; Greenfield, Marshall, & Reed, 1986; Kelly, 1987; Marshall &

Greenfield, 1985, 1987; Spady, 1985). Spady's (1985) observation illustrated the dominant assumptions in the literature: "The assistant principalship is the key position providing access to the principalship" (p. 107). "As currently defined, the role is quite unlikely to produce leaders with instructional priorities or instructional leadership potential" (p. 120).

Professors of educational administration and school administrators respond to these issues by offering a variety of prescriptions. School administrators should: "clarify the role" (Black, 1980, p. 33), "reconceptualize the role" (Greenfield, 1985b, p. 85), "define the role" (Kriekard & Norton, 1980, p. 1), and "enhance the role" (Potter, 1980, p. 9). Principals should: "involve the assistant principal as a member of a management team" (Bordinger, 1973, p. 15; Gross, Shapiro, & Meehan, 1980, p. 28; Sprague, 1973, p. 28; Valentine, 1980, p. 43), "groom their assistants" (Gorton, 1987, p. 1), and "expand the job . . . increase the rewards . . . facilitate professional growth" (Gorton, 1987, p. 5). School administrators should develop an instructional role that recognizes the assistant principal as "an agent of instructional reform" (Spady, 1985, p. 107). Few of these writers question the empirical foundation that undergirds their assumptions and conclusions.

The premise that experience as an assistant principal is unlikely to prepare an individual to respond to the

challenges of instructional leadership rests on a tenuous empirical foundation. Several factors contribute to the limited understanding of the consequences of experience as an assistant principal. First, researchers show little interest in studying assistant principals' roles or work experiences (Greenfield, 1984; Marshall, 1992). Second, researchers who study assistant principals tend to focus on identifying perceptions of duties, tasks, and functions assigned to the role, or on reporting observations of assistant principals at work. Researchers do not, for the most part, offer theoretically-informed descriptions or explanations of the assistant principals' role or of the consequences of experience in the role. Greenfield (1984) observed that the existing empirical foundation is atheoretical and limited in scope. He concluded:

. . . the literature on the vice principalship  
. . . contributes little to increasing the field's  
knowledge about the role or the work of the  
assistant principal, the administrative career in  
education, or the social dynamics of working in  
and administering schools. (p. 4)

Previous investigations do not, for the most part, contribute to a theoretical or practical understanding of the learning outcomes that accrue from experience in the assistant principal role and of the mechanisms that affect the emergence of these learning outcomes. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the knowledge base by developing a theoretical understanding of the perspectives

that emerge from assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences.

#### Problem Statement

Many school administrators begin their careers in educational administration as assistant principals. The perspectives that emerge from assistant principals' socialization experiences are assumed to guide assistant principals' behavior in the entry-level administrative role and may guide future behavior in subsequent administrative roles (Greenfield, 1985c; Greenfield, Marshall, & Reed, 1986; Jones, 1983; Katz, 1980; Louis, 1980; Mortimer & Simmons, 1978; Schein, 1971; Van Maanen, 1977; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Hughes (cited in Van Maanen, 1977) explained:

. . . at no other time during a person's organizational experiences is . . . the development of a perspective likely to be more important and lively--more exciting and uncomfortable, more self-conscious yet perhaps more deeply unconscious--than in the period of learning and initiation. (p. 17)

This study uses Becker et al.'s (1961) classic definition of perspective to conceptualize the learning outcomes of the assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences:

. . . perspective . . . refer[s] to a coordinated set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation. . . . These thoughts and actions are coordinated in the sense that the actions flow reasonably . . . from the ideas contained in the perspective. . . . The

actions flow from the beliefs and the beliefs justify the actions. (p. 34)

As noted in the preceding discussion, the literature on assistant principals contributes very little to an understanding of the perspectives that emerge from assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences, and of the socialization conditions and processes that affect the development of these outcomes. Thus, the research problem is reflected in two interrelated questions: one, what perspectives emerge from assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences; and two, how do the orientations of the individuals being socialized, their experiences in socialization settings, and their experiences of socialization processes influence the emergence of the assistant principals' administrative perspectives?

#### Theoretical Foundation

Symbolic interactionism, an intermediate between deterministic and non-deterministic theories (Wentworth, 1980), has been used to establish the theoretical and methodological foundation for studying assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences. A general interactionist model of organizational socialization (Levinson, 1967) has been used to frame the analysis of the assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences. According to Levinson (1967), a comprehensive organizational socialization model takes into account four

analytical components: the socialization processes, the individuals being socialized, the socialization settings, and the socialization outcomes. The following discussion briefly describes the interactionist premises that characterize each component of this organizational socialization model.

### Organizational Socialization Processes

Interactionists conceptualize socialization as a dynamic, interactive process (Goslin, 1969; Mortimer & Simmons, 1979; Wentworth, 1980). In contrast to role theorists who posit that individuals adapt relatively passively to socializing forces in the organization, interactionists contend that individuals play an active role in their own learning and development (Goslin, 1969; Levinson, 1967; Mortimer & Simmons, 1979; Wentworth, 1980). Becker's (1964) classic notion of socialization as situational adjustment reflected the dynamic, interactive nature of the socialization process:

. . . situational adjustment . . . [is] the process . . . in which individuals take on the characteristics required by the situations they participate in. . . . The person, as he<sup>1</sup> moves in and out of a variety of situations, learns the requirements of continuing in each situation and of success in it. If he has a strong desire to continue, the ability to assess accurately what is required, and can deliver the required

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<sup>1</sup> The researcher does not share the gender bias reflected in the citations in this dissertation.

performance, the individual turns himself into the kind of person the situation demands. (pp. 41-44)

In parallel fashion, Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) definition of organizational socialization as "the process by which one is taught and learns 'the ropes' of a particular organizational role" (p. 211) recognized the interactive nature of the socialization process.

#### Individuals Being Socialized

The individual's ability to play an active role in the socialization experience is derived from the Meadian view of the nature of the individual and of the relationship between the individual and the organization. Interactionists contend that individuals construct definitions of organizational reality and role identity through symbolic interaction with significant others. Through the process of taking the role of the other, individuals learn to see themselves as others see them, perceive the expectations of others, and respond appropriately to others and to the situation. Role identities emerge, in part, as social products that are shaped by expectations communicated by others. As individuals interact, however, they do not merely respond to the situation; they actively construct the meaning of the event. Blumer (1969) explained:

. . . social action of the actor is constructed by him . . . The actor . . . is seen as one who is confronted with a situation in which he has to act. In this situation, he notes, interprets, and assesses things with which he has to deal in order to act. He can do this by virtue of being able to



interact or communicate with himself. Through such self-interaction he constructs his line of action, noting what he wants or what is demanded of him, setting up a goal, judging the possibilities of the situation, and prefiguring his line of action. In such self-interaction he may hold his prospective act in suspension, abandon it, check it at one or another point, revise it or devise a substitute for it . . . The human being is not a mere responding organism, only responding to the play of factors from his world or from himself; he is an acting organism who has to cope with and handle such factors and who, in so doing, has to forge and direct his line of action. (p. 55)

Thus, while social relationships and contextual conditions affect behavior, individuals act on the basis of interpretations and meanings they derive as they interact with significant others (Becker et al., 1961; Blumer, 1969; Jones, 1983; Katz, 1980; Louis, 1980; Van Maanen, 1977; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

#### Organizational Socialization Settings

The organizational socialization setting creates the contextual conditions within which the individuals being socialized adjust. Becker (1964) explained:

If we view situational adjustment as a major process of personal development, we must look to the character of the situation for the explanation of why people change as they do. . . . All we need to know of the person is that for some reason or another he desires to continue his participation in the situation or to do well in it. From this we can deduce that he will do what he can to do what is necessary in that situation. . . . The structural characteristics of institutions and organizations provide the framework of the situations in which experience dictates the expediency of change. (pp. 44-52)

Van Maanen and Schein (1979), drawing on Schein's (1971) previous work, offered a model for describing structural characteristics of organizational socialization settings that dictate the expediency of change. According to these theorists:

. . . organizations are . . . arenas in which an almost infinite series of negotiated situations arise over who will do what, where when, and in what fashion. Over time, these negotiations result in an emerging set of organizationally defined roles. . . . the set of often diverse behaviors that are more or less expected of persons who occupy a certain defined position. (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, pp. 217-226)

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) conceptualized the structural characteristics of organizationally defined roles using three empirically discernable role dimensions: the functional dimension, the hierarchical dimension, and the inclusionary dimension. The functional role dimension refers to the various tasks performed by organizational members. The hierarchical role dimension focuses on the distribution of responsibility and rank in the organization. The inclusionary role dimension refers to the process of becoming accepted by others as a central and working member of the organization. Members are "included" when they demonstrate that they share the same values, assumptions, and perspectives as the central group. Individuals being socialized adjust to the requirements imposed by organizational role dimensions.

Organizational Socialization  
Outcomes

Interactionists conceptualize socialization outcomes as perspectives on the organizational situation. Perspectives enable individuals to make sense of and cope in a problematic work environment (Becker, 1964; Becker et al., 1961; Jones, 1983; Katz, 1980; Louis, 1980). Van Maanen and Schein (1979) explained:

To come to know an organizational situation and act within it implies that a person has developed some commonsensical beliefs, principles, and understandings, or in shorthand notion, a perspective for interpreting one's experiences in a given sphere of the work world . . . it provides the individual with an ordered view of the work life that runs ahead and guides experience, orders and shapes personal relationships in the work setting, and provides the ground rules under which everyday conduct is to be managed. Once developed, a perspective provides a person with the conventional wisdom that governs a particular context as to the typical features of everyday life [emphasis in the original]. (p. 212)

Katz (1980) elaborated:

Individuals construct situational definitions that serve to account for and anticipate the reoccurring events of everyday life . . . If the newcomer is to develop a realistic understanding of the events and activities taking place around him or her, the person must actively build a situational definition within which certain ideas and assumptions can be tested and interpreted. . . . The individual (must develop) a role identity which will be viable and suitable from both the standpoint of the individual person as well as from the standpoint of other persons within the relevant organizational area. (pp. 82, 92-94)

In this study, the concept of perspective is used to conceptualize socialization outcomes. Perspective refers to:

a coordinated set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation. . . . These thoughts and actions are coordinated in the sense that the actions flow reasonably . . . from the ideas contained in the perspective. . . . The actions flow from the beliefs and the beliefs justify the actions. (Becker et al., 1961, p. 34)

Organizational role learning is conceptualized as a sequential combination of perspectives that accrue as individuals adjust to organizational situations (Becker, 1964).

In summary, within the interactionist framework, socialization takes into account four basic components: socialization processes, individuals being socialized, socialization settings, and socialization outcomes. Socialization is conceptualized as a highly dynamic and fluid process. Individuals being socialized learn to assess changing structures of social situations and learn coping strategies, perspectives, which enable them to make sense of and work in problematic organizational environments.

## CHAPTER II

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

This chapter is organized in three sections. In the first section adult and organizational socialization theories are presented, and sensitizing concepts are defined. In the second section, literature on the socialization of prospective and practicing school administrators is described. In the third section, empirical literature on the assistant principal role is reviewed.

#### Adult and Organizational Socialization Theory

According to Mortimer and Simmons (1978), socialization is a process that must be viewed from the perspective of the group and the individual. They observed:

For the group, socialization is a mechanism through which new members learn the values, norms, knowledge, beliefs, and the interpersonal and other skills that facilitate role performance and further group goals. From the perspective of the individual, socialization is a process of learning to participate in social life . . . The process does not include all changes in personality and behavior . . . but only to the learning that is relevant to social behavior and/or role enactment. (p. 422)

Adult socialization refers to, "socialization after the completion of general education" (p. 422). Adult

socialization tends to occur in formal organizational settings of education and work.

In their review of theoretical and empirical literature on adult socialization, Mortimer and Simmons (1978) identified two general theoretical approaches to the study of adult socialization. One approach views socialization as a predictable process where the socializee's role is relatively passive. According to Mortimer and Simmons, role theorists such as Merton and Brim, identification theorists such as Bandura, and generalization theorists such as Kanter conceptualized socialization as predictable; the individual being socialized changes in response to the actions of the socializing agents or adapts passively to the requirements of the environments.

A second approach to adult socialization views socialization as a fluid process where the socializee is active in determining socialization outcomes. Theories using this approach include symbolic interactionism, exchange theory, and expectancy theory. These theories view socialization as "a dynamic social situation in which both the socializers and the socializees change" (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978, p. 431). According to Mortimer and Simmons, this set of theories:

. . . focuses on outcomes that are considered more specific and likely to shift given new circumstances. . . . the most significant outcome may be the learning of social coping strategies, that is, how to respond to social situations and exert some control over them. (p. 431)

This study is grounded in adult socialization theory that assumes that socialization is a dynamic process where the individual actively participates in the process of shaping the socialization outcomes. Socialization to adult roles consists of three analytically distinct phases; anticipatory socialization; socialization in a new role; and disengagement from an old role (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978). Anticipatory socialization occurs before an individual assumes a new role and focuses on activities that occur in preparation for the new role. Socialization occurs when the individual occupies a new role and includes learning the requirements of the new role and shaping the role in response to the situation and the needs of the individual. In this study, the focus is on the analytically distinct phase of adult socialization that occurs after an individual is in a new organizational role. Three more specific concepts, "perspective," "situational adjustment," and "boundary passages" guided this study.

#### "Perspective"

Becker et al. (1961), in Boys in White: Student Culture in Medical School, contributed to adult socialization theory by describing, "what medical school did to medical students" (p. 17). Working within an interactionist framework, these researchers assumed that:

. . . human behavior is to be understood as a processing which the person shapes and controls his conduct by taking into account . . . the

expectations of others which whom he interacts.  
(p. 19)

Becker et al. (1961) focused on identifying the perspectives that medical students developed while they were in medical school. The results of the study suggested relationships between the organization, the individual, and the socialization outcomes. Becker et al. concluded that "immediate situations exert a compelling influence on individual conduct" (p. 441). These researchers elaborated:

. . . much of human conduct is oriented to the immediate pressures and social controls originating in the situation in which the person is presently acting, and that he will organize his behavior so as to take account of and in some way adjust to them. He adapts his behavior to the situation as he sees it, ignoring possible lines of action which appear preordained to fail or unworkable, discarding those which may cause conflict--in short, choosing the action which seems reasonable and expedient. (p. 442)

This theory suggested that individuals actively choose to adapt their behavior to respond to their perception of the demands of the social situation.

Becker et al.'s (1961) socialization study offered concepts that are useful for studying the outcomes of adult socialization processes--the concepts of perspective and problematic situation. Perspective refers to:

a coordinated set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation. . . . patterns of thought and action which have institutional pressures and serve as a solution to the problems those pressures create. (pp. 34-36)

Becker et al. contended that a perspective contains four elements: a definition of the situation in which the



individual is involved, a statement of goals the individual is trying to achieve, a set of ideas which define that which is expedient and appropriate, and a set of actions or practices that are congruent with the goals. The elements are coordinated in that the actions flow reasonably from the ideas in the perspective; the ideas provide justification for the action.

A perspective differs from values and attitudes in that it is situationally specific. A perspective includes a definition of the situation, a statement or judgment about the nature of the situation, and actions that flow from the statement or judgment. In contrast, values and attitudes are generalized and abstract; they may be applied to many situations. Values and attitudes do not typically refer to actions and dispositions to act (Becker et al., 1961).

According to Becker et al. (1961), a problematic situation occurs when an individual faces a situation that calls for an action that is not dictated by prior beliefs or situational imperatives. As Becker et al. put it:

. . . A person develops and maintains a perspective when he . . . face[s] choice points. . . . where the individual is called on to act, and his choices are not constrained, he will begin to develop a perspective. If a particular kind of situation recurs frequently, the perspective will probably become an established part of a person's way of dealing with the world. (p. 35)

These theorists maintained that a situation does not present the same problem to all individuals. Some individuals will already have a perspective--a way to respond to the

situation. Because these individuals have a perspective, the situation will not be problematic for them. For other individuals, the situation will be problematic; these individuals will experience the situation as a problem, that is, "a question, matter, situation, or person that is perplexing or difficult" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1964, p. 1,161). When individuals experience situations as difficult, they will choose ways of behaving that, over time, enable them to learn to respond effectively to the challenge. Thus, individuals develop perspectives in response to problematic situations (Becker et al., 1961).

#### "Situational Adjustment"

Becker (1964) used the concept of "situational adjustment" to explain change in adult life. According to Becker, situational adjustment is a process in which individuals take on the characteristics required by the social situation. Becker explained:

The person, as he moves in and out of a variety of social situations, learns the requirements of continuing in each situation and of success in it. If he has a strong desire to continue, the ability to assess accurately what is required, and can deliver the required performance, the individual turns himself into the kind of person the situation demands. (p. 44)

Becker maintained that to understand the process of change in adult life, it is necessary to look to the characteristics of the situation. He argued:

All we need to know of the person is that for some reason or another he desires to continue his

participation in the situation or to do well in it. From this we can deduce that he will do what is necessary in that situation. (p. 44)

Becker theorized that the process of adult role learning is constructed by combining sequences of numerous, smaller situational adjustments.

The concept of situational adjustment is a useful tool for analyzing adult socialization processes. The concept suggests that adult socialization is a process of learning the requirements of a situation, learning how to deliver the required performance, and turning oneself into the kind of person that the situation requires. While the situation imposes certain requirements, the individual actively chooses whether and how to respond to the situation.

#### "Boundary Passages"

Schein (1971) conceptualized the career as a process of moving through an organization. This process occurs in basic stages that include pre-entry, entry, basic training, first regular assignment, second assignment, tenure, termination and/or exit. Using these stages, Schein suggested that career movement is basically a process of organizational socialization, followed by a process of performance, followed by a process of either becoming obsolete or learning new skills that lead to further learning.

According to Schein (1971), when individuals enter new organizational roles, they cross boundary passages; that is,

". . . some sequence of moves along these [functional, hierarchical, and inclusionary] paths" (p. 418). Functional boundary passages occur when individuals perform different tasks. Hierarchical boundary passages occur when individuals make changes in their status or rank in the organization. Inclusionary boundary passages occur when individuals move toward or away from the center of the organization's social fabric; movement toward the center indicates that individuals have passed formal or informal tests that assess their fitness for membership. Schein theorized:

Organizational socialization will occur primarily in connection with the passage through hierarchical and inclusion boundaries; efforts at education and training will occur primarily in connection with the passage through functional boundaries. In both instances, the amount of effort at socialization and/or training will be at a maximum just prior to boundary passage, but will continue for some time after boundary passage. (p. 421)

In subsequent work, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) developed an organizational socialization theory that suggested that what individuals learn in an organizational role is a direct result of how they learn it. Van Maanen and Schein defined organizational socialization as, "the process by which one is taught and learns 'the ropes' of a particular organizational role" (p. 211).

Like Becker et al. (1961), Van Maanen and Schein (1979) used the concept of perspective to conceptualize the

outcomes of organizational socialization experiences.

According to Van Maanen and Schein:

To come to know an organizational situation and act within it implies that a person has developed some commonsensical beliefs, principles, and understandings, or in shorthand notion, a perspective for interpreting one's experiences in a given sphere of the work world . . . it provides the individual with an ordered view of the work life that runs ahead and guides experience, orders and shapes personal relationships in the work setting, and provides the ground rules under which everyday conduct is to be managed. Once developed, a perspective provides the ground rules under which everyday conduct is to be managed. Once developed, a perspective provides a person with the conventional wisdom that governs a particular context as to the typical features of everyday life [emphasis in the original]. (p. 212)

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) further postulated that socialization is particularly dramatic when individuals pass through all three boundaries (hierarchical, functional, and inclusionary) at once; individuals passing through all boundaries are especially vulnerable to organizational influence. Van Maanen and Schein also noted that socialization along the inclusionary role dimension is probably more critical for higher-placed members in the organization.

In summary, adult and organizational socialization theories provide the conceptual framework for the study. Becker et al. (1961) and Becker (1964) maintained that the structure of the social situation influences the development of the socialization outcomes--perspectives on an organizational situation. Schein (1971) described

relationships between the organization and the individual. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) theorized that during a socialization stage immediately before and after a career boundary passage, organizational socialization influences are more intense. The constructs of perspective, situational adjustment, and boundary passage are the major theoretical ideas guiding the study.

#### Research on the Socialization of School Administrators

Six studies contribute to a general understanding of the organizational socialization of school administrators, and two of those focus specifically on the socialization of the assistant principal. The results of these studies are summarized next.

#### Socialization of Administrative Candidates

Greenfield (1977a, 1977b) explored socialization conditions and processes that shape candidates' attainment of an administrative perspective. Using the constructs of GASing (Getting the Attention of Superiors), anticipatory socialization, interpersonal orientation, situational adjustment, and organizational space, he analyzed data obtained from 90-minute open-ended interviews with 18 administrative aspirants. The data suggested that analytically oriented candidates tend to be more assertive in adjusting to the ambiguous situation of candidacy; as a

result, these individuals appear to achieve a "fuller" administrative perspective. Affectively oriented individuals seem more complacent in their approach to candidacy; their emerging perspective appears less "full." Greenfield (1977b) concluded:

. . . as the individual is socialized through the life-cycle, he builds up a repertoire of interpersonal responses that condition new-role learning . . . these learned interpersonal orientations (analytic or affective) of individuals seem to interact with situational factors . . . (candidates are processed informally as individuals; candidates are tested in "live" situations; prescriptions for appropriate candidate behavior are ambiguous; and the distance between candidates the reference group varies) . . . and subsequently influence socialization outcomes. Although the degree of intensity of positive orientation to the administrative reference group conditioned whether individuals assumed an assertive or complacent perspective toward the process of candidacy itself, interpersonal orientation appeared to be the most critical variable related to achieving administrative perspective. (pp. 189-191)

In a related study, Greenfield (1985a) used results of a longitudinal study of candidates and novice administrators to explore the thesis that "context" shapes role-learning during candidacy and role-enactment after becoming an assistant principal or a principal. The results of this study showed that socialization processes--characterized as individual, informal, random, variable, serial, and as involving both divestiture and investiture processes (p. 7) --interact with individual dispositions to shape the individuals' perspectives on candidacy and administration. The novice administrators identify four dimensions of the

work context as important determinants of their successful role enactment: relationships with teachers, with the community, with peers and superiors, and the need to develop routines associated with maintaining stability and smooth day-to-day operations. Greenfield concluded that:

. . . the empirical and theoretical literature regarding socialization processes and outcomes offers a powerful basis for explaining why administrators behave as they do--simply stated, they do what they do because that is what they have learned to do and have been rewarded for doing. (p. 43)

#### Socialization of Public School Principals

Duke, Isaacson, Sagor, and Schmuck (1984) studied how individuals learn to become principals by inviting 34 veteran principals and 14 second-year principals to participate in a one-day workshop where they talked and wrote about their first year experiences in the principalship. The findings focused on the issues of the duration of the socialization experience, the mechanisms by which principals are socialized, and the relationship between new principals' expectations and their experience of job realities. Duke et al. reported that the onset of socialization occurs when the individuals decide to become principals; for more than 50%, this occurred after their third year in the classroom. Eighty-three percent of the veterans and 87% of the second-year principals say that they participated in pre-principalship administrative positions



for an average of 3.3 and 5.2 years respectively. Socialization in the position appears to continue for more than a year. While the principals report feeling accepted by faculty, students, and community by the end of their first year, many experienced a "prolonged rookie period" as they worked to establish relations with the central office and other district personnel.

These researchers discussed informal socialization processes. During the socialization experience, other principals in the same school district serve as the major source of support; faculty and assistant administrators, when present, are the primary sources of influence during the first year. Principals experience students as an important source of satisfaction; teachers are the primary source of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction; relationships with other principals and central office personnel are a major source of dissatisfaction.

The researchers also identified "surprises" that the second-year principals experience. These include: the amount of time required for seemingly unimportant chores; unexpected loneliness; unanticipated time pressure; too much and too little power; and the disconcerting feelings of "unpreparedness" (Duke et al., 1984, p. 26). Duke et al. indicated that while surprises can be positive, for these principals, surprises were usually sources of anxiety, upset, and concern. The principals say they felt confused,

uncertain, overwhelmed, isolated, frustrated, disappointed, vulnerable, and guilt over compromised ideals.

Daresh (1987) used intensive, in-depth interviews with 12 first and second year principals to study the socialization of principals. The participants identify three types of problems that they believed limited their first-year effectiveness and leadership. First, principals report the persistent problem of comprehending clearly the nature of their new position. Daresh observed that:

Very few people entering the field of school administration ever stop to question themselves as to what it really means to be a leader, and how to manage and understand the increased power and formal authority that automatically accompany the title of principal. (p. 8)

Second, principals encounter concerns in the area of technical expertise. Specifically, principals report problems with budgeting, legal issues, and implementing system-specific mandates. Principals also find it difficult to deal with interpersonal conflict, and the lack of feedback about whether they were doing what was considered to be a good job. Third, principals report feeling vulnerable in a social and political system they do not fully comprehend. They say they need to learn to "read the signs" of the system and to "understand the proper routes to be taken in order to survive and solve problems in their buildings" (Daresh, 1987, pp. 11-12).

The findings of these studies contribute to an understanding of prospective and practicing administrators'

organizational socialization experiences. They do not, however, show what prospective and practicing administrators learn from their organizational socialization experiences. These findings contribute only to a partial understanding of factors that influence socialization outcomes.

#### Socialization of Assistant Principals

Sandorff's (1980) study of the promotional paths of 11 women principals in the Los Angeles Unified School District offered insight into the socialization of assistant principals. Sandorff reported his expectation that socialization prior to becoming an assistant principal would be most intense; he found, however, that socialization efforts are more intense during the assistant principalship than they are during the candidacy period. The women he interviewed regard the assistant principalship as a "way station" (p. 131) on their path to becoming principals. As assistant principals, the participants report learning to conform to the superior's mode of operation. Collectively, the principals report that the assistant principalship has two main values:

. . . it is training relevant to preparation for the principalship and it is one of the "steps" one normally takes in the progression of experiences leading to the principalship. (p. 128)

Sandorff's data illuminated the assistant principal socialization experience from the perspective of individuals who have become principals. The data do not show how these

women actually experienced the assistant principalship while they were in the position.

Marshall (1985) reported results of a comprehensive, in-depth field study of the enculturation of assistant principals. Preliminary analysis of data derived primarily from three to seven days of observation of each of eight assistant principals suggested that the school organization imposes seven essential enculturation tasks--"hurdles that learning-to-be administrators must overcome" (p. 33). These hurdles include: deciding to leave teaching, analyzing selection processes, maintaining a calm front in the face of culture shock, defining relationships with teachers, learning the art of the street-level bureaucrat, assertively taking areas of responsibility, and adjusting modes and attitudes for discipline management.

