Understanding Complex Role of the Assistant Principal in Secondary Schools

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by

Lisa M. Nieuwenhuizen

Dr. Jeffrey S. Brooks, Dissertation Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate Faculty, have examined a dissertation entitled:

Understanding the Complex Role of the Assistant Principal in Secondary Schools

presented by Lisa M. Nieuwenhuizen, a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and hereby certified that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

_____

Dr. Jeffrey S. Brooks, Advisor
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

_____

Dr. Margaret Placier
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

_____

Dr. Noelle W. Arnold
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

_____

Dr. Sarah L. Diem
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

_____

Dr. Peeter Tammeveski
Sociology, Women and Gender Studies

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Lisa M. Nieuwenhuizen

Dr. Jeffrey S. Brooks, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The assistant principal is often overlooked in school leadership literature, yet in recent years has grown to be a vital part of secondary schools (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). This descriptive study seeks to expand on the work of Marshall and Hooley (2006), which serves as a primer in the study of assistant principals. In an era of increased accountability, this study explores how assistant principals balance the needs of students, teachers, parents, and constituents? This descriptive study seeks to understand the work that secondary school assistant principals do, how assistant principals are trained, the challenges they face, and their job satisfaction in a midsized Midwestern city. This study explores assistant principals from grades six through twelve with various levels of education, experience, and career aspirations to build a deeper understanding of their roles as assistant principals.

CHAPTER 1

Background of the Study

Introduction

Countryside High School assistant principal Maggie Smith begins her day at 6:30 a.m., opening the building, placing substitutes for sick teachers, calling maintenance because there is no heat in the building and it is freezing outside, and meeting with an angry parent whose child was suspended the day before. All of this occurs before 7:00 a.m. By 8:30 a.m. she has handled five discipline referrals, met with a teacher who is concerned about a student‘s behavior, responded to twenty e-mails, and called five parents. At 9:00 a.m. Maggie Smith heads to an Individual Education Plan meeting for a student who is struggling academically. After an hour of negotiating services for her student, Maggie returns to the halls, greets students, conducts some walk-through classroom visits, and then heads to lunch duty at 11:00 a.m. After lunch she counsels a pregnant student into staying in school and helps connect her to resources to get health care and assistance. Maggie‘s day is filled with a steady stream of problems for which she must find the answers. It is a tough job, but one that gives her a sense of satisfaction because she is making a difference in the lives of her students.

This breakneck pace is typical in the daily life of a secondary assistant principal. Given the fast-paced nature of this job, one wonders why assistant principals enter this field. This scenario, while fictitious, plays out on a daily basis across our country in thousands of schools. Assistant principals juggle the responsibilities of ensuring that the school runs in a safe and orderly fashion, providing instructional leadership to teachers to improve student achievement, and working with students to develop relationships. Assistant principals are thought to be just

that, assistants to the principal, shouldering tremendous amounts of responsibility (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

There has been tremendous research and writing about the role of the principal over the last 30 years. However, the assistant principal, while vital to the operation and performance of the school, has been overlooked in scholarly study (Hartzell, 1993). Once viewed as simply an assistant to the principal, the assistant principal has "become an integral and indispensable part" of school leadership teams (Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson, 2002, p. 136). Kindsvatter and Tosi (1971) argue that the assistant principal has been the forgotten person in literature because the position is relatively new in schools and because the assistant principal operates in the shadow of the principal. The role of the assistant principal is not clearly defined by literature or practice. This ambiguous job has evolved over time, yet training and preparation for assistant principals have not. Marshall (1992c) illustrates the problem by stating, "Little attention has been granted to the training and selection, job satisfaction, and motivation of assistant principals. As assistant principals deal with numerous duties during the course of a single day, how do they derive meaning and purpose from their work?" (p. 3). This study will examine the problems associated with job ambiguity by exploring the work of assistant principals and describing the essence of their work.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore secondary school assistant principals' roles and duties, training and preparation, challenges, and job satisfaction. This study seeks to expand the work of Marshall and Hooley (2006) by developing an understanding of how assistant principals balance their needs with the needs of students, teacher, parents, and

constituents. As a result of this conflict, assistant principals sometimes experience a decrease in job satisfaction, emotional problems, a sense of ineffectiveness, and even a lack of confidence due to the ambiguity of their role (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). This study will seek to understand not only the work that assistant principals do, but also their career aspirations and stress management techniques, as well as how race plays a role in the way assistant principals do their work. This study will capture the stories of secondary administrators from a large school district in the Midwest. The insight these stories provide should enable us to better prepare future educational leaders. By utilizing a descriptive framework informed by Critical Race Theory, I will be able to ―unpack and address issues of race and racism internal and external to the school setting" (Stovall, 2004, p. 9).

Assistant Principals' Roles in Secondary Schools

Currently, the role of assistant principal is the most common entry-level position for those pursuing administrative careers in schools (Austin & Brown, 1970; Marshall, 1992; National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], 1991). The role of the assistant principal began as an assistant to the principal when a school grew too large for a single administrator to manage (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). However, over time, the assistant principal has taken on various duties and responsibilities. Austin and Brown (1970) posited, ―The assistant principal is primarily concerned with people and their relationships as established, stressed, and threatened within the milieu of the school" (p.76). While assistant principals' jobs vary widely, they are usually responsible for such duties as student management and discipline, attendance, student activities, staff support, and building supervision (Hausman et al., 2002; Marshall & Hooley, 2006;; Mintzberg, 1973). These duties are congruent with the meta-analysis of assistant principal literature compiled by Scoggins and Bishop (1993). The examination of

these duties begs the question, "How do assistant principals receive training and develop the skills necessary for this job?" Traditional leadership preparation programs do not provide aspiring leaders with training in these areas (Glanz, 1994a; Marshall, 1992). There is a mismatch with the skills taught in administrative preparation programs and the actual job of the assistant principal. An often overlooked area in preparation program is race. Administrators lack cultural proficiency necessary in today's diverse schools.

Critical Race Theory and Assistant Principal Training

Traditional preparation programs of assistant principals neglect to teach future leaders about race and racism in our society and how it impacts our educational system (Lopez, 2003). School leaders have a duty and an ethical responsibility to interrogate systems, organizational frameworks, and leadership theories that privilege certain groups and/or perspectives over others (Capper, 1993; Donmoyer, Imber, & Scheurich, 1995). Lopez (2003) stated, "Quite simply, preparation programs across the nation do very little to equip students with a cogent understanding of racism and race relations" (p. 70). There is much research to support this position, as evidenced by Laible and Harrington (1998); Lomotey (1995); Parker and Shapiro (1992); Reyes, Velez, and Pena (1993); and Young and Laible (2000). Moreover, Parker and Villalpando (2007) argued that "CRT is a valuable lens with which to analyze and interpret administrative policies and procedures in educational institutions and provides avenues for action in the area of social justice" (p. 519).

For many years, schools have been institutions of social control, advancing White hegemony through the Anglo-Saxon notions of righteousness, law and order, and popular government (Noguera, 1995). Schools were deemed the vehicle by which immigrant children would be socialized and taught American values and norms so social order and a civil society

were maintained (Apple, 1982). However, critical scholars argue that administrators, including assistant principals, have a duty to transform schools from the historical sorting machines where students were prepared for their place in society, into an equitable system where the disenfranchised are given hope and social change becomes a reality (Anyon, 2005; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This goal can only be achieved by exposing future school leaders to concepts of racism as it is embedded in the educational system with the hope to eradicate it (Lopez, 2003; Parker & Shapiro, 1992). This critical context is essential for practitioners and scholars to recognize so that real change can take place.

Assistant principals struggle to educate disenfranchised students who rebel against a system that sorts children based on academics, race, economic status, and other factors (Noguera, 2003). These students pose discipline problems for assistant principals as they struggle to prevent the students from dropping out. Many racial minority students no longer view education as a way to empower and create opportunities for themselves (Noguera, 2003). For these students school is not a way to achieve economic prosperity and success. Rather, for some students, school has become the road to low-wage, dead-end jobs and subordination to their White counterparts (Noguera, 2003). Missing is the social justice focus which seeks to end poverty, racism, and injustice for these students (Anyon, 2005; Noguera, 2003). Preparation programs must work to develop antiracist administrators who recognize the reproductive functions of schools and have the tools and courage to create different possibilities for these marginalized students (Lopez, 2003).

Gap in the Literature

While the role of principal is widely studied in leadership literature, the role of the assistant principal is consistently overlooked (Hausman et al., 2002). The assistant principal has

become an important role in secondary schools, yet very little is known about the experiences of assistant principals in this position (Marshall, 1992). Although an extensive base of CRT literature teaches lessons about schools and students, the role of the assistant principal has not been thoroughly interrogated through the CRT lens. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to address the gap in the literature surrounding the roles, responsibilities, socialization, and preparation of assistant principals through this lens. Young and Laible (2000) contended White educators lack a deep understanding of racism in its various forms, therefore they cannot comprehend how they are perpetuating White racism in their schools. The CRT lens will help to reveal the underlying racialized cultures and practices prevalent in schools today, where administrators are primarily White and middle-class, and lack understanding of or interest in institutionalized systems of White privilege, oppression, and racism (Young & Laible, 2000). As our country grows increasingly more diverse, it is important for assistant principals to develop tools and skills in a new mindset that is not currently taught in most leadership preparation programs (Capper, 1993; Donmoyer, et al., 1995).

Research Questions

This study will examine the experiences of secondary assistant principals using the following four questions:

1. What do assistant principals do?
2. How are assistant principals trained?
3. What are the challenges of being an assistant principal?
4. How personally and professionally satisfying is it to be an assistant principal?

Limitations

The study, while rich with personal narratives, cannot be generalized to all school districts. The sample for my study is both purposeful and convenient. I am a full-time administrator as well as a graduate student. I cannot travel great distances to conduct research in schools far away. Therefore, my study focuses on a district within a reasonable commute from my work and home. Protecting the subjects‘ identities will be challenging; this education community is fairly close-knit. My own Whiteness is a limitation to my use of a CRT lens to study assistant principals.

There are 24 secondary assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District. The sample of 13 men and 11 women and are divided racially with 8 African-Americans and 16 Caucasians. While data was obtained from a sample of 22, this is a small number of subjects. Cultural, age, educational, and gender differences among the administrators may impact the results of their interviews. The group is divided by middle school, junior high, and high school.

As Lopez (2003) argued, the need to critically examine the pedagogy of school administrators is important. The knowledge base should be expanded by mining the rich stories and perceptions of the administrators who have differing experiences, job duties, and perceptions of the role of assistant principals. Their stories can serve to enhance educational thinking regarding school policies and practices as well as assistant principal preparation. Leadership implications for practitioners are significant in the areas of race, equity, and social justice. The research will help to make known the underlying biases and prejudices, as well as examine administrators‘ experiences through a CRT lens. The data collected should provide a better understanding of what it means to be an assistant principal in a large school district.

Definitions

The terms necessary to understand this study are defined below.

Assistant principal: Title assigned to the administrator who is next in authority to the principal (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

Counter-storytelling: Writing that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Critical Race Theory: Radical legal and educational paradigm that seeks to transform the structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1998).

Disenfranchisement: Process by which citizens are deprived of voting or other rights of citizenship (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Hegemony: Domination by the ruling class, and unconscious acceptance of that state of affairs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Job satisfaction: The extent to which work fulfills an individual‘s needs (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

Microaggression: Subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Storytelling and narrative: Scholarship that focuses on the theory or practice of unearthing and replacing underlying rhetorical structures of the current social order, insofar as these are unfair to disenfranchised groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Outline of Study

This chapter contains the overview of the study, including a brief introduction to the topic, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, a description of assistant principals' roles in secondary schools, the critical context of the role of assistant principals, a gap in the literature, the research questions, the limitations of the study, definitions, and the outline of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of literature related to the roles and duties of the assistant principal, the preparation of assistant principals, challenges facing assistant principals, job satisfaction of assistant principals, and a Critical Race Theory analysis of assistant principals. Chapter 3 provides details about the design of the study, including information about the participants, research questions, data collection procedures, and CRT's use of narrative to capture the lived experience of participants. The results of the interviews will be presented in narrative form in Chapter 4. Discussion of, implications of, and conclusions about the findings will be presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The role of the assistant principal is one that has only in the last 50 years become essential to the smooth functioning of schools. Initially, schools struggled with the significant increase in enrollment from 1900 to 1920, thus the assistant principal position was created (Glanz, 1994b). Over the last century much has changed not only in society, but in our schools as well. The role of the assistant principal is a growing one, involving many facets of the daily operation of schools. In the early years, assistant principals were called classroom supervisors and general supervisors (Glanz, 1994b). These roles were defined primarily by gender, as some female teachers became special supervisors who worked on improving classroom instruction, while male teachers became general supervisors and assisted with the managerial responsibilities of the principal necessary to run the school (Glanz, 1994).

Over time, the assistant principal has morphed into a "jack of all trades" who must juggle multiple responsibilities simultaneously. It is due to this ambiguity that assistant principals find themselves pulled in many directions. Most administrators begin their careers as assistant principals (Austin & Brown, 1970; NASSP, 1991). For many, the assistant principalship has served as a stepping-stone to the principalship (Chan, Webb, & Bowen, 2003; Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1995; Marshall, 1992; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993; Winter, 2002). The following chapter summarizes the relevant literature about assistant principals, including the roles and duties of the assistant principal, the preparation and training of assistant principals, challenges facing assistant principals, job satisfaction of assistant principals, and the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory.

Roles and Duties of the Assistant Principal

The role of assistant principals has been invisible until very recently, as assistant principals often work behind the scenes to ensure schools run smoothly. Assistant principals struggle to strike a balance between the various administrative duties required of them by superintendents, principals, parents, students, and district office staff (Michel, 1996). Assistant principals usually champion the norms and rules of the school culture, maintain a safe instructional environment, and manage student conflict and discipline (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). The many and various elements that make up an assistant principal‘s work are complex and intertwined (Hausman et al., 2002). The administrative responsibilities of the assistant principal have traditionally been of a different nature than that of the school principal (Chan et al., 2003; Kelly, 1987; Marshall, 1992; Panvako & Rorie, 1987). Typically, the duties of assistant principals focus on the mundane, yet necessary, managerial tasks, including student discipline, supervision of hallways and lunchrooms, chaperoning dances and co-curricular activities, scheduling assemblies, meeting with parents, and, when the principal is away from the building, performing the duties of the principal (Holmes, 1999; Johnson, 2004; Kelly, 1987; Williams, 1995). Because assistant principals‘ duties are often assigned by the school principal, the assistant principals have little opportunity to develop as instructional leaders (Gorton, 1987; Marshall, 1991).

Several authors have noted the various roles that assistant principals assume and the frustration involved with the lack of a clear job description (Black, 1980; Celikten, 2001; Kindsvatter & Tosi, 1971; Kriekard & Norton, 1980; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Norton & Kriekard, 1987; NASSP, 1991; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993). Assistant principals‘ roles contain many gray areas. Assistant principals have inconsistent responsibilities and often lack the

resources necessary to do the work required (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Assistant principals often feel a greater sense of alienation and powerlessness than do their principals (Calabrese & Adams, 1987). Assistant principals are challenged to fill multiple roles all the time and have little say in the duties that they must perform.

From these studies, I have identified four main functions of assistant principals and will explore these roles through the literature for my study. The four broad and somewhat overlapping categories of assistant principal duties include (a) student management, (b) management of school, (c) instructional leadership, and (d) public or community relations (Fulton, 1997; Holmes, 1999; Kelly, 1987; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Norton & Kriekard, 1987; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993; Williams, 1995).

Student management.

Assistant principals often spend their time handling behavior problems that are disruptive to the learning environment of the school (Hausman, et al., 2002; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Discipline and attendance issues are time-consuming responsibilities for assistant principals (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002). Assistant principals‘ days are unscheduled so they can respond quickly when crises erupt (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). When time is eaten up by student-management issues, assistant principals have less time to work on curricular innovations, mentoring of teachers, or even proactive discipline (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Weller and Weller‘s (2002) study of 100 assistant principals showed overwhelmingly discipline was their most significant duty, with 77% ranking it as their main focus. Their study also found that in schools with more than one assistant principal, duties were often split between discipline and attendance and instructional leadership and curriculum (Weller & Weller, 2002). Spending

so much time operating on the negative aspects of school (discipline), assistant principals may become cynical (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

Scoggins and Bishop's (1993) meta-analysis of 26 authors found that there was no conclusive evidence of a set of duties and responsibilities for assistant principals. Instead, they found a broad set of duties that included "discipline, attendance, student activities, staff support and evaluation, building supervision, guidance, co-curricular activities, athletics, community agencies, master schedules, fill in for principal, building operations, budget, reports, transportation, curriculum, communications, cafeteria, school calendar, and lock and lockers" (p. 40).

Fulton (1997) supported Scoggins and Bishop's (1993) work, compiling 32 competencies of the assistant principal. The major tasks included formulating and maintaining the master schedule, learning the budget process, coordinating the school's transportation schedule, creating guidelines for testing, maintaining current knowledge of federal and state laws, executing the policies of the principal, observing and evaluating teachers, constructing extra duty assignments, cultivating the ability to listen, covering classes occasionally, dealing with discipline, compiling a student handbook, keeping records of student disciplinary problems, maintaining visibility, and developing a complete familiarity with local businesses (Fulton, 1997).

Chan et al. (2003) found that assistant principals spent the bulk of their time on five main duties: student discipline, cafeteria supervision, meeting with parents, maintaining a safe school climate, and teacher observations and evaluations. Koru (1993) posited that assistant principals' time is consumed by caretaking, discipline, and even clerical and custodial duties. These duties are congruent with those described by Thompson and Jones (1977) as cited in Marshall and

Hooley, 2006, found that assistant principals were performing duties that were clerical rather than acting as members of a functioning administrative team.

Student activities are a subset of student management. Student activities include extracurricular activities, student organizations, and athletics (Kriekard & Norton, 1980). These activities also consume much of the assistant principal's time in the form of supervising athletic and non-athletic events. Kriekard and Norton's (1980) study of assistant principals in Arizona identified student activities as one of their major responsibilities. Student management is a large part of the assistant principal's job. Another role not to be overlooked is the assistant principal's duties to manage the school.

School management.

The work necessary to keep a secondary school functioning at a high level is tremendous. Assistant principals perform multiple roles simultaneously to ensure the school runs properly and efficiently. Pellicer, Anderson, Keefe, Kelley, and McCleary's (1988) national study illustrated the varied nature of the work assistant principals do. Their study identified several duties within the category of school management that were consistent for the assistant principals surveyed. School management duties include graduation activities, building operations, master schedule development, budgeting, knowledge of state and federal laws, and transportation (Fulton, 1997; Pellicer et al., 1988; Kriekard & Norton, 1980; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Kaplan and Owings (1999) wrote that other duties as assigned included scheduling substitute teachers, dealing with building maintenance issues, counting textbooks, and coordinating bus transportation arrivals and departures, which were all essential to the smooth operation of the school. Assistant principals are overloaded with responsibilities to keep a school running, cutting in to valuable time for instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership.

Recently the trend has been for assistant principals to take on more instructional leadership responsibilities (Pounder & Crow, 2005). This trend contradicts the previous findings of Kaplan and Owings (1999), which indicated that principals viewed assistant principals' duties as non-instructional. These contradictions make one thing clear—assistant principals must know their own job descriptions (overlapping others or not) so that they can perform their duties at a high level (Johnson, 2000). Panvako and Rorie (1987) advocated for the role of the assistant principal to be redefined from a manager to a leader. However the role is defined, one thing is clear: Assistant principals need more time devoted to instructional leadership.

Assistant principals can be valuable assets to principals as instructional leaders, if given the time and opportunity. Assistant principals in recent years have been eager to take on more leadership in the areas of curriculum and instruction with the focus on improving student achievement (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). Assistant principals have few opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of instructional leadership; for many the only venue is teacher evaluation (Chan et al., 2003; Koru, 1993). In the increasing push for teacher improvement through No Child Left Behind (NCLB), assistant principals have picked up some responsibility of monitoring and mentoring teachers to improve instruction through teacher evaluation (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Assistant principals need to work, not only as instructional leaders, but also as vision co-designers and teacher coaches to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). Assistant principals who are instructional coaches are able to mentor, support, and guide teachers to improve student performance through instructional techniques, supervised practice, and feedback (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). Hausman et al. (2002)

claimed that assistant principals would like to be more involved with instructional and curricular issues, but that is not common practice in all areas of the country.

Public and community relations

Assistant principals spend much of their time talking to people. Assistant principals naturally work with parents and students in activities, sports, and extracurricular activities. In this role, assistant principals become the positive face for the school and put forth the image and message consistent with the values and culture of the organization (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002). In this capacity, assistant principals focus on communication and develop the ability to listen (Fulton, 1997).

Kaplan and Owings (1999) offered that APs must also take every opportunity to share their vision of the school and how it relates to higher student achievement. They argued the more the AP speaks about the vision, the more it impacts teachers‘ and students‘ beliefs and behaviors surrounding the expectation for learning (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). They claim a positive relationship between APs speaking about learning and APs becoming a symbol of academics as the school‘s most important purpose (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). Assistant principals are valuable public- and community-relations advocates. Their work forming relationships with students and families can help to shape public opinion and enhance the community‘s perceptions of the importance of academic achievement in schools (Kaplan & Owings, 1999).

Preparation of Assistant Principals

Assistant principals have become a vital part of school leadership teams in recent years. Yet scant information about pre-service training programs about the role of the assistant principal is available. Moreover, there is little mention of the position in professional literature

(Glanz, 1994a; Gorton & Kettman, 1985; Kelly, 1987; Marshall, 1991; Norton & Kriekard, 1987). Many believe that assistant principals are not adequately prepared for the principalship not only due to lack of training in curriculum, instructional leadership, and teacher supervision but also because of the lack of opportunity to perform many of the responsibilities associated with the principalship (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Hartzell et al., 1995; Kelly, 1987; Koru, 1993). With the information available, it is clear little has changed in the training and preparation of administrators for this position. In the literature reviewed, there are three common paths for the assistant principal: university degree programs, ‗home-grown,' and professional development.

University programs.

Often university coursework does not transform people into good educational leaders (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Universities train aspiring administrators for the principalship, not for the assistant principalship (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Marshall and Hooley (2006) noted programs train aspiring administrators in areas of instruction, leadership, finance, etc., using professors who have limited experience as practitioners. The course work aspiring administrators take is disconnected from the reality of the job; no course work is taught on the daily duties that assistant principals face, such as discipline, student supervision, ethics, and staff evaluation (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). University programs prepare future school leaders around a set of core competencies, such as the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) administered by the Educational Testing Service (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Approximately half the states require graduate training in educational administration, with only Maine having a specific licensure for assistant principals (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). As illustrated here, the lack of specific training in supervision, diversity, equity, and civil rights for assistant principals

is a glaring problem. Many districts have developed programs to train aspiring administrators from within their ranks.

Home-grown assistant principals.

With the rising shortage of certified administrators, some districts are moving toward identification of potential assistant principals within the ranks of their teacher leaders and grooming them to become the next generation of school leaders (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Olson, 2007). Teacher leaders are given opportunities to work in leadership roles before beginning their coursework in administration. Grow-your-own or home-grown leadership initiatives for school administrators, offered at the district level, have become a viable answer to the principal shortage in schools nationwide (Olson, 2007). Zellner, Jinkins, Gideon, Doughty, & McNamara, (2002) presented the findings of the School Leadership Initiative, a three-year study of a variety of schools, stating that assistant principals need the opportunity to engage with and reflect on their practice, share leadership with their principals, develop self-initiated leadership activities, and be mentored and supported during their initial stages of leadership development. In buildings where aspiring and new administrators have the opportunity (under the close tutelage of the principal) to deal with school safety, lead collaboration, reflect on practice, take active roles in curriculum and instruction, work with professional learning communities, and develop a common vocabulary among administrators, their chances for success and satisfaction are much greater (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

In some districts, aspiring administrators are given roles as apprentices, working closely with current assistant principals who show them the ropes of the job while the work toward a degree in school administration (Lovely, 2001; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Apprentices receive the benefits of a partnership with the local university, as well as the one-on-one mentoring of an

administrator with whom they work, and are able to experience variety of other duties associated with the role of assistant principal. The Capistrano School District in California has designed an innovative ―you're your own" assistant principal program, which takes aspiring administrators, provides a range of leadership experiences, and pays participants a small stipend (Lovely, 2001). These programs provide support and real-life experience for aspiring assistant principals that go far beyond the university classroom learning.

Professional development.

Professional development is a necessary part of the continued growth and training of assistant principals. However, many districts only provide a superficial treatment of issues relevant to the work of assistant principals (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Given the anticipated shortage of administrators, the need for quality professional development for current school administrators and to better prepare future principals and assistant principals has gained much attention nationally (Johnson, 2004; Olson, 2008; Walker & Dimmock, 2006; Wallin, 2006). With the increase in accountability due to NCLB, much attention is now focused on improving leadership in our schools (Barnett, 2004; Burch, 2007; Johnson, 2004; Olson, 2008; Tirozzi, 2001; Walker & Dimmock, 2006; Wallin, 2006). According to the Educational Research Service (1998) urban school districts are more likely to provide professional development for teachers and assistant principals to prepare them for the challenges of the principalship. However, assistant principals do not set their own schedules and often do not have time to attend professional development training. There is almost no time for reflection and little opportunity to collaborate or problem-solve with others during the workday, making professional development a challenge (Wong, 2004).

Challenges Facing Assistant Principals

The role of assistant principal is varied and diverse, strenuous and tiring, exciting and challenging. Assistant principals are constrained by federal mandates, local board policy, and work overload, yet must ensure the safe and effective daily operation of our nation's schools. With a steady stream of problems to solve and challenges to overcome, assistant principals have a tough job. Based on the literature reviewed, four areas of concern challenge assistant principals: federal mandates for accountability, pitfalls of middle management, stress management and burnout, and preparing for the principalship.

Federal mandates for accountability.

While the responsibility for improved academic performance as dictated by the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) ultimately rests on the school principal, the recent trend has been to enlist the assistant principal to help shoulder the burden (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Tirozzi, 2001). This additional responsibility has significantly changed the work of administrators (Ervay, 2006). Success as a school leader is now commonly associated with meeting accountability standards (Michael & Young, 2006). Stovall (2004) argued, "High-stakes testing replaces socially conscious, community-centered approaches and becomes the measure for student excellence" (p. 8). Obviously, the increased pressures of high-stakes standardized testing coupled with numerous leadership and management tasks are contributing to increased instability in school administration (Hargreaves, 2005), leading to the pitfalls of middle management.

Pitfalls of middle management.

The role of the assistant principal is often seen as uninteresting, detached from instructional leadership, and at the base of the administrative career ladder (Marshall, 1991).

Assistant principals experience a lack of respect and are often regarded as having little impact on effective schools and student achievement. Additionally, principals often overlook the talents of assistant principals (Calabrese, 1991; Kelly, 1987). Many assistant principals believe that superintendents and other central office administrators have little compassion for or understanding of their position (Kelly, 1987). Assistant principals experience a lack of power and turmoil when central office policies are handed down without their voices being considered in the making of policy (Hausman et al., 2002). Assistant principals have a greater sense of powerlessness and alienation than principals (Calabrese & Adams, 1987). Stovall (2004) wrote administrators are responsible for maintaining bureaucracy while following the mandates from central office administration. This can create adversarial relationships among staff who feel their opinions are not valued.

Due to the strenuous demands of the job, assistant principals often experience deep frustration (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). This frustration springs from the assistant principal‘s lack of power and inability to redefine tasks or work toward better management (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Assistant principals have a stressful job to manage the most difficult discipline challenges and mediate some of the most serious conflicts that surface among teachers, students, and the community (Koru, 1993; Marshall, 1992). Astoundingly, even with their workload, assistant principals are often viewed as serving an inferior role, one with great responsibility but little authority (Black, 1980; Glanz, 1994a; Gorton, 1987; Kelly, 1987; Panvako & Rorie, 1987). Many assistant principals realize their responsibilities cannot be accomplished by working the regular eight-hour workday and have increased their workweek trying to meet all the obligations the position requires (Breeden, Heigh, Leal & Smith, 2001; Portin, Shen, & Williams, 1998). It is not uncommon for assistant principals to report role conflict and overload from the job

responsibilities that require so much time, energy, and emotion that little is left over for their personal lives (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). The broad and changing role of the assistant principal is contributing to a decline in morale and enthusiasm for the position (Lile, 2008; Peterson & Kelley, 2001). The lack of appreciation and dissatisfaction assistant principals feel with their current reality should be addressed and remedied as the nation struggles with the declining number of administrators (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

Preparing for the principalship.

Few practicing assistant principals desire to remain in this position for the duration of their career (Marshall, 1991). In fact, the largest motivator for those entering the assistant principalship is the opportunity to climb the career ladder of school administration and advance their careers (Marshall, 1991). Assistant principals often feel that they are not adequately prepared to take the next step in their careers when they are seeking a principalship. Due to lack of training in curriculum, instructional leadership, and teacher supervision as well as the lack of opportunity to perform many of the duties of the principalship, many believe assistant principals are not adequately prepared for this role (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Hartzell et al., 1995; Kelly, 1987; Koru, 1993). Assistant principals believe they do not receive enough in-service training to prepare them to move easily or smoothly into the principalship (Chan et al., 2003; Hartzell et al., 1995; Kelly, 1987). Engagement in student discipline and routine managerial tasks does not adequately prepare the assistant principal for the challenges that face those who seek to become school principals (Koru, 1993; Umphrey, 2007). Assistant principals need strong mentoring, rich support systems, and specialized training to help them become effective instructional leaders (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Kelly, 1987; Lile, 2008; Ylimaki, Jacobson, & Drysdale, 2007).

While preparing to become a principal, assistant principals should be prepared to lead in an era of increasing national diversity (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). The historical practice of selecting administrators who are similar to those with whom they will work has perpetuated the gap in opportunities for people of color, women, and those with different sexual orientations (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Stovall (2004) wrote of the ever-silenced issue of race, advocating for school administrators to forge ahead with a social justice agenda to provide better education for all students, especially those of color.

Job Satisfaction of Assistant Principals

Many view the move into the assistant principal role as a promotion, a reward, and a nod toward their leadership abilities (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Marshall and Hooley (2006) posited, ―Assistant principals who are rewarded for their efforts (by the organization, by the profession, or by their own sense of what is important) should have a sense of job satisfaction" (p. 9). A 1996 study of secondary assistant principals found they were marginally satisfied with their jobs and not seeking to advance their careers (Waskiewicz, 1999). This study found strong relationships with supervisors and the opportunity to use their skills to improve the school increased their job satisfaction (Waskiewicz, 1999). Similarly, Armstrong's (2004) study of Texas assistant principals supported these finding that assistant principals were generally satisfied with their jobs. Assistant principals feel more satisfaction in performing duties requiring expertise and administrative ability than those requiring clerical ability (Croft & Morton, 1977). The changing role of the assistant principal is contributing to a decline in morale and enthusiasm for the position (Lile, 2008; Peterson & Kelley, 2001) since many of the duties are not identified as tasks that contribute to job satisfaction (Rayfield & Diamantes, 2004). Many who enter administration do so to positively impact the lives of children (Potter, 2001;

Torgerson, 2003). Previous studies showed much lower satisfaction with duties such as student discipline, attendance, and other clerical responsibilities (Austin & Brown, 1970).

Theoretical Framework

Qualitative descriptive studies draw from naturalistic inquiry, which is committed to studying a subject in its natural state (Linolon & Guba, 1985). Qualitative descriptive studies have the goal of creating a comprehensive summary of the everyday events in terms of these events (Sandelowski, 2000). Descriptive designs are typically eclectic and combine various elements of sampling, data collection, analysis and representation techniques (Sandelowski, 2000). As Sandelowski (2000) writes, ―Indeed, qualitative work is produced not form any ―pure" use of a method, but from the use of methods that are variously textured, toned, and hued" (p. 337). I will combine the basic elements of qualitative descriptive study with the critical lens of CRT to illuminate the current racialized practices in the PSD and to illustrate the gaps that exist in the current training and preparation programs for aspiring administrators.

Administrative training programs do very little to train students to have an understanding of racism and race relations in American schools (Lopez, 2003). Preparation programs have a duty to raise questions of race and racism to aspiring administrators as well as an ethical responsibility to create critical practitioners who will lead our schools (Lopez, 2003). Based on this need, I have selected a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens through which to view my study. CRT, born out of legal scholarship, questions the status quo on race, gender, and equality in the United States (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to the field of education, providing a basic understanding of the racial discrimination that impacts the educational experiences of children of color. CRT contends racism is inherent in American society and is central to the functioning of the laws and policies

of the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT labels educational policies and practices as inequitable and unjust in regard to students of color (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT views racism as "the weapon of choice used by the ruling class to keep the working class divided" (Gilligan, 1997). Spina (2000) argued, "Racism is so deeply internalized in our society that most Whites are not even aware of its existence or how far they will go to keep it that way" (p. 9). CRT seeks to understand and change the current social situation for racial minorities by analyzing society's self-organization according to racial boundaries and hierarchies and then working to eradicate these boundaries and hierarchies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT analyzes existing power structures through the lens that racism is institutionalized and pervasive in the dominant culture in the United States (Jay, 2003). CRT questions the power relations of society and confronts the persistence of racism, classism, and sexism in the quest for social justice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Jay, 2003). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) posited that our educational system has become "mired in liberal ideologies" (p. 62). Delgado and Stefancic (2001), Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Parker and Lynn (2002), and Solórzano and Yosso (2000) are noted scholars in the field of CRT who have studied education through this lens. Their writing informs my framework.

Rationale for the study.

The Pleasantville School District has experienced a widening of the achievement gap among racial minority students and its White students. Moreover, growing racial tensions in the community and in the high schools has been widely reported by the media in recent years. I chose qualitative description coupled with CRT in the hope of developing a better understanding of educational practices that lead to inequality (Harvey, 2008). CRT focuses on making race relations equal and equitable (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Theorists posit that CRT draws

attention to race as well as the notion that racialized practices are deeply embedded within the framework of American society (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Stovall (2004) contended that the relevance of CRT for school administrators is that it can provide ~~a~~ lens by which to unpack and address the issues of race and racism internal and external to the school setting" (p. 9). Stovall (2004) argued that using Solórzano and Villalpando's (1998) five tenets of CRT would help the school leaders struggling with racialization in schools today. These tenets include: (1) the centrality and instersectionality of racism; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the importance of experiential knowledge; and (5) the use of an interdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). With these tools, assistant principals will be better equipped to combat the racism that is prevalent in schools today.

As previously stated, the role of principal is widely studied in leadership literature, while the role of the assistant principal is consistently overlooked (Hausman et al., 2002). Although an extensive base of CRT literature teaches lessons about schools and students, as well as their experiences in them, the role of the assistant principal has not been thoroughly interrogated through CRT lens. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to address the gap in the literature surrounding the roles, responsibilities, socialization, and preparation of assistant principals through this lens. As Young and Laible (2000) posited, ~~"~~White educators and educational leaders do not have a thorough enough understanding of racism in its many manifestations . . . nor do they comprehend the ways in which they are perpetuating White racism in their schools (p. 388). The CRT lens will help to reveal the underlying racialized cultures and practices prevalent in schools today, where administrators are primarily White and middle-class, and lack understanding of or interest in institutionalized systems of White privilege, oppression, and racism (Young & Laible, 2000). As our country grows increasingly

more diverse, it is important for assistant principals to develop tools and skills in a new mindset that is not currently taught in most leadership preparation programs (Capper, 1993; Donmoyer, et al., 1995).

Using CRT to unpack racism in schools.

The issue of race can be understood best by deconstructing its origins. First, race is a social construction that is used as a tool for Whites to oppress people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Racism is ~~–a~~ means by which society allocates privilege and status. Racial hierarchies determine who gets tangible benefits" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 17). For the duration of this study, I will refer to this concept as White hegemony, the idea that through discrimination against minorities, Whites are able to maintain their grip on wealth and power in the United States. White hegemony has become the vehicle for maintaining the current political and economic structure in the United States (Anyon, 2005). White hegemony refers to a set of social forces beyond the individual and beyond a conscious belief in White supremacy (Roediger, 2005). The establishment of Whiteness as a property serves the majoritarian interests of our country and furthers the agenda of the upper class. Spina (2000) wrote,

> There is a vested interest on both rich and poor Whites to maintain the caste system of discrimination against Blacks. For the rich it has been a cheap way (both financially and morally) to continue to possess and control a disproportional share of the national wealth and income. And poor American Whites have let themselves be distracted from paying attention to how badly they are being discriminated against by the class system, by the fact that there is always a group they can look down upon . . . that in turn buys peace for the rich, who can continue to monopolize most of the nation's wealth and income without having to be bothered by any significant threats to their privileges. (p. 9)

Three major hallmarks make CRT unique: 1) representing the stories of discrimination from the perspective of people of color, 2) taking action to stop racial subjugation while acknowledging race as a social construct, and 3) addressing the intersection of gender, race, class, and inequity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Parker & Lynn, 2002). First, I examine the use of narratives to illustrate the plight of racial minorities in our country.

