Pursuing the Principalship: Factors in Assistant Principals' Decisions

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School administrators who are hired to lead and guide schools and districts must possess a number of characteristics that allow them to become successful leaders. The presence or absence of a strong educational leader can make all the difference in school climate and student achievement (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). Educational leaders need to be cognizant of what constitutes an effective leader and which characteristics have the most effective impact on student achievement. Alford et al. (2011) stated, "while principals are engaged in the managerial tasks of the school, securing the building for safety, ensuring bus routes, student schedules, and the day-to-day management tasks, the instructional needs of the faculty and students compete for attention" (p. 29).

Alford et al. (2011) posited that principals reported spending more time on student instructional issues and management than with leadership activities. An effective administrator has the greatest ability to make change and improvements on a campus. Educational leadership must be about coping with change due to the changing environments around us (Gorton, Alston, & Snowden, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Many school districts face difficulties filling principal positions, but the number of individuals holding administrative licenses or endorsements exceeds the number of vacant positions each year. Current assistant principals are sometimes hesitant to apply for principalships. Researchers have found factors such as family issues, lack of community support, and fatigue as reasons the principalship is viewed by some as an undesirable position (Bass, 2006; Fields, 2005; MacCorkle, 2004). Principal burn out occurs for many reasons including the 50-60 hour work weeks, public scrutiny, and lack of preparations to deal with daily issues (Viadero, 2009). The pressures of high-stakes standardized testing combined with countless leadership and management tasks also have contributed to increased uncertainty in school administration (Hargreaves, 2005; Richardson, 2009).

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The role of principal is viewed as educator-in-chief, but in many districts principals are hired without examining their motivation to do the job (Mitgang, 2013). Identifying these factors can allow districts to carefully consider the role of the principal and the factors that may inhibit future qualified candidates from applying for open positions.

Theoretical Framework

School leadership is second only to teaching in impact on student learning (Mitgang, 2013). Bass (2006) posited that work stress and the negative impact the job has on principals' personal lives are deterrents for those who aspire to the principalship. As accountability systems have increased in rigor, the job of principal has become more demanding (Horng, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2009). Mitchell (2009) highlighted the importance of districts training currently employed assistant principals. In order to create capable leaders, assistant principals need on-the-job training in running a school and being able to assume the role of principal in the principal's absence (Mitchell, 2009).

Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) has a foundation in the self-efficacy theory of Bandura. Social Cognitive Career Theory hypothesizes that an individual's background and characteristics "influence one's learning experiences, and consequently, self-efficacy. Self-efficacy then would influence one's interests and outcome expectations, which eventually would influence one's career choice" (Tang, Pan, & Newmeyer, 2008, para. 4).

Kwan's (2009) research indicated that an assistant principal's sense of efficacy is the most important factor that impacts his or her decision to aspire to the principalship. Kwan concluded that some assistant principals felt like the harmonious relationship they had built with colleagues would suffer once becoming a principal. If assistant principals find their job energizing and rewarding and believe that the stress and challenges of their work are well worth it, they may be more willing to pursue the principalship (Kwan, 2009).

Support of Principals

In order to provide campus leaders with the proper tools, Hill and Banta (2008) suggested that district leaders provide adequate support for future principals by hiring qualified teachers, opportunities for mentor programs, and protections from political pressures. By growing assistant principals in the area of leadership, the assistant principals can gain the knowledge and skills that it will require to move into the principalship when the opportunity arises. Individuals who are identified as self-starters or leaders-in-training need to be encouraged to continue their pursuit of the principalship (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005). In order to grow as leaders, administrators need to look to other leaders they admire and strive to emulate the positive leadership characteristics that those individuals possess (Pellicer, 2008).

In an effort to provide assistant principals with additional knowledge outside of their limited roles, Madden (2008) recommended allowing them to pursue training in the

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human resources side of administration. Historically, the assistant principal's job description has entailed a long list of managerial type responsibilities and very little else. MacCorkle (2004) stated that the assistant principal's role does not lend itself well to training for the principalship. He identified areas where assistant principals felt they were not given proper training; the areas included professional development and leadership. The principal is the instructional leader of the campus and therefore the role of creating an environment conducive to instructional collaboration between staff members is the principal's obligation (Seifert & Vornberg, 2002). Assistant principals must know how to create such an environment and be given the opportunity to attempt such collaboration between administrators and faculty members. Leone et al. (2009) stated that principals of the future should be a positive constant and a navigator for the direction of the building.