Marshall (1985) explained that when they are prospective administrators, assistant principals separate from the teacher normative reference group and form a positive orientation toward administrators. During this stage, women begin to see an opportunity and, with the assistance of sponsors, "gear up" to take advantage of it. Men, in contrast, actively seek tasks that enable them to enter administration, and are "tapped" for leadership positions early in their careers. Candidates analyze the selection process carefully, observing others who seek and succeed in obtaining administrative positions. After

becoming assistant principals, these entry-level administrators experience administration differently enough from teaching that they encounter "culture shock" or "professional shock."

There is a pattern showing that assistant principals live constantly with the stress between their sense of what is right and good for education, their need to display loyalty to the administrator group, and their observing other educators doing things that are, in their minds, wrong or stupid . . . they must not display this shock, must present a united front with other administrators (against teachers, students, district office, even when their sense of professionalism conflicts with this front). "Covering" or finding ways to cope with that shock and continuing to appear competent, calm, and loyal are essential enculturation tasks. (p. 42)

Marshall's (1985) study also showed that assistant principals engage in a process of separating from and defining relationships with teachers. They develop a "we-they" role orientation that enables the assistants to feel comfortable with enforcing policies and evaluating teachers. Assistant principals learn "street level bureaucracy"-- coping mechanisms that help them to sort, interpret, and apply policies in ways that respond to unique contextual demands of each school situation. Because assistant principals' duties and responsibilities are usually defined as "whatever the principal wants" (p. 47), assistants develop strategies that help them cope with the ambiguity of their roles. As part of the enculturation process, assistant principals develop modes for disciplining students and adults. Marshall concluded:

The informal learning on the job transforms idealistic professionals (teachers, entry level, and mid-level administrator) into educators who conform to the realities of education systems. This article has shown assistant principals studying the mobility system and finding out whether they can fit themselves into the values, behaviors, and image of administrator. (p. 53)

She added that these processes may filter out some of "the best and the brightest" (p. 54).

Marshall's (1985) findings have contributed to a partial understanding of assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences. While her findings showed common situations that assistant principals' experience as problematic and offered insight into strategies assistants use as they cope with these situations, Marshall did not systematically describe the perspectives that emerged from the assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences, nor did she clearly identify conditions and processes that affected the various learning outcomes.

In summary, the results of these studies on the organizational socialization of prospective and practicing school administrators and of assistant principals suggest tentative conclusions:

1. Organizational socialization processes tend to be informal and unplanned (Duke et al., 1984; Greenfield, 1977a, 1977b, 1985a).

2. Socialization processes appear to be most powerful immediately preceding and following appointment (Daresh,

1987; Duke et al., 1984; Greenfield, 1977a, 1977b, 1985a; Sandorff, 1980).

3. Organizational conditions--the unique contextual demands of the school situation--may be powerful determinants of socialization outcomes immediately following appointment (Duke et al., 1984; Greenfield, 1985a).

4. Interpersonal orientations may be the critical variable shaping socialization outcomes during candidacy (Greenfield, 1977a, 1977b, 1985a).

5. A "full" administrative perspective, oriented to the complexity of the school organization, may emerge as an outcome of organizational socialization processes (Greenfield, 1977a, 1977b, 1985a).

6. Administrators believe that formal university course work has little impact on their performance in their administrative roles (Duke et al., 1984; Greenfield, 1977a, 1977b, 1985a).

7. Assistant principals learn about administrative roles as candidates during an anticipatory socialization stage and as assistant principals during a socialization stage (Marshall, 1985; Sandorff, 1980).

8. The assistant principals' socialization experience in the role is more intense than the anticipatory socialization experience during candidacy (Sandorff, 1980).

9. Principals appear to exert a powerful influence on the socialization of assistant principals (Marshall, 1985; Sandorff, 1980).

10. Principals perceive assistant principal experience as important preparation for the role of principals (Sandorff, 1980).

#### The Role of the Assistant Principal

As noted in Chapter I, researchers who have studied assistant principals have, for the most part, used survey techniques to identify perceptions of duties, tasks, and functions assigned to the role. Very few researchers have focused on understanding the assistant principals' work experiences. Very few researchers have offered theoretically-informed descriptions or explanations of the assistant principals' role or of consequences of experience in the role. Greenfield's (1984) review of the literature on assistant principals concluded:

. . . the literature on the vice principalship  
. . . contributes little to increasing the field's  
knowledge about the role or the work of the  
assistant principal, the administrative career in  
education, or the social dynamics of working in  
and administering schools. (p. 4)

In her book on assistant principals, Marshall (1992) reported similar observations: "few researchers have paid attention to the assistant principalship" (p. 3). Research that has focused on assistant principals tends to report



"the unflattering stereotype of drill sergeant disciplinarian" (p. 37). She added:

Most of the studies of assistant principals have been normative studies . . . these ways of understanding lead to dead ends--to seeing the assistant principal as hatchet man, activity coordinator, handyman, and fire fighter . . . (p. 37)

Five studies contributing to an understanding of the assistant principals' work and role are summarized next.

Austin and Brown (1970) conducted a comprehensive, three-phase survey, shadow, and career study of assistant principals. The results of a national survey of more than 1,100 assistant principals and 1,200 principals indicated that: assistant principals do "practically everything" (p. 46); assistant principals are rarely assigned full responsibility for executing these tasks; the duties assigned to assistant principals rarely require or permit high-level discretionary behavior; assistant principals and principals perceive assistants' work in pupil personnel, school management, staff personnel, and curriculum and instruction as more important than work in community relations and student activities; principals tend to perceive the role as more important than assistant principals perceive it; as groups, assistant principals and principals hold similar perceptions of the responsibilities, the importance of these activities, and the amount of discretion required to perform these tasks; and considerable

variation in responsibilities assigned to the role exists from school to school.

The results of Austin and Brown's (1970) one-week shadow studies of 18 assistant principals and interviews with assistant principals, principals, teachers, students, and other school personnel showed that: responsibility for discipline and attendance is the one duty characteristic of the assistant principalship; assistant principals spend most of their time in the "front office;" they deal primarily in face-to-face interactions with teachers and students; assistants initiate conferences in response to "happenings" in which the assistant principal was not initially involved; and they take final action on many matters that come to their attention. The interview data with "teachers and students . . . [who] see the assistant principal as he is" (p. 21) revealed that the assistants are perceived as "invaluable," "vital," "important," and "irreplaceable" (pp. 20-21). Austin and Brown concluded that the assistant principal is "pretty much the person that actually kept things going" (pp. 23). They offered the comments of one observer to support this contention:

In essence, the assistant held things together; he was the man who was the operational leader on an hour-to-hour basis . . . Beneath all the trivia there is an important fact lurking--the assistant principal is the man who makes the school go. He is the one who plugs the gaps wherever they are and sees that things get done. The principal is the figurehead who can communicate upward. The assistant is the link with the outside. He is,

incidentally, the link to the principal for most teachers. (p. 23)

Finally, the findings of their career survey of 419 former assistant principals indicated that more than half of the respondents report a late entry (11 or more years) into the assistant principalship, less than 40% planned to make the assistant principalship a career position when they were first appointed, and less than 50% report that they were "very satisfied" as assistant principals. The researchers also noted the results of the assistant principal survey that show that only 16% of the urban assistants, 20% of the suburban assistants, and 20% of the assistants in rural areas prefer to remain in the assistant principalship.

After analyzing the essential findings of their three-phase study, Austin and Brown (1970) concluded that:

1. In today's larger secondary schools, the assistant principal is essential to the effective functioning of that school.
2. The assistant principal is primarily concerned with people and their relationships as established, stressed, and threatened within the milieu of the school.
3. Critical to the understanding of any assistant principalship at any time is the peculiar relationship between the principal and the assistant principal.
4. There seems to be ample reason to question the commonly held belief that the assistant principalship is a necessary step in the preparation of those who will serve as effective school principals.
5. The satisfactions to be found in the assistant principalship are few and unimpressive to most who occupy this office.

6. The assistant principal tends to be an intermediary. (pp. 75-79)

The researchers added:

Preparation for long-range planning, for program leadership and for educational statesmanship of the order required of superior school principals is no doubt more effectively provided through other experiences that are clearly different from the assistant principalship. Tradition has long held that a principal must suffer, even if only briefly, the office of the assistant principalship in order to qualify for his higher post . . . Yet, the assistant principalship is of questionable value as an effective step in the preparation of successful principals. It may separate those who "can take it" from those of a more sensitive or fragile make-up; it may serve a useful purpose as a screening device. But in the actual preparation of educational leaders, little evidence has been secured in this inquiry to substantiate that such an initiation should be required. (pp. 77-78)

Austin and Brown cautioned, however, that:

The position on which this study rests continues to be that the function of building-level school administration is to provide instructional leadership . . . those who do not view (the assistant principalship) with the same concern . . . would make observations and suggestions that would differ somewhat from those made here. (pp. 85-86)

Reed and Himmler (1985) conducted a field study of four assistant principals who were assigned primary responsibility for student discipline, observing each for approximately seven hours. Their narrative showed the assistants engaging in problem prevention activities-- patrolling their campuses to find out that is going on, and using their personal presence to present images such as "policeman" and "father confessor." The assistants act swiftly when problems occur by issuing verbal commands to

minor offenders, sending more serious offenders to the office, and escorting students who are involved in very serious problems to the office. Reed and Himmler reported that while the assistants have responsibilities other than discipline, "patrolling, disciplining, and responding to a variety of other problems and emergencies all take precedence over other assignments" (p. 64).

Reed and Himmler (1985) concluded that four characteristics describe the nature of the assistant principals' disciplinary work. First, the assistants work primarily with students and not adults. Second, assistant principals are expected to respond to events immediately; as a result, they have an unscheduled work day. Third, because most of their time and attention is devoted to student discipline, "the negative side of the school" (p. 80), the assistant principals tend to develop a negative orientation to students in general. Finally, assistant principals find it difficult to claim credit for being effective because student discipline problems do not diminish in their schools.

Working from these data, Reed and Himmler (1985) developed grounded theory to explain assistant principals' impact on their school organizations. Reed and Himmler contended that organizational stability is viewed as problematic in schools, and is maintained through the supervision tasks of monitoring, supporting, and remediating

student behavior. Assistant principals monitor the school-work situation; they support instances that reinforce desired values and behaviors; assistants remediate situations that threaten stability. These researchers theorized that:

Secondary assistant principals as school administrators are charged with establishing and maintaining organizational stability. With respect to establishing organizational stability in large, comprehensive, public high schools, an assistant principal likely has the task of establishing the schools' master schedule and developing the schools's activity calendar. With respect to maintaining the stability of the school, one or more assistant principals likely have the task of supervising students, particularly when they are not under the direct supervision of teachers. (p. 82)

McDonald (1981) used Mintzberg's model to determine the nature of the work day of the urban assistant principal. The findings of McDonald's 25 day shadow study of five urban assistant principals contributed to an understanding of the nature of assistant principals' work activities, and illustrated similarities in superintendents', principals', and assistant principals' work activities.

McDonald's (1981) findings showed that the pace of assistants' work days ranges from "frenetic to merely busy" (p. 141). Their activities are characterized by brevity and fragmentation; 75% of all work day activities lasted less than nine minutes. Assistant principals interact with large numbers of people, averaging 186 people per day. Assistants interact most frequently with subordinates--teachers,

secretaries, aides, and custodians (49% of the contacts). Interaction with clients, students and their parents, ranks second (26% of the contacts). Assistants interact infrequently with their principals (5% of the contacts). McDonald concluded that the assistant principals' work day is largely verbal and people oriented.

McDonald (1981) compared her findings with results obtained in other structured-observation studies: Crowson and Porter-Gehrie's and Peterson's studies of principals; and Pitner's study of superintendents. Principals' and assistant principals' activities are characterized by brevity and fragmentation; superintendents, principals, and assistant principals initiate more than half of their interactions; superintendents and assistant principals interact most frequently in dyads; and a high proportion of superintendents' and assistant principals' contacts and contact time is devoted to information processing.

McCarthy (1987) surveyed 20% of the assistant principals in Massachusetts to identify substantive issues with respect to the assistant principals' work-life, and conducted in-depth interviews with 14 assistant principals for the purpose of understanding, from the participants' perspective, the assistant principals' work experience and the meanings they attach to this experience. McCarthy's interview data showed several recurring themes. First, assistant principals' work-lives are characterized by

irregularity, interruption, unpredictable crises, and an inability to follow a daily schedule. To minimize this lack of control, assistant principals establish an early morning routine that enables them to impose structure on what will become an unpredictable day. Second, assistant principals work-lives are characterized by continual interactions-- interactions involving people in conflict. McCarthy observed that:

. . . the real conflicts, the real sources of tension and dissatisfaction are not the result of student-assistant principal interaction . . . the real conflicts are a by-product of interaction with staff, most especially with jaded, long-tenured teachers who bring their frustrations, their disappointments, and dissatisfactions to the work environment . . . this, then is the difference between the teacher and the assistant principal . . . in the teacher's view, as expressed by assistant principals, every problematic action, every error is, at the moment of occurrence, symptomatic of some larger problem that is not being addressed. . . . To the assistant principal, on the other hand, most instances of student misbehavior are just that-- instances to be dealt with accordingly. (pp. 172-173)

Third, McCarthy (1987) reported that the principal is the critical determinant of the assistant principals' role, involvement in the school, the significance of the experience, the degree of the assistants' growth or stagnation, and ultimately of the assistant principals' effectiveness and satisfaction. She described three types of relationships: in some schools, the principal monitors and controls the relationship, maintaining on-going, one-way communication; in other schools, the principal and assistant



principal relationship is non-existent, and as a result, assistant principals respond initially with "false optimism" and subsequently with resentment and diminishing effectiveness; in a few schools, the principals and assistants maintain a balanced relationship which facilitates shared leadership and respect for varying perspectives and abilities. This third type of relationship, while "more the exception than the rule" (p. 175), contributes to the greatest degree of job satisfaction and effectiveness.

Fourth, McCarthy (1987) reported that the nature of the assistants' work experience is characterized by:

. . . few opportunities for professional challenge and little involvement in other than supervision of students, corridors, cafeterias, and school yards . . . the assistant principal's desire for greater involvement in teacher selection and evaluation, in staff development issues, and in curriculum development and program development remains largely unaccomplished. The result for assistant principals is a generally unsatisfying work-life. The role limitations result in repetition of activities, and often times trivial tasks and in professional stagnation. More than this, given the nature of the defined role, the involvements present few opportunities for positive encounters and professional growth. (p. 176)

In her book on assistant principals, Marshall (1992) used a review of the literature and insights gained from her analysis of case studies of 20 assistant principals to make observations about assistant principals' tasks and roles. Marshall reported that assistant principals have tasks in common: they handle conferences with parents and students;

they monitor student behavior; they develop the master schedule; they counsel and guide students; they carry out public relations tasks; and some take an interest in improving instruction.

In her analysis of the assistant principals' role, Marshall (1992) indicated that the role is characterized by role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload. Assistant principals experience role ambiguity because they tend not to have consistent, well-defined position descriptions and are assigned duties that include many "gray areas." Assistant principals experience role conflict because their responsibilities are at "cross-purposes" (p. 6). She cited as an example the necessity to work as a colleague with a teacher on a curriculum development project and chastise the same teacher for noncompliance with a school policy. Assistant principals experience role overload when they discover that it is not possible to perform all assigned responsibilities adequately.

Marshall (1992) offered two additional insights into the assistant principals' role. First, she concluded that:

. . . there exist no substantial differences between the roles of the assistant principal in the junior or senior high schools in urban, suburban, or rural schools. (p. 3)

Second, she concluded that assistant principals do essentially the same work as principals. The difference between the assistant principals' role and the principals' role is that the assistant principals "lack the position,

power, and status of the principal, and remain dependent on the principal" (p. 3).

In summary, the results of studies on the assistant principals' work and role suggest that:

1. Assistant principals do "practically everything" (Austin & Brown, 1970; Pellicer, Anderson, Keefe, Kelley, & McCleary, 1988) and that they perform many of the same tasks as principals perform (Marshall, 1992).

2. Assistant principals perform functions necessary for organizational stability (Austin & Brown, 1970; Marshall, 1992; Reed & Himmler, 1985) and for improving instruction (Anderson, 1984; Hall & Guzman, 1984; Leabo, 1985; Marshall, 1992; Smith, 1987).

3. Assistant principals' work is characterized by interruption, fragmentation, and unpredictability (Marshall, 1992; McCarthy, 1987; McDonald, 1981; Reed & Himmler, 1985).

4. Assistant principals may experience role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload (Marshall, 1992; McCarthy, 1987).

5. Assistant principals work with people in conflict and crisis situations (Austin & Brown, 1970; Marshall, 1992; McCarthy, 1987; Reed & Himmler, 1985).

6. The real conflict for assistant principals may occur as a result of their interactions with teachers (Marshall, 1985; McCarthy, 1987).

7. The principal is the primary determiner of the assistant principals' role responsibilities (Austin & Brown, 1970; Marshall, 1985, 1992; McCarthy, 1987).

#### Chapter Summary

In this chapter, theories of adult socialization and organizational socialization were presented. Literature on the socialization of prospective and practicing administrators and on the socialization of assistant principals was reviewed. Literature on the work and roles of assistant principals was summarized. Three specific constructs guided this study of the organizational socialization of assistant principals: perspective, situational adjustment, and boundary passage.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the procedures that were used to develop an understanding of perspectives that emerge from assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences. An overview of the research model is provided and participant selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures are described.

#### The Research Model

The constant comparison research model is appropriate for pursuing this study's purpose, and is consonant with the interactionist premise that establishes this study's methodological foundation:

. . . the genuine mark of an empirical science is to respect the nature of its empirical world . . . procedures of inquiry . . . should be done by direct examination of the actual empirical social world . . . Exploration and inspection, representing respectively depiction and analysis, constitute the necessary procedure in direct examination of the empirical social world.  
(Blumer, 1969, pp. 46-48)

The constant comparison research model integrates exploration and inspection processes by providing a strategy for using empirical data to generate theory grounded in the reality of the empirical world. Grounded theory is derived

inductively from data, and is illustrated by characteristic examples of the data. The theory "must fit the situation being researched, and work when put into use" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 3).

The constant comparison model is grounded in two basic premises. First, "generating a theory involves a process of research. . . . Theory as process . . . renders quite well the reality of social interaction and its structural context" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 6-32). Theory as process does not seek to verify a priori assumptions, propositions, and hypotheses about the phenomena to be investigated. Theory as process is an ever-developing entity that is derived from data, not deduced from a priori assumptions. Throughout the research process, the researcher selects data, creates methods, makes strategic decisions, and takes instrumental actions in response to the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The challenge in using this model is not to seek answers, but to work with the data and ask: "What questions do the data raise?" "Where do I go next?" "For what theoretical purpose?"

Second, data are collected, coded, and analyzed, using theoretical sampling procedures. Theoretical sampling is:

. . . the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes . . . data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop . . . theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is

controlled by the emerging theory . . . the initial decisions for theoretical collection of data are based only on a general sociological perspective and on a general subject or problem area. . . . Theoretical sampling . . . provid[es] constant direction to research, [and] gives the [researcher] momentum, purpose and confidence . . . in [the] categories, since they have emerged from the data and are constantly being selectively reformulated by them. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 45-76)

Thus, three operations are conducted: the researcher systematically chooses comparison groups on the basis of their relevance to the emerging theory; the researcher allows the emerging theory to control the data collection process by continuously seeking theoretically relevant data that both minimize and maximize differences among the comparison groups and the emerging categories; and the researcher systematically generates theory by coding and analyzing data--identifying categories, properties of categories, and relationships among categories--and by integrating the categories and their properties, and delimiting the theory.

Guided by these premises, this study of organizational socialization did not seek to verify a priori assumptions about the content of the administrative perspectives that emerged from assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences or about the mechanisms that influence the emergence of these learning outcomes. Data derived inductively were used to generate theory that "fits" the assistant principals' socialization experience and

"works" as a means of explaining how elements of the socialization experience interact and influence assistant principals' emerging administrative perspectives (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

### Selecting the Participants

The constant comparison model offers guidelines for selecting participants. Initially, the researcher identifies groups for comparison. If necessary, groups can be artificially created, as long as the researcher recognizes that these groups are an artifact of the research design. Through the process of choosing and creating comparison groups, the researcher controls the scope of the population and the conceptual level of the theory, and provides for simultaneous maximization or minimization of differences and similarities. Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasized:

This control over similarities and differences is vital for discovering categories, and for developing and relating their theoretical properties, all necessary for the further development of an emergent theory. By maximizing or minimizing the differences among comparative groups, the sociologist can control the theoretical relevance of . . . data collection.  
(p. 55)

Beyond the initial selection decisions, however, the principle of theoretical sampling is used in selecting additional groups. As the theory emerges, the theory points to the next data sources or theoretical categories needing



exploration. The researcher addresses the questions: "What groups or subgroups does one turn to next in data collection? And for what theoretical purpose?" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 47).

The researcher contacted personnel offices in suburban school districts to locate participants for this study. The researcher requested that directors of personnel identify high school assistant principals who were in their first, second, and third year in the position. The researcher also asked the directors about the assistant principals' role responsibilities.

The first two participants in the initial phase of this study were selected using criteria derived from Katz's (1980) temporal stage model. Katz contended that individuals' perspectives change systematically over time as individuals progress through socialization, innovation, and adaptation cycles in the organization. Katz also contended that individuals are more vulnerable to organizational influence during a socialization stage that lasts up to approximately six months; during the innovation stage, at some point after the sixth month in the organization, individuals are more likely to influence the organization. Hypothetically, then, assistant principals' perspectives differ according to the amount of time they have been in the position. Initially, they are more likely to be influenced by the organization; subsequently, however, they are more

likely to influence the organization. Thus, the criterion satisfied in selecting the first set of participants is the number of years incumbents have held the position.

An assistant principal with less than one year of experience as high school assistant principals--an individual who was hypothetically in the socialization stage, and an assistant principal with three years of experience--individuals who were hypothetically in the innovation stage--were located for the first phase of this inquiry. Data collected from these participants were used to artificially create two comparison groups: the novice group, assistants experiencing the socialization stage; and the experienced group, assistants experiencing the innovation stage. Using the processes of minimizing and maximizing differences, similarities and differences in the "novice" and "experienced" assistant principals' perspectives were explored.

Subsequent selection decisions were made following the guidelines of theoretical sampling as the researcher addressed the questions: "What groups do I include next?" "For what theoretical purpose?" The researcher continued to explore similarities and differences that occurred over time, and pursued new avenues of comparison as suggested by the data including gender, and the nature of role responsibilities (assistant for discipline and assistant for instruction comparison groups). These selection decisions

were made on the basis of their relevance to the emerging theory, with recognition that the choices made impacted the scope and the conceptual level of the theory that was generated. The content of the decisions and the rationale for decisions were systematically documented. Following the principle of ongoing inclusion, additional participants were included until the theoretical categories appear saturated--that is, until no new and unexplainable data were found.

#### Collecting the Data

The "best" method for obtaining data is "the collection technique that can best obtain the information desired, provided that conditions permit its use in some manner" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 66). After identifying the technique that yields the most meaningful information and evaluating the strengths and limitations of the technique against what could have been learned using other techniques (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973), the focused interview was selected as the primary data collection technique for this study. The focused interview, a relatively open-ended interview technique, was appropriate in this study because: participants had been involved in a particular concrete situation; the researcher had analyzed the content of the situation, and had identified the hypothetically significant elements, patterns, and structure of the situation; the

researcher had developed an interview guide that identifies the major areas of inquiry; and the interview was focused on the subjective experiences of the participant in the situation (Merton & Kendall, 1946).

The primary purpose of the focused interview is to acquire data that elicits participants' meanings. As people tell what they do and why they do it, they reveal their perceptions of themselves and their symbolic experiences in their worlds (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). To elicit participant meaning, two interviews were scheduled with each assistant principal. Different kinds of questions were used in each. In the initial interview, unstructured and semi-structured questions, designed to elicit the participants' subjective experiences (Merton & Kendall, 1946), and rhetorical questions that aimed to elicit the who, what, when, where, why, and how of events were posed. In subsequent interviews, devils' advocate, propositional, hypothetical, and posing-the-ideal questions that challenged the participants' assertions were used in confirming and modifying the emerging theoretical categories, the properties of these categories, and the relationships between the categories (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The interview guides are included in Appendix A.

While the interviews were being conducted, provisional criteria enabled the researcher to monitor and adjust strategies as appropriate:

**Nondirection:** In the interview, guidance and direction by the interviewer should be at a minimum.

**Specificity:** Subjects' definition of the situation should find full and specific expression.

**Range:** The interview should maximize the range of evocative stimuli and responses reported by the subject.

**Depth and personal context:** The interview should bring out the affective and value-laden implications of the subjects' responses, to determine whether the experience had central or peripheral significance. It should elicit the relevant personal context, the idiosyncratic associations, beliefs, and ideas. (Merton & Kendall, 1946, p. 545)

By following these guidelines, and using procedures such as asking several levels of questions, working from a "suggestive" interview guide, exercising a minimum of guidance, making transitions that extended the interview range, and focusing on feelings, the "success" of the interview was improved (Merton & Kendall, 1946).

Recognizing that "There is no more important tactic . . . than to communicate the idea that the informant's views are acceptable and important" (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 74), the interviews were conducted as purposeful conversations where the researcher behaved in ways that aimed to build rapport and communicate understanding, encouragement, genuine interest, and respect. The

researcher's personal experience in school- and district-level administrative positions enabled the research to "talk the talk" of the assistant principals. In addition, because two interviews were held with each participant, the interviews were conceptualized as a cumulative experience. Effort was made to provide continuity in relationships and to create conditions that balanced the need for comparability of content with the need to ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to share their own unique, subjective experiences.

Logistical issues impact the success of the interviews. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were tape recorded. As soon as was feasible after the interview, observation notes and verbatim transcripts were prepared. The initial interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes; duration, however, was modified as the situation warranted. Interviews were conducted in settings where the potential for interruption was minimized. The researcher preserved the anonymity of all participants.

The decision to use interviews as the primary data collection technique recognizes the strengths and limitations of the interview method. The strengths of the focused interview lie in the potential for collecting data in the participants' own words, discovering internal states such as attitudes and beliefs, reconstructing the past and projecting into the future, focusing more directly on the

study's central questions, and efficiently gathering information from a number of participants (Arnold, 1982; Crowson, 1987; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).

Interviews are limited in that individuals may be limited in their ability to describe and explain their own actions (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973), participants may intentionally or unintentionally "lie, evade, or otherwise deceive" (Van Maanen, 1983, p. 45) the researcher; and people may resist telling the interviewer things the researcher might want to hear (Becker & Geer cited in Manis & Meltzer, 1972). In addition, interviews constitute a situation in their own right--a situation that differs from the "real" situation in which the individuals actually participate (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). By being aware of limitations such as these, requiring participants to give specific, concrete examples, checking and cross checking statements during subsequent interviews, and establishing rapport with participants, the limitations of interviewing were addressed (Blase, 1980).

