Generation X and Millennial Generation Assistant Principals’
Perceptions of the Challenges and Rewards of the Principalship

A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Employment figures and population demographics indicate that Baby Boomers (1946-1964) hold a small and shrinking share of school principalships. The oldest Baby Boomer principals began to retire during the middle of the 1990s, and their void created an opportunity for younger Baby Boomers and members of Generation X (1965-1981) to replace them. The youngest Baby Boomer principals are beginning to retire, and Millennial Generation (1982-2000) administrators are stepping up to fill the ranks. Millennial Generation educators have been in the field long enough to develop the requisite classroom teaching experience, graduate school master’s level education, and training needed to obtain administrative positions.

Principals develop their leadership skills through the assistant principal experience, and because Millennials are a relatively new addition to the ranks of assistant principals, little is known about their perceptions’ of the challenges and rewards of the principalship. Generational differences between Generation Xers and Baby Boomers have been investigated by other researchers, but this study was unique because it directly compared Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals. The study explored Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship. This qualitative study involved 12 assistant principal participants, and the analysis of the coded interview transcript data produced major coded themes with valuable implications regarding the participants’ motivations, career ambitions, professional
development needs, and their perceptions’ of the principalship. This study indicated that Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals have distinct similarities and differences, and school division superintendents who understand the generational differences may make more informed leadership and personnel decisions about their future principals.

The findings and implications were intended to assist superintendents and personnel/human resource directors in their efforts to recruit, select, support, and ultimately promote Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals to the principalship. The findings of this study suggested opportunities for researchers to continue the investigation of the topic.
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Chapter 1

Introduction to the study

Introduction

Bowles (1990) examined age and demographic figures on school principals and indicated that many principals would leave the field, due to retirement in the 1990s and 2000s. This mass retirement of a generation of principals was predicted to cause a principal shortage (Whitaker, 2001). A mass exodus of principals through retirement, including 50 percent of U.S. principals in the 1990s, and an additional 40 percent by 2010 (Kurtz, 2000; Whitaker, 2001) would create an opening for a new generation of principals to replace the retirees.

Generational identity theory suggests members of a generational cohort or people born between a select range of calendar years will experience historic events and develop a set of cultural norms at common relative ages, thereby influencing the cohort’s collective perceptions of society and history (Schuman & Scott, 1989). Major historical events serve as cohort identifiers and create a common set of generational memories and attitudes (Schuman & Scott, 1989). Each generational cohort has unique perceptions based on their collective generational memories. “Formative historical events are those recalled as especially meaningful later in life because they are associated with crystallization of both personal identity and knowledge of social realities outside of the self” (Griffin, 2004, p. 545).

Historical Perspective

The national mean age of public school principals was 46.8 in 1988 and it increased to 47.7 in 1994 (United States Department of Education 1987-88; United States Department of Education 1993-94). In 2004 the national mean age of school principals was 50 and Commonwealth of Virginia’s mean principal age was 49.9 (United States Department of Education, 2003-04). By 2008 the national mean age principals was 46 years of age (United States Department of Education 2007-2008) and four years
later that national mean age increased 48 years old (United States Department of Education, 2011-2012). Those data on principal age indicate that principals are typically in their middle to upper forties after serving experiential and formative years as classroom teachers and assistant principals.

A 49 year old principal in 1994 was born in 1945 and is considered a member of the Baby Boomer Generation. A 46 year old Principal in 2012 was born in 1966 and is also a member of the Baby Boomer Generation (Howe & Strauss, 2007). If the national mean age for principals remains constant in the middle to upper forties, then in 2016 the average principal will be a member of Generation X. The applicant pool of principals to replace the Baby Boomers retirements included principals from Generation X in the 1990s and early 2000s. The oldest Generation X principals are 50 years old and as Generation X principals move out of principal positions, Millennial principals will most likely replace them. In fact, Millenial principals currently lead schools and existing research has identified potential differences in the leadership styles of Millennial generation school administrators and Baby Boomer school administrators (Greenlinger, 2013).

Educators in America’s K-12 schools represent a diverse collection of generational identities. Age groups of faculty members can be used to describe generational cohorts in a school building. National statistics on teachers report that 17.7 % of teachers are under age 30, 49.6 % of teachers are between ages 30 and 49, 13.1 percent are between ages 50 and 54, and 19.5 % are age 55 or older (United States Department of Education, 2008 p. 9). The respected age groups translate into generational cohorts.
Table 1

*Percentage of teachers by age group 2007-08*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Less than 30 years</th>
<th>30-49 years</th>
<th>50-54 years</th>
<th>55 years or more</th>
<th>Average age of teachers</th>
<th>Median age of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
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Table 2

*Percentage of principals by age group 2007-08*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Less than 45 years</th>
<th>45 – 54 years</th>
<th>55 years or more</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Median Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future analyzed and interpreted National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) data in 2010 and reached the following conclusions, “NCTAF’s analysis of 20 years (six cycles) of SASS data clearly demonstrates an alarming reality: Almost half of the teaching workforce is made up of Baby Boomers who are at or near retirement. In 1976, average teacher age was 36” (p. 7).
Table 3

Percentage of teachers by age group 2011-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Less than 30 years</th>
<th>30-49 years</th>
<th>50-54 years</th>
<th>55 years or more</th>
<th>Average age of teachers</th>
<th>Median age of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The demographic information on educator ages, indicated that the average ages for teachers (41 years of age) and principals (49 years of age) demonstrates that succession planning to replace retiring principals must eventually involve members of newer generations as the last members of the preceding generation retire (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Members of each generational cohort pass through a constant age, such as the 49 years of age associated with the median age on principal in Table 2.