CRT provides a counternarrative through which critical race scholars are able to share their stories by using narrative (Parker & Lynn, 2002). According to Dixson and Rousseau (2006), narratives contribute to the centrality of the experiences of people of color. This storytelling preserves the history of marginalized and oppressed groups who have never been legitimized within the master narrative (Solórzano, 1998). The use of narratives helps to bridge the gap of imagination; through language the readers or listeners can suspend disbelief of the excluded or marginalized group, paving the way for them to meet the storyteller halfway (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Through their description of micro-aggressions, which are endured daily, individuals are able to provide stories counter to the dominant culture of hegemonic Whiteness (Trevino, Harris, & Wallace, 2008). CRT highlights the feelings of disenfranchisement and discrimination experienced across a range of social institutions, predominately first encountered through the public education system (Trevino, Harris, & Wallace, 2008). Thus, CRT provides a voice for those who are oppressed and can become the tool for ending inequality and injustice (Trevino, Harris, & Wallace, 2008). The call to action is another important aspect of CRT.

Critical Race Theory attempts to promote activism by trying to change how society organizes itself through exploring racial boundaries and hierarchies (Anyon, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). According to Price (2010), CRT moves the focus from equality to social

justice through radical reform. CRT contends that incrementalism, born from the Civil Rights Movement, does not work. Instead, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) argued, "Everything must change at once, otherwise the system merely swallows up the small improvement one has made, and everything remains the same" (p. 57). Social justice includes freedom for all people, as well as the fair and moral treatment of people. It is focused on solving the socioeconomic and political inequities that have remained since desegregation (Dantley & Tillman, 2006). Anyon (2005) contended that the economic policies of the federal government have greatly contributed to the current crisis in our schools by siphoning away resources from urban schools and leaving the empty shells of formerly thriving industrial centers. Today the United States is a society with rapidly changing demographics; as such, social justice has become an important issue to address inequity of marginalized groups (Cooper, 2009). Social justice includes freedom for all people, as well as the fair and moral treatment of people. Solórzano (1998) argued that CRT is committed to social justice and requires scholars to take an active role in working toward "eliminating racial oppression as a broad goal of ending all forms of oppression" (p. 122). Cooper (2009) agreed, contending that leaders should use their power to not only empower stakeholders to work for change, but also promote democracy and equality.

According to Solórzano and Yosso (2000),

> CRT in education is defined as a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the marginal position and subordination of African American and Latino students. CRT asks such questions as: What roles do schools, school processes, and school structures play in the maintenance of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination? (p. 42)

These are important questions that should be embedded in the consciousness of school administrators.

Specifically, CRT questions the issues of differences in inequities (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Whiteness as property is used to explain much of the inequity in the funding of American public schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT theorists assert that Whites control much of the wealth in their communities and thus have access to better schools, while poorer minority communities and children of color have a smaller tax base and therefore less access to quality education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

CRT provides the complex lens through which I will view the responses of the assistant principals of the study. By examining their responses through this critical lens, I hope to shed light on the issues that assistant principals deal with and expand the conversation to include the issue of race.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section restates the research questions. The second section describes the study setting, site, and context. The third section outlines the characteristics of the administrators who participated in this qualitative study. The fourth describes the researcher's role and positionality. The fifth section describes the step-by-step procedures used to collect the data. The final section of the chapter describes the data analysis procedures I used to analyze transcripts of each interview and explains how the use of narrative will provide a voice for these administrators.

Research Design

I selected the qualitative descriptive study coupled with CRT for my research design as it became apparent from the interviews that race was a factor in the work of assistant principals. Creswell (2007) explained qualitative research as that "in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective biased manner" (p. 46). Capturing the lived experiences of assistant principals creates a strong reliance on the words and positions of the participants and necessitates this study originate from a qualitative perspective. As Creswell (2003) explained, "The process of data analysis is eclectic; there is no 'right way'" (p. 153). Data analysis used for this study illustrates the unique techniques of qualitative description, exploration through natural inquiry, and narrative elements that can be utilized in data analysis.

Utilizing open coding, I identified several categories that were consistent with those described in the literature review. Upon closer analysis, several themes appeared within the major categories. Upon identifying the most important themes, I then selected the most salient quotes and wove them into a narrative to create the unique story of each assistant principal.

My descriptive structure borrows Lincoln and Guba's (1985) elements of a case study—the problem, the context, and the issues and lessons learned. By combining these elements, I was able to explore the perceptions and experiences of assistant principals by conducting a series of interviews with assistant principals whose voices are not represented in current literature. By approaching the study from a modified naturalistic perspective, I was able to incorporate the CRT lens as it became apparent through the interviews that the issue of race was intertwined in the selection and promotion of assistant principals, as well as with the students whom they manage. Categories emerged from the analysis of transcripts and expanded the base of themes explored in the literature review. In this respect, I am interested in examining the promotion of assistant principals as well as school policies applied to marginalized groups (low-income or racial minorities), who are over represented in the statistics of school discipline. This research borrows from the methodology implemented by Solórzano and Yosso (2002), creating counterstories from assistant principals' transcripts and existing literature. This study seeks to expand on the work of Marshall and Hooley (2006), which serves as a primer in the study of assistant principals.

This study seeks to understand the work that secondary school assistant principals do, how assistant principals are trained, the challenges they face, and their job satisfaction, as well as to examine the role race plays in how assistant principals function in a midsized Midwestern city. Through a Critical Race Theory lens, this study will focus on assistant principals from grades six

through twelve with various levels of education, experience, and career aspirations to build a deeper understanding of their roles as assistant principals. Four broad research questions guided my study:

1. What do assistant principals do?
2. How are assistant principals trained?
3. What are the challenges of being an assistant principal?
4. How personally and professionally satisfying is it to be an assistant principal?

Working from the CRT premise that racism is thoroughly embedded in American society and schools, the study wove questions about race into the sub-questions of the study, rather than ask one specific question about race. These questions were designed to unmask hidden biases and reveal racial prejudices in the Pleasantville School District which impact not only assistant principals, but also the students whom they serve. CRT draws attention to race as well as the notion that racism is deeply embedded within the framework of American society (Parker & Lynn, 2002). By analyzing data through a CRT lens, I was able to ~~"~~unpack and address issues of race and racism internal and external to the school setting" (Stovall, 2004, p. 9). I recognized racism is pervasive and woven throughout American society and schools, I intertwined questions dealing with race in relation to discipline, professional experience and promotion, as well as discrimination participants have experience due to race or gender, and student achievement. By carefully weaving questions about race throughout the study, I was able to gain honest and unguarded responses during the interviews which shed light on the racial tensions in the Pleasantville School District. A complete list of questions can be found in the Interview Protocol in Appendix A.

This descriptive study seeks to thoroughly understand the role of assistant principals at the secondary level in the Pleasantville School District. Data were collected by spending time in the study schools over the course of one semester and conducting initial hour-long interviews with each of the 22 participants. In the spirit of naturalistic inquiry, I positioning myself in the schools, which allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the work secondary assistant principals do. The issues that sprang forth from the study include student management and discipline, instructional leadership, career stresses and opportunities, and politics perceived by assistant principals in relation to district-level school administration.

The Problem

The Pleasantville School District struggles to educate all students at a high level in accordance with No Child Left Behind. For several years now, the district's racial minority students have not made adequate yearly progress. Additionally, racial tensions in the community and in the schools have been on the rise. Students of color are disproportionately referred for special education services and for severe disciplinary consequences, including suspension or expulsion. As a teacher and administrator in PSD for over fifteen years, I know the district's teaching staff is predominantly White, middle-class, middle-aged females who have little cultural understanding of their minority students. Moreover, administrators are predominantly White and may be unaware of their own biases, which may be leading to the unfair treatment of children of color.

I have chosen Critical Race Theory to deconstruct the hidden racism prevalent in education today. As an aspect of critical research, CRT proposes race-based perspectives to challenge traditional modes of inquiry and to promote a social justice agenda (Crenshaw et al., 1995). This critical approach will allow me reveal the discriminatory practices that are

thoroughly entrenched in educational and discipline policies in public schools. I will derive meaning from the patterns and categories that emerged from the research.

Setting, Sites, and Context of Study

Pleasantville is a large school district located in a progressive, midsized city with a population of 105,000. The community values education and has traditionally been supportive of its schools. The community boasts two colleges, as well as a state university. Medicine is a strong industry in the community, with five large hospitals located in the city. Due to the economic crisis of 2009, the community has experienced significant job losses in manufacturing yet unemployment is about 7%, which is 2.5% lower than the state average (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). With the availability of excellent medical care, the university atmosphere, and relatively low unemployment, the community has consistently been ranked as a desirable city in which to live.

Pleasantville School District (PSD) has approximately 17,000 pupils. The district employs more than 1,400 teachers in 29 schools. The district has been accredited with distinction by the State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the past seven years. This study will focus on the secondary schools, consisting of three middle schools, three junior high schools, three high schools, and a vocational school. The middle and junior high schools each have two assistant principals. Two of the high schools are comprehensive high schools with five assistant principals. The remaining high school is an alternative school with one assistant principal. The vocational school has one assistant principal.

Pleasantville has three middle schools (grades 6–7), which are feeder schools for the other secondary schools. Walters Middle School (WMS) is located in the center of the community. WMS has 901 students with the demographics divided 68.8% White, 18% Black,

8.7% Asian, 3.6% Hispanic, and 1% Indian (District Report Card, 2010). Walters has 27.4% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch (District Report Card, 2010). Johnson Middle School (JMS) is located on the northern edge of the community. JMS has 781 students with demographics divided 57.5% White, 35.1% Black, 3.1% Asian, 3.5% Hispanic, and 0.9% Indian (District Report Card, 2010). Johnson has 53.4% of students qualifying for free or reduced price-lunch (District Report Card, 2010). Hancock Middle School (HMS) is located in the southern part of the community. HMS has 791 students with demographics divided 66.2% White, 23.5% Black, 4.4% Asian, 5.6% Hispanic, and 0.6% Indian (District Report Card, 2010). Hancock has 39.3% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch (District Report Card, 2010).

Pleasantville‘s three junior high schools contain grades 8 and 9. Washington Junior High School (WJHS) is centrally located in the community. WJHS has 819 students, demographically divided 70.3% White, 20% Black, 4.9% Asian, 4.0% Hispanic, and 0.7% Indian (District Report Card, 2010). Washington Junior High has 34.7% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch (District Report Card, 2010). Red Stone Junior High (RSJH) is located in the northern part of the community. RSJH has 727 students, demographically divided 59.3% White, 32.5% Black, 3.0% Asian, 4.1% Hispanic, and 1.1% Indian (District Report Card, 2010). Red Stone has 51.6% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch (District Report Card, 2010). Madison Junior High School (MJHS) is located in the west-central part of the community. MJHS has 889 students, demographically divided 73.3% White, 17.2% Black, 8.0% Asian, 1.3% Hispanic, and 0.1% Indian (District Report Card, 2010). Madison has 25.2% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch (District Report Card, 2010).

Pleasantville School District has two comprehensive high schools and one alternative school. Carver High School (CHS) has a student population of 1,975 students in grades 10–12

and 165 certified staff (District Report Card, 2010). This school has a diverse population comprised of 65.4% White, 26.1% Black, 4.3% Asian, 3.8% Hispanic, and 0.5% Indian (District Report Card, 2010). Carver's free and reduced-price lunch population has steadily risen over the last three years to 31.1% (District Report Card, 2010). Carver's dropout rate has fluctuated over the last five years from the high of 5.4% in 2005 to 4.9% in 2009 (District Report Card, 2010). The dropout rate disaggregated by race and ethnicity shows that the dropout rate for minorities is 5.9% Black, 8.8% Hispanic, and 2.1% Asian (District Report Card, 2010). White dropout rate in 2009 was 4.5% (District Report Card, 2010). The school's graduation rate has remained consistent with over 87% of students graduating (District Report Card, 2010). Carver has maintained an average daily attendance rate of about 92% for the last four years (District Report Card, 2010). Carver's number of students enrolling in four-year colleges or universities has declined 20% over the last five years, with only 45.8% of students graduating entering four-year colleges or universities and another 22% entering two-year colleges (District Report Card, 2010).

Oaklawn High School (OHS) is located in the southern area of the community. OHS has a student population of 1,832 and 127 certificated staff (District Report Card, 2010). The school's demographics are 75.6% White, 13.3% Black, 6.9% Asian, 2.8% Hispanic, and 1.3% Indian (District Report Card, 2010). Oaklawn has 19.8% of its students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch (District Report Card, 2010). Oaklawn's dropout rate has steadily declined over the last five years from 3.1% in 2006 down to 1.9% in 2010. The dropout rates disaggregated by race and ethnicity in 2010 were 4.7% Black, 0% Asian, 2.0% Hispanic, and 4.0% Indian (District Report Card, 2010). The White dropout rate had dipped to 1.6% (District Report Card, 2010). The school's graduation rate has steadily risen from a low of 88.7% in 2006 to 93% in 2010 (District Report Card, 2010). Oaklawn has maintained over 93.4% attendance

for the last five years (District Report Card, 2010). Oaklawn has seen a drop in the number of students entering four-year college or universities from a high of 76.1% in 2006 down to 56.6% in 2010 and an increase to 22.0% of students entering a two-year college after high school (District Report Card, 2010).

Lewis High School is an alternative school located in the central city and serves a population of 185 students with 23 certificated staff (District Report Card, 2010). The school's demographics are 37.3% White, 60.5% Black, 0.5% Asian, 1.6% Hispanic, and 0% Indian (District Report Card, 2010). Lewis High School has 80.2% of its students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch (District Report Card, 2010). Lewis's dropout rate has fluctuated over the last five years, but remained high with 28.4% of their students dropping out. These numbers disaggregated by race and ethnicity show 30.6% of Blacks, 33.3% of Hispanics, and 25.4% of Whites drop out (District Report Card, 2010). Only 7.7% of Lewis graduates enter a four-year college and 25.6% enter a two-year college (District Report Card, 2010).

Pleasantville Career Center is a state-of-the-art career and technical education center populated by students from Oaklawn, Carver, and Lewis high schools as well as schools in surrounding communities. The district does not report demographic data for PCC.

Pleasantville School District's vision is to be the best school district in the state. PSD's mission is to provide an excellent education for all students. PSD's values include student achievement, elimination of achievement disparities, providing equitable curriculum and learning opportunities for all students, diversity, highly qualified staff, collaboration, professionalism, innovation, data-driven decision making, a culture of dignity, a safe learning environment, quality facilities, appropriate instructional and technological resources, partnerships between schools and community, proactive communication, visionary leadership,

excellent fiscal management, and the judicious use of public resources (District Website, 2010). As a researcher with intimate knowledge of Pleasantville School District, I observed incongruence with the mottos listed, as PSD is experiencing a widening in the achievement gap among African American and Caucasian students, tremendous funding cuts, increased school violence, and declining teacher morale. There seems to be a disconnect between the values espoused and the lived reality in Pleasantville.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study are assistant principals at the secondary schools. There are 24 secondary assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District. Of those, 22 participated in this study. They range in age, education, and experience, as well as in race and gender. The following table lists the participants by school, name, race, gender, and years of experience and education. A more thorough description of each participant appears in Chapter 4 in narrative form. Noticeable from the table below is the demographic makeup of the various levels. Middle school has five females and one male and are racially even with three Black and three White assistant principals. The junior high level is comprised of four men and two women. Assistant principals are racially divided, two Black and four White. The high school level has seven men and four women. Here assistant principals are racially divided, three Black and eight White. The secondary assistant principals range in age from 26 to 55. Based on the diversity of this group, I secured varying perspectives of these assistant principals during the interview process.

Table 1

Pleasantville School District Secondary Assistant Principals

School	Participant	Race	Gender	Years of Experience	Education
Walters Middle School	Sierra O'Malley	B	F	8 administration 13 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
	Dominique Sullivan	B	F	10 administration 10 teaching	Pursuing Doctorate in Administration
Johnson Middle School	Leslie Fredrickson	B	F	5 administration 8 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
	Silvia Douglass	W	F	5 administration 9 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
Hancock Middle School	Melissa Smith	W	F	6 administration 10 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
	Jeff Jones	W	M	2 administration 6 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
Washington Junior High	Henry Joseph	B	M	20 administration 10 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
	Mike White	W	M	6 administration 12 teaching	Pursuing Doctorate in Administration
Red Stone Junior High	Renee Moore	W	F	2 administration 7 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
	Sean Schneider	W	M	1 administration 6 teaching	Master's in Administration
Madison Junior High	LaShawna Lindsey	B	F	4 administration 10 teaching	Pursuing Doctorate in Administration
	Saul Hollingsworth	W	M	15 administration 10 teaching	Doctorate in Education Administration
Carver High School	Marcus Clark	B	M	5 administration 14 teaching	Master's in Administration
	Deborah Watson	B	F	17 administration 8 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
	John Green	W	M	20 administration 7 teaching	Master's in Administration
	Anthony Brown	B	M	1 administration 3 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
	Thomas Walker	W	M	1 administration 4 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
Oaklawn High School	Bob Flanders	W	M	15 administration 7 teaching	Doctorate in Education Administration
	Shari Finnigan	W	F	5 administration 15 teaching	Pursuing Doctorate in Administration
	Becci Jonmeyer	W	F	4 administration 22 teaching	Master's in Administration
	Dan Conner	W	M	10 administration 6 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
	Jessica Lewis	W	F	4 administration 7 teaching	Pursuing Doctorate in Administration
Lewis High School	Larry Barnes	W	M	10 administration 5 teaching	Education Specialist-Administration
Career and Technical School	Curtis Jones	W	M	7 administration 23 teaching	Doctorate in Education

Researcher's Role and Positionality

I am a White female assistant principal in a large suburban high school. I have intimate knowledge of the school district and must take precautions to distance myself from my own lived experiences there. Given this personal knowledge, I will classify myself as a constructionist. I acknowledge my own biases, and as a constructionist, I ~~–~~expect people to see somewhat different things, examine them through distinct lenses, and come to somewhat different conclusions" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 27). I will explore each participant's views of the role of the assistant principal through a Critical Race Theory lens, which seeks to uncover the hidden biases within our society and our schools.

As a researcher, I am operating from the perspective of a practitioner in the field of secondary education. I am an assistant principal who experiences the roller coaster of this job. My topic is intensely personal, in that I want to understand the experiences that others have in the same role. I believe that schools should be a safe place for all children to learn. I believe all children should have access to a quality education, free from the insidious racism in our society.

As a child growing up in rural southern Midwest, school was a safe place for me and I loved it. Our small town had high poverty and no racial minorities, and very few students went from high school on to college. My father had a high school education; my mother was a high school dropout. Our family was extremely poor and violence was common in my home.

Early on I realized that education was the only way that I was going to escape the cycle of poverty that plagued my family. My belief in education sustained me through five years of undergraduate study. It was difficult to get a degree; I tried to balance two jobs while in college to support myself and finance my education. I have continued my education, earning two advanced degrees and currently pursuing a doctorate.

My own belief in education has also made me passionate about serving children of poverty. I know firsthand the difficulties of breaking the cycle of poverty. I believe education is the key in changing that pattern. As an educator, I try hard to get to know the children of poverty in my school before I get to know the children of privilege. I believe that positive relationships are essential in keeping children in school and motivating them to succeed. I believe all students, but especially these, need an advocate or ally whom they can trust to help them navigate the system of public education that is often cluttered with bias and prejudice. Throughout the interview process my core values guided my questioning. My own childhood experiences shape me as a researcher.

Data Collection

During the course of one semester, I conducted hour-long interviews with each of the 22 participants, for a total of 22 hours of interviews. Interviews were conducted in the participant‘s school, within the context of their school day. This enabled me to get a feel for the fast paced routine which each followed. My relationship, as a fellow assistant principal, made the interview process very relaxed and cordial. I collected data through the use of semi-structured interviews, open-ended main questions, probes, and follow-up questions as described by Rubin and Rubin (2005). Under each of the main research questions, I devised sub-questions dig deeper into the multiple facets of each area. Working from the CRT premise that racism is thoroughly embedded in American society and its schools; I wove questions about race into the sub-questions of the study, rather than ask one specific question about race. These questions were designed to unmask hidden biases and reveal racial prejudices in the Pleasantville School District which impact assistant principals, but also the students whom they serve. By weaving the issue of race

throughout the interview process, in subtle ways, I was able to obtain honest responses without participants being guarded or worried about being politically correct.

I utilized the conversational partner model for interviewing, which ~~"~~allow[s] for the interviewees to shape the discussion and guide what paths the research will take," guided my interviews (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 14). I framed the questions uniquely for each interviewee to create a personal interview and a unique experience for each interviewee. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data was triangulated based on media reports, Missouri School Improvement Program Reports, district website information, district core data reports sent to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and my own, first-hand knowledge of this district.

Data Analysis

Descriptive data were collected through audio-recorded interviews, which were transcribed verbatim. Careful analysis of verbatim transcripts of interviews yielded the themes that emerge from the interviews. Through a CRT lens, I examined the role that race plays in the daily lives and work of assistant principals in the areas of student management and discipline, promotion to higher positions, and professional satisfaction. My research is akin to the methodology implemented by Solórzano and Yosso (2002), creating counterstories from assistant principals' transcripts and existing literature. By capturing the administrators' experiences in their own words and sharing them, others may understand the work-life of assistant principals, while challenging the master narrative that perpetuates racism in our educational system. Data is presented in the form of narratives of each participant. The use of storytelling is commonly accepted in Critical Race Theory studies. Presenting each person's

unique story revealed biases and prejudices inherent in the culture of Pleasantville School District.

Delimitation and Limitations of Study

Delimitations narrow the scope of a study, while limitations are potential weaknesses that may impact the study (Creswell, 2007). Delimitations for this study include the selection of schools, specifically secondary schools. Narrowing the focus of the study to secondary schools allowed me to explore deeply the duties of assistant principals who are not commonly found in elementary schools in the Pleasantville School District.

Limitations of the study included the inability to use PSD discipline data disaggregated by race, gender, socioeconomic status, and offense. Although I have seen these data and realize they show a horrible over-representation of children of color in suspensions, I was denied permission to quote these data in this paper. Moreover, the central office administration concealed these data from the public. The school district agreed to share only the data that was published on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website. These data, while helpful, only scratch the surface of the real issue in PSD. The data do not show the over-representation of minority students in the discipline data that the assistant principals described.

Further limiting the study was the need to protect the identities of those who participated. The issues of race and discrimination are highly sensitive and uncomfortable for some. Finding a balance between asking questions and digging deeper to get at the hidden racism was challenging. By weaving questions of race and gender within the context of broader questions, I made these questions less intimidating and gained honest and valuable feedback from participants.

Validation

Validation is essential for the study's results to be valuable. The quality of my study will be enhanced by the clarification of researcher bias as well as the thick, rich descriptions and storytelling of the participants. While limited in scope, the credibility of this study is based on the transcript analysis from interviews of assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District, and my own first-hand knowledge of the PSD. The rich descriptions provided by the assistant principals serve to paint a realistic picture of the role of assistant principals. Through purposeful sampling, I selected secondary assistant principals who have experienced the struggles of the position. Through the maximum variation principle, I believed that their differing levels of education, race, and experience would lead to different answers in their interviews (Creswell, 2007).

The study is designed to examine central themes that arise when discussing key aspects of the work of assistant principals, their training and preparation, the challenges they face, the role that race plays in their work, as well as the role gender plays in their work, and their overall job satisfaction. Themes were analyzed and compared among the participants in the study. By comparing the data, I was able to ensure the quality of the inferences drawn from the data collected, without allowing my own researcher biases to color my research. Having already established trust with the interview subjects, I was able to secure thick, rich descriptions in response to my interview questions. Each participant shared personal experiences which supported the development of the themes of the study.

Critical Race Theory and Use of Narrative

I chose Critical Race Theory as the lens through which to analyze the data collected in this study to reveal the strong racial prejudices present in the Pleasantville School District's

discipline practices and in the promotion of assistant principals. CRT strongly supports the use of narrative to capture the voices of the oppressed and to temporarily suspend disbelief in the listener (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Stories can name a type of discrimination so that once named, it can be combated. Stories give voice to those studied and reveal that others have had similar experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Moreover, "narrative reduces the alienation for members of excluded groups while offering opportunities for members of the majority group to meet them halfway" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 44). Delgado & Stefancic (2001) claimed that "society constructs the social world through a series of tacit agreements mediated by images, pictures, tales, and scripts" (p. 42). Scholars argued that CRT methodologies are needed to challenge education scholarship absent of the concept of racism and its marginalization of students of color during the educational processes (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Using narrative structures including personal history, individual perceptions, and individual biases of each study participant, the study presents a snapshot into the daily lives of assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District. By recording their stories and providing an outlet for their voices, hidden issues that plague secondary assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District were revealed. Using narrative will capture the reader's attention and provide opportunities for thoughtful consideration of the complex issues revealed through the interview process.

CHAPTER 4

A Narrative Exploration of the Role of the Assistant Principal

Introduction

The study of Pleasantville School District, during the course of a semester, has yielded some interesting and somewhat provocative data. Through the use of narratives, I will illustrate the themes of roles and duties, training, challenges, discrimination, and frustration, and summarize the essence of what it means to be an assistant principal. The narratives explore four major research questions:

1. What do assistant principals do?
2. How are assistant principals trained?
3. What are the challenges of being an assistant principal?
4. How personally and professionally satisfying is it to be an assistant principal?

Study Participants

The participants in my study range are a diverse group, both in ethnicity, age, and experience. Many of the participants were born and raised in the area, while few come from other states. Pleasantville School District has 24 secondary assistant principals. Twenty-two agreed to participate in this study. The narratives contained within tell the stories of assistant principals, who, by most accounts, are voiceless. Participants are introduced within the context of their narratives. The reader will meet individuals, read their stories, share their experiences, and build a deeper understanding of the role of the assistant principal.

Roles and Duties of Assistant Principals

Assistant principals often enter the position with little input into their roles and responsibilities. Secondary assistant principals‘ jobs typically focus on student management and

discipline, but may also encompass a wide variety of other responsibilities, including building operations and facilities management, master schedule, athletic director, student activities director, instructional leadership, safety and security, crisis management, and substitute teachers. This wide variety should be an asset to tap into the strengths of each assistant principal. However, many assistant principals have no input into their assigned duties and responsibilities. Principals frequently assign duties to new assistant principals based on the duties of the previous assistant principal with little or no consideration for the personal strengths or weaknesses of the individual. This arbitrary assignment of duties creates frustration and stress for assistant principals whose duties do not match the natural talents they possess.

Structures and differences in assistant principal roles.

LaShawna Lindsey is a 36-year-old African American female and assistant principal at Madison Junior High School. She described her childhood in the Deep South, saying, "I was raised in Maysville, Louisiana . . . small town, population six thousand. I attended University of Central Georgia for my bachelor's and master's degrees. I received my Educational Specialist from State University. I am currently a doctoral student there. I am the youngest of eight, five girls and three boys. My mom was a single mom. I am the only child to attend college of this family and they are proud of me for that. I am married with one daughter. I have been married thirteen years and loving every minute of it."

LaShawna Lindsey described her frustration with the way Madison Junior High School structures the assistant principal positions. She is the third assistant principal at Madison Junior High School in the last seven years. Turnover and burnout are factors that impact the work of the assistant principals in this school. With a heavy sigh, LaShawna said, "When we first, when I first got here I just picked up the role of the previous person. And then I didn't like doing the

building [operations] because that wasn't, I just didn't enjoy it. And so I asked to switch duties; however, building is designed AP one and an AP two. And so AP one has more duties than AP two, so next year when I move over to AP one then I will pick up some additional duties like security and that kind of other things because that's the way she has it structured." Puzzled, I asked, "So your duties change each year?" LaShawna nodded and said, "Yes." "How does that work?" I wondered aloud. LaShawna answered, "Well this year that was okay because we kept, we decided to keep what we had but because Saul and I have broken them down to say this is what a lead AP will do and this new person coming in would do I'm moving on that role. But prior . . . but prior to that it was rotating every year. And that just wasn't working out. Yeah that wasn't working out. But some of it is because they had a new person every three years too. I'm the first consistent person that's been in this spot." Shocked, I exclaimed, "Wow! So a lot of turnover!"

LaShawna nodded her agreement and explained, "I think personally because it's a lot of work, I mean it's a, it's a lot of work, this structure is a lot of work." A look of sadness came over her face and she sighed. I pondered, "Have you guys looked at changing the structure?" Shaking her head side to side, LaShawna took a slow, deep breath. "We've talked about changing the structure but we have an old-school principal and she's not interested in changing the structure. I think . . . yeah that's the way it was when she was here so . . . because I do know when I talk to other buildings they do some things differently. And I think she's just one of those who's used to having it in the office and wants to keep it in the office. She's just not a big delegator outside of the office. 'Cause she feels like this what we get paid to do."

Multiple assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District share similar experiences. Often work is allocated based on high-profile or prestigious responsibilities, while

other assistant principals are left to do the low-profile or "grunt" work. Sierra O'Malley, assistant principal at Walters Middle School, is a 51-year-old African American female. She described herself as a hometown girl, stating, "I was born and raised in Pleasantville. My parents both graduated from Lewis High School. There are five girls including me. We were a middle-class family, at that time in space, with dog, cat, snakes, birds, fish, and alligator. My parents both worked outside of the home. We owned all of our homes. All five girls attended and graduated from college. I graduated from the State University, Bachelor of Science, [in] art education, Bill Jenkins University, Master's in Education, and an Education Specialist. I am currently single and divorced. I have three children. The oldest, Tony, attended graphic design school in Arizona, the middle girl, Makira, has a Master's in Marketing, [in] London, and the youngest girl, Ashante, has a culinary degree from Cordon Bleu. Only the youngest lives with me now."

Sierra O'Malley described her experiences with the assignment of duties at Walters Middle School. "When I started here I came in as an assistant administrator, it was like November a week before Christmas because they had made some changes in one of the junior high schools and they pulled me out of the classroom actually and said, 'Okay you start on Monday.' So it was like the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. And when I started Dominique said, 'This is what I do, here, you know, I'm going to divide this with you. And as far as the principal going, this is what I need you to do.' It really kind of came from the assistant because it was at that time it was just one assistant and an assistant administrator. The summer duties she has a list of things and I have a list of things but as far as telling me what my daily duties are I think I just kind of fell into it, you know, it was like okay. Now this year with the new principal, she wanted one of us to be strictly sixth grade and one to be seventh grade. But now since I'm,

you know, strictly seventh grade and then in the last few years I've picked up doing a lot more of those things."

I probed for a better understanding of the duties to which Sierra alluded. I pressed, asking, "So talk about how those duties were assigned, you said the assistant principal assigned them?" Sierra shot me a look over the top of her stylish black frames. "Yeah she, I'm sure that somewhere down the line they said, 'You do this, you do this,' but you know with that, I guess, that separation of 'You're the assistant, you're the assistant administrator,' you kind of do whatever the assistant principal, you know, asks you to do. I think I got a lot of the grunt work when I first started to be real honest with you. Yeah it's like, 'Well you do the attendance stuff and you do the building cleanliness and operations and we'll do this,' to be real honest with you, the more important kind of things." "Higher profile?" I asked. Sierra nodded her head in agreement. "But it's changed and that's good. I know there's a lot more that I need to know moving on to Washington Junior. Next year, they're having a slap in the face and the new principal will go, 'Do you know how to do this?' 'No, never was told how to do that,' but I think you know I'm doing a lot more in the last few years especially since they said, 'Okay you're both assistant principals.'" I asked Sierra to clarify her last comment. Sierra said, "They reclassified everybody that was assistant administrators because each middle school had an assistant [principal] and an assistant administrator and it had been like that since they opened and then I guess four and a half years ago, four years ago they said, 'Okay everybody is assistant principal,' and got a nice little bop of money to go with that because you know the expectations changed even though I still continued to do what I was doing as assistant administrator, still the low-profile kind of like you said, kind of jobs." It struck me as odd that the assistant principal

was responsible for assigning duties to the new assistant principal. I wondered to myself why the principal did not facilitate a redistribution of the workload.

I found a fairly similar experience of distribution of duties at the high school level. Marcus Clark is a 53-year-old African American assistant principal at Carver High School. He described his childhood, "I'm one of twelve kids, seven boys and five girls. I grew up on welfare with a single mother. We lived in Marywood. All of my brothers went into the military. My younger brother Tyrone and I are the only two [boys] who graduated from high school. All of my sisters graduated from high school. I lived under the watchful eye of the family. I had several uncles, aunts, cousins, the church family and under the protection of my older brothers. Our house was very structured. We all had daily and weekly responsibilities. I really had a great childhood. I went to college on an athletic scholarship at State University. I am married and have two beautiful and successful daughters who are in college." He is a large, imposing man, standing about six and a half feet tall and tipping the scales at more than 350 pounds. He has an easy smile and sense of humor, which seem at odds with his hulking, sometimes intimidating presence.

A five-year veteran assistant principal, Marcus Clark also felt that he did not have input into the duties he was assigned at Carver High School. He began, "Well, I have, I'm in charge of student discipline for the alphabet L–S. Again custodial, I'm in charge of custodial staff, building maintenance. I am in charge of, I'm the administrator for the C3 team. I do the . . . " Puzzled, I asked, "What's C3?" Marcus answered, "It's like our version of PBS. So, basically, it's a teacher-led group to look at the environment and relationship between my students and my teachers and what we can do to enhance the environment and education from a student standpoint. And then, let's see, I have the evaluation of the math department and the P.E.

department. Then I do lockers in the summertime, you know, organize and get the lockers ready to go for the fall. I'm in charge of putting work orders on, so I greet the maintenance guys when they come in if they have any questions. I think that's it."

"That's a lot," I said. "How were those duties assigned? Did you choose those duties, or were they given to you? Did you have any say?" Marcus looked at me like I was crazy. With frustration in his voice, he said, "No, I didn't have any say! They were assigned to me. But it's like a mutual agreement. The C3 is something I brought with me when I came back to Carver High School because of work we had done over at Madison Junior High School. The maintenance, because my first degree is in industrial technology, and it's common knowledge that I build houses in the summer. I've done a lot of construction over the years. So, I kind of, they kind of gravitated me to that area. The custodial staff, that coincides with me coming back to the building because over at Madison, again, with my knowledge of building, the building trades, and the profession, my skills, they kind of gave me those areas. The P.E. department, they gave me that because initially I was a football coach and P.E. instructor here. So, I have some knowledge of that area. And the math department was just a department that was assigned to me."

I was perplexed by Marcus's description of how his duties were assigned. His colleague, first-year assistant principal Anthony Brown, described a much more democratic process at Carver High School. At 26, Anthony Brown was on the fast track to the top. A bright, intelligent, articulate, and likeable guy, Anthony, as an African American assistant principal, will go far in his career. Anthony spoke of his humble beginnings, saying, "I grew up in inner-city Chicago. I come from a very loving home. My family prides itself on being a close-knit extended family. My uncles, aunts, and cousin all gather at my grandmother's home at least

twice a month to share experiences, and provide support for one another. My older sister and I were the first in our family to attend four-year universities. I lived with my mother who is forty-six and an older sister who is twenty-seven in a small apartment (which my mother still occupies) from the time I moved to college. My sister had her first child at age sixteen so at one point there were seven people living in our three-bedroom apartment. My father has been a very distant part of my life. He fathered eight children including me and the sister listed above. I went to the same school grades six through twelve with one of my half-brothers. Because my mother worked often and my father wasn't around, I was cared for by my grandfather. I most often credit him for my values system. I have been married for almost two years. My wife is a KU graduate with a degree in English and she is working on a degree in education. We do not have any children. We are both from Chicago, so we have no other family in Pleasantville, which I believe makes our bond and sense of dependence on one another stronger. I attended college at the State University and received a Bachelor's in Education in 200;, I finished my Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction in 2008, and am currently working on my Education Specialist. I have one more class to complete, the Superintendent's Internship. This summer I will begin my Educational Doctorate with a cohort at the State University."

Anthony Brown's perception is vastly different from his colleague Mr. Clark. Anthony shared his experience in acquiring duties for the job. He said, "Initially we had assistant principals retreat—actually it was the principal's administration retreat and we met for a week and we talked about all the different aspects of what it takes to run the school, and we kind of asked each other what do you feel comfortable doing or being a part of leading and we actually got a chance to choose it. They're based on strengths." He viewed the process as inclusive and

collaborative, while Marcus, who attended the same retreat, saw the process as top-down, but based on individual skills.