#### Analyzing the Data

The purpose of the constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis is "to generate theory . . . systematically . . . by using explicit coding and analytic procedures" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 102). Constant comparative analysis is a four-stage process that includes:

1. comparing incidents applicable to each category,
2. integrating categories and their properties,
3. delimiting the theory, and
4. writing the theory. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 105)

The method is a "continuously growing process" where

earlier stages . . . remain in operation simultaneously throughout the analysis and each provides continuous development to its successive stage until the analysis is terminated. (p. 105)

The researcher initiates the analysis by coding each incident in the data into as many categories as possible and comparing each incident with previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category. Two types of categories emerge: categories abstracted directly from the language of the participants tend to describe the actual processes and behaviors, and categories constructed by the researcher tend to be the explanations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After coding for a category several times, the researcher begins to consider ideas and theoretical notions. When this occurs, the researcher stops coding and writes a memo to record notions about the emerging theory. These coding and memo writing procedures continue until all data have been collected, analyzed, integrated, and the theory emerges.

As the coding process continues, the analytical units change from incidents to properties of categories that result from comparing incidents. Gradually, relationships between categories are established and the properties of



categories emerge. By constantly comparing each incident that relates to the "accumulated knowledge" on a category, the accumulated knowledge of the category starts to become integrated, and the properties become integrated. Glaser and Strauss (1967) indicated that when data are collected using the strategy of theoretical sampling, as is done in this study, the integration of the theory is more likely to emerge by itself.

Delimiting occurs both at the theory and at the category levels. The theory solidifies as major modifications become fewer and fewer. Subsequent modifications are made only to clarify logic, take out non-relevant properties, integrate details into the major outline, and by reduction. Reduction, a process of discovering underlying uniformities in the categories and their properties, is used to formulate the theory with a smaller set of higher level concepts. As the theory grows, the researcher becomes more select and focused by making a commitment to the categories that are most relevant, thereby reducing the list of categories for collecting and coding the data. Categories are delimited when they become theoretically saturated--no additional data are being found to develop properties.

These processes were applied in this study using the concepts of perspective and temporal framework as the initial analytical categories. The first set of

transcripts, from the first-year and third-year assistant principals, were coded using incidents of situations that assistant principals experience as problematic and incidents of the patterns of thought and action that typified their response in these problematic situations. Similarities between the first- and third-year assistants were maximized for the purpose of identifying the basic properties of the category of perspective. Then, the differences between the assistant principals were maximized.

This process continued while the researcher analyzed the transcripts of four additional participants. The concepts of situational adjustment (Becker, 1964), boundary passages (Schein, 1971; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), and socialization-innovation stages (Katz, 1980; Schein, 1971) emerged as most useful in analyzing the data.

Using constructs abstracted from the language of the participants and sensitizing concepts from the literature, elements that suggested new lines of inquiry were identified, additional participants were selected, and additional interviews were conducted. As the content of the assistant principals' perspectives emerged, the researcher focused increasingly on discovering how the assistant principals' experience of socialization settings and socialization processes affected the emergence of their administrative perspectives.

The constant comparison method of selecting participants, and collecting, coding, and analyzing data continued until the revealed categories appeared saturated. When the researcher was confident that the emerging framework provided a credible, empirically grounded description of the assistant principals' perspectives, and a theoretically coherent explanation of ways the orientations of the individuals, their experiences in socialization settings and their experiences of socialization processes affect assistant principals' emerging administrative perspectives, the final account was written.

#### Chapter Summary

This chapter presents a brief description of the methodological premises and the participant selection, data collection, and data analysis strategies that were used in developing a theoretical understanding of the perspectives that emerge from assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences. Following the guidelines suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the constant comparison model was used to generate grounded theory that explains how the elements of the organizational socialization experience affect the development of the administrative perspectives.

Initially, participants were selected for the purpose of enabling the researcher to explore similarities and

differences in assistant principals' perspectives that emerge over time. Subsequent participant selection decisions were guided by the principle of theoretical sampling; the emerging theory controlled participant selection and data collection decisions. Focused interviews (Merton & Kendall, 1946) served as the primary data collection strategy. Data were analyzed using the strategy described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) for comparing incidents, integrating categories and their properties, and delimiting the theory. When the categories appeared saturated and the researcher felt confident that the emerging theory provided a credible description of assistant principals' perspectives and a coherent explanation of factors in the organizational socialization experience that influenced the emergence of these perspectives, the final account was written.

## CHAPTER IV

### ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS' ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the perspectives that assistant principals have developed or are developing during their organizational socialization experiences and to begin to explain the factors that influence the development of these perspectives. The descriptions and explanations address these questions: What do assistant principals learn from their experiences? What problematic situations do the assistant principals experience? How do the assistant principals describe their own learning processes? What factors appear to account for the perspectives that the assistant principals have developed or are developing during their organizational socialization experiences? The summary that follows provides a brief overview of each of the assistant principal's organizational socialization experiences.

Katie, a third-month assistant principal, is struggling to cope in her new administrative work environment. Katie does not know what she is expected to do, how she is to carry out her administrative role responsibilities, and how she fits in her school organization. Katie has developed a

very narrow perspective--an "it takes time to learn" perspective.

John, a fourth-month assistant principal, is "floundering." John has developed three perspectives: an "it takes time to learn" perspective; a perspective on working for the principal; and a perspective on working with other administrators. John experiences three problematic situations: doing tasks; working with teachers; and balancing his time between his task responsibilities and his responsibilities for working with people.

Sue is a second-year assistant principal who has "stumbled" and has been "humbled" by her learning experiences. During her first year as an assistant principal, Sue developed two perspectives: a perspective on working for the principal and a perspective on doing tasks. Sue also learned that she experiences administration as a paradox. As she puts it:

When I went into administration, I wasn't really sure what I was getting into. The job I was entering was a--was more undefined. It seemed to be, from the outsider's perspective, a job that had more to do with paper and less to do with people. It had more to do with systems and less to do with human behavior and interaction. It had more to do with controlling humans, interacting with humans in terms of disciplinary situations, rather than in terms of nurturing situations.

What I learned in that first year was that neither was true. That administration could be and was a blend of both. Both nurturing and disciplinary situations, of a human and a paper situation. It was a kind of paradoxical situation.

Sue is struggling with two problematic situations: she has not yet developed strategies for working effectively with the teachers she supervises; and she has not yet learned how to balance her time between her task and people responsibilities.

Diane, a fourth-month assistant principal, describes herself as "learning." Diane has developed a perspective on working for and with her principal. Diane has also learned to balance her time between her task and people responsibilities. She believes she has no choice but to give priority to people. Diane experiences working with teachers as a problematic situation. In response, Diane is developing a perspective on working effectively with the teachers she supervises.

Sandy is a second-year assistant principal who "loves" her work. Sandy has developed an integrated perspective on her assistant principal role that enables her to work for the principal, work with other assistant principals, carry out her task responsibilities, work effectively with teachers, and balance her time between her task and people responsibilities.

Rick is a third-year assistant principal who has acquired a deep understanding of teaching and administering. Rick has developed a highly-integrated perspective that guides the choices he makes in his role: he views his paper and system responsibilities as services to teachers and

actively engages teachers in sustained dialogue about the services he offers. Rick clearly articulates his administrative perspective: "The assistant principal is one who focuses on the needs of adults and helps them get their work done." He describes a rich set of strategies that he uses "to improve the quality of the work life for teachers in the building."

Katie's Organizational Socialization Experience:  
It Takes Time to Learn Perspective

Katie is a third-month assistant principal in a suburban high school of 1,150 students. Katie is a member of an administrative team consisting of an experienced male principal who is new to the school this year, a male assistant principal who has worked in this school as an assistant principal for student management for two years and for curriculum and staff development for three years, a male assistant principal who is responsible for student management, and Katie. Katie is responsible for guidance and counseling.

Katie reports having six years previous administrative experience: two years as a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) responsible for coordinating the federal Chapter I reading programs; two and one half years as a program assistant in the state's professional organization for administrators; and six months as an acting assistant principal for student management in her current school.



Katie was hired as acting assistant principal by the previous principal. Katie went through a formal selection process and was hired as assistant principal by her new principal and a new deputy superintendent in the district.

Problematic Situations:  
Administrative Work

Katie seemed eager to describe her experiences as an assistant principal. When she began describing her work situation, it was immediately apparent that Katie was struggling in her new role. Katie says:

Being a leader in a school . . . It's just incredible! You never know what your day is going to be like. You go to school thinking that you're going to accomplish so much, and it can change after five minutes. Something will come up . . . and you will spend your whole day trying to resolve it.

And then you never know if you made the right decision. Sometimes you are forced to make decisions just like that. And that's another thing. I didn't know how many times I would be confronted with needing to make a decision. The classified staff--my secretaries will come to me. The counselors will come to me. The students will come to me. My dealing with the student leaders, they'll come to me all of the time asking for stuff, asking for this, asking for that. Quick decisions. Parents calling me and wanting me to make a quick decision. So you are continually confronted with making quick decisions.

And you never really know what you should be doing. I'm new! I may come to school and I don't have any thing real important on my schedule and I think, well okay, I should be sitting here all day trying to catch up with my paper work. I should be out doing formal observations. How should I spend my day? What would be the best use of my time? And there are days that I honestly am not knowing how to balance my time. And when I do spend time doing paper work, I feel guilty that I

shouldn't be doing it. I don't know if other administrators feel that. There's also my need to do a good job to be an instructional leader. To go into the classroom and not just give feedback, but give constructive feedback and some real specific recommendations about how to improve that person's instruction.

These comments show that Katie never knows what her day is going to be like, whether she is doing things right, how to balance her time, and what she is expected to do. She is experiencing the situational requirements of school administration--the immediacy, unpredictability, diversity, and pace of administrative work as a problematic situation. She is also trying to cope with ambiguity: Did I do it right? Am I doing what I am expected to do?

Katie indicates that the technical requirements of her counseling and guidance responsibilities are also a challenge. She says.

I'm not on top of things. I don't know everything I need to know about counseling. We have a head counselor who has been my mentor. She thinks I have a lot to learn and that I'm scattered. I do act like an air-head. She has to repeat things four or five times. I don't have a counseling background and I have a learning disability in counseling.

When she does not know about counseling, Katie becomes "scattered" and "acts like an air-head." Not knowing about counseling is a source of frustration for Katie.

Katie also perceives working with the counselors she supervises as a challenge. She believes that the counselors perceive themselves as "experts" in everything. Katie says

she typically responds to counselors by trying to please them. Katie explains:

One of the challenges is to make a decision quickly and not be afraid of the ramifications, even if people get angry with you. . . . That's one thing that has been tough on me. I'm getting better at not just being a pleaser, but to know what's in the best interest of kids.

My counselors are hard to confront because they are very set in their ways. Many of them feel they are the experts in everything. I probably try to please them more than any other group. . . . I'm not good at saying, "No," to the counselors. I like to say, "Yes," because it makes them happy.

My nature is to say, "Yes." Saying yes is an easy way to please people. I don't like to disappoint people. I don't like to cause controversy. . . . I don't want to say, "No."

These comments suggest that Katie perceives herself as having only two options when she works with the counselors she supervises. She can say, "Yes," and please them, or she can say, "No," and disappoint them or cause them to be angry. Katie does not appear to be able to draw upon strategies that would enable her to engage the counselors in discussion about issues and to resolve conflict through dialogue.

The preceding comments show that Katie experiences the ambiguity, immediacy, unpredictability, diversity, and pace of administrative work as a problematic situation. The comments also show that Katie experiences the task requirements of her guidance and counseling role, as well as the requirement to work effectively with the counselors she

supervises as problematic situations. Katie also does not know how to balance her time between doing paper work and being an instructional leader. Her comments about instructional leadership suggest that she equates leadership with teacher evaluation. Her strategy for evaluating teachers is giving them constructive feedback--that is, telling them how to improve. Her strategy for working with counselors is to tell them "yes" or "no."

Problematic Situations:  
Working for and with  
Administrators

The ambiguity Katie experiences appears to occur primarily because Katie does not know what her principal expects and does not feel included as a member of her administrative team. Katie says that she never knows what she should be doing. She does not appear to understand what her principal expects her to do; she does not receive feedback from her principal; and she does not receive recognition from her administrative team:

My principal hasn't really said anything critical. He just hasn't said anything. I'd like to hear how I'm doing. I don't feel real comfortable going to my principal because I'm really proud. If he has any concerns he will come to me.

If you sit around and wait to receive recognition from others, then you wait a long time. It's a real lonely job. My administrative team--they're not going to give it to me.

Men are the most severe critics of women. They're tough with them. It's tough being a woman in administration at the high school . . . [They] kind of make fun. They like to. They find a

target. And I'm a good one. I'm a very vulnerable person.

I'm one of these people who likes to know everything. When I'm not informed or when I find out that I am the last one to know, that bothers me! I wish I knew more. I wish I were on top of everything. I can't expect to know everything. But I want to know everything.

Katie is lonely in her new role, she does not feel included by the male administrative team. She appears to see her administrative colleagues as a means of acquiring knowledge; she seems to be saying if they keep her informed, she will more likely be on top of everything. Katie experiences not knowing how she fits and how to cope with the functional requirements of her role as a problematic situation.

#### How is Katie Learning?

Katie appears to be learning in four ways: she is observing her principal; she is comparing herself to her principal; she is asking another assistant principal questions; and she is experimenting with behaviors to see what works for her as an administrator. Katie is using these processes to determine the requirements of her administrative work situation and to assess her ability to be successful in this work situation.

Katie is observing her principal to determine how administrators behave. She sees that:

My principal is very goal oriented and has very high expectations for his administrative team. He is--I don't want to say that he is not as much of a people person as my other principal. He doesn't take the time to sit around and "BS" as much and

do a lot of small talk. He is a very hard worker and he is a wonderful role model. So let me tell you, we all, not just me, but the other vice principals--we're just up to our buns. He doesn't talk off the top of his head. He's very articulate. When he speaks, everybody listens. He's always very well prepared. Even if it's just an encounter with a parent, or with a couple of students. He always does his homework ahead of time. So, he's a real polished individual. He comes across very polished. He's very nice looking, he's very bright, he's very articulate.

Katie notices that her current principal may not be as much of a people person as the individual who was principal while she was an acting assistant principal for six months. Her new principal does not sit around, "BS," or make small talk. Katie's new principal is a "hard worker," "does his homework," and "is polished and articulate."

Katie compares herself to her new principal. She decides:

I think it's of the utmost importance to be a professional. And I always feel I have. There've been a few times that I've almost lost it, but I don't want anyone to see that.

She adds, "It's also important to be very organized and polished when I come across to people." Katie knows that it is important for her to behave more like the principal. She also decides that she does not want to take on all of the behaviors she observes in her new principal. She explains:

I am my own person too. And my principal is very serious and comes across at times as being very intense. My nature is real approachable. And real warm. And I think that we need somebody on the administrative team like that.

Katie believes she can contribute to her administrative team by being more of a people person like her former principal.

Katie is also learning by asking a more experienced assistant principal questions. While she was hesitant at first because she did not want to ask a lot of stupid questions, Katie has learned that he really "understands the make up of the school." Katie also observes that this assistant principal is "grooming himself" to become a principal. She believes that because he has become "more sensitive" and "more of a people person," he is now ready to be a principal.

Finally, Katie appears to be experimenting with behaviors that she believes will help her acquire the knowledge she needs to feel included. She draws upon what she perceives as her strengths and interacts with staff:

I'm approachable. I'm sensitive. I'm a good listener . . . I'm a real good bullshitter. That's to my advantage. By bullshitting with certain teachers during lunch and in the halls, I find out what's going on.

She also tries to be visible:

You know the importance of visibility with staff, in the halls, doing lunch duty, with the administrators. I need to let them know what I'm doing. I cannot be shy. I cannot be feeling like, "Oh, they're not including me." I've got to let them know that I'm part of the team. I've got to!

Visibility is a strategy for acquiring information from others and for letting others, especially the

administrators, know what she is doing. The strategy of being visible, however, may not be effective:

At times I wish I could just go home . . . I want to close my door and pull down the shades, and just hide. I don't want to be that visible. It's tough! And then I give myself a pep talk and I'll say, "This is stupid . . . you can't feel shy. You can't feel that you can't handle anything. You can! You were hired for this job because you can." It's tough. I wish I knew more. I wish I had more time to be on top of everything. I think I should know that. Why don't I know that by now?

She also tries to be a good sport:

You want to be a part of the team. So you need to be a good sport. You need to roll up your sleeves and join in any way possible. But sometimes its damn tough. There was a point where I got angry with them . . . And there were other times that I felt it wasn't worth it. If I start showing my anger, then I may not be included as part of the team. There are three of them and only one of me. I can't let them feel like I can't take it.

"Being a good sport," however, may also not be effective.

If she gets angry because they tease her too much, they may not include her. She appears to be questioning the appropriateness of these behaviors: bullshitting, being visible, and being a good sport.

Katie is observing others' behaviors and experimenting with behaviors in her new administrative role. She appears to be trying to assess what behaviors are appropriate in her new administrative role and assess her own ability to successfully meet the situational social requirements. Katie is trying to figure out how she "fits" in her new administrative situation.



What Factors Influence  
Katie's Learning?

Two factors appear to influence Katie's on-the-job learning. First, Katie has not established effective relationships with her principal and the members of the administrative team. Because she does not know what her principal expects of her, Katie does not know what she should be doing. Because she does not feel included by the administrative team, she has very little support from other administrators as she strives to carry out her role responsibilities. Katie's primary focus appears to be on establishing effective relationships with her principal and the other assistant principals. Katie seems unable to concentrate on learning how to carry out her task responsibilities and on learning how to work effectively with the counselors she supervises.

Second, Katie's experiences have not prepared her to cope in a complex high school work situation. Katie has been a Chapter I reading teacher at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Her transitional role experiences as Chapter I reading coordinator in a district office and administrative assistant at the state leadership organization did not expose her to the complexity of the task and social requirements of being a school-level administrator. During her acting assistant principal experience, Katie observed the principal "bullshitting" and "making small talk" with teachers. She appears to be using

these social strategies as she interacts with teachers and administrators.

It Takes Time to Learn  
Perspective

What is Katie learning from her organizational socialization experience? First, Katie is learning that administrative work is characterized by ambiguity, unpredictability, immediacy, diversity, and rapid pace. Second, Katie is learning that her administrative role requires different relationships with her supervisor and her new assistant principal colleagues. Third, Katie is learning that her new administrative role may require her to behave in new ways. Finally, Katie is learning that her administrative role requires her to make choices about how to balance her time between her paper and people responsibilities.

What has Katie learned from her organizational socialization experience? First, Katie has learned that she does not understand leadership. Katie says:

From my course work in the doctoral program and work at the State leadership organization, I thought I knew what leadership was. But my day-to-day encounters are teaching me about leadership . . . What is leadership? I don't know if I can define leadership. I know it's damned hard to be a good leader. One of the hardest challenges is to be a good leader. What is a good leader? I can't define it. [My former supervisor] taught me excellent organization skills and how to write a budget. Now, I make decisions, make judgements and problem solve. Sometimes I do a good job. Sometimes I don't. I'm still learning, I have a certain style. I'm approachable. I'm available.

I'm organized. I'm sensitive. I'm very enthusiastic. I don't know if I'll ever be a good leader.

Katie appears to perceive leadership as organization, budgeting, problem solving and decision making skills. Katie does not seem to understand that leadership requires followership.

Second, Katie has learned that it is going to take more time than she expected to learn to become a principal.

Katie explains:

Many assistant principals have a goal of becoming a principal. I hope that they would be patient and not rush through that. When I entered this position, I thought that within two years I would be a principal. There is so much to learn. A high school is a whole different community. Now, I wouldn't consider being a principal before I'd been in this position for at least one more year. Then I want to be assistant principal for curriculum and staff development for several years. Then, I will be ready to be a principal.

Katie has learned that there is a lot to learn and that it is going to take time to learn. This is Katie's perspective, "It takes time to learn," to be an administrator.

John's Organizational Socialization Experience:  
A Perspective on Working for the Principal  
and a Perspective on Working with  
Other Administrators

John is a fourth-month assistant principal in a suburban high school of 1,550 students. John is a member of a four-person administrative team that includes a male principal, two male assistant principals (including John),

and a female assistant principal. John shares responsibility for discipline with the other male assistant and assumes sole responsibility for developing the master schedule.

John has been an educator for the past 21 years. After 12 or 13 years in the classroom, John felt "burned out." He was tired of doing the same thing day after day, so he decided to try something different. He considered counseling, but learned that 90 hours of course credit were required to earn a credential. He decided to "go the administrative route," because "the administrative certificate didn't take that many hours to acquire and I was interested in leadership."

During the past four years, John has been a Teacher On Special Assignment (TOSA) who taught three periods a day and served as activities director and student management specialist for half of the day. John recalls mentioning his interest in becoming an administrator to his principal. The principal appointed him to his current position. John comments:

I didn't think it would come about this quickly. I had just gotten adjusted to coming into a new school and to my activities director job . . . it took me a while to adjust to the new system.

#### What has John Learned?

From his experience in a quasi-administrative role for four years and as assistant principal for the past four

months, John has developed three perspectives: an "it takes time to learn" perspective; a perspective on working for the principal; and a perspective on working with other administrators. These perspectives appear to reduce the ambiguity John experiences in his new assistant principal role and enable John to focus on learning how to carry out his role responsibilities.

It Takes Time to Learn  
Perspective

As John talks about his experiences as an assistant principal, John describes himself as "floundering." While he is floundering in his role, John appears to believe that this is a temporary condition. John explains that "It took me a while to adjust to the new system" of being an activities director. He adds, "It's taking a while right now to adjust" to being an assistant principal. He explains that "It is taking longer to do things because you're not sure of what actually to do in certain areas." These comments suggest that John, like Katie, has developed an "it takes time to learn" perspective. This perspective appears to function as a temporary coping strategy that eases the anxiety John feels about carrying out his new role responsibilities.

Perspective on Working for  
the Principal

From the experience of working for the principal during the past four years, John has developed a personal understanding of what it means to assist the principal.

John has learned that:

My principal is a workaholic. He expects you to go above and beyond the call of duty. He spends Saturdays and Sundays at work. He expects administrators to give extra. He views people differently who gives more. You just know that he expects you to give more. You need the support of the principal and you need freedom to do some things.

I don't see the principal very much. He's not concerned with the way I handle discipline unless I have a real problem. Sometimes I don't even talk to him during the day. I'll run the master schedule by him . . . If I have a problem with teachers, I'll ask him.

The principal wanted a risk taker. I'll take a risk. I took risks as an activities director. But, I haven't taken any risks as an assistant principal. I've been pretty conservative. I want to feel my way along. I'd give the same advice to new administrators. Don't think you can come in and make a lot of changes because when you make changes you will affect a lot of people. I don't care how good they are. When you make change, teachers say, "It isn't the way it used to be. I don't like it." Some of them don't see the forest for the trees.

John also has learned that his principal expects him to involve teachers in the process of building the master schedule. These comments show John's perspective on assisting the principal. The content of this perspective is: spend more time; give more; take care of discipline on your own; consult with the principal if you have a problem

with teachers; and involve teachers in making decisions that affect them. This perspective provides John with an understanding of his principal's expectations.

John says he is still adjusting to these expectations. He explains, "The time commitment is still an adjustment. I'm staying later now, until 5:30, and I'm working weekends." He adds:

The teachers see me differently . . . that's an adjustment . . . There is that "you're an administrator" and it's a "we and they" kind of thing . . . I'm a new kid on the block. We have a lot of teachers who have been here for many years . . . so I try not to make a lot of changes.

John's comments about teachers suggest that he may not follow all of his principal's expectations. It appears that John has decided that he is not ready to take risks in his new role. He will not make changes that could upset teachers.

#### A Perspective on Working with Other Administrators

While John understands his principal's expectations, he does not appear to rely on his principal for assistance in learning how to carry out his role responsibilities. John says that the principal "probably doesn't know much" about the tasks he does on a day-to-day basis. John believes that it is important for assistant principals to rely on other assistant principals. According to John:

You need to benefit from other assistant principals' experience. You need to ask them, "How would you deal with this?" You need to

bounce ideas off of them . . . I think that assistant principals should buddy up with other assistant principals.

These comments suggest that John has developed a perspective on working with other administrators. The content of this perspective is: ask other assistant principals how to do things; bounce ideas off of other assistants. This perspective provides John with a strategy for getting support and assistance in his new role.

John uses this perspective as he seeks to create relationships with a veteran assistant principal. According to John:

The administrative team, I don't think, has been too cohesive. There's friction between the principal and the administrator who has been here a long time . . . there has been animosity there. So I don't really think it's been a working team. When I came in I told her, "I want to work together. I think all of us should communicate. Whether you did before or not doesn't matter." . . . Three of us are working together as a team and one is left out. So I try to inform her and hopefully she will inform me and we can work together.

John knows that this assistant has expertise in doing tasks that he is now assigned to do. His perspective on working with administrators provides him with strategies to elicit her assistance and support.

#### Problematic Situations: Doing Tasks

According to John, "Assistant principals are given a lot to do." He has "stacks of paperwork" and has to see a lot of students. He spends most of his time in his office:



I spend 80% of my time in the office. I've got kids coming in and paperwork to do. I didn't know how much paper work would come in. I've got stacks here. I'm shuffling paper all of the time. It's hard to plan. I don't know when the kids are coming in. . . . I don't have the organization down as far as how I need to manage this office. Before I was probably more organized. I'm tired. I'm floundering. When you're learning something new, it takes twice as long to get something done. I haven't gotten into how I need to organize my day to be more productive. I'm not as productive as I could be.

John is tired. He does not feel productive. He has more paper work to do than he expected. He does not know when students are coming in so he is finding it hard to organize his time to be productive. John does not know how to organize his time on a day-to-day basis to deal with the unpredictability of students and with the amount of work that he is expected to do. He experiences the amount of work and the unpredictability of administrative work as a problematic situation.

As John continues to describe his work, he reveals another challenge. John does not know when he should be doing things:

In some areas, I don't know exactly what I am supposed to be doing now. It's the first time I've gone through the evaluation process . . . . The other assistant principal said, "You better have it done by February." I asked, "Why?" I've never gone through it. It's like going into a blind alley, not knowing what's within. I don't know how long it's going to take me.

I don't know what I am supposed to be doing now on the master schedule. . . . The other assistant principal is saying that "In another month I'll need to show you what to do." Otherwise I'd be lost. [I don't know] when to start what . . . I

need to gear up for the schedule. I don't have down in my mind when I need to do all this because I haven't done it before.

Because he has never evaluated teachers and done a master schedule before, John does not have a sense of when he needs to do things and how long it is going to take him to accomplish various tasks. He does not know how to plan and sequence over a longer period of time. John experiences the ambiguity of not knowing when he should do tasks and how long tasks will take him as a problematic situation.