Principal Candidate Shortage

The principalship has evolved into a position with an unlimited amount of roles and responsibilities, making the attraction of the principalship diminish. Future leaders see it as a job that simply deals with managing an agenda (Fink & Brayman, 2004). Alford, Ballenger, Perreault, and Zellner (2011) reported that principals face stress that causes them to weigh the benefits and the limitations of their career choice.

MacCorkle (2004) proposed finding the key factors to attracting and retaining qualified and effective leaders. He urged educators to address the increasing deficit of qualified principal candidates in order to identify the conditions that attracted people to the principalship. With the accountability system leading educational reform and curriculum and testing-based classroom instruction, the role of the principal becomes even more demanding and rigorous (Horng, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2009).

Assistant Principals' Perceptions of the Principalship

As current assistant principals watch building principals' role and duties evolve into greater and more detailed responsibilities, districts are finding it difficult to locate a good pool of applicants. Aspiring principals tend to be skeptical about the roles and responsibilities that constitute campus-level decision-making and leadership. Assistant principals often need more training in most areas of the principalship (Madden, 2008). It is generally the assistant principal who is witness to the increasing level of work and stress that is placed on building level principals. According to Viadero (2009), "employment data from 1995 to 2008 concluded that the average tenure over that time was 4.96 years for elementary, 4.48 years for middle school, and 3.38 years for high school principals" (p. 14). Some assistant principals find the job of the principal to be less appealing and therefore do not apply for the position. MacCorkle (2004) conducted a study in which 22% of participants indicated that they were reluctant to move into the principalship because of the time commitment the job required.

The assistant principalship is looked at as the stepping-stone to other administrative roles; the majority of assistant principals can be expected to move up in administration (Dowling, 2007). Current assistant principals see the campus principal take on daily

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issues and tasks such as facilitating substitute teachers, lesson plans, discipline, scheduling, curriculum, and custodial and teaching staff (Leone, Warnimont, & Zimmerman, 2009). Providing campus direction and vision are important tasks for leaders but are difficult with the amount of daily issues to which principals must attend. Cusik (2002) stated that applicants see that principals are in a more demanding, more difficult, and less attractive position and decide not to apply for the position.

Gender and ethnicity. In regard to gender and career aspirations, the literature suggested that females were more concerned about the impact on family life than males. According to Dowling (2007), females aspire for the position of the assistant principal and males aspire more for the principalship. His reasoning was substantiated by the study's findings that females were more concerned about the impact the job will have on their personal lives than males. However, Dowling's study showed close scores between males and females, indicating that impact on personal life was a major deterrent for both males and females.

Reynolds et al. (2008) advocated that schools have a precise succession plan and stressed that there should also be considerations for gender, race, or ethnicity in that plan. The researchers posited that a formal policy or procedure for succession planning can help to identify leaders within schools to address all ethnicities and genders. Whitaker and Vogel (2005) suggested pursuing minorities who are teacher leaders or assistant principals and having them participate in a good mentor program and principal preparation program as a way to address the need for more minorities applying for the principalship (Whitaker & Vogel, 2005).

Grade level. In an effort to identify deterrents of possible principal candidates, Mitchell (2009) suggested that school districts take a look at the amount of work and extracurricular duties principals at different grade levels are required to attend. Mitchell wrote,

> The job is indeed difficult with regard to the number of hours, activities, and supervisory duties, which do exceed those of similar positions at the elementary and middle school levels. Perhaps it is time to take a more proactive look at the way salaries are constructed for these principals. (p. 121)

The sentiment was shared by Whitaker and Vogel (2005) whose study summarized that the salary of assistant principals needed to be somewhat comparable to the effort put into the job. They noted that with high assessment standards the stress and workload required of assistants does not commensurate the pay. Gilson's (2008) research indicated that secondary principals spend most of their time on discipline, classroom issues, classroom observations, paper work, and duties, and less than 30% of their time on professional activities, professional growth, and observations.

Whitaker (2001) stated that although there are a number of principal applicants, districts continue to face a personnel dilemma in finding *quality* applicants for the principalship at all grade levels. One of the greatest challenges facing the school systems of Virginia is

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the recruitment and retention of qualified and certified administrators (Paola & Moran-Tscannen, 2001).