Becci Jonmeyer is a 56-year-old Caucasian female who was born and raised in a rural area about an hour outside of Pleasantville. She describes herself as having attention deficit disorder and being obsessive-compulsive about certain things. She speaks rapidly, almost as if to purge her stream of consciousness. When I asked where she went to college, Becci described her educational experiences jokingly, "Where didn't I? State University for two years in journalism, then switched to Kelly Hospital School of Nursing. Then [I] commuted at night to St. Francis University from Pleasantville to get BSN, then M.Ed from State University, then M.Ed from both Russell and Bill Jenkins, and finally Educational Specialist from State University." She described her family by saying, "[I was an] only child to blue-collar parents who grew up during depression and were always worried about money, never knew how to have fun; all work, clean, work. Had me late in life (after both being divorced earlier but that fact was hid from me until my father's funeral) when I was in my mid-forties. They both worked in a shoe factory in town. I had to figure out everything on my own, regarding college. My dad only went to school until sixth grade and my mom eighth grade. They intermingled German in their talk when they didn't want me to know what they were saying. [I've been] married thirty-plus years. Married someone very different from me, which is hard. I'm actually very introverted and overcompensate. I do not like a lot of people around me, need alone time a lot. [I] prefer not to have noise and generally have no filter on me. However, I love to dance and let loose when I do go out. Chuck is pure country, sings at the top of his voice from time he wakes up. [He] is not into shopping and [he is] more quiet but has never met someone he can't talk with. He is also much more conservative than me. [We] married at twenty-three, folks change a lot. Husband is

a good soul and loves to garden, cook, and loves his kids. We have two great kids. Both of them are spoiled. Joseph is the intellectual who was conservative and then married a socialist and now very liberal in his thinking. Adrienne has a big heart, religious, and she was sickly growing up with asthma. She always struggled more in school in math, like her mom. She doesn't give herself credit for how reflective she can be in her writings. She will be the caretaker of the family. We have taken tons of vacations together as a family. [We] are not savers and will probably work until we are in our caskets or urns. Chuck and I eat out each Friday evening. Enjoy seeing grandbaby pictures and visiting them."

Becci Jonmeyer described her duties as an assistant principal at Oaklawn High School. Taking a deep breath she began, "Okay I mean to me your job is not a disciplinarian but ultimately that's what ends up happening. But I think your first job is always to make sure you have a safe and effective learning environment. In order to do that you have to know your kids, you have to build relationships with those kids because they're not going to do anything for you. Fair doesn't always mean equal. So like the thing I just talked with you about I want to get their viewpoints on it before the perspective of maybe people who don't understand our culture of how they're talking about something and get them into three days of suspension when maybe this is already squashed so we don't have to end up kicking them out of, you know, stuff." She was referring to a conversation we had just finished concerning how to handle students who wanted to fight at school. We discussed at length various strategies we used to mediate peer conflict and resolve issues peacefully in our schools.

Coming up for a breath of air, Becci continued, "But as far as other duties, I mean, I'm over the Science department and Art and the sports medicine person goes in with the science and health position and then I go to several different PLTs [professional learning teams] in those

areas. I do the student handbooks. I do all the emergency manual and the emergency, our drills and stuff." I asked her how she received her specific duties. She joked, —Well there was a person called Shari Finnigan who wanted to do it all at first when she was working with PB and so then after one year as I'm trying to learn this job we decided to start saying, _Hey you don't have to do it all. Let go.' So she let go of a few things and that's really how. But it wasn't necessarily assigned. The departments were assigned to me by Bitsy Taylor but the other positions were really not assigned. I do the drills and get all that stuff. I check the rooms and make sure everything is updated after summer school and then we always have our certain talks that we do at the beginning of school and then depending on what grade level you are you're going to talk to different advisories or grade-level teams. You're going to be working with our counselors on different types of talks. I've done some stuff for the newsletter each year. I usually try to find something that's tempered like we've done cyber-bullying, we've talked about the handbook a little bit, we've talked about safety, we did a drug, or I did a drug thing once. I believe it was in February, March last year. So that's the part of my job that's even more enjoyable because it's a little creative where as the rest of the job has no creativity." Becci's comments about creativity resonated with me and I scribbled a note on my pad. —Need creative outlet," I wrote.

Dan Conner, the 51-year-old Caucasian male assistant principal at Oaklawn, described his family with humor. —I grew up on the mean streets of Dallas . . . well not really . . . more like the cushy suburbs. We were a blended family of nine kids, six _steps' including step-mom, and two natural siblings and a natural dad. I am the second youngest kid . . . I'm married and have two kids, ages nine and twelve and my wife is self-employed. We, like most, struggle at times to balance our active [and] busy family schedule with our respective work schedules. I attended the

University of Wisconsin. Technically I have been as an assistant principal four years. I was an administrative assistant here for the first eight plus. I did assistant principal stuff, building operational stuff, budget stuff. I mean this is my ninth year. I did like five years and then this is four years."

In sharp contrast to Becci's duties, her colleague Dan Conner described his duties at Oaklawn. He smiled and said, "Official school communications, building use, school calendar, student agenda, clubs and activities meaning supervising sponsors and clubs, organizing and orienting preservice teachers, student teachers, charge of the language, music and technology departments." Struck by the omission of the words "discipline" and "student management," I asked Dan how he came to possess these duties. He took a deep breath and said, "That's what the job did when, when Bitsy really asked me to take this job, if I was interested that was it. The student teacher thing was added. Yeah, student teacher thing was added. But no you're not asking me, they didn't ask it was like, 'Here you go.' At the same time I knew pretty much going in what I was in for in terms of the responsibilities but what I didn't know is kind of how many multiple projects are always rolling around at the same time." Two things struck me, so I quickly jotted them in my notes: no discipline duties, and Bitsy appointed Dan to the job. I put a star by this so I would be sure to return to it at a later time.

Saul Hollingsworth is a quiet, unassuming Caucasian man, who at 51 has had a variety of experiences as an assistant principal at Madison Junior High. Joking about his age, he quipped, "I'm fifty-one and proud of it! Actually, I'll be fifty-two in a few weeks . . . man, I'm getting older! I recently completed my doctorate and I know this is going to sound crazy, but I love to analyze data!" We laughed together then settled in to our interview.

Saul described his duties and how they have changed over time. "No, when I started here I was the only assistant principal. So when I came here it was just Cindy and I and I did [it] all, everything and then as we started getting assistant principals we divided them up. In the beginning I had, I dealt with the substitutes also, I dealt with the ECA [extra-curricular activities], I've been the ECA coordinator for years. LaShawna does it now but I've done it for years along with that. So I mean you just, you just, you encompass and then when you get someone else you just start to delegate out you know where those will be. You know originally when I first started you know here nine years ago, here at Madison Junior it, my days were always based around nothing but discipline referrals and building management; that was my life. And since we've had and we've gone through three assistant principals in this building since I've been here. Okay, you know I did two years by myself, then we did two years and he was gone two years and now this is LaShawna's third. So I've, I've seven of the nine years we've had an assistant but of those a lot of my job has been training them and preparing them and teaching them. So I've held on to a lot of, of duties. Currently though, with LaShawna being in her third year, you know it's been a lot easier. It really has been a lot easier." The high turnover rate at Madison Junior High seemed odd to me. I wondered if their administrative structure really was the cause for assistant principals leaving the school every couple of years.

Leslie Fredrickson is another home-grown administrator, also graduating from Carver High School in Pleasantville. The 40-year-old assistant principal at Johnson Middle School is an African American female and has lived her entire life in this community. She has been an assistant principal for five years and taught for eight years prior to her promotion. Describing her education, Leslie detailed the long road to her current position, saying "I earned a] bachelor's degree from Pleasantville College, a master's in leadership from Bill Jenkins University, and an

Educational Specialist from the State University. I am currently in the Educational Doctorate program at Bill Jenkins University, but haven't completed it yet. Leslie described her family as interesting, saying, "[My] mother and father were married twice to each other. I have one full-brother and one half-brother with my dad. I am the oldest, with my half-brother six months younger than me and the youngest brother is nine years younger. [I have a] blended family, I have one son that is twenty-three, my husband has a son that is twenty-three, and we have one daughter together and she is seven." When asked to describe her career as an assistant principal, Leslie paused to think. With her hands resting lightly on her chin, Leslie said, "This is my fourth, no—I guess I would have to say five. I've been here for four years. But I came over here as an administrative assistant from Walters Middle School, and then got moved over to Red Stone in November of that year to an assistant principal there. But I've been here at Johnson for four years."

Leslie Fredrickson described her duties, "We do have listed duties. And we pretty much share most of them between Silvia and I, but I am responsible for the building. So, work orders and issues that affect the building, I am responsible for the, oversee of the special education, we have a department chair, but I'm kind of the administrator. So, her and I visit. I help our guidance in coordinating our master schedule. And it seems like I do other things, but probably over, not over, but more involved in our PLC [professional learning communities] groups, attending more of those meetings. They meet every other day about content. And I kind of go to more of those than Silvia does. But she does more of our expectations, which is looking at our behaviors. So, I'm looking at more of the academic and the PLCs, and she looks more at the behavior. No, I was here first, before Silvia. So, when I came in, I was more special education. And Amanda Burns was the other assistant principal that was here. So, she, because she had

been here longer, she kind of oversaw most things at that point. And then, just the transition of duties when Silvia took over for Amanda. And then once Montez came, he kind of let us just do our natural piece of it. I am the administrator for the language arts and social studies department. And Silvia is over math and science. And so when we go through and look at what needs to be done, he allowed us to take more of our strengths in our discussion. And then as the year goes on you pick up pieces."

Instructional leadership vs. discipline.

Assistant principals often enter the profession wide-eyed with wonder at the awesome possibilities that lay in front of them. It is exciting and intoxicating to have the power to shape instruction that will impact students for decades to come. However, the reality that most assistant principals face is that the demands of the job are greater than the time allotted. Assistant principals struggle to balance the demands of student discipline and building management with their roles as instructional leaders. Thus, things that can wait are often pushed to the ~~"~~back burner" or moved farther down the list of tasks to accomplish when more pressing issues arise. Instructional leadership is a vital aspect of school improvement. Teachers need to feel the support of their administrators and see them as instructional coaches, not just disciplinarians. Yet, in every interview with assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District I found that all assistant principals felt that they did not spend enough time on instructional leadership. Table 2 illustrates the APs' perceptions of how they divide their time around the duties they have.

Table 2

Pleasantville School District Secondary Assistant Principals' Duties

School	Participant	Discipline and Student Management	Instructional Leadership	Other Duties	Selected or Assigned Other Duties
Walters Middle School	Sierra O'Malley	90%	5%	5%	Assigned by AP
	Dominique Sullivan	85%	5%	10%	Selected
Johnson Middle School	Leslie Fredrickson	70%	10%	20%	Assigned by principal
	Silvia Douglass	55%	20%	25%	Assigned by AP
Hancock Middle School	Melissa Smith	85%	10%	5%	Assigned by principal
	Jeff Jones	90%	5%	5%	Assigned by principal
Washington Junior High	Henry Joseph	Did not participate in study			
	Mike White	90%	5%	5%	Assigned by AP
Red Stone Junior High	Renee Moore	70%	15%	15%	Assigned by AP
	Sean Schneider	90%	4%	6%	Assigned by principal
Madison Junior High	LaShawna Lindsey	75%	20%	5%	Assigned by principal
	Saul Hollingsworth	70%	5%	25%	Assigned by principal
Carver High School	Marcus Clark	65%	5%	30%	Selected
	Deborah Watson	80%	10%	10%	Selected
	John Green	0%	10%	90%	Selected
	Anthony Brown	80%	10%	10%	Selected
	Thomas Walker	90%	5%	5%	Selected
Oaklawn High School	Bob Flanders	85%	5%	10%	Assigned by principal
	Shari Finnigan	Did not participate in study			
	Becci Jonmeyer	65%	25%	10%	Assigned by principal
	Dan Conner	0%	20%	80%	Assigned by principal
	Jessica Lewis	0%	10%	90%	Assigned by principal
Lewis High School	Larry Barnes	75%	20%	5%	Assigned by principal
Career and Technical School	Curtis Jones	12.5%	25%	62.5%	Assigned by principal

Jeff Jones, assistant principal at Hancock Middle School, is a 45-year-old Caucasian male who described his childhood as very mobile. He stated, "[We lived] all over the US—specifically, California, New York, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Arizona, Florida, and Virginia. I attended college in Miami, Florida. I have two sisters. My father is an OB-GYN who went into public health. He was director of health for different areas and we moved around a lot. I have three children ranging from nine to sixteen. My wife and I both work busy jobs."

Jeff Jones describes his frustration with the discipline load he carries. Trained to be an instructional leader, he spends most of his time working with discipline. I asked, "How much of your work is with teachers as an instructional leader?" Shaking his head, he said, "I would say very little. Yeah. I would say . . . well, that's a difference between this job and my last job because it was elementary. I didn't have much, I mean. . . . " "Not much discipline?" I asked. Nodding in agreement, he went on, "I don't think I broke up maybe two fights my whole career there. So I was in the classroom, you know. Almost every day I would, I was able to spend time, I had forty-five teachers that I was responsible for immediately and I was able to spend time in their rooms all the time. I got to every one of my teachers every week. I was in their classrooms." Impressed, I exclaimed, "Wow!"

Jeff beamed with pride as he remembered the good old days in his previous district. "So that's, that's the frustrating part that, you know, I don't want to be. . . . You want to be visible but you're kind of trapped. The discipline really traps you and you only get to meet ten percent of the kids because, you know, because you really only get to meet the kids that get in trouble a lot. So there are kids out there that I would love to get to work with but you really get kind of put on hold with the discipline. I do get to do walk-throughs but not as much as I would like. I would like to be out there more. But I think it's also good for me coming from elementary that I

have this year to kind of see what it's about because, you know, kids basically are going to be the same but the content is much different. So I don't have that experience with the content, you know. I know what good teaching is like . . . and I know how to be a good teacher . . . and what it takes to be a good teacher and I could work on that, but as far as subject matter it's going to be . . . "

Sean Schneider, the 32-year-old Caucasian assistant principal at Red Stone Junior High School, described his upbringing by saying, "I was raised in suburban Detroit, and attended Northern State University for my undergraduate and master's degrees. I completed my Education Specialist at KU. I grew up with divorced parents who were middle-class, all white. I am one of two children who lived with Mom. My mom worked and both my parents' education was a high school diploma. My own family, I am married. My wife is half Japanese. We have one child and my wife is a stay-at-home mom. My wife and I are both college graduates. We are middle-class."

Sean's passion, and what led him to administration, is his desire to be an instructional leader. He smiled as he began, "Number one thing, that to be an assistant principal is really attractive on the instructional leadership side of things. There was a time where districts had money, it seemed, and were really going after the instructional coach model. It seemed like in the district I worked in previously, and it was a very neat idea for me. So I got involved with staff development. That was the only way that I could be involved. My discipline didn't have an instructional coach. But through staff development I was able to provide some instructional leadership in the district, taking on student teachers, taking leadership roles in my department that I worked in. And I was very excited about being able to do that. And so, in speaking with some colleagues of mine and some mentors, quickly realized that maybe administration would be

a route that I would want to do, ultimately with the goal of being a principal at some point in my career when I felt comfortable and felt like I knew enough. And so that's really it. As far as being an administrator, that's it. The instructional leadership piece is number one, hands down. I'd love to tell you I got into this, you know, there's a part of me that does like the idea of 'Let's take on the challenge.' This young person is not being served by us very well right now. Or this person needs a voice. And that's a very attractive part of this as well. And it's become that as I've continued on, and as I've become an administrator, and as I've kind of dabbled in it. But initially it was one hundred percent I wanted to be involved in instructional leadership."

I asked Sean how much of his day was spent doing instructional leadership. His smile faded and he said, "Not enough. I mean, I think that's the, in my opinion, probably the romantic part of being an administrator. And it's the reason that I feel you should get into administration. And it's the reason that I think everybody should want to be an administrator. So, realistically, probably if I tallied it all up, I'd say I probably could look at maybe four, three or four percent of my year was spent in instructional leadership. I hate to say that, but . . . " His voice trailed off and he looked away. I had struck a nerve here; he was frustrated that only four percent of his time is spent doing what he loves.

Similarly, Anthony Brown described his workday at Carver High School with a heavy sigh, "I would say eighty percent of it dealing with discipline and putting out those fires like I said it's supervision, discipline. Ten percent is teachers, directly dealing with teachers and academic achievement. Everything else is indirectly dealt with. Everything else is indirectly dealing with academic achievement, making sure that those particular structures are in place to make sure students are in an environment where they're safe. They can be productive so that would be the other ten percent of the day and that can include various things."

Marcus Clark, Anthony's colleague and assistant principal at Carver High School, described his plate as being full with his workload. "Wow. In terms of being able to get into the classroom, I don't get into the classroom as much as I think we should. I'm one of these guys that believe that the administration team should be divided and assigned duties based upon expertise. I don't think you could do all, you know, administrators cannot do everything. You know, for example, I feel like I have a full load. If I go focus on the building aspect, something else has to suffer. So, most of my contact with the teachers, I do get in the classrooms, quick walk-throughs. I do talk to the teachers in a relaxed environment. They may come in my office. I may stop down and talk to them. I get into the classrooms as much as I possibly can. We try to get into a minimum of five classrooms a week. Sometimes that's easier to do where I can do more. Sometimes it's very difficult to do. But my door's, well, my teachers, they understand that my door's always open. And they know I'm here early in the morning for those reasons. So, if I can't get in the classrooms, I have a lot of conferences with my teachers."

Sierra O'Malley thought about her time on instructional leadership at Walters Middle School, and said, "Really not as much as it probably should be. I'm in and out of the classrooms, you know, I do the three-to-fifteen minute walk-throughs and just kind of talk to them about what that is, you know, what I saw, how do you handle this, what if this happens, that's really probably about it."

Saul Hollingsworth reflects on the last decade's worth of work as an assistant principal. Continuity is challenging for Saul. After training another new assistant principal for Madison Junior High School, the third one in seven years, Saul said, "Yeah, so when, now that LaShawna's really rolling I'm able to do more. My time is more towards the classroom, I'm able to call teachers into the office, talk to them about strategies. I think the faculty is more

comfortable, in fact with coming in here now and saying you know either come watch this or if they say I'm struggling in this area, you know what suggestions you have, I can at least be reflective. Where early on it was touchy because I didn't have time to do that as much as I would've like to."

Becci Jonmeyer sighed when recalling how much time she spends on instructional leadership. Slowly shaking her head side to side, she said, "Twenty-five percent, it should be more than that if you actually could do it and some days it doesn't even feel like it's anywhere near twenty-five percent. You have sometimes great plans to get in more and one of the things I think we've all learned is if we don't put down that we're going to do it then we will always find more kids to work with or you know talking to more, calling or e-mailing more parents where sometimes some of those things probably could be put away a little while and then concentrate on the other stuff. So it is a matter of putting it down on your thing. But I think a lot of times when I work with teachers I try to, I try to talk about instructional strategies in the reflection stuff that we do with them too so it's not just here's what I'd observe and not maybe some other ways of doing things. And even when I work with Paula, I've tried to help her since she's never gone through cognitive coaching how to deal with some problem-solving scenarios and the steps because she's not had an opportunity."

Dan Conner echoed the need to have more time for instructional leadership. Although Dan does not have discipline duties, he also feels the pull on his time. "Honestly, I don't know. It's ten or twenty percent. It's low. Yeah, probably that will be interesting to see what you find out about that but I think the older, the longer you do the job the more you're able to carve out time for that. That's my kind of theory." I clarified, "And so pretty much all of these other duties suck up eighty percent of your time?" He nodded in agreement. I continued, "Okay so the, how

do you, before I go to the other thing, how do you feel about that? You know about it being ten or twenty percent of your job."

Dan rumpled up his face, as if truly perplexed by this question. After a moment, he said, "I think. Yeah. Ideally I wouldn't say it would be flipped but I think that, I mean that's the part because, that's the part that's the hardest to carve out time for. It's because I got to get out of the office and force myself to get away from . . . there's always some business here so, you just have to schedule it you know. You know, I didn't mean kind of a big deal is I understand how this supports kind of the school and the vibe and student involvement and their eventual success and they get skills and stuff but really I mean if you got a crappy teacher that's got a bigger impact on really the deal. Making it a multi-year impact on kids' interest in taking a subject and having kids for two or three years so that's why." I felt as if I was on to something big here, so I pressed Dan for more detail. "So if you have, say a crappy teacher, to use your words, what do you do? Then what? You don't want them harming kids for years. What happens?" I asked.

Dan shifted in his seat. He was uncomfortable and clearly did not like to deal with conflict involved in the teacher-improvement process. He stopped fidgeting and said, "Well, I mean, you know, it depends on if they're a first, second, third, fourth, fifth year. So it's typically it's a PIP [professional improvement plan] based on classroom observations and based on conversations with department chair, principal, other counselors. To identify areas of need to work on. Then it's working on that. Following through with the PIP and then reassessing along the way." I asked him what he meant. Clarifying, Dan said, "It seems to me that the PIP process is more about trying to help ineffective teachers consider their effectiveness in—place in—the profession rather than in truly impact instruction. While it has helped, perhaps, younger teachers move toward being more effective in the classroom that change seems incremental at best. To

me the most effective strategies for improving instructional practice are proper hiring [and] placement in the first place, and constant coaching either by peers or administrators early in a teacher‘s career.”

Student management and discipline.

As noted in the literature review, assistant principals spend the majority of their time dealing with issues of student management and discipline. Of the 22 APs interviewed, all but three reported discipline and student management as their primary responsibility. Assistant principals described their interactions with students in their disciplinary role, as well as their work analyzing the data about the types of referrals and consequences.

Silvia Douglass, another assistant principal at Johnson Middle School, is a 51-year-old Caucasian female who described her family by stating, “Until the age of ten I lived with my parents, older sister, and younger brother and we were a typical family living in a new home next to my grandparents. My mother took us to church and we attended bible school, Sunday school, etc. My father was often gone in the evenings, but it seemed normal for us. When I was ten, my parents divorced due to my father‘s alcoholism and abuse toward my mother. We then moved into apartments and struggled financially as my mother worked to support three children. When I was fourteen, my mother remarried for four years and my stepfather was somewhat abusive to all. I was married for eighteen years to my first husband, had two daughters, and am now married for eleven years to my second husband. My older daughter is mentally disabled and lives with me and my husband. My younger daughter is married and lives in Tennessee. We are extremely happy!”

Silvia Douglass described her work analyzing discipline data through the “Expectations Committee.” Eager to learn more, I questioned what the Expectations Committee did. Silvia

became excited, saying, "It's our committee that meets each month and we look at our positive behavior support, lessons and expectations in the building, and we review discipline data for the month, and compare and look at where are our most referrals happening, what is the major reason they're happening, what can we do as a building to address those concerns? We build in positive rewards for receiving PAWS, which are the little tickets that kids get for doing the right thing. So we build that in. So PBS and BIST combination, I guess you'd say. Discussions about referrals."

Leslie Fredrickson described her juggling of responsibilities, saying, "Probably seventy percent of my day, I'm going to venture to say, is discipline, on an average day. And then I have, we have teams here. And I'm responsible for four teams. They—I'm currently the seventh-grade principal. So I have three core teams, and then I have one specialist team. And I meet with them every B day. So, one of those four teams I'm meeting with. And then I share our exploratory which are . . . elective courses. I come in. Silvia and I share those. So, she meets with them for one time and I meet with them one to talk about our specific grade level students. So, within a two week, I meet with each team once."

Becci Jonmeyer reflected on how her day typically goes. The lack of control over her daily routine is frustrating to Becci. "You never can come in with a plan because the plan usually goes out the window depending on what kids are doing or what teachers are upset about something or what parent just happens to drop by because they got a concern, something that happened overnight or whatever a teacher might have said. So I think the biggest thing you learn is you just got to be flexible and you just keep going with the flow. People first, paper second. Well in the morning I always try to make sure that we have looked at consequences from the day before or who hasn't gone to class and following up with those first and I try to get as many of

those or make sure that one of our helpers is starting with that because if not then I feel like if we open a door where people don't think we're following through then they're going to continue to do it. So that's where I, that's kind of first if I can do them. And then from there it's just more trying to get out, sometimes checking with the counselors and making sure I've given a follow-up with them on anything that's been happening with kids or teachers or parents. Yeah, just checking in with counselors making sure the communications that I might have had with any parent or with a teacher that there was kept up to date or they have anything that's going on as well."

Discipline and student management consume the bulk of time for assistant principals. Marcus Clark, who has a significant amount of other responsibilities, described his work with student management. "Ah, shoot, that's the large percentage of my day. And again, that's what the staff expect assistant principals to do, to manage student behavior, manage the flow of the building. As things go wrong, they want us there. And they don't feel like it's their responsibility to address a lot of these situations." "Like what?" I asked. Wiping his brow with a handkerchief, Marcus said, "Oh, loud, disruptive behavior, kids being in the hallways without their planner, coming late to the classroom. Well, we took care of the cell phone, you know, electronic devices, but you know what? I just had a conversation with a student yesterday that out of her, three out of her six classes, teachers allow them to use their cell phone and iPods and stuff in the classroom, which is a violation of the policy that was written. So, you know, when that goes wrong, they want me there. But they don't enforce, and we don't come together as a team," Marcus said shaking his head in disgust.

After a pause, Marcus said, "The team concept is hard to get the teachers to understand. Not one of us can operate without the other people doing their job. And when they do not

address issues or concerns that they know are not right, they're setting their colleagues up for failure as well as that student. And that is the team. The team concept and we all are totally responsible for the environment and education of this building is a hard concept. They want to isolate themselves in their own individual departments, in their own classrooms. And one of the things I did explain to the teachers when I was in the P.E. department, I was responsible for that department. Now, since I'm administrator, my classroom is every classroom in this building. And they have to take on the same views to support, not only their colleagues, but also the students." —Powerful words from a powerful man," I thought. His team metaphor struck me as obvious; Marcus, the former NFL Super Bowl champion, accomplishing tremendous feats, cannot find a way to bring his faculty together to make their school better.

Preparation of Assistant Principals

Educators go into administration for a variety of reasons and take many different paths to achieve their goals. As the literature states, assistant principals can be home-grown, university prepared, and even groomed for leadership positions.

Home-grown and groomed assistant principals.

Renee Moore, a 36-year-old Caucasian female, has a much different background. Renee began, —I was born in Southport, England, then moved to Cleveland and Portland, Oregon, then moved to Pleasantville when I was nine. I have been in Pleasantville since then, except for the year that I attended the university in Dorchester, England. I have dual citizenship and became an American citizen when I was thirteen." Renee continued, —I attended the State University for my Bachelor's in English and English Education, my Master's in Curriculum and Instruction, and an Ed Specialist." When describing her family, Renee smiled. —It was just my mom, dad, and I growing up—all our family lives in England, so we were a very insular trio and still are!

Mom was a stay-at-home mom, although she did volunteer extensively at Meals on Wheels and at the state hospital gift shop, and Dad was a professor of radiology at the medical school at the university. Now I'm married to Frank for almost three years, and we've been together ten. We live in the country and are hoping to be blessed with children soon. Frank has a sister and many aunts, uncles and cousins at the lake, so we often go from the sublime to the ridiculous between families of three and thirty at Thanksgiving and Christmas."

Renee Moore jokes that she received her current position as assistant principal by default. She's a home-grown assistant principal who has been groomed and put on the fast track for administration. –So I got my specialist degree with my principal certification. And I didn't feel like I learned a lot about being an assistant principal through that program, but I did learn a lot through being Becci's assistant principal at Carver summer school and then the Oaklawn summer school, which I was everything. And so, from that, because of that experience from summer school, we were awarded the Wallace Grant last year and so Dr. Petersen got an opportunity to go to the board office, Ms. Sheldon stepped up and they asked me to cover Ms. Sheldon's spot. So it was just going to be for a year, and after that year I was going to go back into the classroom, well Ms. Sheldon went to Walters. Mr. Thomas went back to St. Louis so it was just Karen, so they asked me to stay on. So I got the job by default," she said laughing.

Thomas Walker had a similar experience and training by working summer school. He reflected, –Probably my experience of summer school principal. I served as summer school principal the last two years, and the year before that as assistant principal. And so really assistant principal, I saw a lot of, kind of what I do now, student management and discipline and then the principal role, more of the larger role, the larger, you know building community, culture building that goes on with a school."

Carver assistant principal, Deborah Watson recounted her experiences as a home-grown administrator from another state. She said, "I worked with an assistant principal and she coached me through it basically or you know we talked about it and those kinds of things. For instance, when I worked with Mr. Clark, same type of thing, you know he did work with me two hours a day and then we would discuss that I observed him make sure he's comfortable. And then I would leave him on his own a little bit and he would come back and debrief on what happen and what occurred and he said that's probably what's valuable." She used her experience of being mentored and tutored as an AP to help another individual grow into the role.

Sierra O'Malley relaxed into her chair as she prepared for my next question. "What was the best preparation for your role as an assistant principal?" I asked. Pausing for a moment, she concentrated on her thoughts. Sierra began, "I would say probably my master's degree really. I did that with Bill Jenkins University and you know they just covered the whole gamut and it just you know told you pretty much what to expect. It's like okay you need to know the finance. Yeah, just a variety of the things that you would be doing from operations [building operations] to possibly, if you're the principal, to the budget or whatever. So I think that's what I think gave me the best because everything else is just kind of been on the job. I'm learning how to do things, you know."

Satisfied with her answer, I moved on to the next in this line of questions. "Would you consider yourself to be a, like a home-grown administrator or assistant principal in that you came up through the ranks and were given leadership opportunities or would you say you were more of a traditional like you university prepared and got the job that way?"

Without hesitation, Sierra said, "I'd say home-grown. Yeah I would definitely say home-grown because when I was receiving my bachelor's Pleasantville had started minority internship

with the State University and Dr. Tutt got me interested in education. He was the HR person at that time and said, —You do this we'll get you in," and you know gave me a really good look at and that was before it was paid, it was like a free volunteering just to get minorities interested in education. And I remember my interview with him was —How you doing? So you want to teach art? Okay we'll set you up with the principal," and Lisa everything has kind of been I guess I'm one of those, kind of been done and handed to me." Intrigued, I questioned her. —What do you mean?" Sierra looked at her fingernails and then smiled softly. —They handed me the art position. I didn't have the big flashy interview with all the people around the table; it was with Dr. Tutt, you know, and when you say the home-grown you know they prepared me, they were like 'Okay look at this education, you know, and come in and do this with us and do that with us' and then once I was in the position I was there and worked like I said at Parkside Elementary for seven years and tried to kind of get out of there, you know, but Bonnie Brooks was like 'No, you're good, I need you here.' She wouldn't let me go for several years and then Dr. Brown was like she called me, 'I need an art teacher and I want you. Come over for an interview.' The interview was we walked through the halls, she's like, 'I don't have a room for you. This would be this, this would be this. Do you want it?' 'Sure I'll take it.' And then it was like I taught for a while and received, it was like 'You should do this little thing, why don't you do that.'" In my notes I wrote, —groomed for positions," and underlined it.

Sierra continued, —So yeah I am home-grown. They've, you know, shown me everything. I just finished model medics in the fall and it was just like, 'Oh we'd like for you to do this. We'd like for you to do the cognitive coaching. We'd like for you.' So yeah I am home-grown and rather than coming from university and here's this type of thing and you know and then it was at Suzanne's son engagement party, December thirtieth I remember and she was

like, ‗You ready to get your boots ready for something else,' she said, ‗I've got something that I want to talk to you about after Christmas,' and she came in and she's like, ‗This is what Washington needs and you've been here eleven years and it's time to spread your wings.' So I said, ‗Okay.' It's not that I haven't struggled and I was kind of real skeptical with the Washington Junior High job. Because I was kind of promised the Carver job, I mean, they came after me like crazy." Intrigued, I asked, "What Carver job?" Taking a big drink of her tea, Sierra said, "Last year, the one—Thomas and what's the guy's name, Anthony, yeah, I mean Madison was like, ‗Why didn't you apply?' And Simon was like . . ." Interrupting, I asked, "Why didn't you apply?"

Exasperated with my lack of comprehension, Sierra groaned. "I did apply! I didn't want it at that time and you know one thing that, this is easy with just the track and the basketball and it's like okay you have to go to three track meets and you've got to go to four basketball games." Nodding in agreement, I said, "In high school it's three nights a week." Sierra agreed. "Yeah and I was like I really don't want all that, you know, so when it came up I was like I'm okay here and they pursued me. We need you. We want you. I bombed the interview. I think it was fifty-fifty, some of the teachers were like, ‗Yeah we need somebody with experience;' others were like, ‗She doesn't know what to do if a kid has drugs.' Well I haven't had that; everything is on-the-job training." Confounded by her experience, I observed aloud, "Isn't that weird that things people think are important." Sierra sipped her soda and shook her head yes and said proudly, "So you know, yeah, I'm home-grown."

Another administrator who had been groomed and fast-tracked was Anthony Brown, the 26-year-old African American assistant principal at Carver High School. After teaching for three years and working as an administrative assistant for his supervision period during his last year,

Anthony was hired at Carver. Intelligent, articulate, and confident, Anthony is a rising star in the Pleasantville School District. He smiled, saying, ―The best preparation I had was actually working in the office at Oaklawn High School because you see what a principal does every single day. You see how their day is structured and being—you get a holistic understanding. It‘s not just learning about being a principal in the classroom. It‘s not looking at the administration from a teacher‘s standpoint. It‘s being in the office with the assistant principal and seeing what they‘re doing every single day and how they put out these different fires and how they navigate the school and how they‘re in a position to be a leader to make sure students and teachers are accounted for, to make sure that they are having a good experience, so I think it‘s invaluable to sit there with an administrator to see what they do and how they do it. The follow-up conversations are probably the most beneficial because you get a chance to ask questions. Why did you do this, this particular way? How would you have done it differently with a different student? How would you in understanding my personality —how would you suggest that I would do it if that particular way didn‘t work for me?" After spilling out his thoughts, Anthony paused, almost as if to assess my understanding of what he had said. Nodding my agreement, I pressed on. ―Do you consider yourself to be a home-grown assistant principal, someone who‘s come up through the ranks or do you think of yourself as someone who‘s been college prepared?" Anthony smiled and said, ―I would say home-grown. I‘ve had excellent mentors. Even becoming—when I was teacher, my mentor was Marti Donhoe. She taught me how to become a good teacher and becoming a good teacher, you learn what, as an administrator, who was a good teacher, you understand the importance of that training you had as a teacher and then I had Shari Finnigan as a mentor during my principal internship. Those conversations we had were invaluable, seeing what you did every single day, invaluable.

Learning the theory in class is good, but the practice—it was so much better. I had some of these people surround me that have helped me and continue to help me develop in my leadership."

Switching gears, I turned the conversation away from this topic, and asked, "What aspects of your training did not adequately prepare [you] for becoming an assistant principal? That could've been either your work in the office or your coursework or whatever." Anthony was silent for a moment, thinking about the question. Slowly, almost cautiously, Anthony said, "I would have to say there was—I can't give you an answer for that because I think everything that I did prepared me to be a principal, whether it was something I felt was not a good practice. I think I was reflective enough to understand why it didn't work and what I need to do when I become a principal. I look at it as experience in something that's going to help me in some type of way even if it's a horrible experience. Even in my coursework, looking back on it, listened to how people approached a subject that I thought maybe wasn't the best subject to talk about, I think even those things still help me in my quest to become a principal." I wondered aloud, "Like what, when?"

Anthony said, "Let me think. It was actually the superintendent's class as opposed to a principal class. Maybe that's why I thought at the time it wasn't that beneficial but looking at the funding it was beneficial for me to understand on a holistic skill how districts are funded, how schools are funded but it didn't necessarily prepare for what I'm doing right now because I'm not involved in those types of things at this moment." I scribbled in my notes, "training for superintendent, not for assistant principal." I underlined this. I wanted to come back and look at this again. Focusing on the questions at hand, I asked, "What if anything would you change about your leadership training for the assistant principal role?"