John also experiences the technical requirements of his work as a problematic situation. John has been assigned responsibility for developing the master schedule. John believes the master schedule is "important" and "complex." John does not know how to develop a master schedule:

I know the master schedule is probably one of the most important things in a school. That's what the school lives on, what the teachers are going to teach, where the students are going to be. I've never really done a master schedule before, so that worries me.

John has assessed the requirements of the master schedule situation. He is not sure that he can perform the task:

I'm not a person who likes to sit at a desk and work with figures. I'm not a puzzle type of person. I'm more of a doer than a thinker. And it still worries me.

I'm not sure that a new administrator should be doing the master schedule. It's important. It's complex. When you have 1,500 kids, it's scary. It's tough to do.

John wants to ask for help, "I'm not afraid to ask for help.

I would rather ask for help than get myself into quicksand

and sink." However, he is not sure whom he should ask to help him. He says:

The principal may know a little about the master schedule, but he probably hasn't done one. Maybe he has a long time ago. So there's only one resource for me to depend on . . . but the principal doesn't want her doing it.

Nobody else here--well, I take that back--there is another vice principal who has done the job as far as master schedule, but she no longer does that because the principal does not want her to have that.

John explains that the principal does not like the way the schedule was developed in the past. The assistant principal who had been responsible for the schedule worked on it during the summer. Teachers never knew what they were going to teach before the first day of school. John observes, "that didn't make a lot of teachers happy." He believes that the principal "took the schedule away from her" because she took an "I'll do it my way approach" and did not provide for "a lot of teacher input into the master schedule." John knows that the principal expects him "to get a lot of teacher input."

Problematic Situations:  
Working with Teachers

The expectation to get teacher input introduces another problematic situation for John. John is struggling to establish effective working relationships with teachers. John explains his perception of the problem:

We have a lot of teachers who have been here for many years. This is only my fourth year, so I'm

still a new kid on the block . . . There's a "we-they" thing.

John describes what seems to be a powerful learning experience for him. Within the past month, he tried to change something in the activities schedule. A veteran teacher confronted John. John says:

To make change is humongous! When I tried to make a change, I was told right away by one of the experienced teachers that "We don't do that around here! That's not the way we do things!" That straightened me up right away!

John adds, "I can't put my finger on tradition. There's tradition in this high school. You don't play with tradition around here!"

John experiences the problem of working effectively with teachers when he carries out evaluation, discipline, and master schedule responsibilities. From the experience of the goal setting phase of the evaluation process, John has learned that he has "some power to influence teachers' careers." This differs from his entry-level understanding. When he entered the role of assistant principal, he says, "I knew I wouldn't have any problems with evaluation. I've been evaluated myself and I've taken the course." Now that he has completed the goal setting phase of the evaluation process, he appears less confident, "It's the first time I've gone through the evaluation process. . . . It's like going into a blind alley and not knowing what's within." He adds:

I have never really evaluated a teacher . . . the course doesn't help you when what you say has an effect on a teacher and the teacher says, "I don't think that is right. Now change it."

He believes, "They're going to confront you," and that he may have to confront them. He suspects, "It's easier confronting a teenager than it is a teacher."

From working with students in discipline, John has learned that sometimes teachers cause the problem:

. . . a lot of times when you're dealing with discipline, the kids' problems come from teachers' classroom management. Teachers will bait kids to get them out of their classes.

He believes that teachers want to be supported:

They complain a lot that the administrators don't support them in certain things, especially in discipline. You send this kid down and all the administrator does is talk to him and send him back and no change has been made.

He also believes that "Teachers want action right now," so he tries to give them action by dealing with the student and explaining to the teacher why he made the decision he made.

He explains:

I'm not saying that you have to give every kid a suspension, or a detention, or whatever it is. . . . try to deal with the teacher and let them know why I made the decision. They feel that maybe the other assistant principal conferences a little bit more, but doesn't get down to action.

He knows that sometimes teachers "bait students" to get them out of their classes. When this occurs, "I try to be supportive when they send students down here. But I understand, I'm not always going to do what they want me to do."

John has also learned that it is important to provide teachers with opportunities for input on the master schedule. He explains:

I'm going to try to get a lot of teacher input. It's just like decorating your house. If someone else decorates it for you and says now you have to live with it (pause) a lot of people don't like it. Not everyone will be happy with the schedule. There's a conference that I went to. Everyone has to be equally unhappy. And so everyone is going to get two of the things they want to teach. And maybe they aren't going to get . . . (pause)

He knows that he cannot always make teachers happy. From the conference, he has learned to deal with this by making everyone equally unhappy.

John assumes that teachers want to maintain tradition, "the way we do things around here." So he is not planning to make a lot of changes in the master schedule:

It does worry me. I'm not going to make a lot of major changes, because not understanding everything, I would just as soon tinker with it, a little bit, and mainly keep it the way it is, and then as I progress into being more knowledgeable, then make changes. But I am going to have the same concept, that the teachers and the department heads will be involved as much as possible in developing the master schedule.

John describes actions he is taking to establish effective relationships with teachers:

I try to go to the faculty room once in a while. It's hard because I sit here at this desk 80% of the day. . . . I went up there the other day and they said, "Ah, you're here. Administrators never come in here." And that is true. Administrators never go up there. I think you need to go up and socialize with them and show that you're one of them. You're working together, not against them.

This comment shows that John does not know how to balance his time between paper and people responsibilities. His responsibilities for student management, as well as the paper work, require him to spend 80% of his time in his office. He believes he should spend time working with teachers.

John's comments also show that John does not know how to work effectively with the teachers he supervises. He believes they want to be supported, so he tells them what he has done. He believes that he cannot make them happy, so he will make them equally unhappy. He suspects that when he evaluates teachers, they may confront him and he may have to confront them. These beliefs appear to reflect John's understanding that he has power over teachers. As he puts it, "Developing the master schedule is a power position. Evaluating teachers is a power position." John is behaving in ways that suggest control--he is relying on the power of his position to tell them what to do. Yet, John is at a choice point. He appears to be recognizing that he cannot tell teachers what to do. He says, "I'm here for you . . . let's work together . . . I'm not going to make changes . . ." John has not yet learned how to work effectively with teachers.

### What Factors Influence John's Learning?

Five factors appear to influence John's on-the-job learning. First, John was "tapped" to be an assistant principal by a principal with whom he had worked for four years. The experience of working for the principal in a quasi-administrative role influenced the development of John's perspective on working for the principal. John understands what his principal expects him to do and has developed criteria to use to determine when he needs to see the principal.

Second, John's role responsibilities appear to influence John's learning. John's responsibilities for disciplining students require him to work with teachers. At times, he tells them what he has done. At times, he must deal with discipline problems that occur because of teachers' classroom management problems. In addition, John's responsibilities for developing the master schedule, and evaluating teachers, require him to work with teachers. These situational requirements necessitate the development of strategies for working with adults that are different from strategies John needed when he was a teacher or an activities director.

Third, teachers appear to have a strong influence on John's learning. While John knows that his principal expects him to be a risk taker, John has decided that he will not take risks and make changes during his first year



as an administrator. His interactions with teachers led him to the conclusion that teachers do not want change.

Fourth, the absence of quality in John's quasi-administrative experience appears to influence John's learning. John was responsible for coordinating student activities. It appears that he had virtually no experience in doing other administrative tasks or working with teachers. In addition, he observed a principal and other administrators who he perceives as having very little interaction with teachers.

Finally, John does not appear to be strongly motivated to become an administrator. He enrolled in his administrative preparation program because he felt "burned out" and because it took less time than counseling. He plans to retire in eight years. Because he is not strongly motivated, John seems less likely to focus on learning to be successful in his new role.

Sue's Organizational Socialization Experience:  
A Perspective on Working for the Principal  
and a Perspective on Doing Tasks

Sue is a second-year assistant principal in a suburban high school with 1,750 students. Sue's administrative team consists of: a male principal; a very experienced male assistant principal who is responsible for discipline; an experienced female assistant principal, new to this school, who is responsible for guidance and counseling; and Sue.

Sue is responsible for curriculum, staff development, and facilities.

Sue describes herself as a "really, highly successful teacher" and English department chair who worked in this school for 18 years. She became interested in administration when a new principal involved her in bringing about instructional change in the school. Toward the end of his first year, the principal asked Sue to become community coordinator. In this "quasi-administrative role," Sue did a lot of writing and other tasks for the principal and worked with the administrative team. She says, "He got a chance to see what I was capable of doing . . . so he picked me as assistant principal."

Sue says that she "contemplated for a long time" before she accepted the position. She explains:

I knew I would have difficulty rising in the building because I have been here for a long time . . . It was hard for me to leave teaching. I knew I would never be more loved than when I was in the classroom, nor more respected by parents and community.

Sue decided to take the assistant principalship because, "I had a particular loyalty to the principal."

#### What has Sue Learned as an Assistant Principal?

During her first year as an assistant principal, Sue developed two perspectives: a perspective on working for the principal; and a perspective on doing tasks. Sue also experienced several problematic situations. Sue finds it

difficult to work with the teachers she supervises, and she finds it difficult to balance time between her task and her teacher responsibilities. These situations reflect fundamental choices that administrators learn to make: How do I work with the teachers I supervise? How do I balance my time between my task responsibilities and my responsibilities for the people in the school organization?

Perspective on Working for  
the Principal

From the experience of working with the principal as community coordinator and assistant principal during the past three years, Sue has acquired a personal understanding of what it means to assist the principal. She says:

My job is to work with the principal. We are building a leadership team. Providing them with knowledge of change, of instructional practice, decision making, problem solving. We are expanding the cadre of teachers who are involved in leadership.

Sue continues by describing her perception of her principal's role and of her assistant principal's role:

The principal has the vision and the value system. . . . He clearly outlines the expectations. He clearly outlines the tasks. In comprehensive high schools, no one person can do the job. So, there has to be delegation and trust. Over time, you build a trust relationship. He has trust in me-- that's important. The principal is the leader. The assistant principals are the informal leaders. They share his vision and value system. They carry forth his message . . . assistant principals do the bottom line work. They enact.

These comments suggest that Sue has developed a perspective on working for the principal that guides her

actions as she decides what she should do in her role. The content of this perspective is: the principal is the leader; he has the vision and value system; he defines the tasks and expectations; I am an informal leader; I carry forth his messages; and I enact his vision.

Sue perceives differences between her role and her principal's role. As she puts it:

Because it isn't a principal's position, it's sheltered. It's less trying and less demanding. There is less responsibility. So, there is a chance for me to try my wings and grow.

She adds that "the principal is a staff developer in the broadest sense." He "encourages" her, "challenges" her, "provides feedback" to her, "nurtures" her and "allows her to fail." She says, "I receive my support from the principal. That's important." It appears that because he trusts her and supports her, she has become very loyal to her principal.

Sue's perspective on working for the principal appears to reduce ambiguity about what she should do in her role. It also appears to be a source of conflict for Sue. She explains:

If [the principal] fouls up, you live with his foul-ups. And if you foul up, you live with your own foul-ups. Because it always ends up on the person who is dealing with the situation. You're translating his vision into reality. And what you do is only as clear as his vision is, only as clear as his leadership is, only as clear as people respond to him. Unless . . . you begin to deal in your own realm. If you're loyal you don't do that. So you can be eaten alive. And that is tough. I've thought a lot about this as I work.

Because my frustration sometimes is, very often is the fact that although I share the vision, it isn't how I would do it. But it affects what I do and it affects [my] success. . . . So you are working under tight, pressurized constraints. . . . Every strength and weakness that he has is contrasted with you. In my case, I have--I am very direct. He is much more formal. There is a style difference. It is just real tense.

These comments suggest that Sue has learned that she is expected to be loyal to her principal. The expectation to be loyal, however, is a source of frustration to Sue. While she shares his vision, Sue appears to believe that the principal is too formal and not direct enough with teachers. She seems to believe that if the principal were more direct, his vision and leadership would be more clear. If he were more direct, she would be less likely to experience foul-ups that occur as she translates his vision into reality.

#### A Perspective on Doing Tasks

During her first year as assistant principal, Sue experienced the tasks assigned to her role as a problematic situation. Sue says:

The challenges in the job are that the job is never ending. There are always more things than you can do, and there are always better ways to do it. And there's always learning. The challenges are that no books are written on it.

I believe so much of the learning, whether it is a teacher or a vice principal, depends on a series of unwritten rules. So you stumble. I believe that it is much more difficult in this job because your failures are private in the classroom. Your failures are quite public in this job and the rules and stakes are higher. It's difficult. And me being the kind of person I am, in my case, I built my own files and built my own systems. What

I thought was, it would have been easier if there had been some systems that somebody would pass on. That was tough.

It's been an extremely challenging job. Stretching me. Stretching me because I've always learned fast. I've always been able to finish tasks. What I found in this job is that it's a never ending pile of tasks that you work your way through to get to the good stuff. The good stuff of what occurs in classes. The good stuff of understanding, touching, seeing, reinforcing, and facilitating. You have to be able to set those priorities and be able to work fast to be able to make decisions well. And by decisions well, I mean timely as well as look at problem solving. . . . I believe the job can be a tremendous learning experience and it has been for me a tremendously humbling experience.

The joys that you get out of this job are that, as I said earlier, if you are a person that likes challenges, problem solving, as well as planning and scheduling, this job offers those. But there are trade-offs. It does not offer (pause) I believe that over time, depending on your position, you can become much more of a human developer. The role really has that strong potential. And you do it in every instance that you meet and talk with people. But, once again, what gets in the way is that sense of power.

In response to the challenge of doing administrative tasks, Sue developed a perspective on doing tasks.

Sue's perspective on doing tasks consists of a set of heuristic strategies that guide her actions as she deals with administrative work. The content of this perspective includes: work fast; build your own files and systems; set priorities; solve problems; and make decisions well and in a timely manner. Sue says that she enjoys responding to the challenges of planning, scheduling, solving problems, and

making decisions. She is challenged by and feels good about her ability to carry out her task responsibilities.

The preceding comments reveal Sue's perspective on doing tasks. They also reveal one of the problematic situations that Sue experiences. As Sue puts it, "The job can be a tremendous learning experience and it has been for me a tremendously humbling experience." Her comments show one of the difficulties Sue has in her role. Sue started to say that her role "does not offer" the potential to be a human developer. However, she modified her statement, "I believe that over time . . . you can become much more of a human developer. The role really has that strong potential." Sue is beginning to see that the role has potential for helping teachers grow. However, she has not yet learned how to become a human developer. As she puts it, "What gets in the way" of the human development role "is that sense of power."

Problematic Situations:  
Working with Teachers

Sue describes herself as "judicious." The strategies she uses as she works with teachers reflect her judicious, judgmental approach to her role. She says:

I believe that making teachers efficacious and powerful and empowering teachers and department chairs is giving them knowledge.

We're looking at building a community of learners. What you have there is you have improving instructional practices in a number of ways.

Building a leadership team. Providing them with knowledge.

I see that people come to me for usually three things: they want time resources, or money, or equipment and materials. And usually, what you want as you talk to them then, is that you are filtering what this is about. Because teachers are interested in the classroom. And what you do is that you delegate those things out as judiciously as possible. And with limited resources you are in a position where you say, "No." Nobody ever gets exactly what they want. But, that's okay, because if you keep at the center of your decision-making what's best for kids, that's the only conscience you have.

It is difficult for teachers to accept the fact that you are now in a different position and that you have power over them . . . I bring to tasks the knowledge of the individuals and I'm weighing the good and the bad when I make decisions.

The preceding comments show that Sue believes that the process of empowering teachers is a process giving them knowledge. She appears to assume that she has knowledge to give and that she can make judgements about the knowledge teachers need. She does not appear to perceive teachers as having knowledge that they can contribute to the instructional improvement process.

Sue also believes that she has to make judgements about what is in the best interest of students when she decides how to delegate limited time, money, or equipment and material resources. She does not appear to believe that teachers are able to help determine that which is in the best interest of students. This judgmental style reflects her understanding that she is now in a position where she has power over teachers. She has the power to make



judgements about the "good" and "bad" of teachers when she makes decisions.

While Sue says she is, "Okay," with this judgmental approach, Sue appears to be questioning the appropriateness of the decision she has made. She explains:

I feel like I am committing professional suicide of sorts. It's suicide in the sense that when you are in a position where you say, "No," to a zillion things . . . that becomes an identity that is almost indelible.

In her role, Sue believes she has committed professional suicide by saying, "No," to teachers.

As she continues to talk about working with teachers, Sue reveals difficulties she has had as an assistant principal. Sue comments:

It's been a tough transition. I didn't realize what administrative power was. . . . Today I was in a meeting and I said we are these people and what we need to do is have this open relationship. I was reminded real carefully and quickly that I am no longer one of these people. "You are an administrator." And I do remember that.

As an administrator, what I began to feel was a sense of autonomy--a sense of autonomy that you have in controlling your own time . . . I was a self-starter and did well with time and task setting. At the same time, paradoxically, and I think that this is important to note, that you are also responsive to the situations that arise at all times. You need to rely on your skills in problem solving and decision making, your skills in sizing up a situation. Every human skill that you have in dealing with staff will be utilized. The greatest difficulty I've had in this position was an understanding that with the position came power.

The we-they issue is an issue of power . . . or perceived power. Leadership-(pause) power is a myth. When it is used, it is no longer power.

The more you use it, the less you have. Leadership itself is based on followership. It is based on your position in the organization. . . . The we-they in a school is perpetuated--I used to think by administrators. But now I don't think so. I think it is perpetuated by teachers. . . . I've been thinking a lot about how much power teachers really have. Over tasks that they're asked to do or that they have undertaken. And the real power that they have always lies between them and the administration. Everything else removed, it is the teacher and the student. That is the bottom line in education. The center of the school lies in the classroom. You shut the door and there is no such thing as an administrator. They know that! I know that!

I think that teachers don't understand what the school is about . . . the mission of the school . . . or the importance of what they do. I think that there is a kind of treaty that is signed between teachers and administrators that [you won't talk about what schools are about.] When you talk about . . . teaching and learning, [teachers see] hierarchy--they see we-they . . . We-they is a scapegoat. It's a reason for why I can't, or why I don't, or why I won't.

The most powerful teachers really disregard administrators and don't see them as even being there. It is they and their students. And they recognize their own power. And when they come to ask for something, they know what they are about. They know they are efficacious.

The preceding comments reveal several important messages about Sue's on-the-job learning. The process of learning to become an administrator has been a tough transition for Sue. The greatest difficulty she has had has been understanding the power of her position. Sue perceives administrative power as power over teachers. Administrative power for Sue is the power to be judicious; that is, to make judgements about knowledge teachers need, about resources they can have, and about that which is in the best interest

of students. Sue appears to equate power with leadership. As she has used the power of her position, however, Sue believes she has committed professional suicide.

The preceding comments also suggest that Sue is developing new understandings about power. Sue used to think that administrators perpetuated we-they thinking. Now she believes that teachers perpetuate the we-they relationship. Sue sees "we-they" thinking as a scapegoat teachers use when they cannot, will not, or do not want to do something. Sue has come to believe that teachers have power: when they close the classroom door, there is no such thing as an administrator. She believes, however, that because most teachers do not understand that "the school is about teaching and learning," they do not understand the power that they have.

Sue also believes that some teachers do understand that they have power. These teachers "disregard administrators;" "they are efficacious." She may be thinking, "Teachers close the door on me. Powerful teachers disregard me. They do not even see me as being there." Sue observes, "I was always a very powerful person . . . I was a highly successful teacher . . . I was respected." Sue does not appear to perceive herself as successful, respected, or powerful and efficacious in her current role.

### Paper-People Paradox

During her first year as an administrator, Sue developed a new understanding of what it means to be an administrator. According to Sue:

When I went into administration, I wasn't really sure what I was getting into. The job I was entering was a--was more undefined. It seemed to be, from the outsider's perspective, a job that had more to do with paper and less to do with people. It had more to do with systems and less to do with human behavior and interaction. It had more to do with controlling humans, interacting with humans in terms of disciplinary situations, rather than in terms of nurturing situations.

What I learned in that first year was that neither was true. That administration could be and was a blend of both. Both nurturing and disciplinary situations, of a human and a paper situation. It was a kind of paradoxical situation.

These comments show that Sue entered administration thinking her role would focus more on paper and system responsibilities and less on human interaction; her role would focus more on controlling humans and less on nurturing humans. The discussion of the strategies Sue uses for doing tasks and working with teachers shows that Sue's understanding as she entered her role influenced her behavior as a first-year administrator.

Sue's comments indicate that she perceives herself as having autonomy to control her own time. She chose to give priority to her task and system responsibilities. She did tasks first. After she worked her way through the "never ending pile of tasks," she tried to get to the "good stuff" of teaching and learning. She also chose to control

teachers by using the power of her position to give teachers knowledge and say "No" to teachers. It did not concern Sue that "Nobody ever gets exactly what they want," because she knew what was in the best interest of students.

From the experience of working with teachers, Sue also learned that her role has potential for becoming a human developer. It appears, however, that Sue has not yet learned how to nurture teachers and help them grow. Sue says:

As an administrator, you have more control over your own time. At the same time you know that the pulse of the building is going on in the classroom and that is the fundamental thing. So you work through your paperwork to try to facilitate that learning process, to try to get involved in it, to see it, to evaluate it, to do all of those kinds of things. To touch teachers and (pause) it's strange (pause) it's just real different . . . The farther you get away from the classroom, the farther you remove yourself from your students, the more you forget what this is about. And it can easily become a series of memos and papers that get shuffled back and forth (pause) as you can see here on the table (pause) I've got a lot of that. I think you begin to see the inner workings of people and the potential of human beings in a different way. I work with staff development in terms of getting workshops and those kinds of things. But you begin to see the custodians. And you begin to see the inner weavings and the interdependency of secretaries and custodians.

Most teachers just want to be heard. They don't care if you're ever listening, but they want you to appear like you're listening . . . If you are going to cope with the we-they out there, it makes it a we by just listening, by sitting, by being available. The paradox of the job is that in many situations you are not allowed to do that because of the kinds of tasks that you have to do. I mean you can game play, but in truth you can't give.

These comments show that Sue recognizes that her job "can become a series of memos and papers that get shuffled back send forth." She wants to "try to facilitate the learning process . . . to evaluate it . . . to touch teachers." Yet, she finds the process of working with teachers "strange." She wants to cope with the we-they by "listening," and by "being available." Yet, she believes she is not allowed to do that because of the tasks she must do. She can "game play," but she cannot "give." Sue says she experiences administration as a paradox. She has learned that administration is a blend of both human and paper situations, of both controlling and nurturing people. The challenge for Sue appears to be to develop strategies that enable her to balance her time effectively between her paper and people responsibilities and to work with teachers in both disciplinary and nurturing situations.

#### How is Sue Learning?

Sue describes the process of learning to do administrative tasks as a process of "stumbling." She perceives her tasks as "divergent" and "different" from the day-to-day tasks performed by the principal. Learning is more difficult for Sue because, "These jobs are not really collaborative." As Sue puts it:

The principal's functions are different enough that [he] really isn't a role model in terms of how I do my job on a day-to-day basis . . . Your job is not as defined as his job was. So what you are doing is feeling your way along. As I said,

when I walked in there were no files. I built everything from scratch . . . so you use all of your best skills of survival . . . You just stumble.

One of the differences between being a teacher and a first year administrator is, like I said earlier, a sense of isolation, not cooperation. And your tasks are more divergent.

Sue also describes the process of learning to work with teachers as a "humbling" experience. Sue says:

When you move from the classroom to administration, you learn about yourself. [I have] a sense of understanding my own weaknesses as they strike me again and again . . . [I have] not taken care of things interpersonally. It has been a tremendous learning experience . . . and a tremendously humbling experience.

Sue adds, "As an assistant principal the warts of who you are come out."

She appears to be learning how to work with teachers by observing her principal and comparing her style with his style as an administrator. She describes his style as "formal," "distant," and "cool." As she reflects on her behavior, Sue concludes:

Something that is developing more and more is guardedness. I think a sense of observing pretty much what I say, and of what the impact of that saying is. What I say is retold, and it's retold, and it is retold. That's something that really is.

What you would have said before should have been treated casually, as casual conversation. But now, because you wear a different hat, people listen with different ears . . . It's been difficult because I tend to be very direct. So there is a sense that I have come to terms with being more guarded. I've learned kind of the hard way (pause) from the school of hard knocks.

I have to maintain a public image of the school. That was something that was different. What I believe is that I started out not having an awareness of this. And that is part of the transition into administration. I am becoming more and more aware of that . . . And I wonder if it is that sense of image that . . . engenders a separation between teachers and administrators. the formality with which they operate. If the process of becoming an administrator is a process of becoming more formal. Some people seem to do it more naturally, because they are naturally more distanced, less personal . . . What I haven't done, I have not, quote, "projected" an image. And is a situation where I've been for a long time, that is exactly what I need to do.

My own weaknesses strike me again and again. Well, one of them is paradoxical. The intensity with which I worked in the classroom can be a detriment, because what it does is that it is very frightening to people. It goes against the grain of administration which is cool and distant. I'm warm and direct. But, I have not, interpersonally, taken care of things as well.

These comments suggest that Sue is assessing the requirements of her administrative situation. She believes that to be successful in this situation she needs to become "more guarded," become "more formal," and to project an administrative image. She also believes that if she were a male, her style would be more appropriate. She says:

The reality is that high schools are male-dominated places. Style-wise, had I been a man, I would have been seen as "red hot." Because you don't golf or coach, a direct style is not advantageous for you. One of the things I've learned this year was that I've always been kind of what I am . . . an androgenous female. In a position of authority it leads to a sense of fear . . . and resentment. If I were a more traditional female . . . it would be easier to stomach.



Sue also appears to be learning by interacting with a teacher whose opinion she values. According to Sue:

I asked him to tell me why teachers are intimidated by me and he said, "Well frankly, it's because you're an administrator now, and you have knowledge of us . . . you know our strengths and weaknesses as well as the skeletons in our closet." That was weird! It was a difficult learning experience.

The teacher also told Sue:

He said, unlike other administrators he knew, I had been a strong teacher. And that I had been an innovator. And because of that there was fear. Because some administrators have risen through coaching positions, or activities positions, or a counseling position. It was a different hat I came in with.

These comments suggest that Sue is attempting to determine how she needs to behave to be successful as an administrator. While she seems to have ideas about what she perceives as appropriate, Sue is not yet able to describe strategies that she feels are effective when she works with teachers.

#### What Factors Influence Sue's Learning?

Five factors appear to influence Sue's learning in her assistant principal role. First, Sue was "tapped" by a new principal to function as an assistant principal in a school where she had been "a really highly successful teacher" for 18 years. The data suggest that she believes he selected her after observing her capabilities as a writer. Her comments, about her strengths as a writer and her ability to

finish tasks quickly and well, suggest that during her first year she drew on her strengths to complete the "never-ending pile of stuff." When she learned that there was more to do than she could possibly do, Sue chose her task responsibilities over her responsibilities of working with teachers.