Methods and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to determine what factors inhibit or motivate assistant principals to pursue the principalship. This study utilized quantitative methods to determine which of those factors are most prevalent in participants' decision to pursue the principalship. The study examined: 1) factors that inhibited or increased assistant principals' desires to obtain the principalship, 2) differences in assistant principals' desires to pursue the principalship by gender, 3) differences in assistant principals' desires to pursue the principalship by ethnicity, and 4) differences in assistant principals' desires to pursue the principalship by school level.

The survey used for the research was a previously used, validated survey created by Bass (2004). Bass's survey modified an instrument originally constructed by Moore and Ditzhazy (1999) and Harris et al. (2000). The Bass survey was chosen because it was most closely linked to the questions to which the current principal aspiration literature pointed. Sorting factors were selected because several of the items used in the survey were repetitious and thus could be grouped. The survey's reliability was established by Bass (2004) through comparisons to previous editions of the survey, with Cronbach's alphas of .80. Face validity was established through a pilot study conducted with a group of professors. Using pilot participants' advice, questions were changed or rewritten to eliminate problems. The survey also was piloted and given to current aspiring principals and sitting principals to ascertain the survey's clarity.

School districts in Texas are divided into 20 different regions (Texas Education Agency, 2012); 1,731 K-12 assistant principals in one north Texas region were sent a link to the survey. The survey (created by Bass in 2006) included 38 questions regarding inhibitors and motivators. Respondents selected strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree, indicating how much this inhibitor and motivator influences their decision to seek a principalship. The survey also included questions regarding demographic characteristics of the participants, including gender, ethnicity, and level of school (elementary or secondary), and facilitated the identification of factors that most influence an assistant principal's desire to pursue the principalship.

Two open-ended questions at the end of the survey allowed participants to add any other comments not mentioned in the survey regarding their decision to pursue the principalship. Constant comparative methods were used to analyze the open-ended questions to determine whether the factors found in the data match theories expressed in the literature review. Strauss and Corbin (1990) described open coding as breaking down, examining, and comparing and categorizing the data. Coded data were examined for themes.

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Findings

There were 323 surveys (18.7%) completed and submitted. A factor analysis was conducted to identify inhibitor and motivator constructs. Bass's research (2004) identified six inhibitor and five motivator constructs, but did not describe which survey items aligned with the constructs. Bass's survey included six factors that accounted for 67% of the variance and five factors that accounted for 51% of the variance, but did not divulge specifically what those factors were. Therefore, his survey questions were used to identify which factors stood out the most, but his factor analysis results were not used. A limitation of the study that can make the results less conclusive is there were only four response choices available for the force-choice questions.

Results from the current study were analyzed and constructs were named and specific items were assigned to each construct. A factor analysis on the current survey data found four inhibitor constructs and three motivator constructs. Bass's (2006) research was conducted with various groups of aspiring administrators who did not yet hold assistant principal positions rather than current assistant principals, therefore the number of constructs used for this study was reduced to identify primary areas assistant principals identified.

A principal components analysis was conducted on the 36 survey items. The sampling adequacy was measured by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin with an adequacy level of .886 and significance of $p < .001$. Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for principal components analysis. The total amount of variance explained was 53.8%, indicating a significant effect size. Four inhibitor constructs and three motivator constructs were identified.

Factors that Inhibit or Increase Desire to Obtain the Principalship

The first research question explored what factors inhibited or increased assistant principals' desires to obtain the principalship. Four inhibitor and three motivator constructs were identified. The four inhibiting factors were distance from making a personal impact, roles and responsibilities, external forces, and personal impact. The three motivating constructs were influence on change, the challenge the job presented, and influence on personal life. An indicator that had a high mean score meant less concern or that the indicator was less of a motivator and a score with a low mean indicated that participants felt strongly that the specific indicator was a factor in their decision making process when deciding whether to pursue the principalship.

Administrators indicated their largest concern about being a principal was the impact the job would have on them personally (M = 2.07, s.d. = .735). Distance from making a positive impact had the highest mean, indicating participants were not as worried about making a positive impact on the campus because of their distance from students and

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classrooms (see Table 1). Roles and responsibilities and external forces had mid-range means, suggesting participants had some concern about the two factors.