Instantly, Anthony said, "I would make the principal internship longer. There are no particular limits on the intern itself, but I would probably move it to the very beginning of the EDS program because I believe it'll help you stay more organized, you know exactly what you need to do and what you should be focusing on every single day because the end result is the portfolio, which is not the end-all, be-all because the result is really you're becoming a good administrator, but I think it will give you a way to organize your thinking and organize what you're doing in your internship and throughout the entire time of your course work to be more intentional on what your focusing on as far as you, yourself and your personality becoming a principal." "Good idea," I thought. It was also the perfect segue to my next question. "What type of mentoring or support did you receive upon becoming an assistant principal?" Anthony became animated and smiled widely. He began, "It was amazing. It was awesome. I worked with the building principal at Oaklawn High School, Bitsy Taylor, and she helped me develop a plan and even when I was going into accounting in the wrong direction trying to develop my own plan as an intern, she would help me to say maybe you should focus on these things a lot differently, and she would say pay attention to what Bob does and what Shari and Becci does. They do things differently, but they're all doing it for the same reason. So Bitsy set my initial plan and then working in your office and having those conversations, being involved and being trusted enough with the inner workings in what happen in our office really helped me out because I felt like having your trust made me realize that it's really a team effort and you're pouring into me so I can become a better administrator." Anthony had received support from his building principal and other assistant principals while he was studying to become an administrator. He was a home-grown administrator, trained in his own school.

University-prepared assistant principals.

Jeff Jones, assistant principal at Hancock Middle School, cited some of the training that he received at the University of Florida during his certification for administration. "My favorite or the most, the one that rang true was when one of the professors—the exercise was where we sat at a desk and we were given a list of tasks you know you've got a parent that needs to be called right away, and it's just a list, and you're working through the list but as you work through the list he would come around and put something else on your desk. You ever done those things?" I nodded yes and Jeff continued. "And I was like 'Oh my gosh, how do you do this,' but it was the most real . . . I thought that was you know and you really didn't appreciate it until you got out and you realized that's really what it was like. So I thought that was pretty. . . . It was like a quick little thing, but it really that one hit home. Like this is a really. . . . You have to be able to prioritize and juggle and . . . yeah and it's all fires and triage you know you really have to know, okay, well this fight I really need to deal with right now, these two, and you have to know the kids too. Well, these two kids got in a fight, but I know that I can put this one here, this one here while I deal with this more urgent issue and then the parent comes in the door and then the secretary. . . . You know it's just so real, so." He was right; what he described is a familiar routine for many assistant principals across the country. They are not only administrators, but master jugglers as well.

Silvia Douglas came to administration from being a teacher leader in a previous school district. She entered a university program in hopes of gaining the necessary skills to be a successful assistant principal. She reflected on her training and said, "I have to think about where do I still feel most challenged? You know, I think one of the hardest things about being an AP is dealing with people and dealing with discipline and dealing with parents from many

different backgrounds. But I did feel like having been a teacher for so many years in different areas, I felt like I was fairly well prepared for that, more with experience, but not with training. You know, I don't think they do a nice job in training because we spend, in our role I think as APs, we spend a lot of time counseling kids, counseling parents, you know, counseling teachers. And what training do they actually give you for that piece? You know, I don't think that there's formal training in our programs for that."

Dan Conner wistfully smiled when asked the question about his training and preparation for the role of assistant principal. University-prepared, fondly, he recalled his time at the State University, saying, "Well, interesting question because for my current role—okay two things. One, being part of the cohort group, where many of my cohort were already administrators, I wasn't. I kind of learned a lot just from hearing them formally and informally talk about the issues that they deal with daily."

"I think a really good preparation for becoming an administrator was getting the school accredited with Golden Apple. Especially the curriculum itself, working with teachers. There's a lot to navigate there. Getting to know, you got to know every aspect of the school. I had to do the guidance stuff for the at-risk stuff. So you got to know pretty quickly how guidance worked. All the curriculum stuff, budget when your two hundred thousand dollars is dropped in your lap and you have to figure out how to kind of spend it, and how to involve people in the spending of that so. You notice I didn't say anything about discipline." He and I both laughed. Dan is one of three assistant principals in Pleasantville School District who does not do discipline and student management as part of his duties.

Following up I asked what his training lacked for his role as assistant principal. Dan sighed and said, "Kind of classroom observation stuff could have been pumped up I think, just

kind of looking at that and how that fits into the big picture, would have been helpful. Lacking was I think kind of the instructional leadership. Getting into the classrooms, working with teachers, that was it for me. Nothing, nothing prepared me for this job, what I went through because it's so different. Golden Apple definitely was . . . it was like just having to do a thousand things at once under a time jam. Pressure is on especially the year that's accreditation year. Attention to detail, you can't really . . . and communicating. You know you got all these people."

Thomas Walker is a 29-year-old Caucasian male and is new to the assistant principalship. Thomas describes his childhood as being somewhat rural. He said, "I was born in Independence, Missouri, and I grew up on a farm in Odessa. I attended the State University and all my degrees are from there. My family growing up was my mom, dad, and younger brother. Dad's parents lived two miles away, Mom's parents lived eight miles away. Dad's only brother and family live in Minnesota. Mom's two sisters and families live within fifteen miles. Both my parents worked during the days so I caught [a] bus from grandparents' house and spent summers with them while parents worked. I am single."

Walker, a first-year assistant principal at Carver High School, shared his frustrations with the training he received at the State University. "You know the course work that I took at State University really prepared me for I guess more of the teacher leadership; the larger building principal side of things. I think the things that I have picked up along the way that maybe weren't in the course work are you know attending presentations and procedures and the one that you and Madison hosted about in the trenches and what the duties of an assistant principal. And talking about what's the proper way to carry out a search? What's reasonable cause and all those types of things that are more specific and related to what I am doing?" Thomas was describing

the need for practical, use-every-day skills not taught in university courses. This theme was present in multiple interviews with assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District.

Diversity training lacking for assistant principals.

A few administrators studied diversity, social justice, and multicultural education during their preparation, but the majority of participants had no formal education in these areas. I probed this topic with the question "What training if any did you receive in diversity during your preparation program?" I assumed that the younger assistant principals who have been in college recently would have experienced these topics as part of their preparation. I was disappointed at the mixed results I found.

Anthony Brown, the most recent graduate in my study, shared his experiences. With eyes flashing, Anthony shook his head, saying, "In undergrad, I had, I don't remember any diversity training at all and it may have been so long ago that I don't remember it, but I remember having conversations with people saying that teachers are not prepared well enough to deal with issues of diversity in the classroom. In the EDS program I was under Dr. Simone, and her classes were eye-opening because she had an opportunity; she gave us the opportunity to discuss with our colleagues the realities of diversity not only in the classroom and our schools but in society itself and how if those issues find themselves or get rid of their ugly heads in the policies that we create." Pausing for a moment, Anthony said quietly, "We have a lot of gate keeping strategies that we may not even know are strategies in education, and we discuss every single day, like the achievement gap and suspension gaps, just all these different gaps and why minorities fall into these predicament gaps." Anthony was fired up! His voice continued to rise. "We do it without the understanding of society and the role that society plays in how we form schools, and we also do it without the understanding that, actually we understand it but without

taking account, accounting for the issues that some of our students are facing. We actually make it worse for a lot of our students when we're talking these particular gaps because we have a lack of training and diversity, and sometimes we're afraid to have these different types of conversations about what we need to do to better support these students that are falling into these gaps." Anthony was obviously passionate about the achievement gaps that exist in the Pleasantville School District.

Jeff Jones, assistant principal at Hancock Middle School, described his training in diversity as very minimal. He said, "I received training as an undergrad in diversity, but not anything in graduate school or my administrative work so. And those were just multicultural, multicultural ed courses. Which were great for discussions and just you know talking about experiences and things and cultural awareness, but nothing other than that."

Jeff Jones reflected on what was lacking in his training. He thought for a moment and his gaze trailed off into space, then coming back to the small office, he said, "I would have liked more of the school law. Now this is all University of Florida stuff, so it doesn't really you know this is not here. I really enjoyed that course. It was probably my favorite course, the school law course, but I think I really needed more, more meat. So more practical application and knowing the law. Especially, well, it would help me more here in Missouri you know, but you study those cases and you know search and seizure and all those different things, but I would like to know more about the, like when we had that, you all were very informative." Jeff referenced the annual staff development for assistant principals that I facilitate, which is a crash course for new assistant principals. "Tips from the trenches," I offered. Nodding, Jeff said, "Yeah. That was, I enjoyed that, so. But it's really, that's a great thing so. I think it was valuable."

Dan Connor described a similar experience with his training and diversity. "You know I'm sure we read articles, right? But it wasn't real to me until I got into a school and you started to say, okay, and you know what I think of diversity I think, I say this all the time, I think in terms of you know rich kids, kids that are poor, homeless kids, kids with kids, kids working two jobs to support their family, kids that have kind of a solid two-parent family. Kids who come in and having lived through horrendous issues in their home country. I think of kids like 3-D scales, so like we got kids that are off the charts bright doing college work and then kids doing like barely doing third-grade-level stuff so." Confused, I asked, "So it's really diversities not about color?" Shaking his head, Dan said, "That just part of it you know. That's the other thing I say. You stand in the halls and look around and you just kind of see everything. We're a public school. Yeah it's partially based on that. Kids get to be around every type of kid."

Mentors missing for new assistant principals.

I asked Jeff Jones what he would have changed in his preparation program. Jeff became animated, saying, "A mentorship or you know, I'm pretty big into being able to have somebody to bounce ideas off of. And I would have liked to have had that. . . I had the experience of being an administrative assistant while I was doing that. So I kind of had on-the-job training, but then which is good, but I would have rather had you know—it's hard to explain—but I would have rather have had some time to kind of process information and . . ." Interrupting, I said, "To watch it being done?" Jeff replied, "Yeah, exactly, rather than to live it immediately. Yeah I had, you know, I had a very supportive principal, you know. Basically I had and another assistant principal that I—that was at that school—that became a principal, who—we're good friends—so I you know that was . . . but that was something that I sought out. So it wasn't set up for me." I could not believe my ears. Incredulously, I asked, "You weren't given a mentor?" Jeff shook

his head side to side, and after a long pause, said, –No. I wasn‘t given a mentor. No mentor other than I had the principal who you know who was a wonderful mentor, but you still need that assistant principal mentor. ‘Cause she knows, like you know how it‘s much different. So I didn‘t have a mentor, but I had that friend who had recently become a principal. I just kind of knew who I had a lot of respect for.” In disbelief, I asked, –What about here in this district? Were you assigned a mentor?” Jeff shook his head side to side. Quietly he said, –Unless I had one that I don‘t know about. Someone that‘s looking out for me. I wasn‘t getting . . . I would have, you know, I would have liked to have had someone from this district, because I‘m coming from.” His voice trailed off. Jeff continued, –We do things much different and I don‘t know what the Pleasantville Public Schools you know way. Well, that‘s the thing. They‘re you know just even as simple as some acronyms that come up that people take for granted that you know what they mean. I thought PBS was public broadcasting system. I didn‘t know have an idea what . . .” I interrupted. –Seriously?” Jeff nodded his head yes. –I mean and what you know I did love and logic, and I did basically the same stuff, but it wasn‘t—we didn‘t call it PBS. You know, so. . . . You know, but that‘s just a simple example of it would have been nice to have a mentor here to . . . someone just to look out for you and say, ‗Hey this is how.‘ This is this person‘s role you know. Basic stuff. Right, because there are two of us. We‘re both new and . . .” –She didn‘t get a mentor either?” I asked. Jeff shook his head no. –No. No mentors. Now there are two other middle schools and the women there at the APs are very kind and supportive. You know if I have a question I can call one of them up and they would gladly help me, but if no one has like said, ‗Hey take care of this person,‘ so.” I scribble furiously in my notes, –NO MENTOR. Unbelievable.”

Unfortunately, the lack of mentors is present in almost every interview. Becci Jonmeyer expressed her frustration with the mentor _on paper‘ only. She said, –I had a person who was assigned to me by another, from another building who came out here once and I made up my professional plan and then that was all that was ever done with it. . . I mean she actually came away with stuff that we had created out here to take back to her school. I‘m not complaining because I‘m glad I didn‘t have to go through a lot of little hoops to make someone happy to say that I had a mentor because I feel like the people that mentor me were people who were already in the building and kind of knew how things were running and I think the hardest thing was just learning and this is not someone you need to get a degree from.” Extremely disturbing is the fact that when new assistant principals are placed in positions, they are done so without a support network. They are isolated and left to figure out the –ropes” on their own. Table 3 summarizes the APs perceptions of their mentoring experience in PSD, their training and preparation, and multicultural education.

Table 3
Pleasantville School District Secondary Assistant Principals' Training, Preparation, Mentoring, and Multicultural Education

School	Participant	Training	Preparation	Mentoring	Multicultural Education
Walters Middle School	Sierra O'Malley	On-the-job	Home-grown	First year only	One course
	Dominique Sullivan	On-the-job, summer school, admin. asst.	Home-grown	First year only	None
Johnson Middle School	Leslie Fredrickson	On-the-job, summer school, admin. asst.	Home-grown	First year only; met once	None
	Silvia Douglass	None	Teacher leader	None	None
Hancock Middle School	Melissa Smith	On-the-job	University	None	None
	Jeff Jones	On-the-job; admin. asst.	Home-grown	None	One course in undergraduate program
Washington Junior High	Henry Joseph	Did not participate in study			
	Mike White	On-the-job; admin. asst.	Home-grown	None; informally with other APs	None
Red Stone Junior High	Renee Moore	On-the-job; admin. asst.	Home-grown	First year only	One workshop at school
	Sean Schneider	On-the-job; admin. asst.	Instruction-al coach	Mentor in prior district, not PSD	Extensive coursework in urban leadership
Madison Junior High	LaShawna Lindsey	On-the-job; summer school	University; experience in six states	First year only; only met twice	None
	Saul Hollingsworth	On-the-job; admin. asst.	University	Informal only	None; personal readings
Carver High School	Marcus Clark	On-the-job; admin. asst.	Home-grown	First year only	None
	Deborah Watson	On-the-job; summer school	University	Excellent in former district; none in PSD	None at university; taught workshops in former district
	John Green	Admin. asst.	Home-grown	None	None
	Anthony Brown	Admin. asst.	Home-grown	Building principal first year	None in undergraduate; more in Ed. S.
	Thomas Walker	Admin. asst.; summer school	Home-grown	Building principal first year	None in undergraduate; recent book study
Oaklawn High School	Bob Flanders	On-the-job; admin. asst.	University	Very little	None
	Shari Finnigan	Did not participate in study			
	Becci Jonmeyer	On-the-job; summer school	University	Only on paper	Courses in Ed. S.
	Dan Conner	On-the-job	University	No formal; informal building principal	Read a few articles
	Jessica Lewis	On-the-job	University	No formal mentor; informal building principal	None
Lewis High School	Larry Barnes	On-the-job	University	First year only	None
Career and Technical School	Curtis Jones	On-the-job	University	First year only; building principal	Some in the Ed. D.

Challenges of the Assistant Principals

Assistant principals are often placed in difficult situations that create frustration, stress, and burnout. Consistent with the literature reviewed, this study identified several challenges of assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District, including lack of power, stress and burnout, communication with constituents, time management, and the achievement gap. Additional challenges emerged from the interviews. Those challenges include the impact of race on the role of assistant principal as well as the role gender plays in the work that APs do. These new themes provide deeper insight into the role of the assistant principal and fill a gap that exists in the current literature on assistant principals.

Lack of power.

Anthony Brown leaned across the desk, eager to hear my next question. "The third question is about the challenges of the job. What's the most challenging part of your job as an assistant principal?" I asked. Anthony frowned and squeezed his chin with his right hand and said, "The most challenging part of the job is the fact that I've never realized how powerless the position really is as an assistant principal. You're placed in the middle of everything and it's impossible to make everybody happy. I thought it would be a position where we would discuss our practices, discuss how we can make them better and everybody would be on the same page for students, but it's not always like that. You have faculty members who are not as progressive as others, who are not on the same page as the administrative team maybe and in essence or not what's best for kids but we still have to support them and we have to do whatever we can to make sure that our kids don't suffer in their classes. So the biggest issue I guess is realizing how powerless the position is and that particular sense as far as policy making is concerned

because I feel like I have a lot of input in policy, but I don‘t have—when it comes to the outcome of the policy I don‘t have a lot of weight and then dealing with adult problems.”

Struck by the profound statement Anthony made, I encouraged him to go on. “Like what?” Anthony sighed and said, “Like sometimes when teachers are the impetus for behavioral problems that our students have, supporting teachers even at a time when they make a decision that you don‘t feel is worthy of support, being a go-between [for] teachers and the parents of students who are angry with our teachers. So we‘re talking about difficulties. That would definitely be the biggest thing.”

Sean Schneider echoed the frustration Anthony feels. Sean describes his lack of power to change situations for students. “You know what? I‘ve had to deal with this, this week. I think the most challenging part of my job is not be—in most jobs, there‘s an answer. There‘s something that—every job presents problems. And you have to work a solution. I found that a lot of the solutions I‘ve attempted to come up with this year have failed. And that is a discouraging part of my job sometimes. I keep trying. I keep talking with people, keep talking with families, keep talking with parents, keep talking with students. But I think the failure rate is, you work so hard with a student, and you demonstrate a genuine interest, concern, and love for them that only a teacher could, as it‘s appropriate in that relationship. And it, you can‘t control what happens with them outside this school. And when you realize that it‘s frustrating. That‘s my number one frustration.” Sean‘s frustration is shared by many assistant principals across the district. This frustration can cause stress and lead to burnout.

Deborah Watson feels there is a lack of power in shaping both district- and building-level policies. Her voice was full of frustration as she shook her head and said, “As far as central office, I don‘t think I have hardly any input there. Here I think if there‘s a concern or something,

I feel that I can voice that and . . . okay meet and regroup and look at it. You know one of the things it says is that you should always review your policies and procedures. So you see really if it's harming kids and so I think we do, do a good job on that when we do our administrative retreats in the summer we look at some of the ways of what we're doing and how we're operating. I know my big thing this year is when they look at in-school detention and whether or not that is really helping kids. We think that . . . we say that it's helping because it keeps them in school but yet my concern is some of those kids are in in-school detention all the time. Two to three days a week, well they're still not in class. Our focus should be trying to keep them in class and so I hope we'll have an opportunity to look at that and regroup." Deborah's point about ineffective policies demonstrates her own ability to reflect upon her practice. She is truly concerned about students missing valuable instructional time by sitting in in-school suspension all day. She, like other APs in the Pleasantville District, feels she has a lack of input toward the policies she has to enforce.

Thomas Walker expressed concern and dissonance with the disciplinary policies and practices in place to deal with chronic offenders. With a heavy sigh, he said, "Yeah, and that was the first thing that I was going to talk about. I think at sometimes that it does, yes. And how do I cope with that? I think it's talking to others and seeing if this is the correct way. If this is something that's been done. But then sometimes then also suspending kids for truancy and I had a kid in here this morning that is on a suspension contract and missed a day. But then was suspended for three days before spring break. And so he missed a day and was suspended for three and so he has missed four. And so I went back on my word a little bit and gave him a day of in-school suspension because I wanted him to get caught up. So I think that even coming back on my own policies that I set into place and your own gut feeling about things does

happen." He struggles to accept and apply the disciplinary practices in his school because they are not in the best interest of the student.

Stress and burnout.

Larry Barnes, the 55-year-old assistant principal at Lewis Alternative School, describes the physical and mental stress of the role of the assistant principal. "I think the, the stress and how you—and when I'm talking about stress, it wears you down listening to what these kids have to go through on a daily basis. And I think that affects you both mentally and physically. And you have to consciously keep yourself upbeat and positive about your job. Because so much of what you're dealing with is a negativity that you really have to make a conscious effort to remain positive. And I know in my case it's always been good. I've had you know a great family, had great family support; and I think going home to your family and having that support has been a huge help to me. But I know there're still times I—I mean it really wears on you mentally."

Scribbling furiously in my notes, I said, "While we're talking along that line I'm going to jump down because one of my questions is how do you manage the stress of the position?" Larry smiled and took a deep breath. He said, "Okay. Like I said, one of the things I do is commute an hour and that drive time is my decompression time. And by the time I get home the negative stories that I've heard over the course of the day and the stressors from the job pretty much go away. And I've, as I said my family has been very supportive in what I do. My wife's a retired educator so she's been helpful to me in that respect, and you know I know we tried to save every kid that we can. But I have come to the realization that I'm not going to save everybody but you do the best you can."

Prompting him to go on, I asked, ―What strategies do you use to avoid burnout?" He said, ―I have a separate life away from school. That's my main strategy. You know I do—there's a couple of people that I socialize with that I work with, but very few. And my life away from school is totally separate from school. That is important to me."

Becci Jonmeyer remarked that the stress of the job is tremendous. She said, ―It's so stressful. . . . I drink wine! It's like that's an unwinder. I exercise and I try not to bring the work home."

Deborah Watson gave advice about dealing with the stress of the job. She said, ―I think you gotta have a great support system and I have one. You know I've got family, I've got friends, Mr. Clark and I are always kicking over things of, ―Oh we should've done that, oh we didn't do that right, oh did you know we did". . . I even we give each other compliments and things. So you gotta have a good support system and the best thing for me that some people can't do is to reflect."

Communication with constituents.

Bob Flanders identified a challenge in the role of assistant principals: communication with parents concerning student discipline. Bob sighed and said, ―It, it took me a while to develop the capacity to get to a point with either an adult teacher that that you're trying to help improve teaching, or with parents in dealing with discipline issues. It took me a while to develop the ability to get to a point when we were stuck to say, ‗We're just going to have to agree to disagree.' You know the theory of working with adult learners and the theory of you know that's all well and fine; but you know when you're sitting in your office and you're dealing with, for example, an upset parent and you're talking about their discipline and that their student's behavior. And you know I always tried to focus on the behavior and that you know that is what

got you know the student the consequence, not that the teacher didn‘t like him or; and you know I‘d say eighty-five to ninety-five percent of the parents accepted that.”

He continued on, —There was a very small percentage that well you know that‘s _I don‘t agree with this.‘ And as an administrator new to administration I felt you know that I needed the parents to get to the point where they understood and accepted _We‘re holding your child accountable for their behavior. That has nothing to do with we don‘t like him or we‘re going to hold this against him.‘ And you know I can think back on my early years as an administrator you know belaboring and beating a dead horse literally and feeling like _Gosh I failed because I didn‘t get the parent to acknowledge that it was their student‘s behavior that was disciplined not . . .‘ And you know I over time and as I began working on my doctorate and would pose questions like that in class, _How do you deal?‘ And obviously talking to colleagues that had more experience than I did, you do get to a point where it‘s perfectly fine to say to a parent, _We‘re going we‘re just going to have to agree that we disagree on this perspective and but know that I‘m always going to be consistent‘ you know; and so I . . . I was able to develop that sense of there‘s time to stop beating the dead horse and say you know _We‘re just not going to agree on this but I want you to‘ you know and I‘d always stress _But I want you to know I will always be consistent with your child and this behavior that I know you don‘t agree with. . . .‘”

Dominique Sullivan, AP at Walters Middle School struggles to find ways to work with parents and constituents. She said, —The most challenging part is determining how to incorporate parents, how to help parents be more involved or involved in ways that support the students learning in school on a regular basis. I get a variety of parent involvement from the parent who‘s the helicopter parent who you send something home and they're all over it to the parent who I've sent—we've sent letters, we've called, and we get no response whatsoever, and as a result, the

child has no motivation. You know, there's no incentive, you know, no follow through in the home." She described familiar scenarios for APs: some parents are too involved in their child's schooling, while others remain aloof and removed from the picture.

Time management.

Bob Flanders also identified the issue of time management as a huge challenge to being an effective assistant principal. In regard to his preparation, he would have liked to see more emphasis on time, stating, "Honestly, I think I have had pretty decent training in regard. I guess the one thing I wish I could have had a better, clearer grasp of was the amount of time being an effective administrator takes and that you know again, it's not necessarily a lack of training you know. How do you train for the amount of time it's going to take? I don't know the answer to that. I don't think there is an answer. But you know when I think back, that is probably the least prepared I was to just understand the impact that being an effective administrator takes and how much time it really takes to do our job effectively."

Larry Barnes expressed frustration with his time-management skills. "It did—that's very hard. And you have to be very organized. Any time that you get a couple of minutes you've got to work with your discipline, entering discipline, those kinds of things. And you just have to make time to do classroom observations. You just have to block a set of a set of time during the day to do those kinds of things. And it's very difficult to do it but just organizing your time on and have a routine throughout the day has been helpful. And don't let things go." Curious, I asked, "What do you mean?" Exasperated, Larry said, "Make sure that you stay current with entering discipline and those kinds of things. If you can do that as best you can that's going to help." I asked, "Do you have a secretary to help you with that?" Larry's expression became grim and he said, "No." Shocked, I said, "So you have to do your own data entry." He nodded

and said, ―I have to do it, yes.‖ What a blatant waste of his time! Here is a man making $90,000 a year and spending his time doing clerical work. Ridiculous!

Thomas Walker described the frustration that he had as a new assistant principal trying to manage his time. ―Because in this regard I think one of the hardest things for me in the beginning was as a teacher you come in with a daily schedule, a lesson plan. If it doesn‘t work then you can change it to the next hour and modify it for your kids. But in the assistant principal job at the beginning of the year it was so frustrating because I would come in with ‗I am going to see these kids. I am going to talk about these things with them and not all discipline related, school related, grades related,‘ you know those types of things too. And I wasn‘t satisfied with myself because I wasn‘t getting my list or to do things done like when you were a teacher.‖

Saul Hollingsworth describes his efforts to maintain balance in his work and personal life as a big challenge. He said, ―I keep it in perspective. I keep it in perspective. That‘s been a learned skill. Do I get stressed? Yes, every day and there‘s times that when I drive home I talk to myself all the way home. I always think people are probably looking at me saying, ‗What in the world is that guy doing?‘ Some, you know, some people go home and they, I don‘t talk, I don‘t take my work home as far my real emotional piece you know go talk to like my wife about it because things that happen in these offices pretty much need to stay in these offices.‖

Stopping to think for a minute, Saul continued, ―One thing is communicating with the principal and the assistant principal. You know when Mr. Clark was here he and I would have thirty minutes every night we‘d talk. LaShawna and I talk after school. Cindy and I talk after school. It doesn‘t have to be about school stuff sometimes just taking a few minutes to unwind. The other parts of that though too is trying to get some exercise, trying to go home and even if it means I‘m sitting in front of the television set, just to sit down in front of the TV for an hour and

maybe just kind of try to decompress is a lot of it. And the other part is about the stress of the job it goes back to keeping that balance on the building. And again when I talk about it being a learned skill it doesn't happen overnight. It takes years to get to that point and being here nine years I've [become] very comfortable here and I know the building, I know what's going to happen and that in itself has reduced my stress load." Saul had such a soothing presence, I found myself staring into space. Snapping back to reality and an awkward pause, I asked, "So what strategies do you use to avoid burnout then?"

Saul chuckled to himself and said, "Trying to find new ways to stay energized with things and keeping things kind of fresh and moving forward. I've had days where I've been and just weeks and months where I'm just drained. So part of that is me getting away for weekend sometimes you know. I may be going fishing or hunting or something like that. A little bit of relaxation on my own but true burnout to where I don't want to come to school the next day. That typically doesn't happen to me much. It just doesn't and I think part of the reason is because I enjoy what I do but again I feel in pretty good shape. I don't, I think the day I get burned out will be the day that I retire!"

Achievement gap.

Infrequently reported in interviews was the impact of No Child Left Behind in the interviews with assistant principals. Perhaps the building principals bear the burden of NCLB alone. Only two references to high-stakes testing were found in the interviews. Both describe the uncoordinated attempts to make positive improvements through data driven decision making, but lacked sustained support in each administrator's building.

Saul Hollingsworth reflected on NCLB and its impact on his school. "You know I, I continue to try to find new areas to research and look at [NCLB]. You know I've done so much

work with positive behavior support and I really like that I believe in that but it's also well, like I've kind of taken down this piece about proportionality [of sub-groups]. We look at the grades the Fs and the Ds and so on with the kids. Track that. Again the results, the . . . I have to get that one out. I'd have to pull that out and actually look at that but I do know that again the data that I just shared with you a semester we had a higher number of students that were African American students that had Fs than any other sub-group. I know that." "So the achievement gap continues?" I asked. Saul nodded. "Yeah but I don't have the exact numbers but I know that that's the, that's the result of that. We also take in free and reduced lunch count too in that as well. And we look that as based on ethnicity also."

Race and the role of assistant principals.

Race was an emergent theme in the data. While race was not a formal research question, rather a follow up question, it became a recurrent theme in many interviews. Through careful analysis of transcripts, it became clear that race was intertwined in multiple aspects of assistant principals' work.

Jessica Lewis, the 35 year-old athletic director and assistant principal of Oaklawn High School, describes her experience with the issue of race in education as it relates to her work as an athletic director. I asked her, "How much of a role, if any, does race play in the work that you do?" She replied, "Probably more than most people would think. There's a lot of just nuance things that people don't realize about race. This seems really silly, but I think it's not silly at all. For instance, we have a freshman, girl basketball player who is extremely talented. And she is African American. She gets traveling calls more often than other students and just very—that's just my impression. The reason I think she does is because she's Black and athletic. And they make an assumption when she starts to make this particular move that she gets called traveling

on, that there's no possible way that she could do that. So, the whistle is actually blowing before she even makes her move. And it's frustrating to watch because I think they've made an assumption about a kid based on the way she looks and their own constructs about race and athletes. And that seems like a silly little thing, but I believe that it's a thing."

Jessica continued to describe how her head football coach deals with the issue of race on the field. "Our football coach is African American. I believe he gets treated differently, especially within our own district. He is very aware, on the sidelines, he is very aware that he is a big, scary black man. And his staff is full of young, African American men. And judgments have been made as soon as they come on the field. And he is very, very aware that he does not have the same latitude as far as leverage with officials or other teams. And he has very consciously made sure that his staff does not argue, does not yell, and is as respectful as possible with other staffs and officials because they know that any blowup, anything will be taken more harshly because of the way they look and those constructs about what young Black men do. As a result, we get a lot of complimentary reports about our coaching staff, our football coaching staff, which I think is also a race thing because I think they probably are more polite than other coaching staffs. But I think it's almost a 'Huh, that's really surprising. A bunch of thugs and they're really nice.' I mean, I get that sense. So, those are two examples where I see it. I see it, actually, a lot. I get a little bit frustrated. And there's not much we can do about it. But I get frustrated watching some of these things where we have—and we are certainly, African Americans are the only minority really prevalent within our coaching staff. And really, we have some Middle Eastern students on our teams, but for the most part. We have some Hispanic students on our soccer teams and track teams, but for the most part, as far as high-profile

athletes, it's African Americans. So, yeah. I'm very aware of it. What can be done about it, I don't know. We see it. I think being aware is a good thing, but . . ."

"So what is the next step," I inquired. After a moment's pause and shaking her head, Jessica replied, "What's the next step?" She sighed. "And when you're in Podunk, Missouri, and you see these things happening. And you hear things being said, is it worth it to cause the stir when we're dealing with some very deeply held social constructs? We're like speaking a different language. If I say, 'You know, that's not appropriate because,' there's no real understanding of why. So, that's a frustrating thing because you're talking about trying to change people's minds about something when we're looking at a very small interaction. And it may or may not." Her frustration hung like a cloud in the room.

Across town, Sierra O'Malley, the 51-year-old African American assistant principal at Walters Middle School, shared a similar experience. She had been an assistant principal for 8 years and a teacher for 20, so I was confident she would have examples of race in her work. I asked her to describe the role race plays in her work. Sierra replied, "It's got its goods and it's got its bads. I think maybe I would like to think I am more respected by African American parents. I think that there is probably a fifty-fifty distrust of Caucasian parents, you know, I think they're like, well, sometimes I get the feeling it's like 'Well who are you to make this decision about my child' and you know as far as discipline. Yeah I get that and even I had a hard time this year with a woman from India and her son has issues that I think her and her husband sometimes aren't willing to recognize. I think that he's Indian and Caucasian and you know her thing whenever I would call to talk about what he had done, 'Well what did the other child do?' 'Well ma'am I've dealt with that. Here is what your child has done and these are the consequences and they build' because I kind of kept seeing him quite a bit and she was not

pleased with anything that I did. Fortunately Terry backed it up and said I trust my assistant, you know, I've looked at the facts myself and it was just distrust. I was really surprised because he stayed out of trouble for about two months; he received a referral from a sub the other day and I'm surprised that she didn't call to complain about the kid having an hour after-school detention and it kind of empowered him because when I was talking to him he's like, _Well I want to talk to the principal,' and so she came in and I gave her the story and I said, _This is what the sub has said,' and he gave the story and you know Terry was like, _Well did you act out in the classroom?' _Well I was just' _You were disruptive for the sub.'" Sierra took pride in the support that her principal, Terry, showed for her with this parent. Sierra believed her race caused the Indian woman to distrust and question her professional judgment. This subtle form of racism is woven throughout the fabric of schools in PSD.

Sierra highlighted a positive aspect of race in her work as an assistant principal. Sierra believes that it is important for the African American community to see other African Americans in positions of power or authority. She continued on, "So I guess he didn't complain to his parents but you know I think race does play, you know, and I think it's important for African American parents to see that we are here in these positions and that I like to feel that they have the trust in me that I'm going to have their child's best interest in heart. But you know we do get, I've been ragged on quite a bit. I had a, there was a big joke last year that dealt with an Asian child and the parents were not happy with my decision and the mom came in and said to Thom, who was principal then, _Who hired her?' So that was the big thing for a long time whenever anything would happen Dominique and Thom got a big kick out of going, _Who hire her.' So you know I think there is some distrust." "Because you're a black female?" I probed.

—I think there is, yeah." Sierra took a sip of her tea. I followed up, —But not among minority parents only among Caucasian or . . ." Sierra, nodding her head, said, —Yes that's what I found." —That's interesting," I noted. Agreeing, Sierra continued, —Now, not just saying that minority parents don't get, Black parents don't get upset with me because they'll cuss you up one side and down the other you know, you just, I mean I've even heard, _You're being racist,' well I'm like _Duh, come on.'" Astounded, I asked, —Really? And they know you're African American?" Nodding in agreement, Sierra went on, —Yeah because I put it in the voice on the telephone. I won't use my teacher voice. I'm like, _Okay let me tell you what's up really,' but I think in the end they go, _Okay maybe she's right telling us what's really happening.'" Sierra's description of distrust by parents solely based on her race is a perception shared by other administrators of color in this study.

Sean Schneider described his experience dealing with bias differently. —Bias, I deal with bias all the time. And I guess I would have to say almost every parent I talk to loves their kid more than anything in the world. And that's a bias right away. Frequently I'll talk to parents and they'll say their, _I talked to my student, and my son told me this is what happened.' And I have to say, _Well, I talked to the teacher, and this is what *they* are telling me happened. And I've talked to some other people, and this is what happened.' And that bias plays a major role. And I have to be aware of that bias. And when delivering that information to a parent, I have to respect and recognize that bias."

In his dealing with students, Sean has seen an escalation of derogatory comments concerning race or sexual orientation. Sighing he said, —You know, probably once a week, every other week, there will be a claim of a racist statement that was made, a discriminatory remark. Is discriminatory a word?" I nodded and he continued. —A derogatory remark that was made to

someone about their sexual preference, their gender, or their race. You know, an adolescent brain is an interesting thing. And they will let some things slip sometimes that they don't mean to. We also deal with it in a sense, and I'm having a real interesting time with, there's an amount of camaraderie amongst students that allows them to poke fun of race, gender, sexual preference. And it's all done in a playful way in their eyes. But when they get to the person that it's not a playful thing for them, typically that person's first response is to play along and not draw attention to themselves. And as they've done that over time and played along, now they're getting to an age where they're beginning to say, 'This isn't okay anymore.' And all of their behavior up to this point, letting people poke fun of them because they played right back into it, is becoming a really tough thing for some of our students. And so I would say I deal with discrimination in that way, students feeling like they're being discriminated against, whether they are or not. If they feel like they are, then they absolutely are because their perception is their reality."

Silvia Douglass, the 51-year-old Caucasian assistant principal of Johnson Middle School, views race in terms of discipline data. "Well, I would say, the first thing that comes to mind on that question is this year we have been running the race ethnicity reports for discipline through e-School, and we've been bringing those reports to our Expectations Committee each month, looking at you know, the fact that many of our Black students receive the majority of the referrals. So we've had that type of conversation going on in our building. As far as how to resolve some of that, I don't think we have any good plan in place for being able to do that. At this point, it's awareness, conversations, what does it mean? We have staff who are asking, 'What does it mean?' You know, how can we—what can we do to improve the situation? But gosh, other than that . . ." Shaking her head, her voice trailed off. Johnson Middle School

acknowledges that African American students receive a majority of the discipline referrals, while only 35% of their population is African American. I became lost in thought. Why do the African American students have more discipline referrals? What practices are contributing to this data? Have they disaggregated their data by teacher and by offense? What is the most prevalent offense? My mind raced to create a list of why the phenomena might be happening. The telephone ringing broke the spell and brought me back to the interview at hand. I excused myself so Silvia could take the call. This would be a conversation to continue later.