Second, Sue's role responsibilities for curriculum and staff development require her to work with the teachers she supervises. To "get to the good stuff of teaching and learning," Sue needs to establish effective relationships with teachers. She cannot develop curriculum or coordinate staff development without the support of the teachers in her school.

Third, Sue's longevity as a teacher, 18 years, and her style as a teacher appear to negatively impact the strategies she uses as an administrator. As Sue puts it:

As a classroom teacher, my style made me alive. It was a probing style, it was a style in which I set up lessons and kids talked. I facilitated a lot of interaction. And the intensity and the dynamics with which I operate (and you probably feel it as you talk to me) was a strength. In an assistant principal position, it can be a weakness.

She does not perceive her "probing," "dynamic," and "intense" teaching style as being appropriate for her in her current role. In addition, traditionally, teachers have derived their legitimate authority from giving students knowledge and controlling students' behavior. When Sue talks about empowering teachers, she says she empowers

teachers by "giving them knowledge." The data suggest that Sue transferred her teaching style into her administrative role and attempted to control teachers and tell them what to do.

The fourth factor that appears to account for Sue's learning is the teachers themselves. The data suggest that the teachers have and are serving as a divestiture agent by disregarding her as an administrator. Sue has not yet learned strategies that enable her to influence teachers.

Finally, Sue's inability to work collaboratively with other administrators appears to influence negatively her learning. While Sue believes her principal supports and trusts her, she does not appear to trust him. As she puts it, she has to live not only with her own foul-ups, but also with his foul-ups. In addition, Sue says she has not established effective relationships with the other assistant principals in her school. As a result, she says she feels "isolated." She does not appear to have anyone she can trust to help her through the "tough transition" of becoming an administrator.

Diane's Organizational Socialization Experience:  
A Perspective on Working with Teachers

Diane is a fourth-month assistant principal in a suburban high school with 1,550 students. Diane's administrative team consists of: a male principal; a male assistant principal responsible for curriculum and staff

development; a male assistant principal responsible for student management; and Diane. Diane is responsible for operations.

Diane became interested in educational administration when her principal encouraged her to apply for an activities director position. In this quasi-administrative role, Diane had a diverse range of preparation experiences including working with discipline and attendance, developing a master schedule, developing curriculum, setting policy, enforcing policy, organizing community meetings, and working with parents. When Diane's principal was selected as principal in this school, he hired Diane as activities director. When the assistant principalship became vacant in this school, the principal encouraged Diane to apply. She was formally selected by a committee that included teachers and parents.

#### A Perspective on Working for and with the Principal

From her experience of working with the principal for the past six years, Diane has developed a personal understanding of what it means to assist the principal. She explains:

If an assistant principal is doing her job, then everything is going to be going right . . . The principal is giving most of the work to the assistant, so that everything in the daily operations of the school is taken care of and the principal can respond to the outside global needs. That means that everything from making sure that the bell system is working, to solving the cooks'

problem, to teachers being concerned . . .  
Anything that happens between the doors of the  
school from before the time it opens to way after  
the time it closes, is what an assistant principal  
does.

While Diane describes her responsibilities as "undefined," she has developed a clear understanding of what she is expected to do; she also understands how her role supports her principal's role. Diane has developed a perspective on assisting the principal.

During their time together, Diane and her principal have developed a relationship characterized by mutual respect and trust. She says:

[The principal's] style is to let people go . . . He doesn't turn you loose and turn his back; he has confidence in me. He'll give me tasks that he knows are hard to handle . . . I have confidence in him.

When I first met [the principal], I thought he could do no wrong. I thought, this is the man I've been waiting for--the way he talks about education. I think I've matured in our relationship . . . now I know that sometimes he screws up and there are things that he doesn't do very well . . . I know his weaknesses.

Sometimes I go to the principal and rant and rave. I'm not really a ranter and raver. He helps me brainstorm, and we come up with new tactics. I tell him how I'm going to handle something . . . and he tells me to do what I think is best.

Diane describes herself as having a mature relationship with her principal. She goes to him for assistance, yet makes her own decisions about how she should handle tough situations. The confidence she feels appears to provide

support as she develops her own strategies for dealing with situations she experiences as problematic.

Problematic Situations:  
Working with Teachers

When she entered her new role, Diane says, "I thought I was truly prepared. I thought I knew what to expect. But I find that I am not as prepared as I thought. There is so much more . . ." Her descriptions of things that she did not expect indicate situations Diane experiences as difficult: she cannot control her own time; and working with teachers can be difficult.

Diane did not expect that other people would be able to plan her time. She addresses the time issue by stepping up her speed and blocking out time on her calendar so she can get written work done. She says:

You know, it's like being on one of those stationary bicycles. You get on and you keep going. Then you keep going faster and faster, and there's almost no limit to how fast you can go.

Sometimes I artificially plan my time. I tell my secretary not to schedule anything from 8:00 - 10:00 a.m. I have to leave my office or I won't get anything done.

Blocking out time does not seem to work for Diane. She has a major project that she needs to complete writing. Yet, she says that "I have no alternative" but to be available to respond to the immediacy of other peoples' needs. Diane has made a choice. She believes that her only alternative is to give priority to people.

From the experience of responding to people, Diane appears to be developing some new understandings about teachers:

Teachers are just as bad as the kids . . . They have petty complaints. They get rumors going and fire them up . . . They get real focused on whatever their narrow job description says . . . Teachers jump to conclusions without checking to see what the real story is.

Our staff works real hard. A lot of them are involved in extracurricular coaching or activities. They don't have time in their day. They are separated by things . . . We have a building that is not real conducive to communication . . . So a lot of times misunderstandings will arise.

It's hard to get the staff to be cohesive in all areas. A focused vision. Goals. I think sometimes we want our teachers to be up here [discussing vision and goals], when we have forgotten the real basic security and safety issues.

Diane has learned that teachers complain, they start rumors, they jump to conclusions, and they get very focused. When she observes them doing child-like things, she looks to the situation to see why they behave as they do. Diane is able to distance herself from teachers, and find reasons for their behavior.

As Diane talks about things she did not expect, Diane reveals a second situation that she experiences as challenging: sometimes teachers listen, and sometimes they do not. She says:

It's hard to communicate with faculty. Sometimes people listen and sometimes they won't. And when they won't listen and won't open their minds to my strategies, or any of our strategies. To me, that

is one of the most frustrating things . . . I think that there is inherent distrust between administrators and faculty.

Diane is developing a perspective that helps her communicate effectively with teachers.

#### A Perspective on Working with Teachers

Diane is developing a perspective that guides her actions as she works with teachers. She believes that it is critical to:

Spend time with people. Spend time getting to know them, getting to know the history, the rationale behind why these decisions have been made . . . it takes a lot of talk, a lot of sharing with people, and spending time with them on a one-to-one . . . It's taking me time to get around to everybody.

I try to be available for teachers and be a support to them. Whether it is trying out new ideas, whether it's sharing ideas, whether it's helping them with a student who's horrendous. That interaction and working with teachers one-to-one is important.

When someone has an emergency type need, I make a priority adjustment in my head and take care of it . . . If it's not priority, or I can't answer them quickly, I'll let them know what I'm going to do and when I'll get back with them.

I try not to make snap judgments, but shift the priority or categorize in my head in terms of what I'm going to do . . . then I say, "Let me get back to you in a couple of days."

I try to be realistic . . . I think being realistic is taking into consideration that there are probably good reasons that something comes out a certain way and things are not always as they appear to be.



The content of this perspective is: spend time with teachers; be available to teachers; support teachers; respond to emergency needs; provide follow through; do not make snap judgments; find out why people do what they do.

When she encounters tough situations, Diane uses the "global-perspective" strategy that she used when she was a teacher:

I used to try to teach my students about having a global perspective. When you are confronted with a problem, try to look at it through the eyes of everyone . . . Teachers get real focused on their narrow job description. Their stresses. Their lives. I try to help them see, "Step in the other person's shoes and see it from their point of view."

While this strategy may be effective with some teachers, Diane is learning that she needs to find alternatives for working with teachers who do not want to change:

It's hard to deal with people's personalities. If you have either something very tough you need to talk to them about, whether it's something they need to do or an idea you want them to change, I think there are certain ways you can approach certain people. But the same process doesn't work the same with everybody . . . It's a trial-and-error process, learning how to use different strategies with different people.

Diane's perspective on working with teachers does not yet include strategies for dealing with tough people situations. Her principal's confidence in her ability to deal with tough situations may provide strong support as she continues to develop this perspective on working with people.

What Factors Influence  
Diane's Learning?

Three factors appear to be salient in accounting for Diane's learning: the quality of her quasi-administrative preparation experiences; her relationship with her principal; and her long-range motivation. First, as a quasi-administrator for six years, Diane had a diverse range of preparation experiences. Diane engaged in activities traditionally assigned to an activities director such as scheduling student activities and organizing meetings for students and parents. In addition, she was involved in discipline and attendance work, master schedule development, curriculum development, policy development and implementation, and budget preparation. During this experience, Diane appears to have developed a perspective on doing tasks that she transferred to her administrative work situation.

Second, as noted previously, Diane and her principal have developed a work relationship that is characterized by mutual trust and respect. Diane perceives herself as having a relatively high degree of autonomy to carry out her work responsibilities and believes that her principal has confidence in her ability to deal with tough situations. The quality of her preparation experiences, as well as her strong relationship with her principal, create conditions that enable Diane to focus on the people dimension of her role.

Finally, Diane is strongly motivated to make a difference in education. She says:

The reason I'm in education is that I want to make a difference in people's lives. It used to be primarily students. But now I can see where as an administrator, I can have the same kind of effect on teachers, who, in turn, have an effect on 150 students . . . I guess I'd been convinced that working with kids in the classroom is the way to make the most impact on people's lives. What I have found is that by broadening my horizons, I am broadening the impact I can have. I can make even more of a difference.

Her motivation to impact the lives of others appears to be an important factor in accounting for her response to people. Diane believes that she is beginning to make a difference. When she works with teachers:

I really see myself as planting seeds in lots of places because my job takes me in lots of different areas. Whether it is responding to faculty or answering kids. It takes care and nurturing of those seeds . . . I feel like I'm spending my time planting those seeds and I hope that I'm going to get a good crop, you know, get some good results. I think I see little kinds of changes . . .

#### Sandy's Organizational Socialization Experience: An Integrated Perspective

Sandy is a second year assistant principal in a suburban high school with approximately 1,200 students. Sandy is a member of an administrative team that consists of: a male principal; a female assistant principal responsible for curriculum and staff development; a male assistant principal responsible for guidance and counseling; and Sandy. Sandy is responsible for student management.

Sandy has 10 years teaching experience. While she has not had experience in a quasi-administrative position, Sandy worked in a district that used aspiring administrators as substitutes for administrators. During her last year of teaching, Sandy served as "acting principal" about 25% of the time. She disciplined students, helped develop the budget, helped develop the master schedule, and presented at PTA and Board meetings. Sandy believes that she "had a fairly good handle on being an administrator." She explains, "By doing a potpourri of things that administrators do, I began to see a pattern." The patterns she learned appear to have transferred to her new administrative role.

Perspectives on Working for  
the Principal and Working  
with Other Administrators

Sandy loves being an assistant principal. She says that when she entered her role, she expected to feel "isolated" and "inadequate." She found, however, that the transition was relatively easy. As she puts it, "My daily feelings of inadequacy soon turned to weekly feelings of inadequacy."

The ease of Sandy's transition appears to be related to the relationship she has established with her principal and her administrative team. Early in her first year, Sandy developed perspectives on working for the principal and working with other administrators. As she talks about her

principal, Sandy says, "I just know what he expects. I am a professional. I do what he expects me to do." She adds:

When you're starting in a new school, it really helps to have a four-person administrative team that is really an administrative team. I knew that I could ask questions and answers would be given to me.

Sandy has learned what her principal expects her to do; she has also learned that when she has questions, she can go to her administrative team for support. Sandy has developed perspectives on working for the principal and on working with administrators.

#### A Perspective on Doing Tasks

As Sandy talks about her first year experiences, Sandy recalls what she thought would be a tremendous challenge. She was responsible for developing the master activities calendar. She remembers worrying, "What comes next? What comes next?" Sandy, however, "muddled through." She explains:

We had to pay close attention to detail. We had to watch the calendar, use a little bit more common sense, try and think a number of weeks ahead, anticipate problems that would arise and needs that had to be met. I think that helped me understand this job inside-out.

During her first year, Sandy developed a perspective on doing tasks. The content of this perspective includes: pay attention to detail; watch the calendar; use common sense; anticipate problems; and anticipate needs. This process helped Sandy learn her job, as she puts it, "inside-out."

### An Integrated Perspective

As a second year assistant principal, Sandy is feeling great about her work. She says:

I'm having a good time and at the same time I think I'm doing a good job. Being able to enjoy your job and feel like you're doing it well-- there is not a lot more that I could ask for.

Sandy's feelings of success appear to occur because Sandy has developed an integrated perspective on her assistant principal role.

According to Sandy, a "lion's share" of her work is disciplining students. While Sandy will "kick butt" when she has to, Sandy uses a positive, proactive approach when she disciplines students. She describes it as:

I see kids very positively. I mean, it's supposed to be a negative job, but it doesn't have to be. Kids come in here now because they know the emphasis out of this office is proactive discipline. And kids come in here, at least one a week, who are trying to get me to help them stop from having a fight. The kids know me now. They know what to expect.

The kids are incredible . . . they know what the punishments are, so we get the punishments out of the way and then we talk about the kid. They know I will listen to them and help them with their problems.

She adds, "My highest high was being selected by the students as a Natural Helper."

Sandy's positive, helping approach also characterizes the way that Sandy works with teachers. She explains:

This was my approach as a teacher, and that is the only approach that I would take.

I view this job as an extension of teaching. Now I'm just doing it one-on-one. Every chance I get I go into a classroom. I teach. I cover for teachers. I guest lecture.

I've done a lot helping teachers handle problems. If the teacher has had it and the last straw has been reached. I try to work that through with the teacher to make them feel good about what they're doing.

When a teacher has a problem, you go to the teacher. Or you write them a note. You do something to let them know that you're available.

Sandy's approach to working with teachers is similar to her approach to working with students. She goes to them and tries to help them work through the issue so that they can feel better about what they are doing. She adds, "The teachers are happy with what I'm doing."

Sandy knows that she needs to be available when students and teachers need her:

You can't plan time because you never know what is going to happen. My calendar is by far the most open of any of the administrators, because I have to be here to respond to what is needed at the time.

Sandy's comments about her work with students and teachers show that Sandy has developed an integrated perspective that guides her actions as she carries out her role responsibilities. The content of this perspective is: work with people by helping them; organize your time to be available to respond to their needs. Sandy has learned to work effectively with teachers in a nurturing manner and to balance her time in ways that enable her to carry out her system and people responsibilities.

Problematic Situations:Becoming a Principal

Sandy has been strongly motivated to be successful in her role as an assistant principal. She explains:

I want to make myself good at this job and I want to train myself to bring in more challenges so I can go on to a principalship. There's no question that that is what I want.

Determining how to become a principal is the situation that Sandy experiences as problematic. She comments:

I don't know the most effective way to do that. Whether it's through schooling. Whether it's through committee work. Whether it's through district level positions. I don't know the best way to do it. I'll hit and miss and I'll do what I'm doing for me because I need it and the school needs it. I wish there was some nice little formula that you do this and this if you want this job. I know that's not reality. It's hard not knowing quite what my future holds.

I felt it was real important to get a handle on this job. I'm still new at this. But getting a handle on this job has been my top priority. When I do something there is a motive behind it. That motive is to improve my skills and a byproduct is that someone is going to benefit. I make myself available for presentations. I'm the district gang expert. I'm on the district at-risk task force. That's a real high issue. I try to be visible.

Sandy has gotten "a handle" on this job, so that she can demonstrate that she is ready for a principalship. She is making herself available and visible to those who may be able to help her move into another position.



What Factors Influence  
Sandy's Learning?

The preceding description of Sandy's organizational socialization experiences suggests three factors that are influencing Sandy's learning. First, Sandy had high-quality administrative preparation experiences. During her time as a "substitute principal," Sandy acquired "patterns" of understanding that she could transfer directly to her administrative role.

Second, Sandy says that she has been able to transfer her style as a teacher directly into her assistant principal work. This positive, helping approach to working with people appears to serve her well as she works with students and teachers. Third, Sandy is strongly motivated to do her job well. Sandy wants to be good in this job so that she can become a principal.

Sandy describes one additional factor that appears to influence her learning. She was formally selected for the assistant principalship from the outside. She says that this gives her "an automatic advantage":

I think anytime someone coming in new--I think there is an automatic, built-in advantage, because teachers don't bring an agenda with them. They don't bring any preconceived notions. The staff didn't know what to expect. Things I had done as a matter of course in my old district weren't done here. When I implemented some things I got lots and lots of positive feedback.

The condition of coming in from the outside made Sandy's transition into her new role easier for her. She adds, "The

honeymoon is over, but the staff members are still supportive. They let me know when I'm doing a good job."

**Rick's Organizational Socialization Experience:  
A Highly Integrated Perspective**

Rick is a third-year assistant principal in a suburban high school with approximately 950 students. Rick is a member of an administrative team consisting of a male principal, a male assistant principal responsible for discipline, and a female assistant principal responsible for counseling and support activities. Rick is responsible for curriculum, instruction, and staff development.

Rick has had 10 years of high school teaching experience, three years experience as a project manager for a national computer software company where he supervised a "work group" of approximately eight to 10 adults, and seven years experience as a consultant for a regional educational laboratory. Rick re-entered education because he wanted "to work with principals and understand their work well and see if I could make a difference." He reports having an abstract understanding of administrative work, but knew that if he wanted to be credible as a consultant in the future, he needed experience administering in a school. Rick concluded his comments about his background by saying, "I've made some differences, I don't know if I've met all of my goals. But I've had some impact. There's no doubt about it."

What has Rick Learned  
from his Experience as  
Assistant Principal?

Three learning outcomes have emerged from Rick's organizational socialization experiences. First, Rick has acquired a deep understanding of the work-life realities of teachers and administrators. Second, Rick has developed a highly-integrated perspective that orders his world and guides his actions as an assistant principal. Finally, Rick has acquired an understanding of his role in relationship to the principal's, other assistant principals', and teachers' roles. Rick sees himself as "central" in his school organization.

Teaching and Administering

Rick has acquired a deep understanding of the daily work life of teachers and administrators. When he was asked to describe differences that he perceived between teachers, assistant principals, and principals, Rick replied without hesitation:

I think the teachers' view of the world is defined by their routine. It's a schedule-driven reality where they go on stage, and they stay on stage. They have to consistently, from period-to-period and from day-to-day, be in a position to communicate with kids who are not always wanting to be communicated with. I think their view is shaped by that. By routine, by the schedule, and by their interaction with adolescents.

I also think their view is shaped somewhat negatively by the kinds of compromises that they have to make. I think teachers, in general, have a view that they can help kids learn successfully.

But I also think that they must make compromises between what they can actually deliver versus what they would want to deliver given the resources, time and circumstances to do that. As a consequence, I think there is always a somewhat less than a complete feeling of fulfillment in their daily work life as a result of those compromises that are there. They know they make them. They know that they have to make them. They're in conflict with their view of what they could do and would want to do because they are motivated to work with kids by and large. Most teachers that I've worked with have that view of the world.

Rick has several understandings about teachers that appear to influence his behavior as assistant principal. First, Rick believes that teachers want to help students learn and, that not all students want to learn. Therefore, the act of teaching in ways that promote learning is inherently challenging. Second, when teachers are not successful in promoting learning, Rick assumes it is because the teaching work situation requires teachers to make compromises. Rick does not blame teachers; he looks to the requirements of the situation to account for teachers' successes or lack of success. Third, Rick acknowledges that teachers have limited opportunities to interact with adults --they are relatively isolated in the work place. Finally, Rick perceives teaching as resulting in a "somewhat less than complete feeling of fulfillment." The work realities of teachers do not allow them to accomplish all that they want to achieve. Rick respects teachers and the challenges inherent in teaching.

Rick perceives administering as being different from and similar to teaching. He explains:

An administrator in a building has to deal with a very much different orientation to routine. I think that administrators have very few routines where teachers have very many routines that are clock oriented and schedule oriented. Administrators don't have . . . they have those time structures around which they can hang much of anything in terms of routine. So every day is a different day and a different set of tasks and a different set of interactions and a different set of problems to work on.

I guess one other way in which I would describe the difference has to do with kind of the sphere of interaction for teachers. The sphere of interaction for teachers is about 90-95% students in the course of the day. Now that's where their communication is happening; the other 5% is with other teachers. Sometimes there is none of that in the course of the day or very little. Administrators have a much larger sphere of interaction. It might be a custodian, it might be a parent, it might be a department chair person, it might be an on-the-line teacher, it might be a student, it might be a reporter, you know there's a much larger group of audiences with which administrators have to cope in the course of even any given school day. And I think that scope or sphere of interaction of communication is significantly different between those two professions.

I do think that administrators share with teachers the feeling that . . . I know what results I could produce if I had the time, resources and circumstances to do that, and they make a similar set of compromises relative to things they are going to focus on, the things that they will pay attention to, the things that they will fire fight, and the way in which they will interact with people to get things done. Short conversations versus long conversations to explain meaning and give meaning and solicit the input and get participation. Those compromises are all made by administrators. I think they share in common with teachers a sense that "I'm not getting as much in the way of results as I want to get." I know what that is. It doesn't make me happy, but

given the compromises I know I have to make I'm doing as well as I can. So that their sense of fulfillment and their sense of closure that administrators get relative to the tasks they take on, is hard to come by, hard to achieve. It's hard to get that closure and find that fulfillment in a variety of ways.

Rick's description of the differences between teachers and administrators reveals situational requirements inherent in administrative work. Administrators, in contrast to teachers, do not have "time structures" upon which to "hang" routine activity. He sees unpredictability and multidimensionality as characteristic of the administrative work situation. "Every day is a different day . . . with different tasks . . . different interactions . . . and different problems." Administrators, in contrast to teachers, have a much larger sphere of interaction; they communicate with students, teachers, parents, department chairpersons, and reporters. Rick sees teaching as characterized by "sameness." Administrative work is characterized by diversity. Rick sees similarities in teaching and administering. Because resources are limited, both teachers and administrators make compromises that result in a "less than complete feeling of fulfillment."

#### Problematic Situations

Rick has developed a deep understanding of situations he and other administrators experience as problematic. As Rick continues to talk about the nature of administrative work in general, and his work situation in particular, Rick

reveals his perception of problematic situations experienced by administrators and by assistant principals:

When principals talked to me about not having time to work with teachers and do staff development and school improvement activities, I used to see that as a time management problem--as a matter of setting your priorities. Well, it's more complex and difficult than that. The tasks that we've agreed to do take us beyond what we can literally do in the time allotted . . . The size of the job is pretty huge. The expectations associated with it. It's not just the assistant principal. I think everybody has a huge job. We're a flat organization without specialists to go do things so we sort of dabble in everything, and maybe not master much, but you have to be able to influence many systems and touch many people to try to make a difference.

This passage reveals several important messages about Rick's on-the-job learning. Rick used to think administrators had time management problems that could be solved by learning to set priorities. Now, Rick perceives the problem differently: "The tasks that we've agreed to do take us beyond what we can literally do in the time allotted." Administrators, assistant principals, and all others in schools have more work to do than they can do in the time that is available. If they want to make a difference for students, administrators and assistant principals have to influence many systems and touch many people. Assistant principals have to make choices that enable them to deal effectively with the systems and people in their schools. It's not an either-or choice. His challenge is to determine how to respond to both paper and people responsibilities.

Rick explains that he supervises approximately 25 teachers, 4 counselors and 4 support staff people. He says:

I barely have time to meet the letter of the district policies . . . I've worked with a couple of problem situations with teachers and have helped resolve those well. I don't spend enough time in classes, in one-on-one coaching, listening, being available to listen to the concerns that the people I supervise have. I haven't been as supportive as I hoped I would be able to be.

Rick believes he should spend 90% of his time as a supervisor. Rick also believes that he should also spend 80% of his time on responsibilities such as the master schedule. Rick explains the press toward management responsibilities:

I'm a very instruction oriented administrator. That's where my love is--working with staff development, working with teachers, spending time in the classroom--that is where I want to spend my time. But I also recognize the political realities that certain things have to happen in order for the school to run and that I cannot neglect those to pursue the things that interest me because instruction will go on whether I am in the classroom or not. That's going to happen anyway. But if the master schedule has two people scheduled in the same room, that's a major problem.

The political reality in schools is that instruction will go on; problems such as two groups of students scheduled in the same room have to be solved. The choice Rick and other administrators must make is how to balance time between their managerial responsibilities and their responsibilities to work with people.



Rick experiences working with the teachers he supervises as a problematic situation. Rick says:

I didn't expect to deal with so many episodes without closure. The episodes--the dealing with no closure on things--without a sustained series of episodes is (pause) I didn't realize how much of that is the case. You know, it's not like I get a person in my office, we sit down, and we agree, and they go off and do it, and that's the last I have to deal with it. It just doesn't work that way.

These comments show that Rick did not expect to deal with episodes that do not have closure. He has learned that he cannot just get people in his office, discuss problems, agree to solutions, and expect them to go away and do what they have agreed to do. "It just doesn't work that way." He now knows that it requires a sustained series of episodes for people to reach agreement and actually do what they've agreed to do. Rick has learned that he cannot just tell people what they are supposed to do; he has learned that he has to "create conditions for participation . . . that include sustained dialogue, not with the intent of ever getting closure, but talking and listening and listening and talking" to address issues.

#### A Highly Integrated Perspective

Rick has developed a highly-integrated perspective that guides his actions in his role. Rick perceives his system responsibilities as services to teachers; his role is to deliver services that help teachers feel supported. Rick

sees his role as creating conditions that make their job easier and more effective; he focuses on the needs of adults and helps them get their work done:

Schools are interesting institutions in that all the adults are focused on the needs of youth. There are relatively few people in the building who are focusing on the needs of adults. The assistant principal is one of those people who focuses on the needs of adults and helps them get their work done.

The assistant principal's success is going to ride on whether teachers feel supported or not by the services. Essentially as an assistant principal you are delivering service to teachers. The scope of the job description is to deliver--get kids into their classes, get classes assigned in an eight period day, get classes assigned to rooms, make sure that the grading mechanisms are in place, you know--all of those things are teacher services, and if you are not in a position to be able to deliver those things to teachers you are not going to succeed. This is my view of the role of an assistant principal.

I think that the assistant principal is in a unique position to make a difference with the faculty and influence the work environment that they are in--they can make it better, and they can make it worse. The challenge is to understand teaching in the building, teachers, faculty, work with them, and start creating the conditions that make their job easier and more effective. So, I think that the assistant principal is in a good position to improve the quality of work life for teachers in the building.