Table 1

Ranking of Inhibiting and Motivating Factors

Inhibiting factors		
Construct	Mean	Standard deviation
Personal impact	2.07	.735
External forces	2.46	.569
Roles and responsibilities	2.60	.947
Distance from positive impact	2.91	.509

Motivating factors		
Construct	Mean	Standard deviation
Challenge	1.46	.521
Influence on change	1.63	.418
Influence on personal life	2.42	.441

In regard to the motivating constructs, the highest mean was influence on personal life, indicating participants were least motivated by the impact the job would have on them personally. Participants responded that the greatest motivator was the challenge that the job would present; the assistant principals welcomed the challenge of becoming a campus principal.

Desire to Pursue the Principalship by Gender

The second research question addressed differences in assistant principals' desire to pursue the principalship by gender. One-way multiple MANOVA was used to compare the inhibiting and motivating factors. The independent variable was gender; motivating factors were the dependent variables. The inhibiting factors were distance from positive impact, roles and responsibilities, external forces, and personal impact (see Table 2).

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Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations for Inhibiting and Motivating Factors by Gender

Factor	Males		Females	
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.
Inhibiting factors				
Personal impact	2.11	.755	2.04	.721
External forces	2.35	.621	2.52	.530
Roles and responsibilities	2.69	.982	2.54	.952
Distance from direct impact	2.93	.551	2.90	.484
Motivating factors				
Challenge	1.59	.404	1.49	.507
Influence on change	1.70	.435	1.59	.404
Influence on the personal life	2.40	.429	2.43	.449

The MANOVA for inhibitors by gender was significant [Wilks' lambda =. 952 [F (1, 311) = 4.000, p= .004, η^2= .048]. The mean scores indicated how much of an inhibitor or motivator the factor was for the participant. A high mean indicated the factor was less of an inhibitor or motivator, whereas the lower the mean the more of an inhibitor or motivator that factor was. Males were more influenced by external factors (M = 2.35, s.d. = .621) than females (M = 2.52, s.d. = .530) as an inhibiting factor to pursue the principalship (see Table 2). External factors in the survey included bureaucracy, lack of autonomy, and political pressures. Both males and females indicated that their greatest inhibitor was the personal impact the job would have on their lives.

The MANOVA test of between subject effects showed significant difference for the construct external forces [F (1, 314) = 5.97, p = .015, η^2 = .019]. Males indicated their concern about external forces was a greater inhibitor for the principalship than females (see Table 3). The MANOVA was not significant [Wilks' lambda = .982 [F (1, 305) = 3.000 p = .139, η^2=.018] for the motivators by gender, yet females were found to be more motivated by their ability to have an impact on change than males.

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Table 3
Between Subject Effect Size by Gender

Factor	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
		Inhibiting factors				
Personal impact	.374	1	.374	.694	.405	.002
External forces	1.911	1	1.911	5.970	.015	.019
Roles and responsibilities	1.616	1	1.616	1.803	.180	.006
Distance from direct impact	.070	1	.070	.271	.603	.001
		Motivating factors				
Challenge	.195	1	.195	.715	.399	.002
Influence on change	.800	1	.800	4.616	.032	.002
Influence on the personal life	.064	1	.064	.327	.568	.001

Desire to Pursue the Principalship by Ethnicity

Research question three addressed differences in assistant principals' desire to pursue the principalship by ethnicity. One-way multiple analyses of variance (MANOVA) were used to compare the inhibiting and motivating factors. The independent variable was ethnicity; dependent variables were the motivating factors. Inhibiting factors were distance from positive impact, roles and responsibilities, external forces, and personal impact.

The MANOVA for inhibitors by ethnicity was not significant [Wilks' lambda =. 960 [F (1, 817) = 4.000, p= .381, η^2= .014]. African American participants were more influenced by the positive influence the job would have on their personal lives (M = 2.20, s.d. = .412) than any other ethnicity (see Table 4). The survey indicated factors that would positively impact participants' personal lives such as increased salary and job progression. White and African American participants were deterred from applying for the principalship because of the negative impact the job would have on their personal lives such as time away from family and stress.