Courageous conversations.

Deborah Watson is a 53-year-old African American female assistant principal at Carver High School. Deborah spoke of her childhood, "I am a native of the area, growing up in nearby Benton and attended college Central State University and KUC. I have an average hard-working family and most members of my family have done better than our parents. This is my thirteenth year as assistant principal at Carver and I had five years in Kansas, so I've been an administrator for eighteen years. I have an Education Specialist degree."

Watson described the role race plays in her daily work. "Well it plays a lot. A lot of times . . . well for one thing I, I know I'm a minority assistant principal and some of the issues I think that non-minority face I have to deal with. I deal with parents that come in and say get somebody else and that doesn't mean . . . that usually indicates they don't want to deal with me because or believe it or not sex is reasons too. You know because I'm a female. They want a man to talk to sometimes. Oh yes back in the old days when Jack Perkins was here some of them demanded to speak to Mr. Perkins over me sometimes and he'd tell them the same things but it was okay 'cause it came from a man. Sometimes I think our White teachers expect me to have

all the answers concerning African American students that type of thing." Intrigued, I challenged her. "Talk about that."

Taking a deep breath, Deborah said, "Well I get kids, African American kids, pulled in by our White teachers because I'm African American also and they believe they're doing the right thing of bringing them in to talk with me because they feel that I'm going to be able to relate to that student and some of that is true. But we all are in this position, we all better be able to relate to all kinds of kids. But when I start talking to them it's because they're uncomfortable in approaching certain things especially with some of our kids will bring out the race card and the teacher oh! And they immediately that's not me you know and that kind of thing. So they bring, I think they bring the kid down and we talk to validate they're not racist. You know and that kind of thing or but my thing is . . . Lisa you know me I'm pretty open and honest. So when I do see some things that I have concerns about I address those and they're so appreciative and when I say they are White or Caucasian; student-teachers appreciate that I stepped up and said, 'You know I observe this and this is sending the wrong message to our kids you know.' Or 'Did you realize you did this . . .'" Deborah's voice trailed off as if she was remembering a conversation she once had. I prompted her, "Can you give me an example of one of those?"

Slowly coming back to the present, she said, "Sure, all the time . . . one of the things is I'm usually the person supervising the doors at our football games or basketball games. Football is probably one of the things that happens a lot and we have kids, the policy is you can't leave once you come in. And what happens is some of our Caucasian teachers will let certain kids leave and they'll say, 'Oh that's a good kid.' And they let them leave and I stand there and I just observe it and then we have an African American, say two boys, come up and they're dressed you know with the hood and the hair . . . pants down and all that and they'll look at me and say

can they leave but when the White students ask they never look toward me but when the African American kids they look toward me." Stunned I choked, "Wow!" Scribbling in my notes, "blatant racism by teachers," I noticed Deborah smiling and nodding her head. She spoke, "You know and so I would say to them we have to treat all kids the same. And I'd say you let the others kids, some other kids go earlier so we have to let them leave too or this group of students leave and they'll say they'll look at me like 'whoa' . . . and so I let that go. And then later after it calms down and tickets and everything and I'll pull them over and I'll discuss and I'll say did you realize that every time an African American you look toward me for the answer but if they weren't African American you didn't question it you let them go and . . . and we start talking about it and of course they tears in their eyes they didn't mean it. Didn't even realize it and then I say, 'So now you do,' and that's when that cultural competency that we gotta bring up and discuss with 'cause some people don't realize that they're doing that. Some are Caucasian teachers; they don't realize that you know and but when draw it to their attention they were like 'Oh my God you're right.' And so that that's . . ." Processing what she said, I interrupted, "But they don't get mad at you for pointing that out, they're receptive?" Deborah became animated and said, "They're very receptive; I have never had someone get mad. They're more frustrated because they didn't realize it and they're appreciative 'cause after the game and Monday they come down there like 'wow.' And she'll say, 'Did we do that all night long?' And I said, 'My observation yeah you did,' but the good thing is when we go back to the next game they'll look at me and they'll wink you know . . ." "Like, I got this," I added.

Deborah nodded in agreement, saying, "I got this, right you know or I know that I shouldn't be doing this and in fact one of the teachers said, 'You know it just changed how I operate because now I'm more in tune to when that person asks me in class can I go to the

bathroom you know. I'm saying no to everybody and you know that kind . . . she says so it really helped heighten her conscious of what she does and how that reflects on kids. She says some of my kids will say, "Oh you're not fair,' and she's "Wow I probably wasn't because I didn't realize I was doing it.'" Deborah described the teaching opportunity she had with some of her Caucasian staff to address institutionalized racist practices at Carver. She finished up by saying, "So the benefit kind of . . . you gotta have that courage to talk to them too because I could've just let it go." "Courage—now there's a concept," I thought and made a quick scribble in my notes.

LaShawna Lindsey, the 36-year-old African American female assistant principal of Madison Junior High School, sees the role race plays in the classroom when teachers discriminate against students. She described her experiences in having tough conversations with students and staff, "Well I will say that I think that I am harder on the African American population than the other assistant principal because my expectation is different." "How so?" I questioned. Taking a sip of her Crystal Lite, LaShawna said, "There are a lot of things that students use as a crutch because of it and often sometimes, he [Saul] has to come to me and say, "You know are you sure this is what I should be doing?' or "What do you think?' Because you're not so sure that they are honest about what they're doing or about what they're saying. Some of them know how to play the game." A confused look puzzled my forehead. "What do you mean by "play the game'?" Smiling, LaShawna said, "They know how to play the race card."

Okay, there it was, staring me in the face. I nodded my understanding. LaShawna continued, "Yeah, they know how to play the race card and so they use that to an advantage. And when you are a White middle-class sometimes, you don't know what those advantages or

disadvantages are. However, I will tell you that like this morning I had a young lady come in and tell me she felt like this teacher was being racist and she told him and he sent her to the office for that." "How did you deal with that?" I wondered aloud. LaShawna chuckled. "Well she's over in ISS right now and I told her that once he calms down and she calms down I will talk to the two of them; however, her disciplinary is Dr. Saul Hollingsworth, the other assistant principal. So I would also have a conversation with him to see how I can help guide it. I do think though because I'm the only African American, I'm the African American assistant principal all the race issues come across my plate." In stunned disbelief, I said, "Because you're Black?" LaShawna agreed. "Yeah. Well when it comes to questions about being racist or when it comes to issues that relate to race, I think the parents and the students feel more comfortable coming. I used to wonder because I hated working here why I was here and then started thinking well maybe I'm here because God wants me to help because some of the things that teachers do in this building and in other buildings are racially offensive and I don't know that they know that they're racially offensive." Surprised by her assessment, I said, "Can you give me an example?"

Taking another long drink from her Crystal Lite, LaShawna thought for a moment. "Well for example, let me see if I can come up with one that just happened recently. There was a teacher that was in the classroom and they were having a conversation in social studies about civil rights and I'm sorry about that the Civil War and they were talking about the work that people did back in those days as it relates to slavery. And a student said, 'You're talking about cotton pickers.' Well the teacher didn't realize that the student was trying to be racist so the teacher didn't address and so when the student brought it to her attention that was African American who said she felt like that was inappropriate the way the conversation went after that.

The teacher said this is not the time for you to talk to me and sent the girl down to the office. Now that student internalized that, as you are just as racist, as she is."

Contemplating what LaShawna said, I asked, "And so what did you do?" LaShawna said, "So I had the conversation with the teacher, I talked to the teacher. Of course they were offended and they often go next door to Cindy and complain to document a complaint. And then you know I have to say my side and I don't know what she does with it after that but I had the conversation, told her this is the way she interpreted it and they feel like because they didn't intend for it to happen that way they don't owe the child an apology. And I'm just like 'Yes you do.' Now and I said to her, 'I can't make you apologize I can only tell you what I think that you need to do to rectify the situation.' Now I've had some that'll say, 'Okay I didn't mean it but I knew this one was going to be a hard one.'" Suddenly I realized what LaShawna was hinting at. Cautiously I said, "'Cause she did mean it." Nodding very slowly, LaShawna agreed. "Yeah 'cause she did, 'cause she knew and she, her thing was you know she was looking at it more in a sense of 'You a child, you don't talk to me like that.' And I was looking at it in the sense of they're a student and they deserve the respect." I was impressed by LaShawna's composure and professional demeanor in the face of such blatant racism. I thought to myself, "I don't think I could have been so calm."

The color-blind assistant principal.

John Green, a 50-year-old Caucasian, is a native of Pleasantville. He describes his upbringing, "Raised in Pleasantville, mostly. I've lived in Benton, Harrisville and Hayesburg—seven years, three months, and two years respectively. All others in Pleasantville. I attended the State University. Mom and Dad both worked and I have a younger sister, who is three years younger." Smiling, he continued, "Family now, I have an adopted child who is twenty-three;

Joann and I have two daughters, seventeen and thirteen years. We've been married twenty years in June. I've worked for Pleasantville district for twenty-eight years, twenty of which has been as an assistant principal." Currently he is Carver High School's athletic director and assistant principal.

John Green has a much different perspective on race—color blindness. At 50, this Caucasian male has worked in the Pleasantville district for 28 years, 20 of which he has been an assistant principal. Adjusting in his chair uncomfortably, he answered my question, "I mean, I don't think there's any place for race as far as we have a variety of different backgrounds ethnically. Try to be sensitive as far as surrounding holidays. Especially when you're dealing with some of the students that have religious beliefs that are different than the mass majority. There are holidays and different things, I mean, celebrations. We want to be cognizant of those items. So I mean, you know, for the most part, it's not a part of the job, I walk in and say, 'How is race going to be important to me today.' It is just one of those things where I stay continually aware of what's going on and if we need to make accommodations we do." While noting the reference to religious difference, I was struck by his omission of racial differences in his response. I wrote, "WHITE PRIVILEGE," in my notebook.

White hegemony.

Similar to John Green, Assistant Principal Dan Connor describes how he views race related to his work with student activities at Oaklawn High School. "Formally I'm not directed in any way to do any . . . you know. I mean indirectly I involve the MAC [Minority Achievement Committee] scholars in certain events and I involve the most of the student union and involve, I'm conscious of it at that time but aside from that I'm not directly. No one asks me, however, if I'm very aware that if I'm not purposeful, and or it's a constant challenge the

activities can take on a kind of a White feel. I try and be purposeful about even communicating to student council. _You guys, it's not about you. It's about take a look at everyone at our school. That's who you're trying to do stuff for.' But you've seen it's not that easy to do. To find the right kind of mix of activities and stuff."

Curious about —the right kind of mix" he alluded to, I questioned him. –So how do you address that? I mean how, how do you overcome that? I mean I think that's true. So what do you do?"

After a pregnant pause, Dan replied, –Well, try and find other ways to involve. Well, like I said try and get . . . student council does so much with these all-school activities. Trying to increase their awareness. You know asking you to kind of get up on the chair and remind them what it's about that it's not about them. It's about kind of this big mix but that's a lot harder than I thought it would be, to kind of get them to kind of go alright well you know. The other thing is trying to get specific groups involved."

Breathing a deep sigh, he continued, –Okay, so MAC scholars for example. You know, the leadership that this change kind of so much it's really hard to kind of get an inroad. Especially like losing Anthony Brown you know that was the most consistent . . . and kinda . . . that was it right but it's really hard to get a grasp with them. This year you know early on I said, last year I said, _Hey you guys, why don't we take February, Black History Month if you guys . . . find . . . why don't we to try to encourage them to think about just take that over we can do things at lunch. You can do things you know da da da.' You know nothing kind of it doesn't . . ." I challenged, –How many Black kids are in student council?" Dan replied quickly, –None. Last year one. Yeah."

—Any minorities of any kind?" I asked. Thinking for a second, Dan said, —Oh no, that's not true. That's not true. Alicia, Annabel. There's two. Sorry." —What grade level are they?" I wondered aloud.

Thinking for a moment, Dan said, —Senior and sophomore. We all kind of . . . anyways so I'll finish that MAC scholarship part and then kind of remind me something about that. So nothing materializes but even so you know for as long as I've been here MAC scholars or someone has taken care of the mid-winter assembly. In that piece. And I communicate early on in the year like _Hey you guys keep in mind,' 'cause I think if they would be meeting and you would kind of just put that out there and said to them this kid and you know keep your eyes open. I kept after, after, after them and then it was _Sorry don't have time.' Anyway so it's that's just one example, it's weird. You know Cesar was here. Talking to Cesar he talked about how his student council, whatever, is organized it's kind of a mixture of student council, student coalition, and just kind of other stuff. And Andrew Rawlings, the other student council guy, and I have talked about this like it seems to me that the way we elect student council officers perpetuates, I mean they're great kids, they're involved kids, they're the _get 'er done' kind of kids, by large. And right now the way that it's set up is 'cause they're great kids, they help kind of make it happen. But that may not be the best way to . . . or only method really. Well, regardless of race it tends to be popular kids, kids that are involved . . . kids that have done it before."

The perception in the school, that student council was for the rich and popular kids, is shared by Dan too. I scribbled, —popular kids = kids of privilege," in my notes as Dan continued. —Done student council, that kind of thing and yeah it's good. Like I said they get a lot done and it's cool. Maybe there's need for something else. You know. Principal's council, principal's

cabinet. A student cabinet that's handpicked you know and says hey, tell us what's going on." Intrigued, I said, "Yeah. That's a good idea."

Encouraged by my comment, Dan continued, "Once a month. Let's do it. So funny, but at the end of the year when we do senior speeches and performances. We ask the senior class officers to brainstorm fifteen to twenty . . . maybe twelve, fifteen kids to be involved in judging those. We say a wide range of kids and then we get those kids there and it's a true representation of the senior class and I kind of look and go well, 'How come we haven't been' . . . you know it kind of reminds me . . ." Lost in his own thoughts, Dan scribbled a note with a red pen on a small yellow pad. Trying to finish this line of thought, I offered, "Why is that the first time I'm seeing you?" Grabbing on to that, Dan said, "Yeah like, why haven't I figured out a way to reach out and kind of get this happening more. Or student council get that happening more. Great mix of kids, great input, thoughtful, articulate." Clearly Dan struggled to understand why minority students were not represented in student council at Oaklawn.

I decided to push the race issue in a different direction. I asked him about the challenges associated with race at Oaklawn. Dan thought for a moment, then began, "I think race is a challenge to achieve in that you step back and you see the structures that we have. The whole, the game is definitely a White middle class. It's a White middle-class institution. There's no doubt but I think there's advantages in that. I think as an institution schools are . . . they're aware of that but it's not changed so. The advantages kind of like not as great as it used to be. Obviously you know we have that achievement gap for as long as I've been here. Talking thinking about even in it's a bigger than us thing and that's not saying that it's not worth tackling. It's not saying that efforts have been for naught but it's a big deal." "Interesting," I

thought. He is describing White hegemony and acknowledging the achievement gap, yet is not committed to doing anything about it.

In sharp contrast to the two aforementioned, Sean Schneider acknowledges his own White privilege and hegemony's impact on schools. When questioned about race and his work, Sean thought for a moment. He said, "Right. I am well aware of the advantages I've had in life because of my spot. I'm a White male. I'm thirty-two. Statistically speaking, I think if you looked across the board, a White male with, you know, a college degree, and whatever advantages I've been given, let's just say a middle-class White male, has fewer hardships in life, on average, than someone who doesn't meet that description. And I think gender could be thrown in there. I think life choices could be thrown in there as well. I think it plays a role insofar as I have to realize that I can't possibly understand all that someone I'm working with, all that goes into their lens that they see the world through. And insofar as that, I think race does play a role. How much do I think about it and take it into consideration? Not much at all. And I don't mean that disrespectfully. What I mean is, any kid, whether it was a Caucasian, a Hispanic, or a teacher for that matter, or African American, I think I have to recognize and acknowledge that I can't tell any of them what it's like to walk in their shoes. And I think it's really important that I approach every situation that way. And so, does race play a role in my day-to-day thinking about things? Probably not, but I think the idea of just acknowledging that I can't possibly tell student A what it's like to be them, if they happen to be a Hispanic, male or female, or an Asian student, or an African American student, that's just the way it is. I couldn't possibly tell them what it's like to be them, and how the world views them, and what it is that they've had to go through in any situation."

Stunned by his candor and thoughtful response, I interrupted, "Do you think—I'm kind of making a follow-up to that because it was very interesting, something you said about not presuming to tell them about what they think or feel. Do you think race plays a factor in the discipline, whether it's the kids that you're seeing, or the kinds of consequences, or the offenses, or whatever? Is there anything race related?"

Sean shook his head. "No, I don't think race has any influence over the type of consequences that are given. Can I tell you one hundred percent that every adult in this school doesn't see race as an issue? I couldn't possibly tell you that. I could tell you this. I'm pretty sure that the number of students who get referred who are African American students is higher than my Caucasian students. In fact, it doesn't meet the ratio in the school. And so, on paper you would look at it and say there's a problem with this. Insofar as the consequences that are issued, absolutely not. Absolutely not." Sean has also had the race card played on him in his discipline role. He said, "Yeah, I had a mother sit here with her son. And her tell him that we are going to view him differently because he is an African American. And I didn't let it bother me too much. I explained to her, I said, 'You know what, ma'am, I'm going to deal with your son fairly and consistently. I'm sorry that you feel that way. Obviously something's happened in your life to make you feel that way. And I hope that through our relationship you'll allow—you won't make your mind up about me and Red Stone Junior High until you've had some time to interact with us.' You know, right away she accused us of being racist in that situation. I've had other things where students have accused teachers of being racist. Me directly beyond that, you know, this year no. I've had students playfully say, 'Oh, you're just doing this because I'm Mexican.' And they're playfully saying that, but at the same time I have to have that conversation with them that . . . 'You really can't say that. And here's why. Do you want

people joking with you about your culture? Not really. Well, when you say that, you know you're setting yourself up.'" Sean's thoughtful comments made me appreciate his cultural understanding of the students whom he serves.

Race and discipline.

In stark contrast to the African American females I interviewed, the responses to the race question by White males were quite different. Mike White, a sixth-year assistant principal at Washington Junior High School, shared a completely different experience regarding race. In response to my prompt of the role race plays in his work, he said, "That is a question out of left field. What role does race play? You know, I think it used to probably play a role. Now, I don't think it plays a role at all. It's not like I ever considered myself to be a racist person. But when you consider race, I think I used to at least question my numbers, my demographic numbers when it came to suspensions, things like that. I have looked at them the last several years. It's pretty consistent year to year to year. Any more, it doesn't consciously play any role with me. As far as percentage of people that are suspended or whatever. They're consistent my numbers every year or with Washington Junior High numbers every year. There's definitely a gap. There's definitely more African Americans suspended, etc., than White children here. But it's not out of line, what I'm doing, with what has happened here in the past . . . or in other buildings for that matter. It's pretty consistent with the district numbers. So, I have to admit, it used to play a role with me. Absolutely. Just because whenever you're new at this, you know, I don't want to be perceived as being racist or whatever. But I don't consider that at all anymore. For right or wrong, I don't."

Jeff Jones, the 45-year-old Caucasian male assistant principal of Hancock Middle School, expresses how the issue of race is often talked about in vague terms, without any reflection on its

impact on education. Softly he began, "Well, I'm aware of race. I mean I . . ." He struggled to find the words. Boldly I prompted him, "Can you talk about that?" As if resigning to his fate, Jeff sighed and said, "Yeah I can talk about it. I feel it saddens me when I look at the suspensions or the ROC. . . . Actually the other day when I was watching the students—we have ROC—which is like our in-school suspension, and we have a person that runs that and she had the kids up here because she was taking something to the office and walking back down the hall. I noticed, you know, five kids there and they were all African American. And I . . . you know, that . . . so it's something I think about but I feel like, you know, it's hard, you can't change the punishment because of somebody's race. You have to be, you know. I can't say, 'Oh because you're Black you have this consequence but you did the same thing, but I am aware of it and it's, you know, it's something that—you know—I wish we could—you know—fix. I think it's a problem but . . ." Clearly troubled by the issue of race and discipline, Jeff's voice trailed off. Silently he sat for a moment, lost in his thoughts. I followed up. "Do you guys ever talk about it?"

Quickly coming back to the conversation, Jeff said, "Not . . . maybe. Not formally, no, but I do talk about it." Pushing for more information, I pressed him, "Like administratively or amongst faculty or what?" Jeff adjusted himself in his chair and began, "Well, we've talked it when we've got, looked at our data before. So we've talked about it that way, but not that we've set something up formally to, you know, like here's the plan. This is what we're going to do about this. So . . ." Wondering about their conversations, I asked, "Do you see that as being tied to the achievement gap?" Jeff thought for a moment, then said, "Yeah, I mean, yes. If you, well. . . . Well, because I think when they're—they're missing the instruction so. It just, it just

deepens the gap, you know." "Interesting and valid point," I thought. I wonder why if race is an issue, administrators don't talk about it?

Leslie Fredrickson, the 40-year-old African American assistant principal at Johnson Middle School, has noted differences in the number of African American children referred to the office. When I asked her what role race plays in her work, she smiled broadly for a moment and paused. With a deep breath, she began, "You know, I don't want to say that teachers are being discriminatory to students, but our data shows that more of our minority students, of course, are being referred. Now, are you speaking just to my race, or the race of my students?" "Either, both," I said. "Well, I mean, I do think there are people who maybe are a little more skeptical of me because I am a minority. But I don't focus on that. So, I don't let it drive, or make any type of decisions for me." Trying to get back to the race and discipline train of thought, I probed, "But you said your data shows that they're referring minority students. Is it a difference with male or female? Is it just race? What is it?"

With another breath and looking over the top of her glasses, Leslie said softly, almost whispering, "Well, our minority males are the highest. And then our females are second, when you look at it that way. Even though the population here at Johnson of minorities is probably thirty percent, they are responsible for, I think when we last looked at it, up into the seventies [percent] of referrals." Stunned, I gasped. "Wow!" Nodding her head, Leslie continued, "Yeah. And most of it is disrespect, is what our teachers are coding. You know, they feel disrespected that the kid didn't do what they said, or something like that. But we only have one minority core teacher and three specialists." I furiously scribbled, "lack of culturally relevant teaching," in my notes and began to wonder if the teachers are aware of their own disciplinary biases. I also wondered about the demographics of the teachers in this building, where two of the

administrators are African American, yet only 5 of the 90-plus teachers are African American. Interesting.

Bob Flanders, a 49-year-old Caucasian male, describes himself as a transplant to Pleasantville. "I was raised in Computer City, California, and attended the University of California at Vista View. We were a middle-class family. Four kids, both Mom and Dad worked. They stressed getting an education. I was the first member of my family to graduate from college. I am the 'baby' of my family. We have two children and my wife and I both work. We stress an education and not attending college will not be an option of my children." Bob has been an assistant principal in Pleasantville for 15 years. He began his administrative career at Johnson Middle School where he worked for two years before going to Red Stone Junior High where he worked for seven years. He has been an assistant principal at Oaklawn High School for six years. He is a career assistant principal, who has been passed over for promotion several times.

Bob Flanders views race as an integral part of his work. "In the work that I do, honestly, it comes into play. Not from my ability to deal with students effectively, but it comes into play because when I deal with students I have to deal with the whole student. And so when I deal with students of color, I can't be blind to the fact that I'm dealing with a student of color. And so when I'm talking to students and talking to their parents, I have to be aware of where that student is coming from. Does it change how I deal with the kid in regards to holding him accountable? No. But it does definitely impact when I talk to the parents and under and be able to say I understand. 'You know your child really struggles with x, y, or z.' And that's really one of the strengths that I have always thought was present at Oaklawn. Because we're set up in grade-level teams, I have three years to get to know my kids. And so when I'm dealing with

students and their parents, there's a history that I've taken the time to get to know their student beyond just you know you're a student of color or you know you're a student of poverty. It's I know the family. I know the situation. It doesn't change holding a student accountable, but it helps me to build relationships knowing where those students are coming from." I made a note: "students of color = students of poverty." Bob's biases were likely unknown to him, yet were revealed in his assumptions about students of color. I found it interesting that he equated the two. I wondered about White students of poverty, and how he related to them.

Becci Jonmeyer, a 56-year-old Caucasian female, describes the role of race in the work that she does differently. "Well I think, I don't think it's just race; I would say it's culture and it's also understanding that an age group that we deal with and I mean you have to be culturally sensitive and race to me is a part of that. So if someone is yelling in the hallway it doesn't necessarily mean it's a verbal confrontation depending upon sometimes if you know that that may be a way that students are talking and that might be the way they are use to talking and so kind of getting a kid three days after something like that even if it's already squashed may not be the best choice for them. So helping them understand it's really not okay to do that because other people get worried about it but. So to answer your question I guess just being sensitive to other people's experiences and knowing that maybe sometimes that they've not had good experiences with White people who are in charge before that they feel like you're not listening to their needs, not taking it personally I guess when they don't want to listen to you because they think that you are trying to control them and all you're trying to do is get their kid to school."

Saul Hollingsworth describes how he sees the issue of race in his work at Madison Junior High School. Clearing his throat, Saul said, "I can go a couple; I'll answer a couple ways. First of all one of the things that I personally take a real hard look at is disproportionality in this and I

generate reports for our building based on certain factors of that. For example if you take your F list and then you break that down by ethnicity, by number of suspensions, by number of missed days and so on and you break that you show that but you also need to show that in terms of the proportion of their enrollment in the building. So we do use, we do use ethnicity, data with the faculty for attendance for out-of-school suspension, for office referrals and something else that we do here at Madison Junior we do both teacher manage or what people mind referrals, teacher manage referrals and office referrals or major referrals. Okay we also look at what is there any disproportion regards to how many Black students will receive a minor referral compared to a direct office referral versus our White students receiving minor referrals versus a major referral."

Saul continued, "We use the data and we don't just throw it out there to the faculty; they're usually posed with reflective questions of some type. Wanting feedback from because I tell the faculty this all the time, I can throw raw data at them all day long. If they cannot read that and analyze it and reflect on that and improve their practices then it's useless. First of all we show most recently let's take first semester cause that's the last one I did and I'm taking this off the top of my head. But it shows that our White students proportionally are more likely to receive a minor teacher-action referral versus our Black students. It shows that our Black students are suspended from school or had incurred more out-of-school suspensions than our White students have had. The infractions are higher for our Black students and what makes that significant is that they only make up sixteen percent of our population. Our multi-students make up about four to five percent. So any kind of crossover within the Black race for example, 'cause multi can be different, I mean it can be different but taking that just globally, if you will, we're looking at somewhere around an eighteen to nineteen percent population of potentially with a Black heritage okay but the thing is that they incurred more office referrals than any other group

including our White students which make up seventy percent of our population, okay." I nodded for him to continue.

Saul took off his wire-rimmed glasses and rubbed his eyes for a moment, then continued. —What we have to do with that is be able to teach and instruct our faculty on several different, several different areas. For example, first is getting them to recognize and accept what that data shows. You know that's a big piece because many times they're in denial but if you've got that evidence base and it's there and then they can see that and then provide them the instruction to help them improve their strategies. And we have to identify where their areas are where they're struggling. Is it unaware of, you know, cultural differences for example? Is there something as far as what's going on in the classroom that we can help them better manage behavior in general. That's, their reactions to certain situations. There are several things that we can do and we do, do that and we can provide opportunities whole faculty. We just had a lesson at a faculty meeting, we took about forty minutes and we gave them ten scenarios that could happen in a classroom and we broke them into small groups and we asked them to write how they might handle this. Then we went to a bigger group and they shared that and then we got the full stuff back to us so we could break that down and you know it was amazing the differences of how individually they're going to handle the same situation with that. So we didn't put race into that piece of it but it was just kind of getting that conversation started. The other ways, 'cause I think I just talked about the one ways we deal with . . . I've talked about the attendance I think, I mean again just kind of build the academic part." Saul seemed to be struggling to find a way to confront the racist practices of his faculty without naming it as such.

Renee Moore, assistant principal at Red Stone Junior High, identified a direct correlation between race and discipline referrals. —In my work with students, cause that's seventy percent of

my job. I do take into account, because I review the data, the discipline data. That's part of my own goal and no one has told me to do it, I just do it. And I of course know that African American males take up a great number of office referrals. So, in my dealings with students, I don't necessarily talk to them about race, but I guess it does cross my mind with the data that I have that I get to reflect over after a semester is done or a year is done." Probing, I asked, "So what do you see in the data?" Renee took a deep breath and said, "I see a high African American male, special ed. proportion of students being referred for discipline." I pushed Renee to dig a little deeper on this subject. "And so as you reflect on that, kind of where do you go with that? Is that something you're like—I don't know, is that something you like, is it a worry, is it something that you're just trying to be mindful of?" I asked. After a small pause, Renee said slowly, "I would say it's definitely a worry. I mean we're all cognizant of the achievement gap. We're all . . . we all know if a student is talking to me about a referral that they're not in class learning. We also know that that plays a big role in maybe a continued attitude of racism if students see a particular gender or ethnicity disturbing their classroom. We don't want to you, you know, have any more stereotypes about that. We don't want them to say all the Black kids are bad. All the Black boys are bad. All the special ed. Black boys are bad." Renee was clearly troubled by our conversation, yet I wondered at what point her discomfort would force her to take action.

AP's race and effectiveness.

Newly minted assistant principal Anthony Brown, a 26-year-old African American, sees the role of race and his work differently. "Indirectly I think race plays a lot to do with what I'm doing. It's nothing confirmed or anything like that. It's just dealing—being observant in how I deal with things. I think it's also—race as well as my age, but I would say race because being an

African American in administration, people have certain expectations of you first of all I believe."

I raised my eyebrow, intrigued. "What are those?" Anthony's smile disappeared and his face became very serious. "They expect you to be first of all a good manager as opposed to an instructional leader I think. So they expect you to manage discipline. You find that people expect you to connect most with people who are African American, even though there are so many different aspects of culture today that go into understanding people and connecting with people. I feel like—and I don't know if it's more so on my race or my age but I feel like people question my ability to do the job." "How so?" I wondered.

Flashing his million-dollar smile, Anthony said, "I'm one of those people who's always said you can ask me questions but I start to have a problem when you start questioning me and I feel like people question me a lot about the decisions that I make. It's like—and it could also be the fact that I don't know a lot of the faculty yet here, but there's a trust issue missing so I haven't built that trust, but it could also be my age or it could also be my race and the culture that I come from because just being young myself I have a different culture than a lot of the teachers that I evaluate. So there are so many different factors that go on into it. I can't pinpoint and say that—which issue it is that's causing the trust issue."

"Now we were getting somewhere," I thought. Probing, I asked him to give me one example of when that's happened. Anthony paused for a moment, as if to carefully choose his words. "I don't have anything as far as race is concerned, but I did have a teacher question me and I think she was questioning me because of my age and my ability. She was discussing a student who is an English language learner. He was plagiarizing some of his work and I asked her what parameters had she set in place to make sure he wasn't plagiarizing this work. She

wanted me to tell this kid that she would not accept any work from him unless he did it in class. I told her—I said, ‗Would you do that for any other kid?' I said, ‗Treat him like you would treat any other kid,' and she questioned me. She told me that I sounded pretty much like—in so many words ‗a droning administrator' because I told her that we have to work within certain parameters within the law. There are certain things that we can and cannot do. She wanted me to make special accommodations for the student that she wouldn't make for other students at all. I tried to let her know that we can't do this legally. We can't do this for any particular reason. She told me that I was merely just spelling out philosophy as opposed to being practical and that I pretty much didn't know what I was talking about." Aghast, with my mouth open I asked, ―Wow! So, how did you deal with that?" Pausing, as if to formulate a calm and professional response, Anthony began, ―I tried to—I talked to her and I let her know. I was like ‗Why do you feel the way that you feel?' and she tried to explain why she felt that way and again I said, ‗I'm sorry that you feel that way, but you have to understand the capacity in which I'm working and what I have to tell you because we're here to support kids one hundred percent, but we cannot be unfair to a kid in any particular way. If you are going to not accept work from this student because of his homework, what other provisions are you going to make for him or would you do that for a student who was not an English language learner who had not plagiarized at a certain point in time.' And then I also told her—I did let her know that—I ended up with a follow-up e-mail letter and I said that I thought it was pretty unprofessional and inappropriate that she would speak to me in such a manner. ‗You weren't being very open-minded. You said that you were listening to what I was saying but your actions and your follow-up questions showed that you really were not.' So that's just how I had to deal with that particular situation." Raw with frustration and emotion, Anthony took a sip of water and collected himself. I could see the hurt

in his facial expressions. Anthony seemed to suspect his authority was being challenged by this teacher because he is a young, African American administrator. Anthony continued, "I documented it and I did take the e-mail and I put it in her file and I will discuss it with her. I don't know if it's something that's going to keep her from—I don't think it's something that is so dire that's going to keep her from being successful as a teacher. I think she just had to have knowledge of what was going on at the time and what her actions were showing."

Race and promotion.

Dominique Sullivan , a 42-year-old African American female, is also a home-grown administrator, graduating from Carver High School in Pleasantville. Dominique attended college at the State University and Bill Jenkins University. She reflects on her life growing up, "I grew up impoverished, in a single-parent home. My mother raised us, dropped out of high school; however, [she] later completed the GED and college education to become a nurse. My father was in the picture only on a limited basis. My mother worked nights, and I was the oldest of five kids and had many responsibilities. I grew up with a lot of extended family around me. My own family consists of two working parents, who both have college educations. We have two children, a girl, fourteen, and a boy, seven. We are a middle-income family, and we have a lot of extended family on both sides." Dominique has worked in the Pleasantville District her entire career, spending 10 years as a Latin teacher and 10 years in various administrative positions throughout the district. She is currently assistant principal at Walters Middle School.

Dominique Sullivan shared her experiences of discrimination in career advancement based on her race. A native of Pleasantville, Dominique is a product of the Pleasantville School District. After college, Dominique began her teaching career at Pleasantville 20 years ago as a Latin teacher. After five years as an administrative assistant, Dominique has been an assistant

principal for the last five years. I asked her how much of a role, if any, race plays in the work she does. Leaning forward, in hushed tones, Dominique in a barely audible whisper, she said cautiously, "I have a sinking suspicion that I will not be eligible for a principalship in this district because of my race." "Really?" I asked. Nodding her head very slowly and rocking back and forth in her chair, Dominique continued, "'Cause I don't think this district is ready for an African American principal."

Knowing there have been other African American principals, I pressed Dominique to explain. "Suzanne was placed in every position . . . that she . . . okay? That's between you and me. Suzanne was placed in every position that I can remember and I've been teaching as long as she's been an administrator or I've been in this district as long as she was a teacher and I was at Carver as a student. She was assistant principal when I was at Carver as a teacher. She then went and was chosen. She'd been North Hall assistant principal and then she was chosen to be to open Walters. She was also chosen for Carver. She was chosen for Central Office . . ." Dominique looked away and her voice trailed off and she pressed the wrinkles out of her pants, smoothing them in slow downward strokes, as she ever so slowly continued to rock back and forth in her chair. Stunned by what I had just heard, I tried to make sense out of it. Trying to clarify, I asked, "She didn't apply?" Dominique slowly shook her head and said, "She was encouraged to apply. You talk to her she says every position she's gotten somebody called." With frustration and tears welling up in her eyes, Dominique reflected, "If I were doing this for me I would have been long gone but I don't do the job that I do for me I do it for the children. I know it sounds cliché but I do it for kids. I'm the kind of person that I would not spend almost twenty years of my life doing one thing unless I wholeheartedly believe in the potential of it to have a great impact on human beings. I am a product of how education can change your

circumstances. And I owe that. I owe a debt to society, a debt to society because I could be in a totally different circumstance then I am right now."

Struck by Dominique's commitment and passion, I probed for a better understanding of what she meant. Gently I asked, "And so how does your race help you with that?" She paused, took a slow deep breath, and began. "My race helps me understand that we, while we've come far we still have a long way to go and that I have appreciated every struggle that I had and know that it's basically going to be that. I've kind of accepted that it's going to be that way for me. That because of my race and because of watching people like me you know wait to be selected sometimes but also struggle it strengthen[s] my resolve to do what I need to do regardless of how others might see me or how others might, where others may see me. Do you understand what I'm saying? Does that make sense? Where I had to give up feeling like I needed to go somewhere because others felt that was the direction I needed to go in. I had to fight and always had to fight to get as far as some of my Caucasian peers."