I think the assistant principal is in a fairly unique position to be able to try to create the conditions for teachers that is nurturing for those folks. Try to facilitate change through explanations, through talking, through listening and really lay the foundation for the participatory processes that you're trying to run in a building where the principal is often times leading those things. The principal leads but I create the conditions where that participation can happen. At least that's one of the ways I view myself.

Rick sees his role as focusing on the needs of adults and helping them get their work done; he delivers services to teachers. His success depends on whether or not teachers feel supported by the services he provides. Rick responds by defining the paper and system work that he does as services that cause people to feel supported.

Rick's perspective is not an abstract understanding of ways he believes he should behave in his role. Rick's perspective is reflected in a highly coordinated set of ideas and actions that guide his behavior as an assistant principal. Rick's recollection of the strategies he used when he entered his role and of the strategies he uses to deal with controversial situations shows Rick's perspective in action. Rick describes his entry into his administrative role:

I spent the first two weeks learning every teacher's name in the building. Within the first month I'd had a one-on-one with every teacher in the building . . . establishing some rapport . . . I had a formal sit down with every teacher and then I spent lunch hours, breaks, before and after school, you know, every minute when I thought I could find teachers available and around, I went out and talked with them, so that they knew who I was, we established some personal rapport about who I was and what I was up to, what they were doing, how long they had been here, and all of those issues. I started calling them by name as quickly as I could do that. That rapport with the teaching core is important. And you have to have it! And then I started focusing on trying to get the management routines in place that would cause them to be supported. I mean it's one thing for you to establish superficial rapport with people. But if you can't follow up with services that in fact meet their needs, it's just not going to work.

Rick established rapport, learned the teachers' expectations, and followed up by delivering services to meet their needs.

Rick describes strategies he uses for working with teachers to address issues they perceive as problematic. When he deals with situations that cause teachers to "overheat":

What I do is two things. First, I go out and talk with people who I've identified as being opinion makers in the building and I ask them what they think on these topics. I give points of view, I give a rationale for why we are investigating a change, we talk about what the options are in kind of a brainstorming way we talk back and forth to understand each other's points of view on these things. Then, the second group I go talk to on these kinds of issues that need to be aired and discussed are the people who I know are unhappy about some facet of it. I know they are really pissed off and I have to go out and often times I don't even say anything. I just listen while they pump crap my way. That is simply a venting process that allows people to get emotional baggage relieved before you get down to the substance of discussion. And I'm sure you have been in faculty meetings where you start talking about an issue--two or three people go non-linear--and they take the rest of the group into a black hole of non-productive communication and discussion. My view is that you need to try to head that off if you can. And face-to-face, one-on-one conversations are the best way to do that. And at the same time I engage in that sort of interpersonal processing of things, I try to communicate some key messages about how we go about making decisions through participation. What would be a key message? A key message would be: It's appropriate to develop options; all options are open until a decision is made. Once a decision is made we all speak with one voice on this topic.

I think the messages that you give in these kinds of discussions when there's conflict and confrontation that you're trying to work through,

has to be a consistent message about the norms. You say, "Now this is an example of what--But recall that we've agreed that here's how we approach the problem and here's where we are going to reach a resolution and then we are going to go on from there. So keep that in mind as we talk about these things. But I want to hear from you because we're in this part of the process right now and your input is very valuable in that." What do you see the options to be in this setting? How would you evaluate these options? What makes sense for you to do?

### Centrality and Fit

Rick has learned to define his role in relation to other administrators in the school. He perceives his role as different from the principal's role. According to Rick:

I think the principal is obviously in a position to affect and pay attention to the needs of adults, but he pays attention to not only the needs of the adults that work in building, but the adults in the community, the adults in the central office. His view is split among many adult communities or populations and I really think that the assistant principal is the person that needs to look after the teaching staff in the building. The principal does some of that but he can't always spend as much, put as much focus as the assistant principal can. I think it's possible in that scenario, but I think it less likely.

He has learned that, when principals are being successful:

They have as one of their major focus groups the teaching staff in the building. They did not do as much individual nurturing with people as they did, what I would call ceremonial communication. Addressing groups of people, managing subgroups, like department chairs, working with department chair groups and the like. They also, I guess I'd call it sort of management by walking around, where without much organization or intent or purpose, they are going out and making contact with people and trying to make that as positive as possible. But they are not planning to sustain that contact in a nurturing way over time. It's a go out, needs sense, understand what your people

are thinking about or concerned about, but it's not intended to be a nurturing relationship particularly. So I think the principal has to take that position or take that approach to communication because that person has many audiences. They have to do the same thing with parent groups, they have to do the same thing with their coaching group, which overlaps but is different than working with the teacher groups. They have to also work with other administrators, you know, the echelons, to achieve results. So they have many focal points. They have to concentrate their energy less in any one of those than a person would if that was their sole focal point.

The principal focuses on diverse needs of many adults in the community, engages in ceremonial communication, and develops an understanding of what people are thinking about. The assistant principal, in contrast, is one of the "echelons that is required to achieve results." The assistant principal is in a unique position to create conditions for participation, focus on the needs of teachers, and help teachers get their work done.

Rick perceives his role as assistant principal for curriculum and staff development as different from the assistant principals for counseling and for support activities. Rick explains:

You know that one of the things I feel very strongly about has to do with the role of an assistant principal in nurturing the adults in the building, particularly the certified staff. The other assistant principals are individual contributors in a couple of areas. In our case one is counseling [and] the other case is supportive activities and then they work with kids the other proportion of their time. They also supervise people, but they are not in a position in terms of time to be in a nurturing situation, to be supportive, to go out and do, deliver the

messages, share the vision, share the main ideas of the school with the faculty, as much as [I can].

They handle discipline, activities, counseling, and they split that up so that they have a substantial responsibility for working with youth. As soon as you are in a position where you need to focus on the needs of some group of adolescents in the building, that's where your focus has to go because there are always things that need to happen . . . always things that need to happen there. Adults can take care of themselves and we make that assumption about adults in schools to a large extent. Although I think that is a mistaken belief. I think we do have that belief. And I think that people tend to, if they don't have that as a focus, they tend let that area of interest shrink, while they go deal with things where there are always problems. And you always have problems and issues that you work with when you are working with adolescents in a school like this.

How has Rick Learned his  
Administrative Perspective?

Rick is highly articulate in describing how he learned the perspective that guides his administrative behavior:

I had a fairly steep learning curve. It had been almost 10 years since I'd worked in a school. And it took me--I had to reengage in the routines of life in a school. And that took a while. If there were any way that I could have accelerated that, make that transition easier, I certainly would have taken that. But I can't, at this point I can't think of anything that I would do. My general strategy was: build rapport with people, build rapport with people, understand what has been, understand what makes sense to pursue, get some areas for focus, and then start building on the strengths that are there and try to bring things under control if they're not under control. That was essentially my strategy and I think it has worked fairly well for me.

Because he had not been in a school for 10 years, Rick had to relearn the situational realities of working in a school.

Yet, it appears that he entered his role with a heuristic strategy: build rapport with people; understand what they have done, and are doing; decide what needs to be done; and build on strengths.

Rick applied a similar heuristic strategy when he created the master schedule. His rich description of the schedule building process illustrates the tactics he used to learn how to build a schedule:

One of the individual contributor tasks I have to do is scheduling. And that is not a task you are going to learn any place else but by working in a school. So I didn't come in as an assistant principal with much knowledge about how to accomplish that task. How did I acquire the skill? I would say by emulating what had been done before. Understanding what didn't work with that and then starting to fine-tune the thing. To a certain extent it was a trial and error process based on having set some goals . . .

There was really essentially nothing written down relative to how to do it. But the products of scheduling in the past, master schedules, forms, memos on some subjects, all of those things existed and together with those things you can sort of piece together a general picture of how the processes have worked in the past and you can make some inferences about whether you should continue to do those things, and whether things are gonna get better or get worse relative to the outcomes you've set.

Another way you gain knowledge in a setting like that is to go talk to somebody who is scheduling. So I can go over and talk to my assistant principal friend over here or my assistant principal friend over there and say, "talk through with me what you're doing in the area of scheduling". And, you know, I start accumulating ideas from other people. And networking is another, I think, a major source of information.

A principal may or may not know the specific details of setting up, a fairly complex system



like the schedule. Some may or may not have even done scheduling. I did talk with [the principal. He] had done scheduling. He helped shape the outcomes, what we wanted to achieve as a result of it. But from a procedural point of view, what he had done in his own personal experience with those processes was quite a bit different than what had been done here and what ultimately we ended up trying to do. So that the specifics were not something he could transfer directly to me. He could give advice, he could tell me what his goals were for things. And given his good analytical skills, he could look at something that I was proposing and give some reasonable feedback about it. But in terms of helping me understand the intricacies of the process, the people with the best knowledge, were the people doing it at the time. Because they were emersed in it and they know what to look for and what variables to pay most attention to. So I talked with [an assistant principal in another school] others then I used trial and error to move up to the productivity curve relative to that.

Rick's general strategy for schedule building is: analyze what had been done before; talk with the principal about his expected outcomes; talk with assistant principals in other schools to learn their approach to scheduling; and then, engage in a trial-and-error process until you believe that the schedule will be productive. Rick believes that the most valuable source of information is other assistant principals. While he describes his principal as providing feedback about the schedule, Rick does not believe that the principal has enough specific, contextual knowledge to help him accomplish the schedule-building task. Rick's descriptions of how he learned to assess his school situation and build a master schedule suggest that he took control over his own learning process. His ability to apply

heuristic strategies facilitated the process of acquiring, processing, and understanding knowledge.

In addition to using heuristic strategies, Rick also learned by "planning and executing the mundane" to create a "quilt of understanding out of those individual episodes."

He says:

You learn that by being involved in the planning and execution of the mundane, such as assemblies--you know, getting people through the graduation process-making. You're involved in a layer of activities that are supportive of individual classrooms--going in and talking to kids about the code of conduct for the school. You're trying to convey or create some common bonds, common ideas that all the kids know about and share to a certain extent. Trying to solve bus transportation problems--the whole infrastructure things that you can see if this doesn't happen, then this isn't going to happen, and this isn't going to happen. You begin to see the pattern of all of these interrelated things . . . transportation, activities, teachers and classrooms that aren't well ventilated. All of these things sort of come together to create an environment that either helps kids learn or is putting up road blocks. So it's been sort of an inductive approach where I just have been absorbed or involved in a variety of things that have an impact relative to individual classrooms--kind of creating a kind of quilt of understanding out of all of those individual episodes.

Learning for Rick was a process of doing, seeing patterns, deciding what helped kids learn, and creating understanding. He perceives his learning as having a cumulative effect over time. Through the process of "planning and executing the mundane," Rick learned to respond to the situational requirements of his role.

Rick learned about people and the norms in his environment by becoming a "detached observer":

I spent about the first three months establishing rapport with people. Understanding their points of view and perspectives. And the norms and beliefs. Some people can articulate those fairly well, or some people can articulate what they think the norms are. The norms are, in fact, the way they behave, and by being an astute observer over time you began to see whether people are behaving in the way they say they're behaving, or want to behave, or whether they're not. In many instances you'll learn some interesting things in doing that. You have to be in a position to do that. And that means you have to be out watching what's happening, listening, as a spectator to a certain extent. A detached observer. And see how people interact with each other, how they interact with kids. You'll learn a lot about the norms related to teaching, by watching teachers teach, and over time, you hone in on the core values in this [high school].

Rick also reports learning the hard way. He "stepped on [the] mine fields" of tradition. He rhetorically asks, "How many mine fields have I blown up?" and launches into a description of learning the hard way:

I replaced a person who had been here 8 or 9 or 10 years. He established most of his authority through interpersonal relationships with people and over that amount of time people had come to expect a certain manner of treatment, shall we say, relative to them coming from the assistant principal. Based on his style and his approach to working with them.

Well, my style is quite a bit different than that and I think initially and not intentionally I made some people unhappy simply because I withdrew something that I did not know was there in the first place. And it took . . . in some individual cases it's taken some time to restore rapport there based on our unique personalities. Unintentionally I had worsened the conditions for them. And I brought some people back on line for standard student supervisions that had not been on

line to do that for some time. Because of arrangements that had been made relative to things that they did within the context of the school. And even though I established a fairly elaborate rationale, went out and talked with people a lot about that, there was some resentment that I had leveled the playing field in that particular area. Over time I have done that in a number of areas trying to create, perhaps, my vision of equality in these matters, but none-the-less, communicating that there would be a quality and a variety of teaching conditions for teachers in the building and that we were not going to have a pecking hierarchy based on your popularity.

Rick explains that he tried to "step on mine fields" as much as possible during his first six months. He took advantage of a "window of opportunity before the social contract formed." He adds, "once the social contract is firm . . . it is very difficult to make cultural change."

#### What Factors Influence Rick's Learning?

Four factors appear salient in accounting for the emergence of Rick's highly integrated administrative perspective. First, Rick's previous work experiences differ from the other assistant principals in this study. Rick had not worked in a school for more than 10 years. During his ten-year absence, he worked at an educational laboratory and developed a strong, abstract understanding of schools and schooling. When he entered his assistant principal role, Rick reports having a "conceptual framework upon which he could hang things." He also worked at a national computer company as a project manager responsible for supervising a work group of approximately 10 adults. Rick's conceptual

knowledge about schools and his experiences supervising adults appear to have eased his transition in his assistant principal role.

Second, as noted in the preceding description of Rick's on-the-job learning experiences, Rick appears to have entered his role with an orientation toward being strategic. His ability to use heuristic strategies provided him with a means for acquiring, processing, and using knowledge to learn about and carry out his role responsibilities.

Third, Rick's principal provided him with a relatively high degree of autonomy in his new role. Rick says, "His style was to let me come in, assess the situation, and let me do the things that I needed to do." Rick adds, "I'm a loyal soldier. Once I understand what my superior wants me to do, those are the things I go do." Rick is a loyal soldier who was allowed to do the things that he needed to do.

Finally, Rick's comments about episodes without closure, "It's not like I get a person in my office, we sit down and agree, and they go off and do it . . . It just doesn't work that way," suggest that teachers have influenced the outcomes of Rick's learning experience. Through interactions with teachers, Rick has learned that you cannot "tell teachers." You need to engage in "sustained dialogue of talking and listening" if you want to provide services to teachers.

## Chapter Summary

In summary, the perspectives developed by the assistant principals have been described in this chapter. These perspectives are summarized in Table 1. All of the assistant principals developed the "it takes time to learn" perspective. This perspective functions as a temporary coping strategy that reduces assistant principals' feelings of anxiety and inadequacy when they enter their new administrative role.

John, Sue, Diane, Sandy, and Rick developed a perspective on working for the principal. This perspective consists of a personal understanding of what it means to assist the principal. The perspective on working for the principal reduces ambiguity about the principals' expectations and enables the assistant principals to begin to focus on carrying out their task responsibilities. Katie has not developed a perspective on working for the principal. As a result, Katie does not know what she is expected to do in her role. She is not able to focus on learning how to carry out her role responsibilities.

John, Diane, Sandy, and Rick developed a perspective on working with other administrators. This perspective reduces assistant principals' feelings of isolation and provides them with support as they learn how to carry out their role responsibilities. Katie and Sue have not developed a perspective on working with other administrators. As a result, they feel isolated and lonely in their new role.

Table 1  
Administrative Perspectives

Choice Point	Perspective	Illustrative Content	Functions
-How do I cope with the ambiguity, immediacy, unpredictability, diversity, and pace of administrative work?	It Takes Time to Learn Perspective	Katie: Be patient. It is going to take time to learn. John: It is taking time to adjust. Sandy: It took time to learn.	-Temporary coping strategy that reduces feelings of anxiety and inadequacy.
-What am I expected to do?	Perspective on Working for the Principal	Sue: He is the leader. I am the informal leader. He outlines the expectations and tasks. John: Discipline students. Develop the schedule. Get input from teachers. Consult the principal about problems with teachers. Diane: The assistant principal takes care of the daily operations so that the principal can respond to outside global needs.	-Personal understanding of principal's expectations that reduces ambiguity about role responsibilities. -Enables assistant principals to work for the principal.
-How do I get support?	Perspective on Working with Administrators	John: When you need help, ask another assistant principal. Diane: The principal lets me try my wings and grow. He has confidence in me. Sandy: The administrative team provides support.	-Reduces feelings of isolation and provides assistance in carrying out role responsibilities. -Enables assistant principals to work with other administrators.
-How do I do tasks?	Perspective on Doing Tasks	Sue: Work fast. Set priorities. Solve problems. Make decisions well. Sandy: Pay attention to detail. Use common sense. Anticipate needs and problems. Rick: Analyze what is. Talk with principal about goals. Talk with other assistants. Engage in trial and error.	-Heuristic strategies for doing tasks. -Enables assistant principals to complete tasks and to begin to achieve.
-How do I work with the teachers I supervise?	Perspective on Working Effectively with Teachers	Sandy: Help teachers feel good about what they do. Diane: Spend time with teachers. Understand teachers. Rick: Understand teachers. Engage teachers in sustained dialogue.	-Heuristic strategies for working with teachers in a supervisory capacity. -May enable assistant principals to influence teachers.
-How do I balance time between paper and people? -How do I carry out my role responsibilities?	Integrated Perspective	Sandy: Be available to respond. Rick: Provide services to teachers. Influence systems and people.	-Heuristic strategies for carrying out administrative role responsibilities. -Enables assistant principals to achieve and influence others in the school.

Sue, Sandy, and Rick show a perspective on doing administrative tasks. The perspective on doing tasks consists of a set of heuristic strategies that the assistant principals can apply to their various task responsibilities. This perspective enables the assistant principals to begin to achieve in their school organizations.

Diane is developing and Sandy and Rick have developed a perspective on working effectively with teachers. The perspective on working effectively with teachers consists of a set of heuristic strategies that enable the assistant principals to understand, support, and engage teachers in sustained dialogue. This perspective enables the assistant principals to begin to influence teachers in their schools. Katie, John, and Sue are attempting to use the power of their administrative position to control the teachers they supervise. Katie, John, and Sue say "yes" or "no" to teachers, tell teachers what to do, and attempt to give them knowledge. These assistant principals have not developed a perspective on working effectively with teachers.

Sandy and Rick have developed an integrated perspective on their administrative role. The integrated perspective combines elements of the discrete perspectives on working for the principal, working with other administrators, doing tasks, and working effectively with teachers. This perspective enables the assistant principals to balance their time between their task and teacher responsibilities.



The integrated perspective guides the assistant principals' actions as they carry out their administrative role responsibilities and enables the assistant principals to achieve and influence others in their school organizations.

Problematic situations that the assistant principals experience were also described. Katie experiences administrative work, working for the principal, working with administrators, doing tasks, and working with teachers as problematic situations. John experiences doing tasks, working with teachers, and balancing time as problematic situations. Sue and Diane experience working with the teachers they supervise as a problematic situation. Sandy experiences not knowing how to become a principal as a problematic situation. Sandy's and Rick's experiences suggest that the problematic situations of working effectively with teachers and balancing time between task and teacher responsibilities are not easily solved and may require administrators to approach their role responsibilities as a paradox where administration is "a blend of both . . . nurturing and disciplinary situations, of a human and a paper situation."

Factors that appear to account for the development of administrative perspectives were introduced in this chapter. These include: the quality of the assistant principals' preparation experiences; the assistant principals' styles as teachers; the assistant principals' motivation; the

assistant principals' relationships with their principals and other administrators; the teachers in the schools; and selection conditions.

## CHAPTER V

### A GROUNDED THEORY OF ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS' ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES

The purpose of this chapter is to present a grounded theory that explains factors that account for the development of the assistant principals' perspectives. The chapter is organized in two sections: Propositions About the Organizational Socialization of Assistant Principals; and Limitations, Implications and Recommendations.

#### Propositions About the Organizational Socialization of Assistant Principals

The purpose of this study was to develop a theoretical understanding of the perspectives that emerge from assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences. A grounded theory that describes the outcomes of the assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences and explains the relationships between the socialization processes, organizational factors, individual factors, and socialization outcomes has been developed. In this section, propositions that explain the assistant principals' organizational socialization experience are offered and a model of the assistant principals' organizational experience is presented.

### Organizational Socialization Processes

1. Assistant principals develop perspectives by assessing the requirements of the administrative work situation, experimenting with ideas and actions to determine strategies that are appropriate in the situation, and choosing the strategy that enables them to respond successfully to the situational requirements.

The notion that assistant principals develop perspectives reflects a new understanding of the socialization process. The original research question suggested that perspectives emerge from assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences. The results of this study show that perspectives do not emerge; that is, they do not "come forth into view" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1964, p. 474). The socialization experiences described in this study suggest that assistant principals develop perspectives through an active, constructive, interpretive process. The assistant principals construct a definition of the situational requirements; the assistant principals experiment with ideas and actions to determine how to be successful in response to their perception of the situation; and the assistant principals actively choose how to respond to the situation. The strategy they choose is a perspective that enables them to respond successfully to their understanding of the situational requirements.

The results of this study show that all of the assistant principals use this situational adjustment (Becker, 1964) process. John, for example, is assessing the requirements of working with teachers and has concluded that it is hard to make teachers happy and that teachers do not want change. He responds to his interpretation of the situational requirements by developing two tentative ideas about how he should behave in the situation: he will make the teachers equally unhappy; he is not going to make any changes. John is not yet sure that these ideas will work for him in the situation; John has not yet developed a perspective on working effectively with teachers.

During her first year as an assistant principal, Sue decided that her administrative role required her to "judiciously" say, "No," to teachers. Sue says that by responding in this way to teachers, she committed "professional suicide." Sue learned that teachers fear her and that teachers disregard her. Sue is reassessing her behavior in light of her interpretation of the situation. She is considering ways to behave differently, but has not yet decided how to change her behavior to successfully meet the requirement of working effectively with the teachers she supervises. Sue is experiencing organizational socialization as a situational adjustment process; she has not yet developed a perspective on working with teachers.

Diane has assessed the requirements of working with teachers and has experimented with strategies to determine how to be successful. She has decided that she needs to spend time with teachers, understand teachers, not make snap judgments, and be realistic. She has also decided that some of her strategies do not work. She says, "It's a trial-and-error process, learning how to use different strategies with different teachers." Diane is using a situational adjustment process to develop a perspective on working with teachers.

Rick has also assessed the requirements of working with teachers. Rick has learned that "It's not like I get a person in my office, we sit down and agree, and they go off and to it . . ." Rick has decided that the situation requires him to engage teachers in sustained dialogue and deliver services that meet their needs. Using a situational adjustment process, Rick has actively constructed a perspective that enables him to respond to the situational requirement of working effectively with teachers.

The notion that assistant principals develop perspectives is consistent with Becker et al.'s (1961), Katz' (1980), and Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) empirical and theoretical discussions of the development of perspectives. According to Becker et al. (1961), "A person develops and maintains a perspective when he faces a situation calling for action . . ." (p. 35). In parallel

manner, Katz (1980) explains that ". . . employees . . . will endeavor to structure, interpret, and redefine their work settings" (p. 81). Van Maanen and Schein (1979) offer a similar notion,

To come to know an organizational situation and act within it implies that a person has developed . . . a perspective for interpreting one's experiences [emphasis in the original] . . . (p. 212)

As Van Maanen (1977) puts it:

Perspectives are not provided . . . by environmental fiat. They are not somehow "out there" . . . waiting to be claimed by an individual. . . . Individuals must actively construct definitions to describe features of their organizational situation. (pp. 17-18)

The notion that assistant principals develop perspectives using situational adjustment processes is consistent with Becker's (1964) theory of situational adjustment. According to Becker:

The person, as he moves in and out of a variety of social situations, learns the requirements of continuing in each situation and of success in it. If he has a strong desire to continue, the ability to assess accurately what is required, and can deliver the required performance, the person turns himself into the kind of person the situation demands. (p. 44)

Using a situational adjustment process, the assistant principals learn the requirements of being successful in a situation and develop perspectives that enable them to respond appropriately to the situational requirements.

Organizational Factors  
Influencing the Development  
of Perspectives

2. The requirement to move through three tightly-linked boundary passages--the functional boundary passage, the hierarchical boundary passage, and the inclusionary boundary passage--appears to be the most important organizational factor influencing the development of administrative perspectives and the intensity of the organizational socialization experience.

As noted in Chapter II, the structure of an organization may be conceptualized using the concept of role dimensions. An organizational role has three dimensions: a functional role dimension that refers to the tasks performed by the individual; a hierarchical role dimension that refers to an individual's rank or status in the organization; and an inclusionary role dimension that refers to an individual's centrality in the organization (Schein, 1971; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). A change in an individual's career may be conceptualized as movement through functional, hierarchical, and inclusionary boundary passages that correspond to functional, hierarchical, and inclusionary changes in an individual's role (Schein, 1971; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

The results of this study suggest that when assistant principals enter their role, they enter the functional, hierarchical, and inclusionary boundary passages. As they



journey through the functional boundary passage, they engage in a process of determining the situational requirements of administrative work. They discover that their new administrative work situation requires them to learn how to cope with ambiguity, immediacy, unpredictability, diverse tasks, diverse people, and fast-paced work, and that their work situation requires them to be responsive to people. In response to the question, how do I cope in this new administrative work environment, the assistant principals develop the "it takes time to learn" perspective. This perspective does not guide them in the process of determining how to carry out their new role responsibilities; it serves as a temporary coping mechanism that relieves their anxiety and allows them to continue to assess the requirements of the administrative work situation.

In hierarchical boundary passage, assistant principals learn that their new administrative role requires them to carry out their supervisors' expectations. Rick explains, "If you have been a teacher moving into an administrator's role, it is rare that you've had a close collegial relationship with a person who can assign you work." Thus, one of the initial problems that assistants face is learning to work for the principals who assign them work.

As they journey through the hierarchical boundary passage, the assistant principals learn a perspective on

working for the principal. When they have developed a personal understanding of what it means to assist the principal, the assistants focus on a new problem: How do I carry out my task responsibilities? Katie, the assistant principal who does not have a perspective on assisting the principal, appears immobilized in the hierarchical role boundary passage. In the absence of a positive hierarchical relationship with the principal, Katie focuses on establishing relationships with the members of the administrative team.

As they move through the inclusionary boundary passage, the assistant principals learn that they are required to work effectively with other administrators and to be perceived as contributing members of the administrative team. In response, John, Sandy and Rick have developed supportive relationships with their assistant principal colleagues. Diane and Rick have established relationships with their principals that are characterized by mutual trust and respect. The relationships with other assistant principals or their principals provide these assistant principals with support as they learn to carry out their role responsibilities.

Sue, in contrast, does not appear to feel included. While she says that her principal trusts her, she describes herself as being loyal to him. She has to live with his "foul-ups." She does not trust him not to foul up. The

absence of a mutual relationship of trust may interfere with the development of her perspectives. In addition, Sue has not established collaborative relationships with other assistant principals in her school. Katie also does not feel included by the members of her administrative team. Sue and Katie feel isolated. They do not have assistance in learning how to carry out their role responsibilities. Sue and Katie appear to be immobilized in the inclusionary boundary passage.