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Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Inhibiting and Motivating Factors by Ethnicity

	African American (N = 43)		Hispanic (N = 20)		White (N = 238)		Multi-racial (N = 15)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Inhibiting factors								
Personal impact	2.01	.702	2.32	.748	2.06	.739	2.10	.760
External forces	2.25	.568	2.58	.551	2.48	.569	2.53	.541
Roles and responsibilities	2.41	.919	2.80	.815	2.59	.942	2.98	1.40
Distance from positive impact	2.85	.502	2.97	.536	2.91	.513	3.07	.412
Motivating factors								
Challenge	1.41	.576	1.47	.499	1.48	.517	1.26	.457
Influence on change	1.64	.476	1.49	.437	1.65	.410	1.47	.361
Influence on personal life	2.20	.412	2.28	.415	2.47	.434	2.47	.507

When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately with the tests of between-subjects effects for ethnicity (see Table 5), the only statistically significant difference was influence on personal life between African American participants and White participants [$F(1, 737) = 5.12$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .048$]. African American participants reported that influence on their personal lives was more of a motivator compared to White participants.

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Table 5
Between-Subjects Effects by Ethnicity

Construct	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Influence on change	.894	3	.298	1.697	.168	.016
Challenge	.776	3	.259	.950	.417	.009
Influence on personal life	2.90	3	.967	5.127	.002	.048

Desire to Pursue the Principalship by School Level

Research question four addressed differences in assistant principals' desire to pursue the principalship dependent on the grade level they served. One-way MANOVA was used to compare inhibiting and motivating factors by grade level (elementary or secondary). The independent variable was grade level; dependent variables were motivating factors (influence on change, challenge, and influence on personal life) or inhibiting factors (distance from positive impact, roles and responsibilities, external forces, and personal impact) (see Table 6).

Differences in inhibiting factors by grade level were not significant [Wilks' lambda = .963 [F (1, 311) = 3.000 p = .019, η^2 = .037]. Elementary administrators indicated that external forces proved to be less of an inhibitor to pursing the principalship than did secondary administrators. These statistics indicate that factors such as politics and bureaucracy were greater inhibitors for elementary assistant principals than for assistant principals at the secondary level.

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Table 6
Means and Standard Deviations for Inhibiting and Motivating Factors by Grade Level

Construct	Elementary (N = 141)		Secondary (N = 168)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Inhibiting factors				
Personal impact	2.04	.742	2.09	.175
External forces	2.55	.538	2.39	.586
Roles and responsibilities	2.56	.893	2.63	.990
Distance from positive impact	2.93	.480	2.91	.533
Motivating factors				
	M	SD	M	SD
Challenge	1.53	.563	1.40	.503
Influence on change	1.62	.435	1.64	.408
Influence on personal life	2.46	.433	2.39	.445

Differences in motivating factors by grade level were not significant [Wilks' lambda = .964 [$F (1, 305) = 3.000$ $p = .011$, $\eta^2 = .036$]. Secondary participants indicated more motivation to pursue the principalship because of the challenge it would present than did those at the elementary level. The secondary administrators indicated they would pursue the principalship more for the challenge aspect than would the elementary administrators. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately with the tests of between-subjects effects for grade level (see Table 7), the only statistically significant difference was challenge [$F (1, 737) = 4.64$, $p = .032$, $\eta^2 = .015$].

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Table 7
Between-Subjects Effects by Grade Level

Construct	SS	df	MS	*F*	*p*	η^2
Influence on change	1.250	1	1.251	4.646	.032	.015
Challenge	.047	1	.047	2.68	.605	.001
Influence on personal life	.471	1	.471	2.434	.120	.008

Two open-ended questions at the end of the survey asked participants about other factors that influenced their decision to pursue the principalship; 141 participants commented about inhibiting and motivating factors in their desire to pursue the principalship. The majority of the comments regarded politics and time/stress as an inhibiting factor and the ability to impact students, teachers, and education as a whole as one of the major motivators. Themes that emerged from those comments included: a) politics is overtaking the ability to initiate true change; b) conflict with central administration; c) family responsibilities; d) stress and workload involved in the job makes it hard to be effective; and e) individuals seeking the position have generally been motivated or encouraged by others to become a principal.

Participants said they felt that obtaining the principalship was a biased process and shared that it was apparent from their previous experiences that applicants were chosen for principal positions because of political reasons and not necessarily because they were the best fit. Participants said this deterred them from wanting to apply for the principalship in the future. Politics within the district was listed as a deterrent for some participants. Participants commented that mandates and decisions made from central office often prohibited campus leaders from doing an effective job.