There it was. Racism used as a mechanism by which to stifle or hold down an aspiring African American professional. Cautiously, I asked, "Male or female?" Dominique, with voice beginning to rise, said, "I think I would, I fight harder, twice as hard as males do but I'm realistic to know that they would select a White female to be a building principal before they would select me. And that's just the way I feel it doesn't, it's, I have watched in this district many initiatives to try and recruit and retain African American people fall to the wayside much like the one that we're working on right now. If you are true to wanting to do that then you work toward that end especially when you have qualified individuals and I'm not saying that I feel like I'm, you know, I should, I am saying in a sense that if you say that you are really concerned with the number of African Americans or lack of African Americans who have leadership positions and teaching

positions in this district why not start from within. The same is true for anybody from within the district. If you know that you have highly qualified individuals then you need to work from within. If those individuals are not as highly qualified as you'd like for them to be then you provide them the training to get that way, to like develop much like you do your teachers. My race plays a part in that. I have, for every position that I have gained sought it myself, took on educational endeavors to make sure that I had the knowledge and the skills to do it, worked harder, longer hours to accomplish or to demonstrate. I have this internal feeling that I have to work harder to accomplish what I'd like to see, a building principalship or any kind of leadership role." "Wow!" I thought. She is describing the type of bias and discrimination that I have read stories about. I was saddened to see that racism was alive and well in Pleasantville.

Bob Flanders, a Caucasian male, experienced discrimination in a reverse manner. As stated previously, he has been passed over several times for promotion to a building-level position. He sighed and said, "There was an assistant principal position that I was applying for and one of the—well they didn't really come out and say it. I was given the impression that I was highly qualified for the position but they really were looking for an African American female. Now that was not what I was told was the reason, but it was implied that for that building at that time a female of color was the best fit. I don't want that to sound like I was crying foul but I mean that's what I was told." Just to clarify, I said, "Okay. So they said that an African American female was the best fit. For that building at that time." Bob nodded and said, "And and do you know what? In hindsight, it probably was the best fit. But that, that has been a time where in, in relation to your question it kind of I know still makes me sound like a crybaby. That's what I was told."

I asked, –So how do you deal with bias or discrimination like that? And that sucks." Bob agreed. –It you know. . . . It does suck initially. But I also think there's a, there's definitely some truth to not all high schools are exactly the same. Not I mean I have been in several schools. I've only been in two districts but several schools within those two districts. And no two school cultures are exactly the same. No two schools' socioeconomic makeup are the same. So there really is some validity to who's going to be the best fit for us. Is it hard as being on the losing end of that? Absolutely. But I have always, and this is going to sound really stupid, but I mean I've always been a believer in you blossom where God plants you. And so I firmly believe that the times I didn't get positions that I had applied for several things may have been at play. But ultimately at that time I wasn't the best fit for that job. And so does it stink to hear _Wow. You know you were qualified but we just we went a different way. We went with an in-house person.' Or the one time that I was told that a female of color was a better fit for that building. When I reflected on it, they were probably absolutely right. At that time for that building it was a better fit." Here is a case of reverse discrimination, a White male, highly qualified, being passed over for promotion for an African American female.

Gender and role of assistant principals.

I was curious about the role that gender plays in the work that assistant principals do, and how they are perceived by others. I discovered that White males consistently viewed their gender as a reason to treat female students differently. Some opted out of dealing with female students, particularly African American female students. While others, overcome with compassion, dealt less sternly with discipline infractions for female students.

Can't touch this.

When I asked Mike White, the 41-year-old, White assistant principal at Washington Junior High, "How much of a role, if any, does gender play in the work that you do?" I was surprised by his perspective. Mike pressed his palms to his face and raised his eyebrows, slowly exhaling. He began, "Quite a bit, in my opinion. I am—well that's kind of hard for me to answer because it's not direct. You know, I think it hasn't changed necessarily since I've been doing this job since I was teaching math. But I'm very, very conscious and fearful of being perceived as the guy that talks to the girls, or the pretty girls come down. I try to keep my door open unless it's terribly confidential with a girl because, you know, they're flirty. Junior high girls, they've got crushes all the time. So, they come down. And it does bother me. So I do have a tendency to treat the females slightly different than the boys. The boys, I think nothing of slamming the door and telling them what's what. But I consciously don't with the girls because I don't, 'Oh, he's been back there with her for a long time.' I've never been accused of anything like that, but I don't want to be. And that stuff really freaks me out." Clearly, Mike is fearful of being accused of having inappropriate or sexual contact with female students.

As a female administrator, I have never given it a second thought to close the door and speak to a male student. This realization puzzled me momentarily. I pressed Mike for more. "So, it's something that's always in the forefront of your mind?" Taking a bite of his cold pizza, Mike nodded. "It really is. Not always, no, but you know. If there's a girl that's perceived as being cute, and she's really flirtatious, yes. It plays a major role. I try to get 'em in and out of here as quick as possible. And God forbid I have to search a girl. There's always witnesses."

Understanding Mike's perspective on protecting his own liability, I sought to clarify his practices. "Do you have a home school communicator or an SRO [school resource officer] or

somebody to help you with that?" I asked. Clearing his throat, Mike said, "Well, we have a home school communicator, but he's also a male. We have an SRO who's also a male, and he's only here two to three days a week. And the other two administrators in this building are also males." Confused, I asked, "So how do you handle that?"

Sheepishly, with a little smile, Mike leaned forward and softly said, "Generally speaking, what I do is I call the parents. And I say, 'Listen. Here's the situation.' So, I get parental consent, or at least let them, I don't need it necessarily, but at least let them know what's going on. Because I think, you know, I, if I'm going to search a girl, I'll have another person here, even if it's another male. That's just kind of the situation. I don't feel right putting a secretary or guidance counselor in that position. I'm not going to ask the secretary to sit in with me while I search a girl. I don't think that's appropriate."

Intrigued, I questioned, "So, what does it look like when you search a girl?" Mike sighed and said, "I simply ask them the same thing every time. 'Can I search you?' of course. But to me, when I search a girl, it's gonna have a witness in here, and it's gonna—if they even have a jacket on, sadly, I don't even ask them to take it off. I ask—with a boy, I'll have them hand me their jacket so I can look through it. If it's a girl, just because I'm a little more fearful of that, I have them empty the pockets of the coat. Now, I do look in their purse myself. But I don't want them to take off any clothes, including their shoes. I look inside boys' shoes. I don't look inside girls' shoes. Or at least *I* won't do it. I might have them do it." Dumbfounded, I considered what Mike said. He doesn't treat female students in the same manner he treats male students. He is practicing discrimination against the male students due to his fear of being accused of inappropriate interactions with his female students. This did not sit well with me. I understood

where he was coming from, but how can we legally, morally, ethically not treat both male and female students equally? I would have to come back to this thought because Mike continued on.

"And I don't know if it's just my fear of being a male administrator. I don't know. Maybe I'm just really fearful, but I see what's gone on with other people. And if somebody accuses them of one thing, and it just takes an accusation. It doesn't take a fact. Some little girl's fantasy of inappropriate behavior could get me fired, and I . . ." His voice trailed off, as he truly worried about being accused of inappropriate behavior. With a final deep breath, Mike finished, "Yeah. So, I'm fearful of that."

Compassion for opposite gender.

Sean Schneider also expressed concern about his gender when dealing with female students. Sighing he said, "I think I can't tell a fourteen-year-old girl what she's going through. And there's a lot going on in the mind of some fourteen-year-old girls that I couldn't possibly pretend to understand. But I can listen to them. And I need to listen to them. One thing I'll always tell, I'll deal with some personal issues with some female students. And I'll tell them that right away. It's like, I don't possibly try to let you think that I understand what you're going through. But I do live with a woman. And we're very close, obviously. In the nature of our relationship we share everything with one another. Now that's not what you're going through. I understand that. And again, I think it's just doing your best to put yourself in their shoes, knowing that you can't possibly be in their shoes."

Sean paused for a moment and continued, "Let me be honest and say this, too. I think the way that I was raised, I think there was always this kind of modern chivalry, not chivalry by any means, but an idea that girls are treated this way and boys—you know the boys will be boys mentality that some people have? And I've worked really hard to put that out of my mind.

Could I tell you that it's not there sometimes? I probably couldn't. It would take a third party to tell me, you are behaving this way or you're not. There is a certain sympathy that I can say that I would probably have much quicker for a female than a male in certain situations. And that's not right. Does that play a role in the consequences that I issue? I sure hope not. I try real hard to not let that be the case. I worked specifically with two different athletic programs previously, female and male, both. And that helped me a lot. That helped me see some biases that I had in my life. The whole _you treat girls differently than you treat guys' type of thing, that's it. You can't, in this situation, I don't think, treat girls differently than you can treat guys. You have to treat every person as an individual and try to understand where they're coming from. Again, I probably couldn't prove to you that I've been perfect in this. But it's on my mind all the time."

Father figure.

Larry Barnes, assistant principal at Lewis High School, is a quiet, unflappable Caucasian man. At 55 years old, Larry has had a variety of careers before becoming an administrator. He quietly says, "Officially as an assistant principal I have been—this is my third year because when I was here previously I was an administrative assistant for three years." Larry is from a very small town located about an hour and twenty minutes outside of Pleasantville. "[I] grew up in Watertown. I had one younger brother; Mom was a school nurse and Dad worked for a livestock feed company. We lived on a farm and most of our time was spent in sports and working on the farm. I've been married thirty-two years, live in a rural area, and my wife was in education for thirty-two years as a teacher and administrator. We have two children; our daughter is a lawyer and married in Kansas City. Our son is a senior at the State College up north and will graduate in December with a degree in accounting." With a chuckle, Larry said, "We are looking forward

to him obtaining employment and reducing our payroll. Any time I am not working on our three acres and home, I enjoy playing golf."

Larry Barnes described the impact his gender has on his work with at-risk students at Lewis High School, an alternative school of approximately 150 students located in a tough neighborhood in Pleasantville. He thought for a moment and said, "I think a huge role. I think especially with our kids you'll see that most of them do not have a male role model in their life. And I, I think this year we have had more, younger girls, ninth-grade age girls who have come in who don't have a father. I think they look upon not only me but a couple of the other male staff members as a father figure and they're looking for that positive influence in their life from a male role model. I think especially this year I've noticed it's, it's really come into play. More of my time is spent listening to their issues at home and that kind of thing." Clarifying, I asked, "So they just stop in to chat or what?"

Larry nodded, saying, "Mmhmm . . . yep. And they're seeking that attention. And then because of the fact that we can't give them the attention they want they will act out to get my attention. And with a lot of the boys it's the same thing. They don't have a male role model and you know they like to talk about sports and that kind of thing and you know it—I think it plays a huge role here."

Gender and promotion.

In another building, not too far away, Sierra O'Malley reflected on the issue of gender and her work. "I don't think it's done much as far as discipline. I guess I like to think that they think I'm a woman and I'm fair and I'm thinking like a mother when it comes to children. There are issues. Fortunately we have a male counselor who will say, 'You should talk to Ms. Keeton about this,' but you know it doesn't bother me to talk about sexual harassment with kids, you

know, I might bring the counselor in and have them sit. I think it's been good, I mean, especially since I think Pleasantville is trying to do more with women and with African Americans as well. That's probably a positive thing for me, you know, that's a big thing when Dr. Suzanne Potter first started talking to me about the job. She was real open, she said, _I'm going to tell you, they need a strong African American woman over there and you're who I want to go,' so you know they kind of handpicked me."

Sierra's experience is a sharp contrast to her colleague Dominique Sullivan, who has experienced what she believes to be discrimination in promotion because she is an African American female. Dominique voiced her concerns with the promotion of male candidates over female candidates in the Pleasantville District. Taking a drink of her Diet Dr. Pepper, she began, —Well, I think—I think more and more in the district, the candidates, the number of male candidates is some that I came up in this era where a man was going to get a position a lot sooner than a female would." I nodded in agreement. She continued, —You know, I've watched men who, with half the experience, get jobs when we were told that, you know, I'm going to repeat what I said in that, you know, in the meeting at the board office, we were told that there were certain standards that would need to be met, only to watch two people be hired without those credentials."

Her argument made me reflect for a moment about my own principal, a 32-year-old White male, who only had a master's degree and three years of experience as an assistant principal before becoming a building principal in my district. Maybe Dominique was on to something. I snapped back to reality as Dominique continued on, —And I don't have a problem with your age. It's your knowledge level, but don't—I don't fault him at all. I don't—it's just like I don't fault . . . He's a very good guy. And I'm assuming that he has his stuff together and

he has the skill and the knowledge, you know, because I'm assuming that's what got him the job. I fault the district for sending messages that were very contrary to their actions. And that is what I mean by honoring the initiative to recruit and retain. You have someone who has been in your district, who has never moved outside of this district, spent her entire career here. There is no loyalty to that, and more importantly, don't feed me that line that you're working to retain the minorities you have when you have an opportunity."

Raw with frustration, Dominique shook her head and pressed on, "And it's not like I'm—I might let my work speak for me, that's the way I see it. If I am not qualified, then tell me I'm not qualified, tell me how I'm not qualified, and then tell me what you're going to do to help me become qualified because you know I spent my entire career in this district and given everything. I've gone to school. I've taken on leadership roles, every committee I'm on, I went out and asked to be on that committee. I wasn't asked to be on a committee. I wasn't invited to be on a committee. I asked to be on a committee. I was told to take a certain path, and it would lead me, might lead me to a principalship, only to find out that it wasn't going to happen, or it hasn't happened. And I understand wait your turn, or wait your time, but when you're not getting any feedback that tells you what you could be doing while you're waiting your time . . ." Her voice trailed off as she looked out the window.

Not quite sure how to proceed, I said, "That must be frustrating." Immediately, Dominique swung back around from her window gazing and said, "That is my thing, I want—if I'm interviewing and I understand outside people come in, they don't interview. Or they interview and they're not somebody you choose. You don't owe them that, but somebody from the inside who you are just as responsible for training as they are for seeking professional growth, you owe it to them to say something better than 'You have one of the best interviews

I've ever heard in my life. Have, you know, I've ever seen.' But you can't tell me why I'm not getting the job, why I'm not moving on even to the next round."

Recognizing how painful this was for Dominique to share, I said, "That would be hard." Holding my gaze, Dominique shrugged her shoulders and said, "It is, and I said the DE was not going to come out in this so . . ." She immediately saw my puzzled expression and clarified, "I don't want to be a disgruntled employee. I said I was going to let it go, and like I said, I do what I do for kids. And what that translates to is all the things about me, it's not about me. All the things that, if it's meant to be, it's going to be. I wake up every morning not focused on how I'm going to, you know, I'm going to the job to—not like in the business world where they're going to the job to show that they can do well so that they can move up the ladder. I'm going to the job to show that I can do well to the kids so that they see that they can do well. That's my mission."

Gender and discrimination.

Administrators experience varying levels of discrimination based on their gender. Athletic director and assistant principal at Oaklawn High School, Jessica Lewis reflects on her experiences with gender discrimination. Jessica Lewis tackled the gender question head-on. "Four years is a short time, but even in four years there have been more and larger schools [with female athletic directors]. It used to be that large schools, it was definitely less. But we're starting to see a few more. Lee Summit has three high schools. Two of their ADs are females. There are some in the public schools in St. Louis. We deal with a lot of the private girls' Catholic schools in St. Louis, and they're almost all. So there's kind of a pocket. So, there are some there. But yeah, gender is an issue. I feel it [is] less of an issue now because I feel I've proven myself with the athletic director community. And it's amazing to see how differently I'm treated now than I was my first year. I would say in the first year, the incidences of, I wouldn't

say degrading talk, but demeaning or the word I'm looking for is . . . I know it's there. I just can't find it." —Misogynistic?" I offered. Nodding, she agreed, —Yeah. Just kind of, _Let me tell you how this is done, young lady.' That kind of thing. Two weeks ago, even in this district, someone I worked with multiple times, I have no issues with them. I don't think anything of it, but he finished the phone conversation and said, _Okay, thanks young lady.' And I was like, _Why is that even appropriate?' Or sometimes he'll call me _kiddo.' I'm like, it doesn't matter, but it's just kind of funny to me. And I know that he respects what I do, but it's still kind of a _Are you serious? Are you still doing this?' As far as the AD levels, there are certain ADs that they're just not going to get past the woman thing. They certainly respect what we do. They don't have any issue with that. And they're certainly handy. They want to help pass off the work to those of us who do the work better."

Jessica recounted several frustrating incidents where gender was used to discriminate in the athletic arena. After a deep breath she began, —But those ADs, they're just good ol' boys. And that's how it works. But for the most part, I feel like I'm now in with them. I play golf and poker on occasions, so I can always kind of relate. And that's a good thing. I guess a stereotypical woman coming in and wanting to go to the conference and shop all the time would never kind of make it. You kind of have to play both sides of the fence because they want you to be a woman, but they also want you to be able to talk shop with them. And so you kind of have to feel out the situation. So, am I authentic at all times? No. I have to play the game." Stunned by her revelation, my thoughts drifted to consider what it would be like to have to play a part in a misogynistic script where your gender was a handicap. What would it be like to have to act like _one of the boys' to be effective at my job?

Woken from my musings, Jessica continued, ―As far as with our sports and our kids and our coaches, yeah, we fight that a lot. There are girls‘ basketball, girls‘ soccer, girls‘ volleyball, the crowds are not the same as for boys. Recently, we‘ve now started working with a different radio station for boys‘ basketball. And they continually promote that they are covering Oaklawn basketball. And I continually say, ―You‘re covering Oaklawn boys‘ basketball. You choose not to cover Oaklawn girls‘ basketball.‖ And I‘m not even asking for it on an equal playing field, but one or two games, could you find a spot for? And they pretty much just pander and say, ―Oh, yeah, we‘ll look into that.‖ But they don‘t. And they don‘t change their language. And they don‘t ever look into it. And they don‘t ever apologize for it. They basically just try to put you off. An example of that that really ticked me off, we had boys‘ basketball in the final four. They were in the final four two years ago, and at that time a different radio station was going to cover them. And they called us and said, ‗We‘d really like for your head girls‘ basketball coach to be our color commentator during the state semifinal because she probably knows everything really well. She‘s Oaklawn. She knows basketball. She‘s well known.‘ In my mind, it was a great thing. If you asked Tim Berryman, ‗Who do you want to do color for your games?‘ He‘d say Faith Lester. She knows her stuff. So, she ends up getting sick and can‘t do it, two years ago. So, this year I thought, perfect opportunity. We‘ll do this again. Well, it was a different radio station. It‘s the one that doesn‘t believe that women‘s sports exist. So, I called and I offered. And [their response was] ‗Oh, great idea. We‘ll see. We‘ll talk about it in our production meeting.‘ They called back and said, ‗We know you really wanted her to get involved, so we‘re just, we‘re going to have her on at the halftime.‘ So they offered a half-time interview. So, we were not very happy about that, but we thought, okay, whatever. And at that point, since we asked, we had to say yes. So, we get to the game, and they don‘t have color

commentary. They have one guy covering the game. They have no one working with him. So, the assumption we made that they had someone else they wanted for color, they didn‘t have anyone for color, which is a disservice not only to our boys‘ team, but also to we offered you an expert and you chose not to take. Then when she went down to do the half-time interview, there was no headset. She was on a microphone. The guy was—all this stuff‘s going on. She can hardly hear the questions. And she wondered if it was even on the radio or whether they were just doing it. Now, someone said they heard it on the radio, so it was. But it was just a very frustrating. I mean, that‘s analogous to ADs and not accepting women. It‘s just a very frustrating thing. And I think we, partially because I‘m a woman, I‘m very aware of those issues, and we push those issues. And we try to get kids involved in supporting girls‘ sports and the girls. And we watch at the district play in games. There are five teams in our district. So, the four and five seed had to play on Monday night. So, went down to see those teams play. We weren‘t playing because we were the number one seed. Lincoln High School was playing Farmland High School in the girls‘ semifinal, or the girls‘ playing game. And this was after Lincoln has played Carver or somebody in the boys‘ game. They brought a bus, a spirit bus, down for this game. Now, they have, like, no chance. They brought a spirit bus. They had a group of kids who came down to watch the boys. They had cheerleaders. Those kids stayed for the girls‘ game. We thought, okay great. At halftime, they took the bus and the cheerleaders home and left the girls in the gym with just the parents for the rest of the game. They had the lead at half. They ended up losing the game. Not that it made a difference, although it did make a difference. It was like crickets. Yeah, no crowd. Our girls‘ coach was there, and she was appalled. And I said, you know, no one ever questioned it. That‘s just how they did it. And probably not even the girls‘ team questioned it because this is what they always do. So we see

that a lot. And so it goes back to these social constructs. Whether it's race or gender, this is how it is. And our school is not even there yet. And kids, I mean, it's like pulling eye teeth to make kids stay for the girls' game and seeing value in it. And when you ask them, they can't really—_Well, there's no dunking in girls' basketball.'" Jessica raised an excellent point—discrimination against girls' athletics in most schools is so institutionalized it is not even given a second thought. That is just how it is done. That was something for me to chew on for a while.

Gender matters.

LaShawna Lindsey, assistant principal at Madison Junior High School, described the importance of having female assistant principals when dealing with female students. "Well anything that deals with a female do. Female searches, dealing escorts, when we go into a female locker room, I do all those because and it's vice versa, he does the other. So and that was one of the reason[s] why they got a female was because of those issues. I mean we had an issue the year before I got here where the nurse searched a young lady and the young lady had the stuff in the bra and the nurse searched the bra area and they were like we need an administrative female cause then the nurse didn't know what to do after that point and so anyway."

Not wanting to talk just about discipline and gender, I pushed LaShawna to think deeper. I asked, "Is there ever a time when gender plays a role like maybe you're talking to an angry parent or teachers, I mean have there ever been any issues with your gender in terms of other aspects of your work?" LaShawna thought for a moment. "Well there's a few male chauvinists. Men in this building who have to, they have to deal with the issue of dealing with me however, having a female principal she's alleviated a lot of that. Most of the issues here is race, it's race. Age and race I'd guess, first of all, I'm young and then I'm Black. So how dare this young

Black person tell me what to do?" Noting the fire in her eyes, I asked, "How do you deal with that?"

Slowly shaking her head, LaShawna said in a small voice, "Most of the time I just ignore it. I've dealt with it so long . . . it becomes an . . . it just it is what it is.' "That's horrible," I said. Frustrated, LaShawna sighed. "It's just, it's just a, just let it roll off my shoulder most of the time. Some days it will get to me but not often. Most days it's just like . . ." Her voice trailed off and she gazed out the window.

"I am on to something!" I thought. "Is it overt or covert? I mean is it in your face and blatant or is it subtle and sneaky?" I questioned. After a moment, she brought her gaze back to me at the table and said, "It's subtle and sneaky. And so if you're not used to seeing it you don't notice it and I think that's why the kids get so upset is because it's so subtle and sneaky. But I try to tell myself it's because they're ignorant and they don't know any better. 'Cause if I think it the other way than I'll react. S . . . and you have some that's open to it but not many." Confused, I asked, "Open to what?" She said, "I mean you have some that are just open and blatant. You know they just . . ." As LaShawna's voice trailed off, it hit me. What she described is institutionalized racism.

Jeff Jones shared his uneasiness with gender in his work as an assistant principal. "Well, gender is another, being a male and also having taught kindergarten for multiple years. Gender is always on my mind. So as far as how we deal with that is with a female AP and a male AP, is when there are dress code violations we have it where Melissa will work with the girls and I'll . . . We'll work with the saggy pants and the boy things. I don't feel comfortable talking to a female about her outfit—so—and if I did I would have a female with me, but I don't, you know usually we just split it up and Linda knows that I'm not going to . . ." Interrupting Jeff, I finished

his thought. ―Say anything to the girls in short skirts?" I caught myself a moment too late. ―Why did I interrupt him?" I asked myself. ―Yeah, exactly. I don't think—that's just not something I rea—I want to put myself . . . No. I don't think it, other than, those basic things like that or anything for discipline that would involve anything of a sexual nature, you know, but really gender I feel like I see more boys for discipline than I do girls, but that's the, really, that's not that girls can't do the same things that the boys do to get in trouble but really I think it's probably just heavier boy-wise but I don't think, I don't see it as a factor on my day to day . . ."

Deborah Watson agreed that gender does play a role in the way she does her job at Carver High School. ―It does. I think since I started eighteen years ago to compare it to today it's not a prevalent but there's always that once again it should be a man behind that desk than a female. It's always that type of thing. A simple little thing like a walkie-talkie I might get on and say I don't know somebody _I need your assistance.' No feedback. Mr. Clark gets on there [and says] _Mrs. Watson needs your assistance,' they're there immediately. And that just I think is that's that gender that happens you know. And maybe 'cause somebody says he has a more powerful voice than I do but you know my voice is pretty strong but . . ." ―I'll say!" I agreed.

Deborah shook her head. ―Yeah. No so, it's something. . . . It plays, it plays a role it does." I pushed her to go a little deeper on the gender issue. ―Do you ever feel like your gender makes it difficult to . . . to do this job?" Deborah shook her head. ―No, I think it makes it easier to do the job. Because I now here's the switch roles I can get away with saying certain things that Mr. Clark or the other gentlemen can't say." Intrigued, I questioned, ―Like what?"

Deborah said, ―Well we were just talking about with the girls you know and how they dress and stuff like that, so that's a big issue. With the gentlemen, I can say you know it's not really appeasing to a female to see your underwear showing. Mr. Clark would have to approach

it a little different. They're just it seems like with the students that they're actually more willing to take criticism from a female than a male. And I don't know if that's because the roles at home where Dad's always [in] charge and Mom's not. I don't know but to me I usually get kids that cooperate more with me and let's take it even in a fighting situation sometimes that fight doesn't occur because I'm there as female and the boys especially. Now the girls a little different but the boys they're in fear of my safety but I think that if it was a male there and I know that they'll just start swinging anyway. You know 'cause they figure you know male swing, female they're not so likely to swing as fast. In fact, Lisa, I've had young men basically save me from being hit because they'll step in front and pull that kid down to hold them because I'm trying to you know break it up and they come to my assistance faster than they would if it was a male. A lot of times when the male[s] are involved, they don't get the assistance that I get. I know it's . . ." I interrupted, "From the kids?" Smiling broadly, Deborah said, "From the kids but that's true and even though I tell them, 'No that's not your responsibility,' they'll say, 'I just couldn't see you trying to do that Mrs. Watson by yourself.' So that you know that helps." I was impressed. This was a new scenario for me.

Deborah continued on to describe an initiative she created this school year to educate female African American students about peaceful means of conflict resolution. Deborah gushed as she described the program. "This year I developed a girls group, PASS it was called, and so I kind of work with that group and getting it organized and everything. PASS is Promoting, Advocating, Sisterhood in Service . . . and Service I'm sorry. And so that young group is some at-risk girls that we work with and we talk about how to face problems and make them more or negatively turn them into to positives. We did a video . . . I have to show you at the finally at the end of the year we had a video that we made and it's called 'too pretty to fight.' So and we talk

about young ladies bullying each other and how to solve that and it's talking about . . . Yes, okay it's too pretty to fight or . . . Yeah and it's real short this year because it's just something that we started but we're going over the summer and in the fall and elaborate on that and make it longer. We want to try to get it to be about anywhere from ten to fifteen minutes. Right now, it's just forty-five seconds but it was, it was a great opportunity to get the girls involved and they enjoyed. And I, oh yeah and I had the opportunity to work with another young lady from the housing authority and she helped. Actually, she was also cosponsor of the group." "Cool," I said. This is a real example of using your gender and race to impact students in a positive way.

Anthony Brown agrees that gender impacts his work. "Yes. It does impact my work. I have to be cognitive of how I interact with the young ladies. I think that me being a male allows me the opportunity to connect better with other young men. As far as with adults, I think my gender impacts it because I also have to watch how I approach certain conversations with female faculty. Because I have a very friendly personality and I never want a faculty member to misconstrue it as me flirting with them or anything like that, even if it's a conversation that has to do with expectation. I want to make sure a teacher—I think my gender plays a role because I don't want to come off as an angry Black man, that angry Black man syndrome. So I think gender plays a role in that particular case as well."

Job Satisfaction of Assistant Principals

While the role of the assistant principal is a complex and sometimes frustrating one, overall, the administrators in Pleasantville have favorable experiences and are satisfied with their jobs. They often cite the need to give back to the community and build relationships with students and staff and a deep sense of fulfillment as their most satisfying aspects of their work.

Melissa Smith, the 42-year-old assistant principal at Hancock Middle School, absolutely glowed when she talked about her work. "Gosh, I think working with, just working with the kids. And when the kids even though you're giving out discipline they still respect you, like you, care about you or talking with you in the hall. They may, they see that you're being fair and you care about them. Working with the teachers and coming up with those good positive strategies to use in a classroom to help that kid. Building the relationships with the faculty and staff."

Thomas Walker had a similar view and was satisfied with his work, both personally and professionally. He smiled and said, "I think it's knowing that or hoping that the conversations that you have with teachers and students [are] going to impact the greater community and the greater world. So if you're having a conversation with a kid about their future career path and what they're going to do and what their goals are and trying to set those things up for them I think that's personally satisfying for me. Just to know that you've impacted a student in a certain way or particular way. And I think that's, I think that's what we're here put on earth to do. And us you know, have that special side of us that can do that and work with kids every day. I think and hope that it's I guess changing the, I hate to say changing the culture of a school but working together with a group of people to accomplish some type of task. Or the thing we call school. And using what I know from my course work and trying to implement some of those things and practices for the better community here at Carver. And some of it goes in with what I said, personally satisfying. But I think professionally satisfying is knowing and setting those kids up to be successful in their future careers too."

Bob Flanders, assistant principal at Oaklawn, finds satisfaction in the relationships he builds with the administration team and faculty. He smiled and said, "Professionally? I would, I would have to go back to two aspects you know. Professionally working with a dedicated group

of administrators is extremely satisfying. Being able to impact in some form or fashion teachers' development as professionals. And, and, I mean I don't mean that from a negative standpoint you know impact that you know. I get to know my teachers too. What they're interested in. Their families. Their children. Their spouses. What they're interested in. Trying to you know. If or when a problem arises always approaching it from the standpoint of what is best for the development of the teacher not necessarily that this is a negative."

Praise from teachers.

Jeff Jones described the satisfaction that he receives when he is complimented by his teachers. Smiling broadly, he said, "When a teacher will say, you know, I saw you doing this the other day, and you know just give you a compliment. When a teacher give[s] me a compliment. I saw you shoveling snow out there the other day and, you know, that's you know you didn't have to do that, but you did. You know, those kinds of things that—when a teacher notices you doing something in and appreciates it and. . . . Just things like that. That is professionally, that's the . . . you know."

Sean Schneider finds happiness in his work through reflection. "Professionally satisfying part of my work, I guess, this is personal, I think. And I'm not sure this answers your question. But I think for me the most satisfying thing that I can do, and it's been like this through my entire experience in education, is going back and doing some serious, and it's just thinking. But it's the personal reflection on decisions that you made and determining where I've made mistakes. And then when I deal with a similar situation later on, dealing with it differently and seeing a different outcome is professionally very satisfying for me. And it's that internal piece of me that kind of recharges my batteries at times. But I am a reflective practitioner. And if I'm not, then I need to find something else to do. Do you feel like that answers that question? I'm

also someone who enjoys praise." Sean smiled and looked a little embarrassed by his last comment. I nodded in agreement.

He continued, "I think the most personally satisfying part of my job so far was doing all the work that led up to the evaluation of the teachers on my caseload or the teachers that I work with. I'm having the PBTE [performance based teacher evaluation] conversation, speaking with them about the evaluation process, speaking with them about what was going on in their classrooms, all the great things that I saw, a few things here and there that I thought needed to be different. And then watching that teacher again, after that and seeing the changes being implemented. And then just having a feeling that that's really going to impact one, ten, twenty, over the course of that teacher's lifetime, thousands of students. That is a very rewarding, the most rewarding thing that I've done so far. And, you know what? I don't want to take away from this. There's success stories with students that feel so good. You finally get a breakthrough with a student, and have three great weeks in a row where they couldn't even go four days before without having a problem. That's very rewarding as well. I can't say that that's not. That feels good. Getting a parent that's never been on your side to be on your side, oh that feels so wonderful." Sean's eyes sparkled as he thought back to a small victory. "These are the things that keep assistant principals going," I thought to myself.

Career aspirations.

Most assistant principals enter the profession with higher career aspirations. For some, it may be to a building principalship. Others may desire a central office job. For some, the desire to work with curriculum or professional development at a district level is their goal. Of the 22 assistant principals participating in this study, 18 expressed desire to attain a higher position either in their current district or in another.

Thomas Walker admitted that he does aspire to higher positions in school leadership. He said, "My hope is that in the future would be a building level principal. And right now I hope that to be here in Pleasantville. I think I've always had a desire to go into an inner-city school and work. And work to change the stereotypes that you get from inner-city schools and what you hear about failing schools and working in those schools. To change their culture around and change their maybe practices that aren't working and help them get on the boat to success. I think that's a desire of mine as well in a building-level principal capacity. Superintendent maybe down the future but. I would say yes. I do. I don't think that I am thinking about that right now in any regards. Exposure to that in just being in education and also through course work I think that's a desire of mine but right now I want to focus on the building level and getting adjusted right now to the assistant principal where you're. I don't want to get too far removed from the kids right now."

Sean Schneider also hopes to one day run a building of his own. He said, "I'm an assistant principal because I want to be a head principal at some point, when the time is right. I've got a lot to learn. I've got a lot of work to do and a lot of time to put in before I feel like I'm competent at my current job, before I'm ready for that. And so, my aspirations are to ultimately become an instructional leader in this school. And I see the principal job as the instructional leader of the school. That's my professional aspiration. I don't see myself, at this point in my career, anywhere else besides an assistant principal, a teacher, or a head principal, ideally."

Bob Flanders, while passed over for promotion, maintains principalship as his ultimate career goal. Emphatically he said, "I want to be a building—or I will be not I want to. I will be a building-level principal of a high school. I mean I . . . initially when I first started out, it was I want to be a building-level principal. And as I have been at middle school, junior high, and high

school as an assistant, I really know that being a high school principal is my, the pinnacle of my professional aspirations."

Larry Barnes reflects about his career aspirations. Having served as an assistant principal, principal, and superintendent, he has experienced all levels of school leadership. He smiled and said, "At this point I'm very satisfied with what I do. And again I have been in almost, I guess I have been in every level of administration. And I find that this to be where I want to be. I definitely do not foresee myself going back into a central office situation." Surprised, I said, "You don't?" Larry shook his head. "No. And I if, if I did move on it would probably be to a principalship. At this point I'm very satisfied." Pressing a little more I said, "But at some point maybe a principal?" Shrugging his shoulders in a casual fashion, Larry said, "Mmhmm." I said, "So my next question was did you aspire to a higher level leadership like in a district like central office, superintendent, assistant superintendent?" Larry vehemently said, "At this point no. I did at one time and I've done that and don't really want to go back." Interesting that he had achieved the highest level of leadership and walked away from it.

In sharp contrast to her male counterparts, Becci Jonmeyer expressed tremendous regret that she did not pursue higher levels of leadership earlier in her career. With a heavy sigh she said, "I hoped, only again because I'm too old but I started this all too old, if I would have started earlier I would have probably gone from counseling to become a director of counseling or a principal much earlier because I would have gotten much more enjoyment out of trying to figure out again a way to connect the passion and leadership versus just the discipline part which kind of becomes kind of draining emotionally at times. So if I had started earlier yes. I enjoy being a coordinator when I was although a lot of that job as a leadership position was hard because it was a constant fight of being a coordinator, in a district where that was not valued. And that would

be any district because of budget cuts. But what I hope to aspire to do is either use my health and my leadership stuff in some other capacity whether it's not-for-profit or working for like the MASSP [Missouri Association of Secondary School Principals]or teaching at a college setting, you know, I'm hoping that I can use my skills in some other capacity when I retire in a couple years."

Summary

The stories of the assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District are a snapshot of the stories of thousands of other assistant principals across the country. Each day numerous scenarios play out in our public schools. Assistant principals are there to ensure that students learn, schools are safe, and education happens. It is a difficult, sometimes frustrating and thankless job, yet one that can offer great rewards, both personally and professionally.

Through the study of their roles and duties and training and preparation, we gain a deeper understanding of their work. The challenges assistant principals face are many; looking critically at these challenges will better inform not only our understanding of the role of the assistant principal, but also how their work can be better supported. Finally, looking at assistant principals' job satisfaction helps us to understand where this position can lead future administrators.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion of Findings

Introduction

The roles of assistant principals are complex and challenging, but necessary for the operation of secondary schools across this nation. This descriptive study focused heavily on APs‘ descriptions of their work, identification of themes, and interpretation. This study explored not only the work that assistant principals do and their career aspirations, but the ways in which APs manage this complex job. An additional theme that emerged from the study was the role race plays in the work of assistant principals. In addition to the interview transcriptions, existing literature, and my professional and personal experiences as the researcher, basic demographic and achievement data were also utilized to draw conclusions and make inferences. In reviewing the transcriptions, connections were drawn with the literature review and individual school‘s data.