After they have developed perspectives on working for the principal and working with administrators, the assistants are mobilized in the functional boundary passage to focus on learning how to meet task requirements. They experience task learning as a disjunctive process (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). According to Sue, there are no books and no rules so she had to learn how to do the tasks on her own. Sandy, John, and Rick describe similar task-learning experiences. Sue, John, and Rick also do not believe that their principals have enough specific contextual knowledge to help them complete the tasks that they must perform. Using a learning-by-doing, trial-and-error process, the assistants develop a perspective on doing tasks--a set of heuristic strategies that they can use to carry out task responsibilities. This perspective on doing tasks enables the assistant principals to complete the functional boundary passage.

As noted, assistant principals developed perspectives on working for the principal, on working with other administrators, and on carrying out task responsibilities, as they moved through the functional, hierarchical, and inclusionary boundary passages. In the functional boundary passage, the assistants also developed an important understanding: the functional dimension of their role requires them to be responsive to the needs of the adults they supervise. This understanding introduces a new condition in the hierarchical dimension of their role. Assistant principals need to develop effective working relationships with the adults they supervise. The process of establishing effective supervisory relationships included learning about teachers, experimenting to determine whether their behaviors will be appropriate to the requirements of the supervision situation, and deciding how to behave with teachers. The assistant principals develop a perspective on working with teachers when they find actions that work effectively with the teachers they supervise. This perspective on working with teachers enables the assistants to complete the hierarchical boundary passage.

The assistant principals' descriptions of their journey through the hierarchical boundary passage suggest that divestiture processes (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) are influencing the development of their perspectives on working with teachers. John's description of his encounter with the

veteran teacher who told him that "'We don't do that around here.' That shaped me up right away," provides the only concrete example of a teacher's confrontational behavior. The more vague descriptions, however, suggest that when the assistant principals do not behave as teachers believe they should behave, teachers influence the assistants to change their behavior. This may occur primarily through the subtle process of disregarding what the assistant principals have said. As Diane puts it, "Sometimes they listen and sometimes they won't." Rick communicates the same message, "It's not as if we agree and they go off and do it. It just doesn't work that way." The divestiture process of disregarding administrators appears to be one of the most powerful factors in shaping the development of the assistant principal's perspective on working with teachers.

Divestiture processes seem to be most powerful in Sue's organizational socialization experience. Sue was "tapped" as an "insider" by her principal to become an assistant principal after 18 years of being a teacher in her school. Because she reports having "knowledge" about the teachers, Sue may not have recognized the need to learn about, understand, and establish rapport with the teachers she now is expected to supervise. Sue appears to be immobilized in the hierarchical boundary passage.

The conditions surrounding their selection appear to ease the transition through the hierarchical boundary

passage. Sandy and Rick both participated in formal selection processes. Both were hired from outside their schools. According to Sandy, being hired from the outside gives an assistant principal "an automatic, built-in advantage." She explains:

Teachers don't bring an agenda . . . and don't bring any preconceived notions. The staff didn't know what to expect. Things I had done . . . in my old district weren't done here. When I implemented some things I got lots and lots of positive feedback. The staff was remarkably supportive.

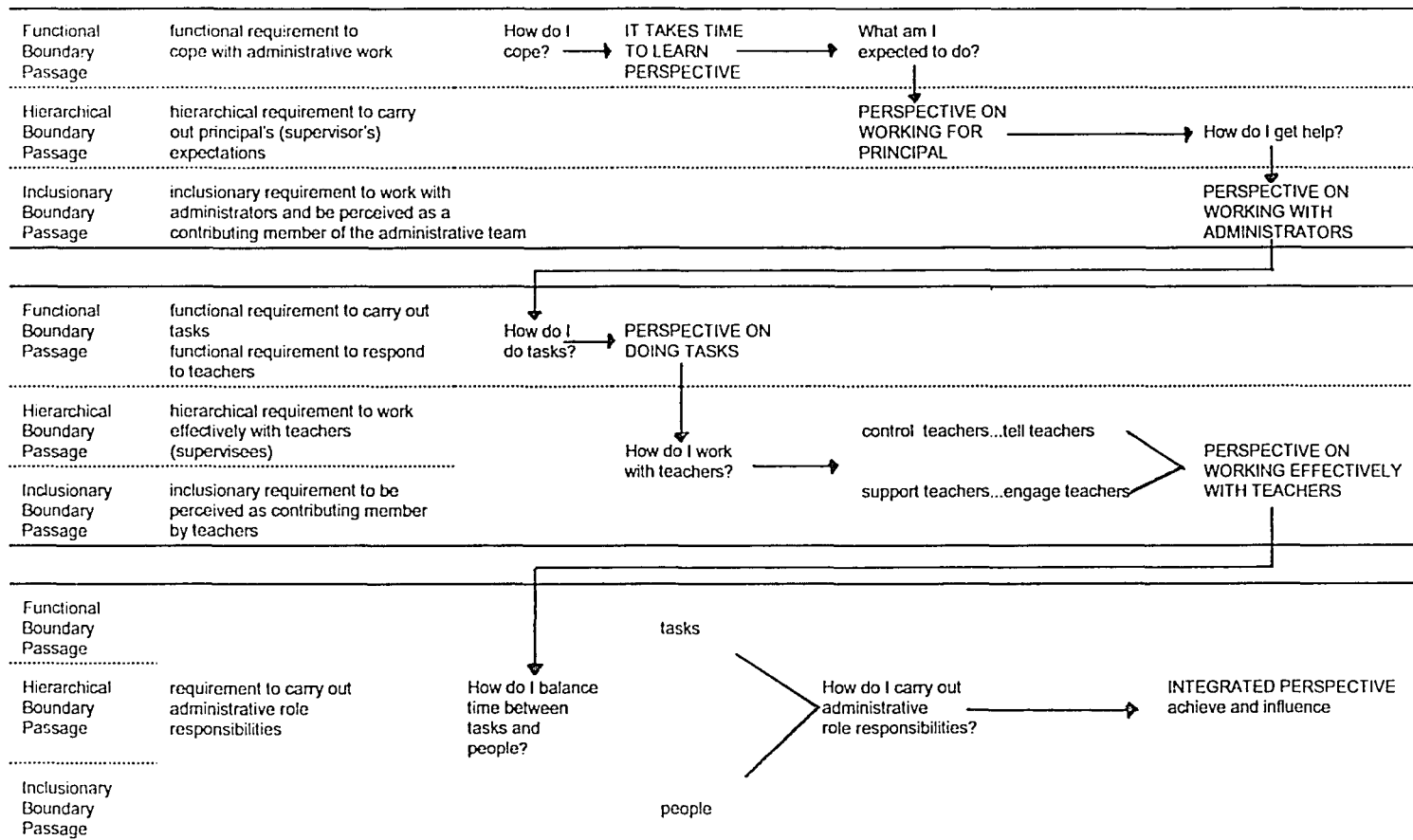
The condition of being formally selected from the outside appears to ease the assistant principal's journey through the hierarchical boundary passage.

The perception of autonomy in their roles may also ease the transition through the hierarchical boundary passage. Diane and Rick perceive themselves as having a high degree of autonomy as they carry out their role responsibilities. In addition, both feel that their principals trust them and are confident in their ability to be successful. This may enable Diane and Rick to feel more confident as they experiment with strategies for working with teachers.

Sandy and Rick appear to have one additional understanding that the other assistants do not have. They know that their success depends not only on the judgments that administrators make about their effectiveness, but also on the judgments that teachers make about the work that they

do. Sandy reports that teachers are happy with the work she is doing. Rick says, "Teachers say very positive things about my being at [this school]." In contrast to Katie, John, Sue, and Diane, Sandy and Rick can clearly articulate achievements they have made in their schools. They believe they are central contributors in their schools. Sandy and Rick have completed the inclusionary boundary passage.

This discussion of organizational factors influencing the development of assistant principals' perspectives is summarized in Figure 1. Each boundary passage imposes different situational requirements. The functional boundary passage imposes the requirements to carry out administrative work and to respond to teachers. The hierarchical boundary passage imposes the requirements to work for the principal and to supervise teachers. The inclusionary boundary passage imposes the situational requirements to be perceived as "central" by other administrators and by the teachers the assistant principals supervise. The assistant principals develop perspectives that enable them to respond to the situational requirements in each passage. When the assistant principals integrate the discrete perspectives developed in response to each situational requirement, the assistant principals complete the boundary passages.



**Figure 1.** Organizational factors influencing the development of perspectives: Boundary passages.



The intensity of the assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences appears to be due to the relationships among the boundary passages. The functional boundary passage is tightly linked to the hierarchical boundary passage. To be able to carry out work responsibilities, the assistant principals need to know what their principals expect them to do and they need to know how to respond to teachers. The hierarchical boundary passage is tightly linked to the inclusionary boundary passage. To be perceived as central contributors in their school organizations, the assistant principals must be judged as worthy by their supervisors, the principals, and by the teachers they supervise.

This proposition is consistent with Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) organizational socialization theory. These theorists proposed that:

Socialization . . . is no doubt more intense and problematic for a member (and others) just before and just after a particular boundary passage. . . . the more boundaries that are crossed by a person at any one time, the more profound the experience is likely to be for the person. This is one reason why the outsider-to-insider passage in which an individual crosses over all three organizational boundaries at once is so often marked by dramatic changes in a person. . . . A person is likely to have the most impact upon others in the organization . . . what Schein (1971) refers to as the 'innovation' process, at points furthest from any boundary crossing. (pp. 223-224)

The passage through three, tightly-linked boundary passages appears to be the most important organizational factor

influencing the development of assistant principals' administrative perspectives.

Individual Factors Influencing  
the Development of Perspectives

3. The quality of the assistant principals' preparation experiences, their styles as teachers, and their motivation appear to be the most important personal factors influencing the development of administrative perspectives.

The results of this study show that three of the assistant principals--Diane, Sandy, and Rick--are developing or have developed an integrated perspective on their role. All of these assistant principals had high-quality preparation experiences.

Diane worked for her principal and with other administrators for six years. In her quasi-administrative role, Diane worked with discipline and attendance, developed a master schedule, developed curriculum, helped create and enforce policy, organized community meetings, and worked with parents. During this experience, Diane had opportunities to assess the requirements of the administrative role and experiment with strategies for responding to the requirements. When she entered her assistant principal role, Diane did not experience the requirements to work for the principal, work with other administrators, and do administrative tasks as problematic situations. It appears that Diane had developed

perspectives on working for and with the principal and on doing tasks that she would transfer with little or no modification to her administrative role.

During her last year of teaching, Sandy spent 25% of her time as "acting principal" in her principal's absence. By doing "a potpourri of things that administrators do," Sandy says she began to see patterns in administrative work. These patterns may have enabled Sandy to assess accurately the requirements of carrying out administrative role responsibilities. Sandy experienced the situational requirements of being an administrator as problematic when she first entered her role. However, it appears that because she had high-quality preparation experiences, she developed perspectives easily in her new administrative role.

Rick, like Diane and Sandy, had high-quality preparation experiences. Rick had been a project manager for a national computer company and a consultant for the regional educational laboratory. When Rick became an assistant principal, he entered with a "conceptual framework" upon which he could "hang things." Rick entered his administrative role with perspectives on working for and with administrators, doing tasks, and supervising adults that he would transfer and adjust to meet the requirements of his school work situation. The quality of Rick's

preparation experiences appear to have influenced the development of Rick's integrated perspective.

Katie, John, and Sue did not have high-quality quasi-administrative experiences. Katie's quasi-administrative experiences consisted of being a Chapter I teacher on special assignment, an administrative assistant in a professional organization, and an acting assistant principal responsible for discipline. John's quasi-administrative experience consisted of four years as a half-time activities director and student management specialist. Sue had one year as a teacher on special assignment responsible for community relations and grant writing.

These experiences provided Katie, John, and Sue with very few opportunities to assess the requirements of their administrative work situation. When they entered their new roles, these assistants had to learn the requirements of the administrative work situation. Then they engaged in trial-and-error processes to determine strategies that would enable them to respond to the requirements.

Experience as teachers also appears to influence the development of administrative perspectives. The assistant principals who are developing or have developed integrated perspectives--Diane, Sandy and Rick--had less than 10 years of teaching experience. In contrast, the assistant principals who have not developed integrated perspectives have more than 10 years experience as teachers. Katie had

13 years of teaching experience, John had 16 years of teaching experience and Sue had 18 years of teaching experience. These patterns are consistent with Blood's (1966) finding that teachers with many years of experience had more difficulty developing an administrative perspective than did teachers with few years of teaching experience.

Their styles as teachers also appear to influence the development of the assistant principals' perspective on working with teachers. Sue describes her teaching style as intense, direct and probing. She suspects that this style is not appropriate in her administrative role. She also believes that empowering teachers is a process of giving them knowledge. John and Katie make similar comments about their work with teachers: they see their role as telling teachers how to improve. In classrooms, the legitimate authority of teachers tends to be grounded in the teachers' ability to give students knowledge and control their behavior. As teachers for more than 10 years, these assumptions about legitimate authority may have become embedded in the ways Katie, John and Sue behave. Their longevity as teachers and their teaching styles appear to interact and have a negative impact on their behavior as administrators.

In contrast, Diane and Sandy both describe teaching styles that do not reflect the power-over-students approach as the legitimate source of their authority. Diane says she

worked hard with students to help them develop a global perspective that enabled them to step into others' shoes before they took action. Sandy describes herself as being proactive and positive when she worked with her students. She did not tell them what to do; she helped them solve problems for themselves. Diane and Sandy report that they have transferred their style as teachers to their administrative roles. These teaching styles appear to positively influence the development of their administrative perspectives.

The number of years intervening between teaching and administering also appears to be a factor influencing the development of their administrative perspectives. In contrast to the other assistant principals, Diane and Rick have had 6 years and 10 years difference between their teaching and administering experiences. Diane and Rick are the only assistants who look to the character of the teaching work situation to find reasons why teachers behave as they do. Their ability to distance themselves from teaching appears to be a factor in their development of a deep understanding of teachers and their work situations. This understanding appears to influence the development of the perspective on working effectively with teachers.

Finally, the assistant principals' motivation also appears to influence the development of their administrative perspectives. Katie, John, and Sue do not describe

themselves as being motivated to be successful in their role. Sandy, Diane, and Rick describe themselves as being strongly motivated. Sandy is motivated to be successful so that she can become a principal. Diane and Rick are motivated to make a difference. Their motivation to succeed or make a difference appears to provide the assistant principals with incentive to learn how to carry out their role responsibilities.

The empirical literature offers support for this proposition. In their study of effective principals, Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) concluded that the quality of principals' previous experience may have a major influence on their work as principals. They explained:

There has been relatively little attention given to assessing the qualitative character of people's previous experience as a teacher, graduate student, supervisor, or administrator. The informal learning that occurs as people enact these various roles is probably a major influence shaping their capabilities as a principal. (p. 258)

This supports the notion that the quality of the assistant principals' quasi-administrative experiences is an important factor in the development of their administrative perspectives.

Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) also suggested that administrators' styles as teachers may influence the development of administrative perspectives. These researchers differentiated between the quality of a teacher's experience working in a single classroom teaching

situation and a teacher's experience working with multiple groups of students and teaming or coordinating efforts with other teachers in their school. They suggested that the teacher who has had experience working with adults may be more successful at fulfilling administrative role requirements. They commented:

It's the quality, the nature of the experience, that counts. . . . what is learned informally through "experience" at an early stage in a teacher's career may indeed not be functionally relevant or appropriate to the role demands at a later stage in the career. . . . Teachers, while active in the teaching role . . . accrue both useful and inappropriate conceptions of the principalship [emphasis in the original]. (p. 259)

Blumberg and Greenfield's conclusions support the proposition that the quality of assistant principals' previous experiences and their styles as teachers are important factors influencing the development of the assistant principals' administrative perspectives.

Organizational Socialization  
Outcomes: Administrative  
Perspectives

4. Assistant principals experience a common set of problematic situations. In response, assistant principals develop a common set of perspectives.

The results of this study suggest that assistant principals experience a common set of problematic situations. These situations include: How do I cope with the ambiguity, immediacy, unpredictability, diversity, and



pace of administrative work? What am I expected to do? How do I get support in my new work situation? How do I do the tasks assigned to me? How do I work effectively with the teachers I supervise? How do I balance my time between my task responsibilities and my responsibilities with and for people? Each of these problematic situations requires the assistant principals to make choices. When the assistant principals choose a strategy that works for them, the assistant principals develop a perspective; that is, a coordinated set of ideas and actions that guides their response to the problematic situations.

The results of this study suggest that assistant principals develop a common set of perspectives in response to the problematic situations. The first perspective, "it takes time to learn," functions as a temporary coping mechanism that reduces the assistant principals' anxiety when they enter their new role. In response to the problem--What am I expected to do?--the assistant principals develop a perspective on working for the principal. This perspective provides the assistants with a personal understanding of what it means to assist the principal and reduces ambiguity about the assistant principals' role responsibilities. In response to the problem--How do I get support?--the assistant principals develop a perspective on working with other administrators. This perspective provides the assistant principals with support as they learn

how to carry out their role responsibilities and reduces their feelings of isolation in their new work situation. In response to the problem--How do I do the tasks assigned to me?--assistant principals develop a perspective on doing tasks. This perspective consists of a set of heuristic strategies that the assistants can apply to any task assigned to them. The perspective on doing tasks enables the assistant to begin to achieve in the school organization.

In response to the problem--How do I work effectively with the teachers I supervise?--the assistant principals develop a perspective on working effectively with teachers. At this choice point, three of the assistant principals are choosing to tell teachers what to do. These assistants are learning that this strategy is not effective. Teachers respond by fearing them or disregarding them. Three of the assistant principals are choosing to help teachers, understand teachers, and engage teachers in sustained dialogue. These assistants are developing or have developed a perspective on working effectively with teachers. The perspective on working effectively with teachers enables the assistant principals to begin to influence others in the school organization.

In response to the problem--How do I balance my time between my task and people responsibilities?--several assistant principals develop an integrated perspective. The

integrated perspective appears to integrate the discrete perspectives on working for the principal, working with other administrators, doing tasks, and working with teachers. The integrated perspective enables the assistant principals to balance their time between their task and teacher responsibilities. As Rick puts it, if administrators want to make a difference for students, they have to be able to influence many systems and touch many people. The integrated perspective also enables the assistant principals to achieve and influence others in the school organization.

The results of other studies on assistant principals support the proposition that assistant principals experience the problematic situations described in this study. While the results of other studies do not describe the perspectives that assistant principals develop, findings of other studies suggest that other assistant principals develop responses that are similar to the perspectives that are described in this study.

The assistant principals in this study addressed the issue of not knowing what they are expected to do by developing a perspective on working for the principal. The findings from several studies support the notion that assistant principals must address the issue: "What am I expected to do?" For example, Austin and Brown's (1970)

comprehensive survey and shadow studies reported the conclusion that:

Critical to the understanding of any assistant principalship at any time is the peculiar relationship between the principal and the assistant principal. The prime determiner of this relationship is the principal. It is his concept of the role of the assistant principal which will be most influential. (p. 77)

The conclusions reported in McCarthy's (1987) interview study parallels the Austin and Brown conclusion. According to McCarthy, "Virtually all assistant principals expressed the view that it was the principal's concept of the role of the assistant principal that was most influential in determining what they were involved in on a day-to-day basis" (p. 137).

Marshall's (1985) field study research reported a similar conclusion, "Assistant principals' tasks and responsibilities are often defined as whatever the principal wants" (p. 47). In her book on assistant principals, Marshall (1992) explained that assistant principals do not, for the most part, have consistent, well-defined job descriptions. As a result, assistant principals tend to experience role ambiguity. Marshall added, however, that

Some assistant principals develop easy administrative understandings about responsibilities and assertively take charge of certain tasks, regardless of their formal role expectation. (p. 6)

The results of these studies suggest that it is important for assistant principals to address the issue: "What am I

expected to do?" In response, they appear to develop a personal understanding of what it means to assist the principal--a perspective on working for the principal.

The assistant principals in this study addressed the issue of "How do I get support in my new work environment?" Three of the assistants resolved this issue by establishing supportive working relationships with other assistant principals. One of the assistant principals developed a supportive relationship with her principal. These assistants developed a perspective on working with other administrators. Two of the assistant principals have not yet established support relationships with the other administrators in her school.

The assistant principals described in the McCarthy (1987) study also appear to address the problem of learning to work with other administrators. McCarthy indicated that one of the common elements in the lives of assistant principals is their sense of isolation. To cope with the isolation, several of these assistants derived their support from their principals; others established relationships with other assistant principals. The assistants in the McCarthy study who had not established supportive relationships with other administrators, like Katie and Sue, felt lonely in their administrative roles.

The results of this study indicate that assistant principals experience the issue of doing tasks as a

problematic situation. In response, the assistants develop a perspective on doing tasks that consists of a set of heuristic strategies to be used when facing unfamiliar tasks.

Marshall's (1992) discussion of assistant principals' on-the-job learning experiences supported the findings of this study. According to Marshall, "Perhaps the strongest learning experiences for assistant principals come when they take on, or are assigned certain tasks" (p. 29). Marshall also suggested that assistant principals learn tasks by seeking role models who take time to explain ways things are done.

The assistant principals in this study experienced the issue of working with teachers as a problematic situation. Three of the assistant principals developed perspectives that guided their actions as they worked with teachers. Three of the assistants have not yet developed a perspective that enables them to work effectively with teachers. These assistants appear to use a controlling style with the teachers they supervise.

While the results of other studies of assistant principals do not describe data that suggest that the assistant principals develop a perspective on working with teachers, the findings of three of the studies on assistant principals suggested that other assistant principals experience working with people in general, and teachers

specifically, as a problematic situation. According to Austin and Brown (1970):

The assistant principal is primarily concerned with people and their relationships as established, stressed, and threatened within the milieu of the school. . . . It is the people who work and learn within this setting with whom the assistant principal must deal. . . . His success or failure is clearly related to his skill in human relations as they are influenced by the demands and opportunities of the school. (p. 76)

Marshall (1985) indicated that assistant principals must learn to define relationships with teachers. She explained:

Perhaps what we see emerging here as a pattern is that part of the assistant principal enculturation task--separation from and defining relationship [sic] with teachers--entails developing a role orientation that is "us versus them" so that administrators can feel comfortable with enforcing policies and evaluating their professional colleagues and teachers. (pp. 45-46)

McCarthy (1987) offered similar observations:

The assistant principal's work-life is characterized by continual interaction with a wide variety of individuals on a wide variety of issues. Most of these interactions involve people in conflict with some other individual or some aspect of the school setting. . . . Interestingly enough, the real conflicts, the real sources of tension and dissatisfaction are not the result of student-assistant principal interaction. . . . The real conflicts are a by-product of interaction with staff, most especially with jaded, long-tenured teachers who bring their frustrations, their disappointments and dissatisfactions to the work environment. (pp. 170-172)

The results of research on assistant principals suggest that other assistant principals experience working with teachers as a problematic situation.

The assistant principals in this study experience the issues of balancing their time between their system and people responsibilities as a problematic situation. Other studies do not explicitly address this issue. However, the data described in Marshall's (1985) research suggested that assistant principals must confront the reality of having too much to do and must make choices about how to use their limited time resources to meet "increasingly complex and pressing demands" (Marshall, 1985, p. 46).

When they entered their assistant principal role, the assistant principals in this study addressed the issue, "How do I cope with the ambiguity, unpredictability, pace and diversity of administrative work?" by developing a temporary, coping perspective, "It takes time to learn." Over time, they developed discrete perspectives that enabled them to respond to specific problematic situations. When the assistant principals confronted the reality of having more to do than they could possibly do, they developed an integrated perspective. The integrated perspective addresses the problematic situation of balancing time, and it integrates the assistant principals' discrete perspectives on assisting the principal, working with administrators, doing tasks, and working with teachers. The integrated perspective serves as a coordinated set of ideas and actions that guide assistant principals' behavior as they cope with the ambiguity, unpredictability, pace and



diversity of their administrative work. The integrated perspective provides a solution to the problem: "How do I respond to the demands of my assistant principal work situation?" The integrated perspective represents a holistic response to the assistant principals' role.

While the literature does not describe the development of assistant principals' integrated perspectives, researchers and theoreticians have confirmed the assistant principals' experience of administrative work. Marshall (1992) indicated the work of assistant principals is characterized by ambiguity, conflict and overload. McCarthy (1987) described assistant principals' work as "characterized by irregularity, by interruption, by unpredictable crises and by the inability to follow a schedule of the day" (p. 167).

Greenfield (in press) offered a description of ways the work of administering a school differs from the work of administrators in other settings:

The work of the school administrator: involves extensive face-to-face communication; is action-oriented; is reactive; the presented problems are unpredictable; decisions frequently are made without accurate or complete information; the work occurs in a setting of immediacy; the pace is rapid; there are frequent interruptions; work-episodes themselves tend to be of very brief duration; responses often cannot be put off until later; resolution of problems often involves multiple actors; and, the work is characterized by a pervasive pressure to maintain a peaceful and smoothly running school in the face of a great deal of ambiguity and uncertainty. (p. 4)

Greenfield explained that school administrators do what they do in response to the nature of administrative work. Greenfield's observations suggest that all administrators may experience administrative work as a problematic situation.

#### Teachers as Socializing Agents

5. Teachers appear to be the most powerful socializing agents in the assistant principals' organizational socialization experience.

The results of this study suggest that teachers, through their power to disregard administrators, have a powerful effect on the development of assistant principals' perspective on working with teachers and their integrated perspectives. While the data provide only one concrete example of a description of teachers' actions, John's encounter with a veteran teacher, the data suggest that all of the assistant principals experience working with teachers as a problematic situation. The data suggest that all of the assistant principals in this study experience divestiture processes when they attempt to control or tell teachers what to do.

Katie says the counselors she supervises perceive themselves as "experts" in everything. She has learned that she can "please them" by saying, "Yes," and make them angry by saying, "No." John believes that teachers may confront him and that he may have to confront them during the

evaluation process. He suspects that it is "easier confronting a teacher than it is a teenager." Sue has learned that teachers fear her and that they have the power to disregard her. Diane has learned that "Sometimes people listen and sometimes they won't. . . . It's hard to deal with people's personalities." Sandy finds herself in "damned if you do and damned if you don't" situations. She says it's hard to meet teachers' needs when their needs are in conflict. Rick says:

I didn't expect to deal with so many episodes without closure. The episodes--the dealing with no closure on things--without a sustained series of episodes is (pause) I didn't realize how much of that is the case. You know, it's not like I get a person in my office, we sit down, and we agree, and they go off and do it, and that's the last I have to deal with it. It just doesn't work that way.