Family responsibilities and the stress the job would entail were also inhibitors mentioned. Participants said that the stress from the role of principal would conflict with their role as a spouse or parent and that the time away from their families was too great. Stated one assistant principal, "as a mother of three young children, I feel as thought my responsibility as a wife and mother would be very difficult to balance if I took on the additional responsibilities that being a principal holds." Other responses included comments regarding having to relocate and the extreme stress that candidates feel would be involved with the principalship.

Politics was mentioned by 12 of the participants as a major deterrent for them wanting to pursue the principalship. One participant commented, "district politics often predetermine

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who sits in the principal's chair. The job does not always go to the person best qualified for the job." Other assistant principals discussed conflicts with central office. Several said that dealing with district officials often convoluted their job as administrators and was a major factor in their decision. Another common concern was the impact the job would have on a participant's family. Participants said that obligations to their families outweighed their decision to become a principal.

In the pursuit of the principalship, aspiring administrators indicated what their main motivations were to pursue the position. Participants were eager to make a difference and had been encouraged by someone to pursue the principalship. Fifteen participants commented that a family member or school administrator had encouraged them at some point to apply for a principal position. "I was encouraged by my former principal that I was ready to pursue the position," wrote one participant. "My principal, she encouraged me and told me that I had leadership potential and good people skills," stated another assistant principal.

One participant wrote that her principal had mentioned to her that she was clearly ready to take on a more challenging position and should apply for a principal position. Another participant wrote that all it took was for her principal to recognize her leadership ability and have enough confidence in her to urge her to pursue the principalship. She knew she was ready for the challenge, but to hear her supervisor tell her she was ready was all the push she needed to pursue a principal position. Participants also commented that their sole purpose in pursuing the principalship was to make a difference in education. One participant mentioned that he felt he could impact more students as a campus principal than as a classroom teacher. Another participant said he would like to pursue the principalship to have a greater impact on the future of education.

Discussion and Implications

It is important for educators to know the factors that are drawing and discouraging applicants to the principalship (MacCorkle, 2004; Retelle, 2010). Stakeholders need to continue to encourage quality educational leadership programs and ensure that they are rigorous and relevant in order to produce effective and qualified school leaders (Mitchell, 2009). Likewise, school leaders must also successfully advocate for themselves in a positive, proactive manner to shift the perception of the principalship from a job that no one appears to want to an esteemed, desirable position with both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards (Mitchell, 2009).

The motivating factors mentioned by respondents included a job promotion, pay raise, and higher stature within the organization. Data regarding differences in participants' aspirations by grade level demonstrated that participants at the secondary level were more motivated to pursue the principalship because of the personal and professional challenge they believed the position would hold.

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The participants' greatest inhibitors in this decision was the impact the job would have on their personal lives due to stress and time away from family. Participants also expressed concern that politics played more of a role in obtaining principal positions versus looking at applicants by their qualifications alone. The results of this study are in alignment with the findings of past researchers who posited that applicants' greatest inhibitor in pursuing the principalship is the stress and impact on their personal lives when deciding to pursue the principalship (Fields, 2005; MacCorkle, 2004; Whitaker & Vogel, 2005).

Participants showed specific differences in their desires for the principalship by gender, ethnicity, and grade level that have implications for districts looking to attract potential principal candidates and address hesitations applicants have about pursuing the job. Males indicated that external forces, such as time constraints, paper work, and political pressures, were main concerns in applying for the principalship. Both males and females were concerned about the negative impact the job would have on their personal lives, such as implications on family responsibilities, stress, and time commitment. Compared to other ethnicities, African Americans were most motivated by the influence the job would have on their personal lives. When examined by grade level, secondary assistant principals were more likely to apply for the principalship for the personal and professional challenges than those at the elementary level.

Summary

Study findings coincided with literature regarding assistant principals' principalship aspirations. Aspiring administrators can be dissuaded from applying for the principalship after considering the amount of time, stress, and implications it can have on their personal lives (MacCorkle, 2004; Waskiewicz, 1999). To address the shortage of quality principal applicants, districts and administrator preparation programs should analyze the factors that entice aspiring principals to apply (Dowling, 2007; Mitchell, 2009). As school leadership continues to become a more demanding profession, it is critical for leaders to understand and be more proactive in approaches to hiring quality principals and understand what drives assistants to take the next step in applying for the principalship (Garduno, 2009; Reynolds, White, Brayman, & Moore, 2008).

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