My study captured the stories of secondary administrators from Pleasantville School District, a midsized school district in the Midwest. This exploration into the lives of APs provides a snapshot of their daily lives, which enables us to understand their work as well as help universities to better prepare future educational leaders. This chapter discusses the findings of the study either consistent with or contrary to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the implications of the findings for practice and preparation of assistant principals, and recommendations for future study on the topic.

Consistent with the literature reviewed, data collected in this study supports the exploration of three broad categories of assistant principal responsibilities, illustrates gaps in their training and preparation, and outlines the numerous challenges they face. A unique finding

emerged from the use of CRT to examine APs‘ work—race impacts the work that they do and is a factor in their overall job satisfaction.

Summary of Findings

In Pleasantville APs’ work entails management and administration and little focus on instruction.

The role of the assistant principal has been invisible until very recently, as assistant principals often work behind the scenes to ensure schools run smoothly. As the literature in Chapter 2 illustrates, assistant principals struggle to strike a balance between the various administrative duties required of them by superintendents, principals, parents, students, and district office staff (Michel, 1996). Assistant principals usually champion the norms and rules of the school culture, maintain a safe instructional environment, and manage student conflict and discipline (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). The many and various elements that make up an assistant principal‘s work are complex and intertwined (Hausman et al., 2002). The administrative responsibilities of the assistant principal have traditionally been of a different nature than that of the school principal (Chan et al., 2003; Kelly, 1987; Marshall, 1992; Panvako & Rorie, 1987). Reminiscent of Harry Wolcott‘s (1973) ethnography of the principalship, the assistant principal is consumed with largely managerial duties, rather than actual leadership activities. Typically, the duties of assistant principals focus on the mundane, yet necessary, managerial tasks, including student discipline, supervision of hallways and lunchrooms, chaperoning dances and co-curricular activities, scheduling assemblies, meeting with parents, and, when the principal is away from the building, performing the duties of the principal (Holmes, 1999; Johnson, 2000; Kelly, 1987; Williams, 1995).

There is no conclusive evidence of a specific set of duties and responsibilities for assistant principals. Rather, there exists a broad set of duties that includes ―discipline, attendance, student activities, staff support and evaluation, building supervision, guidance, co-curricular activities, athletics, community agencies, master schedules, fill in for principal, building operations, budget, reports, transportation, curriculum, communications, cafeteria, school calendar, and lock and lockers" (Scoggins & Bishop, 1993, p. 40). Most administrators begin their careers as assistant principals (Austin & Brown, 1970; NASSP, 1991). Because assistant principals' duties are often assigned by the school principal, the assistant principals have little opportunity to develop as instructional leaders (Gorton, 1987; Marshall, 1991). This power differential can relegate APs to mundane and lower profile work, while protecting the principal's hold on the reins of the school. For many, the assistant principalship has served as a stepping-stone to the principalship (Chan et al., 2003; Hartzell et al., 1995; Marshall, 1992; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993; Winter, 2002).

The assistant principals' duties in the Pleasantville School District are consistent with those described in the literature in Chapter 2 and recapped above. APs in PSD described their duties as discipline and student management; building management; and minimally instructional leadership. Missing was the emphasis on community relations that the literature review described. Moreover, the minute amount of time spent on instructional leadership relegates it to merely a platitude, not a major portion of APs work. Literature that calls assistant principals instructional leaders is fiction in PSD; the current reality of the structure and responsibilities of assistant principals in PSD do not allow time or mentoring toward instructional leadership. As the findings will illustrate, most APs in the PSD are operating at what could be viewed the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy—survival. APs in PSD spend the bulk of their time working to

maintain a safe learning environment and rarely find the time to apply their skills and training in the area of instructional leadership or truly impact changes for school improvement.

Discipline duties consume most of APs' time.

When I began analyzing transcripts, I was not surprised to find that the majority of the assistant principals viewed themselves largely as disciplinarians in their buildings. To get an idea of their duties, I specifically asked the APs to estimate a percentage of how much of their days are spent on student management or discipline; the majority of the APs agreed discipline takes up most of their time. Specifically, of the 22 assistant principals participating in the study, 19 (86%) said that student management and discipline consume the bulk of their days. Several reported that as much as 85% to 90% of their time was eaten up by student management and discipline. These statistics are congruent with the findings of Weller and Weller's (2002) study of 100 assistant principals, which showed that overwhelmingly, discipline was their most significant duty, with 77% ranking it as their main focus. Table 2 in Chapter 4 illustrates the distribution of duties by percentage of time spent by APs in the Pleasantville School District, according to various grade levels. As the table illustrates, the amount of time spent on discipline decreases only slightly from middle school to junior high and decreases only a little more from junior high to high school. Middle school APs reported that an average of 79.17% of their time is spent on discipline and student management. Junior high school APs also reported 79% of their time spent on discipline and student management. Discipline and student management consumed less time for assistant principals at the high school level. High school APs reported that 69% of their time is spent on student discipline, which is 10% less than their middle school and junior high counterparts. Assistant principals variously reported feeling ~~"t~~rapped," ~~"o~~verwhelmed," and ~~"n~~ot prepared" for the amount of discipline involved in their jobs. Assistant

principals reported that the overwhelming emphasis on management and discipline often led to becoming cynical and negative. These highly educated and trained individuals are often relegated to the role of warden in their schools, enforcing discipline policies in which they have little or no voice. Because so much time is spent on management of students, the truly important work of instructional leadership is neglected.

Instructional leadership is pushed to the back burner in PSD.

Hausman et al. (2002) claim that assistant principals would like to be more involved with instructional and curricular issues, but that is not common practice in all areas of the country. Consistent with this literature, APs in PSD expressed strong desire for more active roles in instructional and curricular issues but state that their discipline duties prohibit them from having the time necessary to be effective in those areas. Because assistant principals‘ duties are often assigned by the school principal, the assistant principals have little opportunity to develop as instructional leaders (Gorton, 1987; Marshall, 1991). The assistant principals in Pleasantville School District expressed strong desire to be effective instructional leaders. Yet, most of those interviewed reported that their time was loosely organized so that they could respond to emergencies and discipline matters within a moment‘s notice. Several APs expressed resentment that they were not in control of their time. They shared frustration that many times they were not able to do the things on their lists for the day due to problems popping up, saying things like, ―my day exploded" and ―had to put out fires." This finding is consistent with that of Marshall and Hooley (2006), who found that assistant principals‘ days are unscheduled so they can respond quickly when crises erupt. When time is eaten up by student-management issues, assistant principals have less time to work on curricular innovations, mentoring of teachers, or even proactive discipline (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Remarkably, all APs in this study

expressed discontent with the current structure which focuses primarily on management, yet all accepted this structure as just how it is. There appears to be a lack of self-efficacy for APs as instructional leaders or as anything other than managers. It would seem logical that APs in PSD would push for change and restructuring of the job duties to allow for more time to do the important work of instructional leadership and curricular support. However, most are resigned that the status quo is the only way to work.

Illustrating the challenge of finding time to be an instructional leader, Larry Barnes explained how carving out time to get into classrooms must be done. He said,

> And you just have to make time to do classroom observations. You just have to block a set of time during the day to do those kinds of things. And it's very difficult to do it but just organizing your time on and [having] a routine throughout the day has been helpful.

Focusing their efforts on discipline and student management leaves little time for other important aspects of the role of APs. All APs expressed the need to spend more time on instructional leadership, however. When I asked each specifically to estimate how much of their time is spent on instructional leadership, most reported ~~"n~~ot as much as I'd like," ~~"n~~ot enough," or ~~"v~~ery little." As Table 2 in Chapter 4 shows, the amount of time spent on instructional leadership is consistently low across the Pleasantville School District. Middle school APs reported the lowest levels of time spent on instructional leadership with an average of 9.17% of their time devoted to instructional leadership. Junior high APs reported slightly higher levels of time spent with an average of 9.8% spent in instructional leadership roles. It is important to note that all high school APs listed instructional leadership in their duties, even those whose main responsibilities were athletics or activities. High school APs reported slightly higher amounts of time spent on instructional leadership, with an average of 13.18% devoted to working with

teachers. With more than 85% of APs‘ time spent on discipline and other duties, there is little time remaining for instructional leadership. In the PSD, the ever-widening achievement gap should be a catalyst for the restructuring of the APs‘ duties. Remarkably, the topic of restructuring roles of APs has not been identified as a strategy to address the achievement gap. Refusing to explore restructuring the role of APs into primarily instructional leaders illustrates closing the achievement gap is not a true priority for the district. PSD is wasting the valuable resource of these highly trained professionals who are not able to find time to use the skills and training they received to improve schools through best instructional practices.

Job descriptions in PSD contradict literature: They are clearly defined.

Literature indicates that the role of the assistant principal is largely undefined and vague. Several authors have noted the various roles that assistant principals assume and the frustration involved with the lack of a clear job description (Celikten, 2001; Black, 1980; Kriekard & Norton, 1980; Kindsvatter & Tosi, 1971; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Norton & Kriekard, 1987; NASSP, 1991; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993). APs in PSD reported having clearly defined job descriptions that focus primarily on management duties, not on instructional leadership.

Assistant principals across Pleasantville School District reported that other duties included building maintenance, substitute teachers, master schedule, crisis management, committee meetings, and student athletics and activities supervision, in addition to meetings with parents, team members, and counselors. Three assistant principals in the study described their jobs differently, as exceptions to the rule, concerning duties involving student discipline. These assistant principals‘ responsibilities consisted primarily of athletic director duties and student activities. In these unique roles, removed from student management and discipline, one might posit that these assistant principals would then fill the role of instructional leaders. However, all

three assistant principals reported that they did not spend as much time as they would like to on instruction, due to the demands of their athletic director and activity duties. Moreover the three APs felt that their athletic director and student-activities duties consumed as much time as the other APs spent on discipline. The logistics and coordination with other teams or activities associated with their roles were their primary functions. On average, middle school and junior high APs estimated they spent a little more than 11% of their time on duties other than discipline or instructional leadership. In sharp contrast, high school APs estimated that they spent 36.6% of their time on such other duties. Based on the data collected, I inferred that instructional leadership from APs is not a priority for the PSD.

Contrary to the literature, assistant principals in the PSD noted that their duties were sometimes randomly assigned, not based on their particular skill sets or personal preferences. Instead, duties were typically passed down from one AP to the next to fill that vacancy. The lack of participation in selecting duties was most pronounced at the middle and junior high school levels across the Pleasantville School District. Assistant principals at this level were often handed the list of the previous AP with no consideration given to their personal strengths, prior knowledge, skills, or other experience. As a result, assistant principals reported feeling that they are not getting the training and preparation necessary for them to move into a building principalship. These duties focused primarily on managerial aspects of keeping their schools running smoothly and did not provide opportunities for APs to blossom into building principals.

APs in Pleasantville School District all had varying job descriptions, as noted above, very few had input into their responsibilities. In fact, only 6 of the 22 APs reported that they selected their duties. Roughly 73 percent of APs in the study reported their duties were assigned to them. The lack of choice and voice in selecting duties often leads to frustration, decreased job

satisfaction, and a sense of powerlessness. Remarkably, four APs were assigned duties from other APs in their buildings. Recall in Chapter 4, Dominique Sullivan selected the duties she would keep and deflected those that were less appealing to her junior colleague, Sierra O'Malley. Over half of the APs studied (12) were assigned duties from their building principal without regard to their experience, skills or talents. The remaining nine schools' decisions about duties were also top-down, but did minimally consider each APs strengths and talents. I noticed an inconsistency in the duties of three APs whose primary duties were either athletics or student activities. These three APs had no disciplinary or student-management responsibilities, yet their time on instructional leadership were equal to or less than their counterparts who had discipline responsibilities. Perhaps the scope of athletics and student activities is so vast that it requires most of their time. A small group of APs did report having choice in their responsibilities. Assistant principals at Carver High School felt they had a say in their duties. Only APs at Carver High School described a collaborative process, recalling their administrative retreat, in which each listed their strengths and skills. The administrative team then reviewed these and divided up the duties based on strengths and interests. While Marcus Clark felt that he was arbitrarily assigned the math department to supervise, he did feel that his knowledge of construction, building operations, and maintenance made him a natural choice for the facilities responsibility. The Carver administrative team is the only team in PSD to model skill-based democratic decision making.

Based on the data reported by the APs in this study, I concluded that building principals control the duties of their assistant principals. Moreover, principals control the opportunities that APs have for other forms of leadership. APs who feel trapped by discipline are those who are not given opportunities to grow as leaders in other capacities. Principals control which APs are

allowed to participate in district level activities, chair certain committees, and develop other leadership opportunities for certain APs who aspire to the principalship. The power imbalance of the principal over the AP perpetuates a negative cycle in which only a few select APs are experiencing the types of leadership that would help them attain a building principal position. It seems most principals in PSD do not provide their APs with such opportunities. This lack of equity among APs also leads to decreased job satisfaction and bitterness of those who lack the sponsorship of their principals.

Coursework does not adequately prepare APs for reality of the position.

As the literature in Chapter 2 noted, many believe that assistant principals are not adequately prepared for their work not only due to lack of experience in curriculum, instructional leadership, and teacher supervision but also because of the lack of opportunity to perform many of the responsibilities associated with the principalship (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Hartzell et al., 1995; Kelly, 1987; Koru, 1993). The study found that most APs in the PSD felt their training prepared them more for school leadership roles than for the actual job of being an assistant principal. Many of the APs in PSD reported their training in college was disconnected from the reality of their job. In fact, most felt that the training they had was designed for principals and had little to do with the daily operation of schools, discipline, or evaluation of teachers. Also missing from preparation programs is training in student management, diversity and social justice, and instructional leadership. The literature review describes three preparation modes for assistant principals: university trained, home-grown, and professional development. Most APs in PSD identified primarily with the home-grown model, while some identified as university trained. Professional development was not represented in PSD as the mode for developing APs.

The fast track: Home-grown and groomed assistant principals.

The home-grown model for developing APs is popular in PSD. In this model, teacher leaders and aspiring administrators are identified and selected by the principal. They are encouraged to take on administrative roles in their buildings, as they work toward degrees in school administration. As the literature notes, in some districts aspiring administrators are given roles as apprentices, working closely with current assistant principals who show them the ropes of the job (Lovely, 2001; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). PSD utilized this model to grow assistant principals who were trained by working as administrative assistants, running summer school, or taking on other leadership initiatives in the PSD. These on-the-job experiences serve to educate aspiring APs about the reality of the position, in terms of the nature of the work, the constant juggling of responsibilities, and the inevitable stress associated with the job. Reflecting on Table 3 in Chapter 4, I noted that 10 of the 22 APs in PSD consider themselves home-grown. Home grown APs reported their on the job training was their most valuable education and preparation for their roles as APs. Renee Moore described the training she received while working in summer school. She said,

> So I got my specialist degree with my principal certification. And I didn‘t feel like I learned a lot about being an assistant principal through that program, but I did learn a lot through being Becci‘s assistant principal at Carver summer school and then the Oaklawn summer school, which I was everything.

Recall Thomas Walker‘s similar experience, training by working summer school as both an AP and principal. In response to the question about his most important training experience, he reflected,

> Probably my experience of summer school principal. I served as summer school principal the last two years, and the year before that as assistant principal. And so really as assistant principal, I saw a lot of, kind of what I do now, student management and discipline and then the principal role, more of the larger role, the larger, you know, building community, culture building that goes on with a school.

Both Renee and Thomas were selected and encouraged into administration by their building principals. Each worked to gain experience in summer school. Both, having completed those opportunities are now APs after only a couple of years of experience with administration. Thomas had not yet completed his training or licensure when he was hired as an AP. This fast-track to administration is common place in PSD, where certain individuals are groomed for leadership positions. Home-grown assistant principals feel better prepared to deal with the challenges of their job due to their on-the-job training and familiarity with the policies and procedures of the school in which they work.

University trained APs lack pragmatic knowledge necessary for the job.

Marshall and Hooley (2006) noted that university programs train aspiring administrators in areas of instruction, leadership, finance, etc., using professors who have limited experience as practitioners. The current course work aspiring administrators take is disconnected from the reality of the job; no course work is taught on the daily duties that assistant principals face, such as discipline, student supervision, ethics, and staff evaluation (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Nine of the 22 APs in PSD were prepared solely through a university, meaning that they sought licensure for administration without being encouraged and supported by their building principal. Those nine comprise 41% of all secondary assistant principals who participated in the study. The interviews with APs in PSD concur with the literature in that the connection from theory to

practice is weak at best. The nine APs who consider themselves to be university trained commented that their preparation was more appropriate for a building-level principal, not for the assistant principal.

Surprising is the lack of connection to the work that APs do to the MO Step Standards and the ISLLC Standards. These standards are widely accepted as the measures by which administrators are licensed and evaluated. In Missouri these standards guide the training that aspiring administrators receive at the university level. However, in practice, the bulk of APs work focuses on MO STEP 1.3.3 and ISLLC Standard 3 which deals with the management of the organization for a safe and effective learning environment. APs rarely receive the opportunity to share their vision for the school, nurture school culture, or develop community relationships. APs would agree that they operate in an ethical manner, which meets the MO STEP 1.3.5 and ISSLC Standard 5. While APs work is impacted by the larger political context, they do not have the time to focus on the sixth standard in each which is the responding to and influencing the larger political, economic, and legal climate in which they work. This is seen as the principal‘s responsibility. This analysis of the MO STEP and ISLLC Standards serves to illustrate a fundamental problem with the role of the assistant principal: there is a huge gap between theory and practice in the day-to-day work that they do.

Often, APs enter their first job thinking of school mission, vision, and culture, only to be confronted with the reality of discipline, student management, and the drudgery of the daily grind. APs in this study remarked that university training did not prepare them adequately for a number of functions of their job. APs in this study craved more pragmatic application of knowledge, such as scenarios and in-basket activities where they were required to solve multiple problems simultaneously. APs most frequently cited as deficits in their training: the amount of

time required to be effective, how to evaluate teachers, how to establish relationships with students and parents, how to understand the complex issues of school law, how to deal with student discipline, how to deal with the tremendous stress of the position, and how to acquire the cultural proficiency to deal with people from many diverse backgrounds. Many APs experienced frustration and discontent with the reality of the position because it varied dramatically from the preparation that they had had in the university setting.

As stated earlier, the training APs receive in their preparation programs is often drastically different from the realities of their work. Reflecting back to the narrative in Chapter 4, I am struck by first-year AP Thomas Walker's description of how the instructional leadership theory he learned at the university did not effectively translate into application. He said, "You know in our course work they can talk some about teacher evaluation but you have to really get into the district and look at what [does] our evaluation system look like and how do you carry it out." Dan Connor, AP at Oaklawn, shared a similar frustration with the lack of training for teacher evaluation, saying

> Kind of classroom observation stuff could have been pumped up I think, just kind of looking at that and how that fits into the big picture, would have been helpful. Lacking was, I think, kind of the instructional leadership. Getting into the classrooms, working with teachers, that was it for me. Nothing, nothing prepared me for this job, what I went through because it's so different.

As described in Chapter 4, APs in PSD lack cultural proficiency and often feel ill-prepared to deal with the diversity of their students and families. The lack of cultural proficiency and multicultural education has a negative impact on APs' job satisfaction as well as their ability to close the achievement gap. APs are challenged to relate to people of different cultures without

any formal training to do so. Silvia Douglass came to administration from a position as a teacher leader in another school district. She entered a university program in hopes of gaining the necessary skills to be a successful assistant principal. She reflected on her training and said,

> I have to think about where do I still feel most challenged? You know, I think one of the hardest things about being an AP is dealing with people and dealing with discipline and dealing with parents from many different backgrounds. You know, I don‘t think they do a nice job in training because we spend, in our role I think as APs, we spend a lot of time counseling kids, counseling parents, you know, counseling teachers. And what training do they actually give you for that piece? You know, I don‘t think that there‘s formal training in our programs for that.

There is a tremendous need for APs to have pragmatic, skill based training for their work. University programs should model real world and problem based activities to help aspiring administrators be prepared for their work. Recalling Hancock Middle School assistant principal Jeff Jones‘ positive experience from his university days, I noted the practical training that he received at the University of Florida during his certification for administration. He stated,

> My favorite, or the most, the one that rang true was when one of the professors—the exercise was where we sat at a desk and we were given a list of tasks you know you‘ve got a parent that needs to be called right away, and it‘s just a list, and you‘re working through the list but as you work through the list he would come around and put something else on your desk . . . and I was like ‗Oh my gosh, how do you do this,‘ but it was the most real . . . I thought that was you know and you really didn‘t appreciate it until you got out and you realized that‘s really what it was like. . . You have to be able to prioritize and juggle and . . . yeah and it‘s all fires and triage.

The simulation of the multitasking required in the role of the AP should be an essential component of AP training programs. This fast-paced, multitasking work is a familiar routine for many assistant principals across the country. APs are not only administrators, but master jugglers as well. Real-life scenarios are an important teaching tool to be used in preparation programs for aspiring administrators and should be implemented in all training programs.

Professional development in PSD is nonexistent or irrelevant.

Specific, targeted professional development is a necessary part of the continued growth and training of assistant principals to meet the demands of a rapidly changing demographic, as well as the constantly changing legal and political landscape of education. However, many districts only provide a superficial treatment of issues relevant to the work of assistant principals (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Assistant principals believe they do not receive enough in-service training to prepare them to move easily or smoothly into the principalship (Chan et al., 2003; Hartzell et al., 1995; Kelly, 1987). As APs in PSD reported, their days are consumed with student management and discipline, leaving little time for anything else. Assistant principals do not set their own schedules and often do not have time to attend professional development training. There is almost no time for reflection and little opportunity to collaborate or solve problems with others during the workday, making professional development a challenge (Wong, 2004). Assistant principals in PSD have very few professional development opportunities, which is consistent with the literature reviewed. The only time built in to the school year to bring APs together to share strategies, best practices, or to collaborate on pressing issues in the PSD is one day in August before school starts. During these meetings, there are presentations provided to administrators about topics for the upcoming school year. However, there is no formal collaborative or collegial opportunity for APs to work together and learn from each other.

Additionally, some who request to attend professional development are denied the opportunity to do so because their principal will not approve the time off or expense associated with the professional development. Recall Carver High School assistant principal Deborah Watson's frustration with the lack of professional development described in Chapter 4,

> [In my previous district] I had the principal he . . . pulled me in and said you know we're going to work together and I'm going to teach you, you know this, this and I'm going to make sure you're a hell of [an] assistant principal and your job is to make me look good. I said, _Okay.' He was quite the character, but here nothing, no. In fact, in [PSD] I never was allowed to go to a conference until Ron came four years, five years ago. . . . They [building principals] did send the teachers so I was pleased with that but as assistant principal, no, I didn't go."

Until very recently, PSD did not provide opportunities for APs to attend professional development. Even now, those few opportunities are limited to APs who are personally selected by the principal or even the Assistant Superintendent to attend, thus perpetuating the _groomed and fast-tracked' APs. PSD appears to ration the professional development opportunities for APs whom building principals sponsor and personally mentor. While strides have been made over the last five years to provide some opportunities, issues of inequity persist in determining which APs are allowed to participate.

Lack of mentoring leads to burn out and job dissatisfaction.

Assistant principals need mentoring, support systems, and training to help them grow as instructional leaders, teacher coaches, and program developers (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Kelly, 1987; Lile, 2008; Ylimaki, Jacobson, & Drysdale, 2007). Assistant principals in the PSD reported a significant lack of available quality mentoring. Referring back to Chapter 4,

according to Table 3 some APs reported that they had a mentor assigned to them –on paper" but that no real mentoring took place. Only 45% of secondary APs received a mentor in their first year on the job. Of the APs at the middle school level, 50% reported that they did not have a mentor assigned to them, even as a first-year assistant principal. The remaining 50% only had a mentor for their first year in the role. Junior high–level APs reported that four of the five (80%) participating did have a mentor, a slightly better rate, but only for the first year. At the high school level, 55% of APs reported having a mentor for at least the first year. Informal mentoring at the high school level accounted for 27%. Of the high school APs, 9% reported having no mentor or that their mentor was ―on paper only." Obviously, the lack of quality, systemic mentoring of young assistant principals is a factor their job satisfaction. Working in isolation and spending so much time operating on the negative aspects of school (discipline), assistant principals may become cynical (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Most APs in this study expressed a strong desire to network and collaborate with their colleagues across the district. APs in PSD expressed the need to talk with others who understand the work that they do and who share similar challenges and frustrations. In essence, APs in PSD would like a support group to help each other through particularly challenging and stressful events. Remarkably, the leadership of the district has not taken steps to establish such a group.

To illustrate this point, recall Jeff Jones' description his frustration with the lack of support and mentoring he received as a new AP in PSD,

> Basically I had . . . another assistant principal that I—that was at that school—that became a principal, who—we're good friends—so I you know that was . . . but that was something that I sought out. So it wasn't set up for me. I wasn't given a mentor . . . So

> I didn‘t have a mentor, but I had that friend who had recently become a principal. . . Someone that‘s looking out for me. I wasn‘t getting . . . I would have liked to have had someone from this district, because I‘m coming from [outside]…We do things much different and I don‘t know what the Pleasantville Public Schools‘. . .way. Well, that‘s the thing. . . just even as simple as some acronyms that come up that people take for granted that you know what they mean. I thought PBS was public broadcasting system.

Jeff‘s comments illustrate the importance of a mentor in helping a new administrator navigate a new school system. PSD has not been effective in providing mentors for the new APs across the secondary level. Through the course of my study, I gathered numerous examples of PSD‘s failure to provide mentors for new APs. Another example of PSD‘s failed mentoring program was reported by Becci Jonmeyer, who expressed her frustration with having a mentor ―on paper" only. She resented her mentor, who learned from Becci, took her materials, and provided no feedback or support to her. She stated,

> I had a person who was assigned to me by another, from another building who came out here once and I made up my professional plan and then that was all that was ever done with it . . . I mean she actually came away with stuff that we had created out here to take back to her school. I‘m not complaining because I‘m glad I didn‘t have to go through a lot of little hoops to make someone happy to say that I had a mentor because I feel like the people that mentor me were people who were already in the building and kind of knew how things were running and I think the hardest thing was just learning and this is not someone you need to get a degree from.

As described in Chapter 4, the lack of mentoring can impact APs‘ future successes as building administrators. I reflected on Deborah Watson‘s lack of mentoring as a factor in her inability to obtain a principalship. She said,

> I don‘t know, I just think more of that once again the book studies of making sure we know the role of the principal or assistant principal and then leading up to the role of the principal. Someone helping me [to] understand the importance of what I need to be doing as assistant principal in order to take that next step. I think that‘s what I missed. I missed [that] here in this district.

The lack of mentoring for new APs is a liability for PSD. It is critical for APs to have a trusted mentor to dialogue with when challenging issues arise. Putting new APs out on their own without a support network further isolates them and creates stress with the job. All new APs should to participate in a mentoring program for their first two years as required by the State‘s Department of Education for licensure. I interpret PSD‘s failure to comply with state rules and the needs of APs illustrates a general disregard and lack of appreciation and care for APs in the PSD.

Multicultural training and cultural proficiency is missing from preparation programs and mentoring in PSD.

While preparing to become a principal, assistant principals should be prepared to lead in an era of increasing national diversity (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). The historical practice of selecting administrators who are similar in race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender to those with whom they will work has perpetuated the gap in opportunities for people of color, women, and those with different sexual orientations (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Stovall (2004) writes of the ever-silenced issue of race, advocating for school administrators to forge

ahead with a social-justice agenda to provide better education for all students, especially those of color. A few administrators in PSD studied diversity, social justice, and multicultural education during their preparation, but the majority of participants had no formal education in these areas. Mentoring in the area of diversity and multicultural education is lacking in PSD. As Table 3 in Chapter 4 illustrates, 68% of the participants reported they had no training in multicultural education or diversity. In addition, 27% report having only one course or some readings related to the topic. Only one AP of the 22 reported extensive training in diversity through an urban leadership program. The PSD has provided minimal opportunities to study diversity through a book study, but overall, diversity training does not exist in this district.

The support system for administrators in PSD is flawed, at best. One might argue there is no real support system for APs in PSD. Not only are new APs left to fend for themselves, but they are also not provided opportunities to learn and grow through professional development. Grossly lacking is the need for multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy for APs. Further discussion of mentoring can be found in the recommendations section of this chapter.

APs face many challenges.

Assistant principals are often placed in difficult situations that create frustration, stress, and burnout. The literature tells us that assistant principals are constrained by federal mandates, local board policy, and tremendous responsibilities to ensure the safe and effective daily operation of our nation‘s schools. With a steady stream of problems to solve and challenges to overcome, assistant principals have a tough job. In this study, several challenges were identified by assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District, including lack of power, stress and

burnout, difficulty in communicating with constituents, time management, and the achievement gap. The literature review supports these themes as consistent with prior research conducted in other studies and described in Chapter 2.

Assistant principals lack of power to make large-scale change in schools.

Assistant principals often feel a greater sense of alienation and powerlessness than do their principals (Calabrese & Adams, 1987), perhaps because they have little input as to their responsibilities and duties. Assistant principals experience a lack of power and turmoil when central-office policies are handed down without their voices being considered in policy making (Hausman et al., 2002). Assistant principals are the middle managers in schools. As such, they are often trapped between the wants of teachers and what is best for students. I call to mind the story that Carver AP Anthony Brown told in Chapter 4, summing this catch-22 up well, saying,

> The most challenging part of the job is the fact that I've never realized how powerless the position really is as an assistant principal. You're placed in the middle of everything and it's impossible to make everybody happy. I thought it would be a position where we would discuss our practices, discuss how we can make them better and everybody would be on the same page for students, but it's not always like that. I guess is realizing how powerless the position is and that particular sense as far as policy making is concerned because I feel like I have a lot of input in policy, but I don't have—when it comes to the outcome of the policy I don't have a lot of weight and then dealing with adult problems.

In essence, their hands are tied by their building principal, who controls their duties, opportunities for leadership, and the professional development opportunities they receive. APs also feel a lack of power to provide lasting solutions for problems. This powerlessness is frustrating for AP Sean Schneider. Recall in Chapter 4 he stated,

> I think the most challenging part of my job is not be—in most jobs, there's an answer. There's something that—every job presents problems. And you have to work a solution. I found that a lot of the solutions I've attempted to come up with this year have failed. And that is a discouraging part of my job sometimes.

Lack of power in this sense leads to frustration and stress for APs.

Additional frustration comes with the lack of power to impact district policies. Deborah Watson noted APs' lack of power to influence central-office policy. She said, "As far as central office, I don't think I have hardly any input there." APs are often trapped in middle management, lacking the power or voice to impact district level policies. APs also lack the power to change the structures that perpetuate the difficulties in their work. The principal controls their duties, the opportunities that they receive for additional leadership opportunities, and the resources for professional development. The lack of power of APs in PSD is a common theme among administrators. When APs feel that their voices are not being heard, discontent and frustration grow.

Stress and burnout are high among APs, both nationally and in PSD.

Assistant principals have a stressful job to manage the most difficult discipline challenges and mediate some of the most serious conflicts that surface among teachers, students, and the community (Koru, 1993; Marshall, 1992). Due to the strenuous demands of the job, assistant principals often experience deep frustration (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Many assistant principals realize their responsibilities cannot be accomplished by working the regular eight-hour workday and have increased their workweek to meet all the obligations the position requires (Breeden et al., 2001; Portin et al., 1998). Assistant principals can experience tremendous stress and burnout related to their work, which is consistent with the literature reviewed. APs in PSD

struggle to cope with the stress and balance their work and personal lives. I reflected on Chapter 4 where Larry Barnes, the 55-year-old assistant principal at Lewis High School, described the physical and mental stress of the role of the assistant principal. He said,

> I think the, the stress and how you—and when I'm talking about stress, it wears you down listening to what these kids have to go through on a daily basis. And I think that affects you both mentally and physically. And you have to consciously keep yourself upbeat and positive about your job. Because so much of what you're dealing with is a negativity that you really have to make a conscious effort to remain positive. I have a separate life away from school. That's my main strategy. You know I do—there's a couple of people that I socialize with that I work with, but very few. And my life away from school is totally separate from school. That is important to me.

The stress of the job can lead APs to seek respite in various ways. I recalled Becci Jonmeyer's comment about drinking to deal with stress when she quipped,

> Well I drink wine! Seriously though I have, I have drank more [since taking this job] on this job then I have ever drank my entire life and not because I'm like, I would never have thought about going home and having a glass of wine in the evening on any of my other positions and maybe it's because I had kids at home, I never drank in front of my kids, but I really feel that, yeah this is so different where some days it's so stressful, it's like that's an unwinder. I exercise and I try not to bring the work home.

I remembered Deborah Watson's story of family and collegial support coupled with reflection to manage stress. She gave me advice about dealing with the stress of the job. She said,

> I think you gotta have a great support system and I have one. You know I've got family, I've got friends, Mr. Clark and I are always kicking over things of, Oh we should've done that, oh we didn't do that right, oh did you know we did' . . . I even we give each other compliments and things. So you gotta have a good support system and the best thing for me that some people can't do is to reflect.

Almost all assistant principals in this study said their family support system helped them deal with stress. While drinking to deal with the stress of the job is not a healthy option, Becci's story calls to mind the seriousness of the pressure and stress of the job of APs. Others used exercise, prayer, alcohol, and other diversions to mitigate the damage of stress. PSD does not offer any stress reduction programs, gym memberships or other techniques. Left on their own, APs must find outlets for the stress or risk burning out. There is a tremendous need for change in the structure of the position to decrease the stress the APs deal with each day. Stress reduction programs that are offered in some workplaces could be a significant benefit for APs.

Communication with constituents is framed by administration and management.

Assistant principals spend much of their time talking to people. Assistant principals naturally work with parents and students in activities, sports, and extracurricular activities. In this role, assistant principals become the positive face for the school and put forth the image and message consistent with the values and culture of the organization (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002). In this capacity, assistant principals focus on communication and develop the ability to listen (Fulton, 1997). However, the reality of the AP position in PSD finds that there is little opportunity for positive communication with constituents when APs deal primarily with discipline. Contrary to the literature, communication with parents concerning student discipline is a difficult and challenging aspect of assistant principals' work. Recall in

Chapter 4, Bob Flanders, Oaklawn AP, described his frustration with parents who are adversarial about their child and discipline. He said,

> There was a very small percentage [of parents] that well you know that's _I don't agree with this.' [When I was] an administrator new to administration I felt you know that I needed the parents to get to the point where they understood and accepted _We're holding your child accountable for their behavior. That has nothing to do with we don't like him or we're going to hold this against him.'

Other difficult conversations happen when APs try to reshape teacher behavior. As Anthony Brown, AP at Carver High School described in Chapter 4, he struggles when dealing with uncomfortable situations created by teachers in which parents are involved. He explained,

> Like sometimes when teachers are the impetus for behavioral problems that our students have, supporting teachers even at a time when they make a decision that you don't feel is worthy of support, being a go-between [for] teachers and the parents of students who are angry with our teachers. So we're talking about difficulties.

Here Anthony illustrates the feeling that many APs have of being caught in the middle between the teachers and the parents, all of whom presumably want what is best for children. An opportunity to talk with parents has now become a skirmish over something that a teacher has done. Mediating the two sides requires administrators to walk the tight rope of administration and management, rather than collaborate with parents. APs are frequently searching for ways in which to involve parents and build support for schools, yet when dealing with discipline issues, it becomes a challenge.

Dominique Sullivan, AP at Walters Middle School, struggles to find ways to work with parents and constituents. She said,

> The most challenging part is determining how to incorporate parents, how to help parents be more involved or involved in ways that support the students learning in school on a regular basis. I get a variety of parent involvement from the parent who's the helicopter parent who you send something home and they're all over it to the parent who I've sent—we've sent letters, we've called, and we get no response whatsoever, and as a result, the child has no motivation. You know, there's no incentive, you know, no follow through in the home.

She described familiar scenarios for APs: some parents are too involved in their child's schooling, while others remain disengaged in their children's education. The key is to strike a balance in the middle of the two extremes. Balancing the two extremes is tricky and requires much practice. It is a skill that is developed over time, not taught in preparation programs. This skill could be enhanced by working with veteran APs who have years of experience and multiple strategies from which to draw.

There are not enough hours in the day for all that needs to be done.

Koru (1993) posited that assistant principals' time is consumed by caretaking, discipline, and even clerical and custodial duties. These duties are congruent with those described by Thompson and Jones (1977), who found that assistant principals were performing duties that were clerical rather than operating as members of a functioning administrative team. This literature supports the reality of several assistant principals in the PSD, who must do their own data entry and secretarial work. APs at PSD feel their talents are being wasted on issues that are not important, but a necessary component of the job. Recall how Larry Barnes, assistant principal at Lewis High School, oozed frustration with the demands on his time. He growled,

> [Learning to manage time] that's very hard. And you have to be very organized. Any time that you get a couple of minutes you've got to work with your discipline, entering discipline, [and] those kinds of things. And don't let things go. And you just have to make time to do classroom observations. You just have to block a set of time during the day to do those kinds of things.