Marshall (1992) offered insight into the challenge of working with teachers. According to Marshall:

The assistant may be working with a teacher as a colleague in one meeting and, perhaps one hour later, the same assistant may be meeting to chastise the same teacher for noncompliance with the district's new homework policy. When they must monitor teachers' compliance, assistants have difficulty maintaining equal collegial and professional relationships with them (pp 6-7).

Greenfield (in press) explained the challenge of working with teachers. According to Greenfield:

Teachers in U.S. public schools are a highly educated work-force socialized to norms of professional autonomy, and usually receive a lifetime appointment (tenure) after three years of probationary service. Teachers are unlike workers in non-school settings in several other ways: they are relatively isolated from one another;

compared to counterparts in other work settings they experience and expect a high degree of autonomy in the control of their daily work; there is a low level of interdependency among teachers in terms of task accomplishment; they are not closely supervised; and, teachers place a high significance on the importance of psychic rewards derived from relations and successes with students. . . . Teachers can, with relative ease, ignore most efforts by administrators to influence their teaching or what occurs in their classrooms. (pp. 7-8)

Teachers, as a highly autonomous work-force, can and do disregard administrators. The challenge for the assistant principals is to develop effective relationships with the teachers they supervise.

The assistant principals' relationships with their principals may mediate the divestiture effect of teachers. When the assistant principals perceive their relationship with the principal as being characterized by mutual respect and perceive themselves as having autonomy in their roles, investiture processes may also be operating. These investiture processes may help the assistants feel more confident as they learn how to work with teachers.

#### A Model of the Assistant Principals' Organizational Socialization Experiences

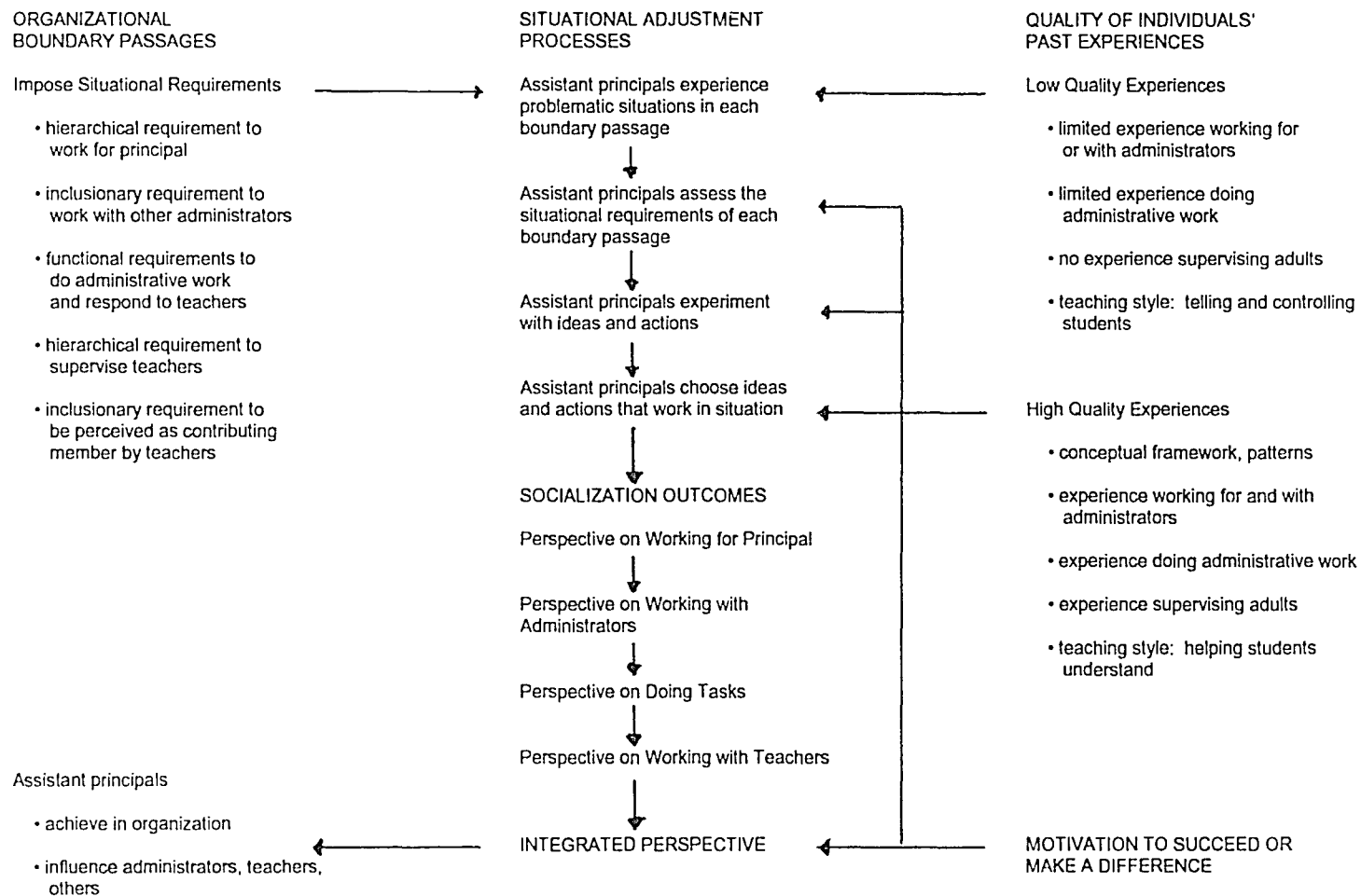
These propositions describe the perspectives that assistant principals develop and the processes that assistant principals use to develop these perspectives. The propositions explain organizational and individual factors that influence the development of the organizational

socialization outcomes--the assistant principals' perspectives.

Figure 2, Assistant Principals' Organizational Socialization Experiences, reveals relationships among the organization, the individual, the socialization processes, and the socialization outcomes. The organization requires the assistant principals to move through the functional, hierarchical, and inclusionary boundary passages. Each boundary passage imposes situational requirements.

The assistant principals experience organizational socialization as a situational adjustment process. This includes experiencing the requirements of each boundary passage as a problematic situation; assessing the requirements of the situation; experimenting with ideas and actions to determine how to be successful in the situation; and choosing a perspective--a coordinated set of ideas and actions--that works for the assistant principals in the situation.

The quality of the individuals' past experiences shapes the way the assistant principals experience the situational adjustment process. The assistant principals who have low-quality experiences experience the organizational situation as problematic and must learn to assess the requirements of the situation. The assistant principals who have high-quality experiences enter with a better understanding of the situational requirements. These assistant principals are



**Figure 2.** Assistant principals' organizational socialization experiences.

able to transfer previously developed perspectives, with little or no modification, to their new administrative situation. The assistant principals' motivation to succeed or make a difference provides additional incentive for the assistants to learn how to succeed in their new administrator role. The organization, the individual, and the process interact to influence the development of assistant principals' administrative perspectives.

The relationships in this model are consistent with theoretical notions expressed by Becker et al. (1961), Becker (1964), Katz (1980), Schein (1971), and Van Maanen and Schein (1979). The results of this study suggest that during an organizational socialization stage, the organization exerts a powerful influence on the socialization outcomes. Because the individual does not know what the situation requires and how to respond to the situation, the individual is, for the most part, under situational control. As the individual develops perspectives that enable the individual to respond to the situational requirements, the individual's control in the situation increases. When the individual develops an integrated perspective, the individual may be able to achieve and influence others in the organization.

This organizational socialization model expands on Becker et al.'s (1961), Becker's (1964), Katz's (1980), Schein's (1971), and Van Maanen and Schein's (1979)

organizational socialization theories by suggesting ways that individual factors interact with organizational factors and organizational socialization processes to shape the socialization outcomes. Individuals who have low-quality experiences must learn what the situations require. Individuals who have high-quality experiences enter with an understanding of the situational requirements and with strategies that they can transfer with little or no modification to their administrative role.

The theories generated by Katz (1980), Schein (1971), and Van Maanen and Schein (1979) suggest that the supervisor is the most powerful socializing agent. This theory suggests that when an individual becomes a school administrator, the supervisees exert a more powerful influence on the socialization outcomes than the supervisor. This may reflect the unique situation of learning to administer in a school organization. Administering in schools is not like administering in other organizations (Greenfield, in press).

#### Concluding Propositions

The purpose of this study was to describe perspectives that emerge from the experience of being an assistant principal and to explain factors that account for the development of these perspectives. The purpose was not to determine the effectiveness of the assistant principals' experiences as preparation for a leadership role as



principals. The results of this study, however, suggest the following propositions.

Preparation for a  
Principal's Role

6. The assistant principal's role provides essential preparation for assuming a principal's role.

Empirical and theoretical discussions of the assistant principal role since 1970 have concluded that the assistant principal role does not prepare assistants to assume a leadership role as a principal. Austin and Brown (1970), for example, tentatively concluded that:

There seems to be ample reason to question the commonly held belief that the assistant principalship is a necessary step in the preparation of those who will serve as effective school principals. . . . Preparation for long-range planning, for program leadership and for educational statesmanship of the order required of superior school principals is no doubt more effectively provided through other experiences that are clearly different from the assistant principalship. (p. 76)

Greenfield (1985) offered a similar conclusion:

Experience in the assistant principal role may be somewhat dysfunctional as preparation for leadership roles of greater responsibility, such as the principalship. (p. 24)

McCarthy (1987) shared a similar observation:

. . . Experienced assistant principals are vastly inexperienced in terms of their preparedness for the broader responsibilities of a principalship or a central office position. (p. 176)

The results of this study contradict these conclusions to some degree. Several assistant principals in this study appear to be developing knowledge and skills that will

prepare them to assume role responsibilities as principals. The results of this study show that some assistant principals are learning or have learned to communicate important messages to adults, to influence teachers to change ways they behave, to interact with teachers in one-to-one situations, and to work with teachers in conflict and confrontation situations.

The data suggest that some assistants are learning or have learned to deal with issues that will help them work with adults in the principals' role. According to Rick:

I think the principal is obviously in a position to affect and pay attention to the needs of adults, but he pays attention to not only the needs of the adults that work in the building, but the adults in the community, the adults in the central office . . . [Principals] have as one of their major focus groups the teaching staff . . . [they do] what I would call ceremonial communication. Addressing groups of people, managing subgroups, like department chairs. . . . They are not planning to sustain that contact in a nurturing way over time. It's a go out, needs sense, understand what your people are thinking about or concerned about, but it's not intended to be a nurturing relationship. . . . The principal has to take . . . that approach to communication . . . [with] many audiences.

The ability to work with adults in one-to-one and small group situations may prepare the assistant principals to work with larger groups and more diverse audiences of adults in the principalship.

In addition, the assistant principals in this study are learning or have learned to respond to the problematic situation of doing administrative work. They are learning

to respond to what Greenfield (in press) conceptualized as the "situational imperatives" (p. 12) of school administration. According to Greenfield, administrators must respond to five critical role-demands: the moral role-demand; the social/interpersonal role-demand; the instructional role-demand; the managerial role-demand; and the political role-demand.

Using Greenfield's (in press) framework, the assistant principals are learning to respond to moral role-demands that require them to determine the "rightness or wrongness" (p. 14) of their actions as administrators. The assistant principals are learning to respond to social/interpersonal demands that require them to work directly with and through people. The assistant principals, through their work evaluating teachers, are learning to respond to instructional role-demands associated with teaching and learning. The assistant principals are learning to respond to managerial role-demands such as scheduling teachers and students and coordinating student activities. Finally, the assistant principals are learning to respond to the political role-demands that require the assistants to influence teachers and other adults to voluntarily change their behaviors or beliefs. The assistant principals in this study have learned or are learning to respond to the role-demands required for effectiveness as a school principal.

### Potential for Leadership

7. Experience in the assistant principal role has the potential for developing the leadership capabilities of assistant principals.

This proposition is based on Cuban's (1988) theoretical notion that:

If there is insufficient time and energy to do everything, choices must be made. From choice comes autonomy. Autonomy is the necessary condition for leadership to arise. Without choice, there is no autonomy. Without autonomy, there is no leadership. From choice, then, comes the potential for leadership . . . Simply exerting authority as teachers and administrators do, however, is not the same as leading. Subordinates are not necessarily followers. For leadership to exist, followers must agree to be led. (p. xx)

The results of this study suggest that assistant principals learn that they do not have time to do everything that they would like to be able to do. Given insufficient time and energy, the assistant principals have the autonomy to make an important choice: they may choose to focus their energies more on their task responsibilities than their people responsibilities; they may choose to focus their energies more on their people responsibilities than their task responsibilities; they may also choose, as Sandy and Rick chose, to define their system responsibilities as support services to the students and adults with whom they worked.

The assistant principals also have the autonomy to make a second choice: they can choose to control or tell

teachers what to do; they can choose to nurture or engage teachers in participatory processes. Diane appears to be developing and Sandy and Rick appear to have developed conditions where the teachers, the followers, agree to be led. These assistant principals are behaving in ways toward teachers that make leadership possible.

Greenfield (in press) provides additional support for this proposition. According to Greenfield:

Leadership is a special form of influence associated with inducing others to change their preferences (actions, attitudes, premises, etc.) voluntarily [emphasis in the original]. (p. 27)

Greenfield argues that leadership is "the most effective and efficient means to administer a school effectively" (p. 23). He adds, "Teachers simply will not consent to be led" (p. 28). The challenge for school administrators is to behave in ways that encourage teachers to voluntarily change their beliefs, behaviors, and/or attitudes.

Three of the assistant principals in this study appear to be learning how to provide leadership. They have learned that they cannot tell teachers what to do. They appear to be developing strategies that encourage teachers to voluntarily change their beliefs and/or behaviors. Thus, the assistant principal role has the potential for developing the leadership capabilities of assistant principals.

The results of this study could suggest that when assistant principals confront the issues of balancing time

and working with teachers, they confront a dilemma; that is, they face "a situation requiring a choice between equally undesirable alternatives" (Stein, 1979, p. 372). The findings, however, support Sue's observation that as assistant principals face the problematic situations of balancing time or working with teachers, they address a paradox; that is:

1. a statement or proposition seemingly self-contradictory or absurd but in reality expressing a possible truth. . . . 3. any person, thing, or situation exhibiting an apparently contradictory nature. (p. 964)

The paradox described in this study suggests that "administration could be and was a blend of both . . . nurturing and disciplinary situations, of a human and a paper situation." Sandy and Rick address the apparent contradiction as they work with people. Neither choose between disciplining and nurturing people. Their strategies are a blend of both. As Sandy puts it, she will "kick butt" when she has to. Her general approach, however, is to view people positively, help them handle their problems, and help them feel good about what they are doing. Sandy responds to people by both disciplining and nurturing them.

Rick has taken a similar approach. Rick says that when he works with teachers who "overheat," he gives them opportunities to provide input and communicates the message "all options are open until a decision is made. Once a decision is made we all speak with one voice on this issue."

Rick's strategy for dealing with "conflict and confrontation" does not provide teachers with the option of refusing to support a decision after it has been made by the group. When Rick works with teachers, he does not choose between disciplining and nurturing them. His strategy is a blend of both.

Patterson (1993) offered support for the notion that administrators wrestle with paradox, not dilemmas. He argued that traditional views of leadership perpetuate "either or thinking." According to Patterson, leaders have learned to:

. . . choose between two ideas . . . Choosing between opposite or competing values becomes our template for decision making. Reward and recognition follow those who learn to make the "right" choice . . . Either/or logic dominates our approach to making decisions. Faced with winning or losing, cooperating or competing, having or not having, we feel we must decide between the two apparently contradictory choices. We must exclude one option from further consideration. (pp. 80-81)

Patterson contended that leaders have learned to approach leadership as a dilemma--a choice between two alternatives.

Patterson (1993) suggested that leadership is a process of "leading within the paradox" (p. 80). He defined paradox as "a thought that seems to embrace two opposing ideas at the same time" (p. 80). He argued that:

Tomorrow's leaders . . . call upon their capacity to hold apparent contradictions (A or B) simultaneously in their mind, linking them with "and" thinking instead of either/or thing. "And" logic moves us from exclusive thinking to inclusive thinking. . . . paradoxes will be

inevitable challenges for tomorrow's leaders. But tomorrow's leaders will be well prepared to meet them. By applying inclusive thinking, both leaders and followers will find that the energy resulting from the tension of paradox can prove to be a valuable asset in discovering creative solutions to complex organizational problems. (pp. 83-85)

Pascale (1990) also supported the notion that administrators experience paradoxes. Pascale differentiated between convergent problems and divergent problems. Convergent problems that deal with distinct, quantifiable issues are amenable to either-or thinking. When a convergent problem is solved, it is eliminated. Divergent problems, in contrast, are not quantifiable or verifiable, and do not lend themselves to a single solution. Divergent problems benefit from the kind of thinking that paradox evokes. Problems such as working effectively with teachers and balancing time between task responsibilities and teacher responsibilities are divergent problems. They require administrators to learn to deal with administration as a paradox, not a dilemma.

The results of this study suggest that Sandy and Rick are learning to lead within the paradox. They recognize that working with people is not an either discipline or nurture situation. They have learned strategies that enable them to work with people in ways that blend disciplining and nurturing. Additionally, they have learned to deal with the choice of balancing their time in ways that enable them to meet their system and people responsibilities. These



assistant principals are learning that leadership is not a dilemma; it is a paradox.

#### Limitations, Implications, and Recommendations

The section that follows focuses on three areas. First, the limitations of this study are described. Second, implications for future research are suggested. Finally, recommendations are offered to assistant principals, principals, school district officials, and professors of educational administration.

#### Limitations

The grounded theory that has been generated in this study reflects the organizational socialization experiences of six assistant principals. These assistants worked for male principals in suburban high schools. This may limit the credibility and transferability of the grounded theory. However, as readers consider the contexts to which the theory may be transferred, it may be appropriate to view the results of this study in light of Marshall's (1992) conclusion, "There exist no substantial differences between the roles of the assistant principal in the junior or senior high schools in urban, suburban, or rural schools" (p. 3).

### Implications for Future Research

The results of this study suggest several areas for future research. First, the findings indicate that gender may be an important factor influencing the development of administrative perspectives. Researchers may benefit from pursuing the questions: What perspectives do men and women develop when they work for women principals? How is the organizational socialization experience of assisting a female principal similar to or different from the organizational socialization experience of assisting a male principal?

Second, the results of this study suggest that it is appropriate to continue to explore the development of administrative perspectives over time. This study describes perspectives that assistant principals develop during what Katz (1980) identified as the socialization and innovation stages of organizational socialization experiences. Future research could focus on continued understanding of the perspectives that develop during the innovation stage and the adaptation stage of the organizational socialization experiences. Research questions might include: What perspectives continue to develop during the second and third years of experience (the innovation stage)? What perspectives do assistant principals with more than three years experience develop (the innovation or adaptation

stages)? What are the consequences of these perspectives for the individuals and for the school organization?

Finally, the results of this study suggest that the assistant principal role has the potential for developing the leadership capabilities of assistant principals. Because the assistant principalship appears to be the entry position for a career in educational administration, the potential of the role for developing leadership should be explored. Future research questions might include: What do assistant principals do to influence teachers to voluntarily change their behaviors, attitudes, or philosophies? How do assistant principals learn to influence teachers to voluntarily change? What do assistant principals learn over time when their attempts to influence teachers are unsuccessful? What are the long-term consequences of the understanding that teachers can disregard administrators for the assistant principals and the school organization?

#### Recommendations for Assistant Principals

The assistant principals in this study offer two recommendations to assistant principals who are entering a new administrative role. First, these assistants suggest that assistant principals develop strong, positive, support relationships with other assistant principals. Sue's advice serves as an example of the assistants' recommendations:

I was thinking a lot about [my own] metamorphosis  
. . . and about ways that a person could be helped

in becoming [an assistant principal]. It is important that there are collaborative networks of assistant principals. These jobs are very strange. . . . When I talk about networking, I mean study groups that begin to take on projects together and think about how each of them handle it. And come back and share. . . . Let's talk about what you're doing. Suppose you're all doing curricular projects. Let's talk about how you went about it. What are your failures? What problems did you run into? How did you overcome those? What did you learn from your experiences? Let's share some strategies. And at the same time, how did you feel? How did it impact you for the next project? What can we do to help you? A support group. A sense of value of your job.

Sue concludes that assistant principals can and should be mentored by other assistant principals.

Second, these assistant principals recommend that assistant principals take time to understand the people with whom they work. As Diane puts it:

Spend time with people. Spend time getting to know them, getting to know the history, the rationale behind why these certain decisions have been made. . . . Get as much variety with experience. . . . Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know, but I'll find that out." Don't be afraid to ask questions. People are going to assume you're an authority, but you're not and that's the reality. Therefore, don't pretend like you are.

Rick offers similar advice:

. . . build rapport with people; build rapport with people; understand what has been; understand what makes sense to pursue; get some areas for focus; and then start building on the strengths that are there . . .

These assistant principals recommend that new assistant principals work closely with other assistant principals and take time to understand people and history before they begin to act like an authority in their role.

### Recommendations for Principals

The results of this study suggest two recommendations for principals. First, when assistant principals enter their new administrative role, it is important for the principal to define clear, unambiguous expectations for the new assistant principal. Assistant principals need to know what they are expected to do so that they can concentrate their energies on learning how to meet the expectations.

Second, assistant principals appear to benefit from a perception that they have a relatively high degree of autonomy in carrying out their role responsibilities. The message for principals appears to be: once expectations have been defined, provide opportunities for the assistant principals to learn how to carry out these responsibilities on their own. The assistants may need support and guidance. As Diane puts it, however, assistant principals need "a chance . . . to try my wings and grow."

### Recommendations for School District Officials

The results of this study suggest recommendations for district officials and others, including the principal, who are responsible for selecting assistant principals. The findings of this study suggest that the quality of assistant principals' quasi-administrative experiences, their styles as teachers, and their long-term motivation are strong predictors of success in their assistant principal role.

Selection teams could ask assistant principals to describe their style as teachers and to explain strategies they use for carrying out new task responsibilities. Teams also could ask prospective administrators to describe their motivation for seeking the position.

The results of this study strongly suggest that "tapping" assistant principals and promoting them directly from the inside the school, without the benefit of formal selection processes, are not effective. Participation in a formal selection process, where teachers are included on the selection team, may ease assistant principals' transition into their new administrative role, and may have long-term benefits as the assistants learn to establish successful working relationships with the teachers they supervise.

District officials may support assistant principals by helping them create a formal, collaborative network of assistant principals. A formal structure that encourages assistant principals to help one another and to reflect on their own learning may contribute to their success in their new administrative role. District officials may support prospective assistant principals by offering practical experiences that are similar to Sandy's experience. During her last year as a teacher, Sandy served as "acting principal" for approximately 25% of her time. This enabled her to see "patterns" in administrative work and to develop

strategies that she could transfer into her assistant principal role.

Recommendations for Professors  
of Educational Administration

The assistant principals in this study found very little value in their formal university preparation course work. Professors of educational administration offered similar conclusions about the effectiveness of university course work for preparing administrators. According to Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) in their comprehensive study of effective principals, ". . . [We] found little to suggest that university graduate training had much direct or observable influence on any of these men and women" (p. 256). Duke (1987) cited evidence that elementary and secondary principals question the value of their formal training programs. Marshall (1992) argued that university training programs offer little support for prospective and practicing assistant principals.

The problem with educational administration preparation programs may be the explicit focus on training prospective and practicing administrators. The results of this study suggest that educational administration preparation programs should be reconceptualized, from a training model to a model that helps assistant principals and other prospective and practicing administrators construct knowledge. Professors of educational administration and others responsible for

formal education for prospective and practicing administrators may learn from Rick's experience. Rick entered his assistant principal role with a "conceptual framework" upon which he could "hang new understandings," and with a set of heuristic strategies that he could apply to learning how to do tasks and work with people. As Rick puts it, this enabled him to construct "a quilt of understanding" as he "planned and executed the mundane."

Rick's experience suggests four areas for emphasis in formal educational administration course work. First, assistant principals and other educational administrators can benefit from opportunities to develop an understanding of schools as complex organizations. Second, assistant principals and other educational administrators can benefit from opportunities to develop an understanding of teachers and their work. Third, assistant principals and other educational administrators can benefit from opportunities to develop a set of heuristic strategies that they can transfer to their administrative work situations. These include strategies for doing tasks and strategies for working with teachers and other people they will encounter in school organizations. Finally, assistant principals and other educational administrators can benefit from experiences that help them develop an understanding of the leadership-followership relationship. Professors of educational administration need to help prospective administrators learn



strategies that influence others to voluntarily change their beliefs and actions. Professors of educational administration need to create conditions that support the ability to approach administration as a paradox that addresses divergent problems, not as a dilemma that requires an either-or choice.

Efforts designed to help administrators become leaders may be the most important contribution made by professors of educational administration. This may require professors to model leadership. Simply telling prospective and practicing administrators what to do, giving them knowledge and controlling their behavior as students may not create the conditions needed for administrators to learn to become leaders. If formal educational administration preparation experiences are reconceptualized as opportunities for prospective and practicing administrators to develop or construct knowledge and learn heuristic strategies that they can transfer into their administrative role, they may be perceived by administrators as valuable preparation experiences.

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APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW GUIDES

## Interview Guide I

## Background Information

Number of years as assistant principal  
Number of years as a teacher  
Number of years in other positions

Degree  
Other Educational Experience

School Characteristics  
Size  
Administrative Structure

1. Tell me about how you got into administration.
2. Think back, before you actually became an assistant principal.  
What did you "know" about the assistant principalship?  
What did you expect your experience would be like?  
How has your experience matched your expectations?
3. Help me to understand what it's like to be an assistant principal.
4. Help me to understand things you experience as challenges and frustrations.
5. How do you typically respond to these situations?
6. Tell me about the joys and successes in your experience.
7. How has being an assistant principal affected you?
8. Is there anything else that would help me to understand your experience better?

## Interview Guide II

1. Follow up questions from first interview.
2. What do you see as similarities and differences between teachers' and administrators' views of the world?  
  
between assistant principals' and principals' views of the world?
3. Help me to understand things you may have learned on the job.
4. What do you see in your career future?
5. If you had an opportunity to advise new assistant principals, what advice would you offer?
6. Is there anything else that would help me to understand your experience better?

APPENDIX B

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

**HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH  
REVIEW COMMITTEE**

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**MEMORANDUM**

OFFICE OF GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

DATE: August 13, 1991

TO: Connie Dickman

FROM: Joan Shireman, Chair, HSRRC 1990-91

RE: HSRRC Waived Review of Your Application entitled, "Being an Assistant Principal - Becoming an Administrator: An Organizational Socialization Study"

This memo is response to your application dated August 1, 1991. The study you describe is waived from review. I will note in our files that no further review of your research, as it is proposed, is required, stating that you may proceed with the study.

Even with the exemption above, it is necessary by University policy to notify this Committee of the proposed research and we appreciate your timely attention to this matter. If you make changes in your research protocol, the Committee must be notified.

c. Office of Grants and Contracts  
Office of Graduate Studies