Statement of the Problem

Those under 30 years of age in 2009 included members of Generation X and the Millennial Generation. The youngest teachers in the under 30 group were Millennials, or those born after 1982. The Millennials or Generation Y included all members of the cohort age 27 and under. Generation X can be used to do identify those born between 1961 and 1981, although other published researcher has dated the end of the Generation X birth range as 1979, 1980, or 1981. The Baby Boomers, those born between 1943 and 1960, preceded Generation X and included the teachers age 48 and older. The oldest generational cohort with members employed as teachers in 2009 was the Veteran Generation (1925-1942) (Parry & Urwin, 2010). The Veteran generational cohort is also known as the Silent Generation.
or the Traditionalist cohort (Howe & Strauss, 2007) (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002) with an ending birth range of 1945 (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). The youngest Traditionalists were 67 in 2009 and it is unlikely that a significant portion of the 55 and older group was composed of Traditionlists.

The separate generational cohorts have generational identities that vary with eras of time (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Generational identity theory offers an explanation of the differences between a 30 year old of 2014 and 30 year old in 1984. A 30 year old in 1984 grew up during the Cold War era and was educated to view the Communist regimes as hostile and evil, while a 30 year in of 2016 was five years old when the Soviet Union collapsed, and grew up in a society when the Communist Peoples Republic of China is a major economic trading partner. This example illustrates that fact that people belong to their generational cohort more so than they belong to their respective age groups (Howe & Strauss, 2007). The depiction below (Table 3) is graphic representation of generational identity and generational cohorts.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of Birth Years</th>
<th>Generational Cohort</th>
<th>Age Ranges in 2015</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982 – 2000</td>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>15 – 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965 – 1981</td>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>34 – 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946 – 1964</td>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>51 – 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before 1946</td>
<td>Traditionalists</td>
<td>70 and over</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data on the age of the educational work force including the age of educators indicated that the attrition of Baby Boomer school administrators, who are nearing retirement, will create opportunities for Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals to ascend to the principalship. As table 2 indicated, over half of all principals were between ages 30 and 49 in 2012. The oldest Millennials were 30 years old in 2012 and the trend data (United States Department of Education, 2011-2012) suggests that Millenial generation school administrators will grow in number annually as Baby Boomer generation school administrators leave the profession. Therefore school division superintendents should be aware of generational differences and work place dynamics, as they prepare for a new wave of principals.

Significance of the Study

Research on organizational management indicated that an individual's perspectives on effective communication, work ethic, culture, and values were related to generational identity (Costanza et. al, 2012; Cennamo & Gardner 2008). These data are relevant to instructional leaders because a school building is a work place and learning center for administrators, teachers, support staff, parents and students representing three respective generations. The individual generations are identified Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1981), and Millenials or Generation Y (1982-2000), (Parry & Urwin, 2010). Instructional leaders work to motivate, manage, and respond to the needs of each generation of stakeholders. Understanding the characteristics of a stakeholder’s generational identity can help practicing instructional leaders better relate to their stakeholders (Howe & Strauss 2007).

Table 2 indicates that Millennial Generation educators are a growing cohort, and they will eventually comprise a larger percentage of school administrative positions. The role of assistant principal is the primary entry level leadership position for aspiring Generation X and Millennial Generation educational leaders. School division superintendents and personnel directors may benefit from this study’s findings on the similarities and differences between Generation X and Millennial-generation assistant principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship.

“Managers face many challenges in the coming decades, and one of the most important will be hiring, retaining, and motivating young employees” (Twenge, 2010 p. 208). Twenge suggested that managers should attempt to work with all types of workers, but acknowledge that instead of targeting recruiting efforts specifically on members of generational cohort, leaders should “Instead, consider strategies that will attract the above-average member— they are the ones you want at the desk next to you anyway,” (p. 209).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship. Identifying Generation X and Millenial assistant principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship, may benefit division superintendents, human resources directors, and personnel directors as they work to recruit, support, and retain Generation X and Millennial assistant principals.
Overview of the Study and Research Questions

This study explored Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship through qualitative interviews. The assistant principal participants responded to qualitative interview questions which explored five research questions.