Larry spends some of his time entering discipline and doing secretarial work because he does not have a secretary. He is a highly educated and trained professional who has been relegated to doing menial secretarial work, which consistent with Koru's (1993) findings. While PSD claims budget cuts require APs to make sacrifices, this example sends the message that the district does not value Larry's time or expertise.

APs must also learn to work in short bursts, because they are not in control of their day. Thomas Walker described the frustration that he had as a new assistant principal trying to manage his time while spending his days reacting to crises. As a new AP, he is still in the teacher mindset of having a daily lesson plan to follow. However in the AP role, he has learned that he can operate with a general of list tasks, but cannot predict what emergency or discipline will erupt at any moment. His inability to check off items on a list has led to decreased job satisfaction. He remarked, "I wasn't satisfied with myself because I wasn't getting my list or to do things done like when you were a teacher." Many of the assistant principals in PSD shared his frustration on organizing their time loosely and responding to crises. Anthony Brown called it "putting out fires," which is an accurate description of how APs spend their days. This mode of responding to emergencies also contributes to stress and burnout and prevents APs from obtaining job satisfaction.

PSD's achievement gap: If we don't acknowledge it, then we don't have a problem.

While the responsibility for improved academic performance as dictated by the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) ultimately rests on the school principal, the recent trend has been to enlist the assistant principal to help shoulder the burden (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Tirozzi, 2001). This additional responsibility has significantly changed the work of administrators (Ervay, 2006). Success as a school leader is now commonly associated with meeting accountability standards (Michael & Young, 2006). Stovall (2004) argued, "High-stakes testing replaces socially conscious, community-centered approaches and becomes the measure for student excellence" (p. 8). Obviously, the increased pressures of high-stakes standardized testing coupled with numerous leadership and management tasks are contributing to increased instability in school administration, leading to the pitfalls of middle management (Hargreaves, 1997).

However, in contradiction to the literature, only a handful of the APs in PSD were focused on the achievement gap. One of the few, Anthony Brown was very concerned with the achievement gap and was searching for ways to close it. In Chapter 4, Anthony described several elements of the problem saying,

> We have a lot of gatekeeping strategies that we may not even know are strategies in education, and we discuss every single day like the achievement gap and suspension gaps, just all these different gaps and why minorities fall into these predicament gaps. We do it without the understanding of society and the role that society plays in how we form schools, and we also do it without the understanding that—actually we understand it but without taking account—accounting for the issues that some of our students are facing. We actually make it worse for a lot of our students when we're talking these particular gaps because we have a lack of training and diversity, and sometimes we're

afraid to have these different types of conversations about what we need to do to better support these students that are falling into these gaps.

Another good example of an AP concerned with the achievement gap is Saul Hollingsworth, who reflected on NCLB and its impact on his school. Recall in Chapter 4 he described using data to track student performance and grades and correlated that data to the discipline referral data in his building. He is a maverick in PSD, compiling and tracking his own data. He does not have district support to assist in that endeavor. He has illustrated the problem in his building is that African American students are underperforming compared to their white counterparts. Moreover, he illustrates the impact that poverty has on student achievement. He is diligently trying to close the achievement gap in his school, almost single handedly, yet the problem is system-wide. Saul needs support from outside his building, but not much is available. I provide a deeper discussion of diversity training and the achievement gap is contained in the recommendations section below.

Job satisfaction varies widely by duties of APs.

The literature review in Chapter 2 illustrates overall job satisfaction among assistant principals. Armstrong‘s (2004) study of Texas assistant principals showed assistant principals were generally satisfied with their jobs. Waskiewicz (1999) found that strong relationships with supervisors and the opportunity to use their skills to improve the school increased assistant principals‘ job satisfaction. Assistant principals feel more satisfaction in performing duties requiring expertise and administrative ability than those requiring clerical ability (Croft & Morton, 1977). Many who enter administration do so to positively impact the lives of children (Potter, 2001; Torgerson, 2003). The APs in PSD generally match the findings of this literature.

Most report that they are generally satisfied with their careers and report that working with students is what motivates them to continue in the profession.

Working with students give APs sense of personal satisfaction.

APs in PSD derive personal satisfaction from a wide variety of things, including seeing students make positive improvements, building relationships with students and families, seeing growth in teachers, and working to make their schools better. Across the three grade levels, working with students to make positive choices was the most common response of APs when questioned about personal satisfaction with their career.

As noted in Chapter 4, most APs in PSD derive personal satisfaction in working with children to make positive changes in their behavior and lives. I remembered Silvia Douglass describing how her work with students creates a sense of personal joy and fulfillment, when she reflected

> The most personally satisfying would be getting to work with kids and getting to help them make better choices and to hopefully reap the most that they can out of their school experience. So I enjoy the guidance or counseling piece really of what I do.

Similarly, APs enjoy the relationship aspect of their work with students, parents and teachers. Thomas Walker described finding great satisfaction in building relationships with people. He noted, ―I think it's knowing that or hoping that the conversations that you have with teachers and students is going to impact the greater community and the greater world."

I am reminded of the powerful story that Marcus Clark shared about the relationship aspect of his job, which gives him tremendous personal satisfaction. He said,

> My personal relationship with my students. I don't have any biological sons. But I have sons. I have young men that call me on my birthday. I have a couple of young men that

> call me on Father‘s Day. I have young men, that when things are going bad, they call and talk to me. Periodically I get phone calls or I run across students in the community. . . [students will say] ‗I enjoyed it, and I still try to do some of the things that you showed me.‘ That was the greatest compliment that I could ever get for this job. And it‘s those compliments that I look for, that I long for. It requires me to really step outside of my comfort zone and try to have a complete understanding of what my students need. So, things like that is the greatest compliment that could ever be paid to me.

When analyzing the stories the APs in PSD tell about working with students, it is easy for me to see why these professionals remain in the field. APs in PSD state that they are having a positive personal impact on the lives of their students. Shaping the lives of young people is a powerful reason to continue in a job that requires so much personal sacrifice and stress. The APs in PSD feel that the benefits to others outweighs their own personal sacrifices.

Professional satisfaction for APs found in service and leadership.

Professional satisfaction is closely tied to personal satisfaction of assistant principals in the PSD. APs derive professional satisfaction from a variety of areas, including service, being part of positive change and instructional leadership in their schools.

In Chapter 4, Dominique Sullivan described the professional satisfaction found in service to families in her school. Her passion for service epitomizes what many APs feel when helping others. She stated,

> When I have helped. Because our job is about services. And when I have served someone effectively and as a result there‘s been a change. I develop . . . relationships with people and you never know how those relationships are going to come back to you.

> But to see the smile on that mother‘s face and the gratitude and how many times she said she was gratified, you know.

Professional satisfaction comes in the form of seeing the fruits of their labor pay off when actual change occurs. Thomas Walker reflected on the satisfaction he experienced during his first year as an AP. He said,

> I hate to say changing the culture of a school but working together with a group of people to accomplish some type of task. Or the thing we call school. And using what I know from my course work and trying to implement some of those things and practices for the better community here at Carver.

While time does not permit Silvia Douglass to work as an instructional leader as much as she would like, she has found professional satisfaction in the limited work she has done with teachers. She reflected, saying,

> Professionally I would say I really enjoy working with teachers and helping them to see different ways of doing things. I wish I had more time to do that. So I guess I think instructional leadership is really where I am as far as wanting to be, like, my reason for wanting to be a principal would be to get more time to be able to do that. But I really would like to have more time to really be in classrooms and go to PLC meetings and be with teachers in that area because that‘s what I did most of my life.

APs who are able to assist teachers to grow and have a positive impact on the culture or instructional practices in classroom express satisfaction with their work. These narratives give real examples of the ways in which APs achieve professional satisfaction in their stressful and often chaotic jobs.

APs in PSD aspire to higher roles in the school district.

The largest motivator for those entering the assistant principalship is the opportunity to climb the career ladder of school administration and advance their careers (Marshall, 1991). Assistant principals often feel that they are not adequately prepared to take the next step in their careers when they are seeking a principalship. Due to a lack of practice and experience in curriculum, instructional leadership, and teacher supervision coupled with the lack of opportunity to perform many of the duties of the principalship, many believe assistant principals are not adequately prepared for this role (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001; Hartzell et al., 1995; Kelly, 1987; Koru, 1993). In a manner consistent with the literature, 18 assistant principals at the secondary level in the Pleasantville district declared their desires to lead a building as principal at some point. Yet few, if any, reported getting the training and experience necessary to make the move to a building principal. There is a mismatch between the experience and opportunities available to APs who wish to pursue higher roles of leadership. PSD has no training or professional development to grow and promote from within their own ranks. As a result, the district often hires from outside the district for building leaders. Only those APs who self-identified as home-grown and sponsored by a superior have demonstrated an ability to gain promotions and move up the ladder more quickly than those who were solely university trained. Recall Sierra O'Malley's story in Chapter 4, in which she states that she has been personally selected, groomed and placed in every position she has ever had in the PSD. She has been fast-tracked into leadership positions based not solely on her skills, but on her personal relationships with others in positions of power. She acknowledges this fact, openly stating, "Lisa everything has kind of been, I guess I'm one of those, kind of been done and handed to me." This type of insider privilege is not available to all home-grown administrators, as is evidenced with

Dominique Sullivan's inability to advance beyond the role of the assistant principal. Her dissatisfaction with her inability to gain a building principalship is described in the following section.

Dissatisfaction, stress, and burnout are high among APs who feel trapped by discipline and management.

As the literature indicates, the changing role of the assistant principal is contributing to a decline in morale and enthusiasm for the position (Lile, 2008; Peterson & Kelley, 2001) since many of the duties are not identified as tasks that contribute to job satisfaction (Rayfield & Diamantes, 2004). It is not uncommon for assistant principals to report role conflict and overload from the job responsibilities that require so much time, energy, and emotion that little is left over for their personal lives (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Assistant principals are challenged to fill multiple roles all the time and have little say in the duties that they must perform. This often leads to job dissatisfaction, stress, and burnout.

Data collected in Pleasantville School District corroborate the literature. In a particularly poignant conversation, Jeff Jones, assistant principal at Hancock Middle School, expressed the frustration that he felt from much of his work being with discipline and student management. He described being "trapped by discipline" so that he could not leave the office and get into classrooms. Sierra O'Malley described her frustration with her colleague Dominique Sullivan's selection of the more prestigious and high-profile duties for herself, leaving Sierra with low-profile "grunt work" like building cleanliness and attendance. Dominique, the senior AP on the team, assigned duties to Sierra, thereby controlling the experience and visibility Sierra could gain in her role as AP. While these examples might seem petty and insignificant, they have a cumulative effect on APs sense of satisfaction and self-efficacy. Like drops of water in a bucket,

slowly accumulating over time until they overflow, the stress, dissatisfaction, and burn out APs suffer takes a toll on them. The result is increased dissatisfaction with their work and some who even plan to leave the field.

Race Plays a Large Role in the Work of Assistant Principals

While race was not the primary focus of this study, I am interested in the race play in the work that assistant principals do. Working from the CRT premise that racism is thoroughly embedded in American society and schools, the study wove questions about race into the sub-questions of the study instead of asking specific initial questions about race. These questions were designed to unmask hidden biases and reveal racial prejudices in the Pleasantville School District that impact not only assistant principals but also the students whom they serve. CRT draws attention to race as well as the notion that racism is deeply embedded within the framework of American society (Parker & Lynn, 2002). I intertwined questions dealing with race in relation to discipline, professional experience, student achievement, and promotion, as well as discrimination participants have experienced due to race or gender. By carefully weaving questions about race throughout the study, I was able to gain honest and unguarded responses during the interviews that shed light on the racial tensions in the Pleasantville School District.

Administrative training programs do very little to train students to have an understanding of racism and race relations in American schools (Lopez, 2003). Preparation programs have a duty to raise questions of race and racism to aspiring administrators as well as an ethical responsibility to create critical practitioners who will lead our schools (Lopez, 2003). Based on this need, I selected a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens through which to view my study. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to the field of education, providing a basic

understanding of the racial discrimination that impacts the educational experiences of children of color. CRT contends that racism is inherent in American society and is central to the functioning of the laws and policies of the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT labels certain educational policies and practices as inequitable and unjust in regard to students of color (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT analyzes existing power structures through the lens that racism is institutionalized and pervasive in the dominant culture in the United States (Jay, 2003). Delgado and Stefancic (2001), Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Parker and Lynn (2002), and Solórzano and Yosso (2000) are noted scholars in the field of CRT who studied education through this lens. Their writing informs my framework for understanding the work of assistant principals in Pleasantville School District.

Race and discipline are inextricably linked to decreased student achievement.

Assistant principals in PSD were keenly aware of race in their work with student discipline. Several APs commented about the overrepresentation of African American students in suspension numbers. While many are aware of the overrepresentation, few APs are actually taking steps to reduce it. As illustrated in Chapter 4, Mike White, AP at Washington Junior High, is one such administrator, saying,

> You know, I think it [race] used to probably play a role. Now, I don‘t think it plays a role at all. It‘s not like I ever considered myself to be a racist person. But when you consider race, I think I used to at least question my numbers, my demographic numbers when it came to suspensions, things like that. I have looked at them the last several years. It‘s pretty consistent year to year to year. Any more, it doesn‘t consciously play any role with me. As far as percentage of people that are suspended or whatever. They‘re consistent my numbers every year or with Washington Junior numbers every year.

> There‘s definitely a gap. There‘s definitely more African Americans suspended, etc. than White children here. But it‘s not out of line, what I‘m doing, with what has happened here in the past . . . or in other buildings for that matter. It‘s pretty consistent with the district numbers. So, I have to admit, it used to play a role with me. Absolutely. Just because whenever you‘re new at this, you know, I don‘t want to be perceived as being racist or whatever. But I don‘t consider that at all anymore.

One must question, _Why doesn‘t Mike consider race in his discipline data now? Has he grown complacent and comfortable with the data? Is there no one to question the data?‘ Renee Moore also notes the overrepresentation of African American students in her school‘s discipline data. However, noting that there is overrepresentation and taking action to change it are miles apart in the grand scheme of how schools are managed. This blatant disregard for the overrepresentation of minority students in suspension numbers should be the first focus in efforts to decrease the achievement gap. One might logically conclude that students who are suspended out of school are not receiving instruction or learning the necessary materials to achieve at a high level, thus further perpetuating the achievement gap.

It is possible that there is no one even looking at the data in PSD. Reports are generated, but not used to inform the practice of administrators. As described earlier, there is no leadership in the area of social justice or equity for diverse populations. In fact, this district professes to want to increase student achievement for all students, yet over a ten year period has made almost no gains toward this goal. The lack of accountability and responsibility for discipline and achievement data is a problem in the PSD. There is little leadership from the Secondary Assistant Superintendent toward decreasing the number of students of color who are over represented in discipline data. Moreover, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and

Instruction has not provided the necessary leadership on how to increase African American student achievement. As the achievement gap widens, children of color are left behind, while White hegemony maintains the status quo. Without time for APs to collaborate and analyze their data and clear leadership from above to improve the situation, there will be little change in the achievement gap.

Relegating issues of race to African American administrators.

This study revealed that African American APs are expected to handle discipline for children of color in their buildings. Several African American APs reported that they are often asked to deal with racial minority students because of their own race. White APs are reluctant to engage in certain discipline issues for fear of being labeled racist by students or parents. As LaShawna Lindsey eloquently described her challenges working as an African American AP at Madison Junior High School, there is problem with race in her school. As a Black female, she brings a different perspective to the position than her White male counterpart. LaShawna noted that students in her school play the race card, saying,

> There are a lot of things that students use as a crutch because of it and often sometimes, he [Saul] has to come to me and say you know are you sure this is what I should be doing or what do you think. Because you‘re not so sure that they are honest about what they‘re doing or about what they‘re saying. Some of them know how to play the game. Yeah, they know how to play the race card and so they use that to an advantage.

Because Saul, her colleague, doesn‘t recognize his own white privilege, LaShawna feels that she must educate Saul and her faculty. She has accepted that her place in this school is to educate others and try to stop racist practices, saying

> I do think though because I'm the only African American, I'm the African American assistant principal [and] all the race issues come across my plate. Well when it comes to questions about being racist or when it comes to issues that relate to race, I think the parents and the students feel more comfortable coming. I used to wonder because I hated working here why I was here and then started thinking well maybe I'm here because God wants me to help because some of the things that teachers do in this building and in other buildings are racially offensive and I don't know that they know that they're racially offensive.

LaShawna identified other examples of teachers lacking cultural proficiency by doing things that are racially offensive, without even being aware that they are doing so. The recurring theme of administrators and teachers in PSD lacking cultural proficiency is a powerful one. It perpetuates White hegemony and the negative treatment of racial minorities. This issue must be addressed before any real progress can be made in decreasing the achievement gap and the overrepresentation of African American children in the discipline data.

If we ignore the problem of overrepresentation of racial minority children in discipline data, maybe it will go away.

For some administrators in PSD, pretending that there is not a problem with the over representation of racial minorities in discipline data allows them to carry out their normal daily routines. This color blind approach is detrimental to the racial minorities and further perpetuates White hegemony and the unjust treatment of students. For example, AP Leslie Fredrickson was aware of the disproportionality of African American students in her building's discipline data. When she raised this issue, her building leadership and faculty chose to ignore the issue of race, and instead, focus on the issue of gender. She said,

> You know, I don‘t want to say that teachers are being discriminatory to students, but our data shows that more of our minority students, of course, are being referred. Well, our minority males are the highest. And then our [minority] females are second, when you look at it that way. Even though the population here at Johnson of minorities is probably thirty percent, they are responsible for, I think when we last looked at it, up into the seventy percent of referrals.

The problem Leslie describes is not uncommon. Nationally, there has been research done illustrating the overrepresentation of racial minorities in school discipline data (Noguera, 2003). However, ignoring the problem and pretending that it does not exist is not a solution. Deflecting the issue of race and repackaging it as a gender issue is disingenuous and will not lead to any real change or progress. Moreover, the subjective nature of many discipline referrals in PSD is cause for concern too. Leslie acknowledges the subjectivity in discipline referrals, stating

> And most of it is disrespect, is what our teachers are coding. You know, they feel disrespected that the kid didn‘t do what they said, or something like that. And most of it is disrespect, is what our teachers are coding. . . It‘s nothing that we‘re looking at the building that we need to address. We‘ve talked about it at our expectations that it‘s something we need to face. And there were disagreements even there because some wanted to address it, and some didn‘t. Some wanted to look at what we could make a change in. Their thoughts were gender over all, females, looking to kind of, not balance, but be, really evaluate as a staff where we‘re writing referrals gender-wise instead of racial. . . But I think that‘s because they don‘t have to face within themselves in case they‘re being, not racist, but discriminatory due to color.

While Leslie's own analysis identifies the problem of racialized disciplinary practices, she is reluctant to actually name it as such. Leslie's story not only supports the need for cultural-proficiency training for teachers and administrators in PSD, but also identifies some clear issues surrounding the subjectivity of discipline involving students of color. I will discuss these topics in more detail in the implications section.

Administrators' work to end disparity and move toward social justice for racial minorities is challenging.

Saul Hollingsworth is concerned about the overrepresentation of racial minorities in his discipline data. He regularly analyzes his data and is trying to make a difference and make positive changes toward social justice and end the disparity of minority overrepresentation. He said, "Okay we also look at what is there any disproportion regards to how many Black students will receive a minor referral compared to a direct office referral versus our White students receiving minor referrals versus a major referral." His careful analysis of discipline data gives him a tool with which to talk to his faculty about the disproportionate number of racial minorities in their building's discipline data. He guides the discussion around reflective questions about the data and gathers feedback from his faculty. Saul is using this data to teach his faculty how to analyze and reflect on it to improve their practices.

Saul is working to educate his faculty on the disproportionality of African American students being sent to the office for discipline. He is working to eliminate this disparity. Moreover, Saul is concerned with the disproportionality and its impact on achievement data. He said,

> I personally take a real hard look at disproportionality in this and I generate reports for our building based on certain factors of that. For example if you take your F list and then

> you break that down by ethnicity, by number of suspensions, by number of missed days and so on and you break that you show that but you also need to show that in terms of the proportion of their enrollment in the building.

By looking at the achievement data correlated to their suspension and discipline data, Saul is working toward the elimination of the achievement gap for racial minority students in PSD. His work is a model for other APs in PSD. The district should be using his work as an example and training other APs to look at data this way. However, as described earlier, PSD does not allow APs the time to collaborate and share information and strategies. PSD is wasting a valuable resource within their ranks by not allowing APs time to work on this problem together and learn from each other.

PSD lacks cultural proficiency in instruction, discipline, and perpetuates racial stereotypes for African American administrators.

As noted earlier in this paper, PSD is woefully lacking in cultural-proficiency training for administrators. As evidenced by the examples provided by Leslie, LaShawna, and Saul, teachers in PSD are lacing in some basic cultural competence. PSD has minimally acknowledged the issue of race through a token 45-minute workshop held for all administrators during mandatory professional development held in 2010. PSD hired an expert to present the issue of racism in schools as the need to have fearless conversations about race. A brief overview skimmed the topic, yet the lack of time allotted for the session is telling of the districts‘ priorities and value for the topic. This overview session did little to scratch the surface of the topics of race, hegemony, White privilege, and the discrimination that is pervasive in the American education system. Moreover, the session failed to show what steps could be taken by administrators to combat the

problem. In fact, other than making some people uncomfortable for a short time, the session had little or no impact on the business as usual of PSD.

Through my research, I have come to believe that cultural competence and multicultural education are essential components of building a good administration and school. Sadly, in some buildings, the hatred and racial stereotypes are deeply entrenched. Recall the narrative Dominique Sullivan in Chapter 4, which clearly shows that teachers in her school are lacking cultural proficiency and may even be openly biased against administrators of color. Dominique's experience of being rated poorly on her evaluations due to her culture as a Black woman is shocking. Dominique was tearful as she shared this story of the comments made on her yearly evaluation completed by her faculty, stating

> I need to _be quieter'. . .maybe it's someone [who] can't take this type of African American lady, that I'm not a quiet, shy, meek in any way, shape, or form and most of the people that you encounter you know who are like me, people who aren't like us have difficulty. Maybe that isn't a racial thing but everything that was pointed to in my 360 survey, it gave me pause, why so personal? Why so personal?

She felt personally attacked based on her race and gender, and rightly so. This example raises questions about the teachers in her building. What training have teachers had in cultural competence or multicultural education? Why are teachers openly biased against an African American female AP? What support is the district giving to Dominique to help sustain her and lift her up after such hateful evaluations? Does PSD see these evaluations as negative reflections on the AP or on the staff? All of these questions beg further study.

Racial stereotyping was not limited to Dominique. Chapter 4 illustrated racial stereotyping of both Marcus Clark and Anthony Brown. Recall Marcus Clark reflected upon the

role race plays in his daily work. His experience tells him he is often stereotyped based on his physical appearance. He is a very large, imposing Black man, who has been chastised for intimidating students and parents. He said

> You know, people say because I speak direct to things that can be intimidating. They say my size would be intimidating. And based upon the stereotype in our society, when a Black man of my stature starts speaking directly, people instantly become intimidated. So are they becoming intimidated because I'm speaking the truth, or are they looking at the exterior factors? It's a combination of mainly both, but I would have to say . . . the scale's got to lean towards the racial issue.

Marcus is not alone in his frustration of being stereotyped due to his race. In Chapter 4, Anthony Brown described his experience of racial stereotyping in his role as an assistant principal at Carver High School. As a young African American AP, he has battled both age and racial discrimination during his first year on the job. Due to his race he believed teachers had different expectations for him. He said,

> They expect you to be first of all a good manager as opposed to an instructional leader I think. So they expect you to manage discipline. You find that people expect you to connect most with people who are African American, even though there are so many different aspects of culture today that go into understanding people and connecting with people. I feel like—and I don't know if it's more so on my race or my age but I feel like people question my ability to do the job . . . there's a trust issue missing so I haven't built that trust, but it could also be my age or it could also be my race and the culture that I come from because just being young myself I have a different culture than a lot of the

> teachers that I evaluate. I can't pinpoint and say that—which issue it is that's causing the trust issue.

Anthony's frustration with being classified as a disciplinarian because he is Black is strong. He wants to be perceived as an instructional leader, but as a first-year AP, new to the building, he has met with some staunch opposition. He has been stereotyped to be the person who deals with the Black students who are discipline problems, yet he wants to be much more than that. Marcus' and Anthony's experiences raise questions about Carver High School and PSD. What support does Carver or PSD provide to recruit and sustain male administrators of color? Does PSD believe that these men should be relegated to taking care of the discipline problems dealing with racial minority children in the school? What will PSD or Carver do to change the perceptions of the teachers regarding race and administrators? These are important questions left unanswered by this study and should be examined in the furture.

Saul Hollingsworth examines cultural proficiency at Madison Junior High through his building's discipline-referral and achievement data. His strategy is to get his teachers to recognize and accept what their data shows. He states

> You know that's a big piece because many times they're in denial but if you've got that evidence base and it's there and then they can see that and then provide them the instruction to help them improve their strategies. And we have to identify where their areas are where they're struggling. Is it unaware of you know, cultural differences for example? Is there something as far as what's going on in the classroom that we can help them better manage behavior in general?

Saul is addressing an uncomfortable issue for the teachers at MJHS. By presenting the actual data, he is shaping opinion with facts, stripping away some of the biases that exist, and working toward equity for all students. His approach is a model for other APs to follow.

Race and promotion in PSD: It's not what you know, but who you know.

Two very distinct examples dealing with race and promotion were gleaned from the interviews. One is the tale of a home-grown African American female who had been groomed and personally selected by the assistant superintendent for every administrative job she had received. The other is the story of a home-grown African American female who had struggled to achieve her current position as AP. One must wonder about the stark differences in their stories.

As described earlier in this chapter, as well as Chapter 4, Sierra O'Malley had been groomed for every position she had received in the PSD. She readily admits that she is home-grown and educated at the local college. She recounts how she got her first break into administration because she is friends with the Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education, Dr. Suzanne Potterfield. Recall Sierra's story in Chapter 4, stating

> . . .you know and then it was at Suzanne's son's engagement party, December thirtieth. I remember and she was like, _You ready to get your boots ready for something else?' She said, _I've got something that I want to talk to you about after Christmas.' I think it's been good, I mean, especially since I think Pleasantville is trying to do more with women and with African Americans as well. That's probably a positive thing for me, you know, that's a big thing when Dr. Potterfield first started talking to me about the job. She was real open, she said, _I'm going to tell you, they need a strong African American woman over there and you're who I want to go,' so you know they kind of hand-picked me.

Sierra‘s story is one of an insider, connected to the powerful assistant superintendent, receiving special treatment and consideration to help her attain her career goals.

One will recall from Chapter 4, in sharp contrast is the story of Dominique Sullivan, who, like Sierra, is home-grown, but is still viewed as an outsider, overcoming poverty to reach her career as an AP. Dominique shared her reflections on her race and how it has impacted her career aspirations. She believes that her race and impoverished beginnings have been impediments to her climbing the administrative ladder in PSD. Moreover, she feels that PSD claims to want diversity among its leaders, but does not actually pursue that goal. She said,

> My race helps me understand that we, while we‘ve come far we still have a long way to go and that I have appreciated every struggle that I had and know that it‘s basically going to be that. I‘ve kind of accepted that it‘s going to be that way for me. That because of my race and because of watching people like me you know wait to be selected sometimes but also struggle it strengthens my resolve to do what I need to do regardless of how others might see me or how others might, where others may see me. . . . I had to fight and always had to fight to get as far as some of my Caucasian peers. I think I would, I fight harder, twice as hard as males do but I‘m realistic to know that they would select a White female to be a building principal before they would select me . . . I have watched in this district many initiatives to try and recruit and retain African American people fall to the wayside . . . I am saying in a sense that if you say that you are really concerned with the number of African Americans or lack of African American[s] who have . . . leadership positions and teaching positions in this district, why not start from within?

Dominique's question is valid. PSD claims to value diversity and seeks to promote from within, yet she has been passed over for promotions multiple times. Dominique's perception of bias is important in that it highlights how an African-American female feels discrimination in the PSD.

Implications

The stories of assistant principals in the Pleasantville School District provide rich details of the daily lives of assistant principals. Their stories serve to illustrate successes and challenges in the profession. Moreover, their stories provide a voice for assistant principals who are often overlooked, not only in the literature, but in education as a whole as middle managers. By examining the work of APs through a CRT lens, a host of issues come to light, including the perpetuation of the achievement gap, discriminatory practices for promotion, and the lack of social justice and equity in PSD. There are important lessons to be learned from their stories, both for research and for practice.

Implications for Research

This study sought to expand the work of Marshall and Hooley (2006) to understand the work that assistant principals do, their training and preparation, the challenges they face, and their job satisfaction. More work is needed to further explore the role that race plays in these areas. Research on the impact of race and gender on the career success and promotion of assistant principals is needed. Large-scale studies are needed to explore the role of race, hegemony, and gender in the work that assistant principals do. Specifically, more qualitative research is needed to capture the stories of assistant principals and their struggles and successes, and to gain insight that can be used to help prepare future assistant principals, change current preparation procedures, and better inform our understanding of what it means to be an assistant principal. The longitudinal study of APs should be conducted nationally exploring the themes

identified within this study. Additional study of APs in a large urban setting could yield important findings too. The field could benefit from the study of urban versus rural APs and the challenges that each face. The study of APs‘ race in the role is also needed. The education community could benefit from studying APs through an international context. There is value in the detailed ethnographic study of one or two APs complete with observational data to help us better understand their work. Studying the training and preparation programs nationally correlated to the success of their candidates and the schools in which they work could provide a basis for a revamping of these programs. Research on the restructuring of the role of the assistant principal is also needed. There is a deficit on research of AP work and student achievement. The impact of professional development and mentoring for APs also beckons study. This is an area which beckons further study. The bottom line is that there is almost no research on APs and they are in a huge pivotal role in the school and should be studied further.

Implications for Practice

The voices of assistant principals in PSD spoke loud and clear about the need for more practical training for the role of the assistant principal. Preparation of APs needs to change. Universities should develop two separate tracks of preparation. The master‘s degree in administration should contain more authentic coursework for aspiring assistant principals. Pragmatic, skill-oriented training in discipline, student management, teacher evaluation, relationship building, communication, and school law is needed in addition to longer internships. The educational specialist program should continue to prepare APs for the role of principal, focusing on building leadership, vision, mission, school improvement, and finance.

Training and preparation of assistant principals must also incorporate cultural proficiency training as well as CRT. APs must be prepared to have courageous conversations and challenge

racism and inequity in our educational system. Assistant principals must understand the concept of social justice and work toward the goal of equity for all students. APs must understand what it means to do social justice in discipline—fair punishment is not necessarily equal punishment. APs must not be afraid to show compassion for students who have tough circumstances when meeting out consequences. The role of the assistant principal as a whole should be reconceptualized to focus time and energies on instructional leadership and less on managerial aspects the position currently possesses.

Focused quality professional development must be available to assistant principals in order to stay abreast of the latest trends in education. Mentoring must be systematic, thorough, and authentic, not simply a form filled out for the state education agency and never revisited. APs must be allowed to collaborate with their colleagues and find time during their busy days to do so. Collegial support is essential for new APs to be socialized into the profession. Both collegial support and collaboration with colleagues can invigorate APs and provide relief from the stress and burn out they experience on the job.

Issues of race and gender must be researched and explored by those in positions of power. It is imperative that racial minorities and women are recruited, supported, and promoted in order to ensure diversity in our schools at a time when our country is growing increasingly diverse.

Practitioners must redirect the focus of assistant principals from student discipline to that of student achievement if we are ever to see a closing of the achievement gap. Acknowledging the impact of racial biases and our own unconscious and engrained biases is but a first step in closing the achievement gap. There is much work to be done and the 2014 deadline of NCLB is looming. We cannot afford to waste a single minute. The role of the AP must change to meet the

needs of instructional leadership if American schools hope to remain competitive in a global economy.

Conclusion

The assistant principal is often overlooked in school leadership literature, yet in recent years has grown to be a vital part of secondary schools (Marshall and Hooley, 2006). As the literature shows, assistant principals have tough and varied jobs necessary to ensure our schools run smoothly. Assistant principals experience frustration and joy as they work with teachers and students to improve their schools and the instruction within. These unsung heroes work quietly behind the scenes to ensure that schools run, education happens, and students and teachers feel valued and respected.

Looking at the work of assistant principals through a CRT lens has unmasked much of the bias, discrimination, oppression, and White hegemony that exist in Pleasantville School District. However, this descriptive study cannot be generalized to all schools. The work of the assistant principal is vital to the success of schools and worthy of more study. This often overlooked position in schools can become a pivotal role in improving instruction in classrooms. Racialization of discipline and achievement data remains a contentious issue in education: it must be acknowledged so that it can be addressed, combated, and defeated. Race is also important in how APs deal with their fellow educators as well as their students. It is time for us to rethink and redesign the role of APs. APs should devote time to instructional leadership instead of management and discipline. To achieve this goal, APs roles must be redefined to that of an instructional leader, rather than a manager of an organization. If the role of the AP remains as the status quo, and focuses on management, then AP training needs to change. More pragmatic application of behavior management, social justice, learning theory and instructional

leadership is needed for APs. It is time for the field of education to recognize the valuable resource it has in the assistant principal. This resource is being squandered on trivial managerial work, when most APs are highly educated and could specialize in school and instructional improvement. It is time for the education community to recognize APs as an integral part of closing the achievement gap and improving our schools.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

Name _____Date_____

How long have you been an assistant principal?

What is your age? Highest level of education?

Q1. What do assistant principals do?

What does a typical day look like for you?

What are your listed duties?

How were those duties assigned?

How much of your work is with teachers in an instructional leadership capacity?

How much of a role (if any) does race play in the work you do?

How much of a role (if any) does gender play in the work you do?

How much of your work is with student management?

How much of your work consists of other responsibilities?

What input do you have in the policies of your school or district?

Q2. How were you trained to be an assistant principal?

What led you to become an assistant principal?

How long did you teach before becoming an assistant principal?

What was the best preparation you had for your role as an assistant principal?

What aspects of your training did not adequately prepare you for becoming an AP?

What (if any) would you change about your leadership training for the AP role?

What type of mentoring or support did you receive upon becoming an assistant principal?

What training (if any) did you receive in diversity during your preparation?

Q3. What are the challenges of being an assistant principal?

What is the most challenging part of your role as an assistant principal?

How do you manage time as an assistant principal?

Has your race, gender, or sexual orientation ever been a factor in your career as an assistant principal?

If so, how did you deal with the bias or discrimination?

How do you maintain a safe and effective learning environment?

How do you manage the stress of the position?

What strategies do you use to avoid burnout?

Do you believe your gender impacts your work as an assistant principal?

Do you find your personal instincts at odds with district policies or practices relating to your work?

Q4. How personally and professionally satisfying is it being an assistant principal?

What is the most personally satisfying part of your work as an Assistant Principal?

Where do you find ways to interact with students in a outside of supervision or discipline?

What is the most professionally satisfying work as an AP?

How would you describe your career aspirations as an assistant principal?

Do you aspire to a higher leadership position within your current district or another district?

How do you find joy in the daily work of the assistant principal?

VITA

Born in rural southern Missouri, Lisa Joplin Nieuwenhuizen was a child of poverty. She used her affinity for school and love of learning to overcome many obstacles in her young life. After graduating from high school with honors, Lisa worked her way through community college before transferring to the University of Missouri-Columbia. At MU, Lisa completed an Bachelor‘s degree in Secondary Education and taught English in rural schools in central Missouri. In 1997 Lisa earned a Master‘s degree in Curriculum and Instruction at MU and began teaching part time at MU through their distance education program. In 1998 Lisa began her career in Columbia Public Schools teaching English and debate. In 1999 she co-authored a successful A+ Program grant for Hickman High School and began the tuition reimbursement program for Columbia Public Schools. In 2004, Lisa completed an Educational Specialists degree in Leadership and Policy Analysis also at MU. She worked as an A+ Program Coordinator, Assistant Administrator, and debate coach until taking her first job as an assistant principal at Rock Bridge High School also in Columbia, where she remains today.

An avid advocate for children of poverty, Lisa continues to work for social justice in public education. When not working, Lisa enjoys time with her family, Tim and twins Lindsey and Madison. She is an avid soccer mom and active in her children‘s PTA.