1. What (if any) are the motivating factors in the assistant principal’s decision to pursue a principalship?
2. What (if any) rewards does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
3. What (if any) challenges does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
4. What (if any) central office level support does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
5. What (if any) future career opportunities does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

Overview of the Methodology

This study utilized phenomenological qualitative research methodology to examine Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals’ perceptions of the principalship. “All qualitative research is based on a philosophy called phenomenology, a perspective that holds knowledge is gained by understanding the direct experience of others (McMillan & Wergin, 2010, p. 7). The direct experience in this study is the assistant principal’s generational identity. McMillan & Wergin stated that a phenomenological study should be “descriptive in nature, relying primarily on narrative and story” (p. 7). Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals responded to the researcher’s
interview questions. The researcher used qualitative coding to analyze the responses and report the data in chapter four of the study.

**Conceptual Framework**

- **Life Experiences 1965-1981**
- **Life Experiences 1982-2000**
- **Generation X Cohort Characteristics**
- **Millennial Cohort Characteristics**
- **Individual Characteristics**
- **Individual Characteristics**
- **Perception of Principalship**
The conceptual framework above provided a graphic representation of the generational identity theory. Generational identity theory suggests that people who were born between certain years, such as 1965 and 1981, were likely to experience significant events and cultural norms during their formative years (Howe & Strauss, 2007). The shared history and influences during their formative years, establishes characteristics which unite members of a generational cohort. Individual characteristics also play a role, and other factors such as a person’s geographic region of origin, culture, or other personal factors have an impact on an individual.

Definition of Terms

The terms in this list appear multiple times throughout the study.

Assistant Principal: A school building administrator who operates under the direct supervision of the building principal to lead instructional activities, supervise staff, maintain the safety, and manage student concerns.

Cohort experience: A collective phenomenological history, shared by members of a specific generational cohort, while the cohort members are at similar chronologic age and formative developmental stages (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Schuman & Rodgers, 2004).

Generational cohort: A group of people born between a selected range of calendar years. There is typically an acceptable range for the start and end of a generation, as leading researchers sometimes differ by one to five years when establishing generational groups (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).
Generational gap: A perceived lack of understanding between cohorts, due to a lack of knowledge or appreciation of various cohort experiences (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000).

Limitations

Roberts (2010) asserted that limitations are factors that are beyond the researcher’s control and may negatively impact the results of a study. Response rate, sample size, and length of study are typical limiting factors that may negatively impact a study’s results. This study was dependent on the honesty and clarity of the respondents, and their willingness to share their honest opinions in response to the questions. According to Roberts, “all studies have some limitations” (p. 162). The researcher extended information regarding the nature of this study to a network of school administrators in Central Virginia, to recruit eligible assistant principals as participants from Central Virginia school divisions. Invitations were extended to potential participants from rural, suburban, and urban school divisions, but the participant pool only represented assistant principals from rural and suburban school divisions.

Delimitations

Delimitations are factors under the researcher’s control and serve as the boundaries for a study (Roberts, 2010). This study was limited to assistant principals, and did not provide data on teachers’, principals’, or central office administrators’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship. This study involved a sample size of 12 assistant principals from Central Virginia. The findings reflected the participants’ experiences as assistant principals with the influence of Virginia law, accountability measures, politics, and public policy.
Organization of Study

This dissertation was organized into five chapters. Chapter one introduced the topic, stated the problem, and previewed the study. Chapter two includes a review of existing literature on the topic. Chapter three describes the methodology for this qualitative study. Chapter four provides the interview response data, data analysis, and the coded responses organized into themes for data reporting. Chapter five discusses the findings, implications for practitioners, and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

Introduction to literature review

This literature review began as a course assignment in Dr. Carol Cash’s Theories of Educational Administration class during the spring semester of 2013 at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Dr. Cash assigned a book review project, and the researcher selected *When generations collide: traditionalists, baby boomers, generation xers, millennials: who they are, why they clash, how to solve the generational puzzle at work* (Lancaster & Stillman 2002). The assignment required the researcher to analyze the text and make an argument for how the book’s theme is applicable to school administrators. The researcher began to examine the concept of generational identity and the role that generational identity plays in workplace relationship dynamics.

The reviewed literature was divided into two sections. The first section includes a review and analysis of literature on generational identity theory. The second section includes a review and analysis of literature that applied generational identity theory to the principalship. The remainder of this chapter explains how the researcher located the reviewed literature, describe generational identity theory, and summarize dissertations and studies on similar topics.

Search Process

The published research articles and doctoral dissertations reviewed as relevant literature were obtained from Virginia Tech’s electronic library resources and online affiliated databases with searches for terms such as, “generational theory, generational groups, generation and management, generation and leadership, generational identity, superintendent influence, and superintendent and principal
relationships.” The bibliographies of selected articles were studied to identify additional relevant scholarly publications. The peer reviewed articles were evaluated in terms of the research methods, citations of scholarly data, data reporting, sampling, and reporting.

Researchers such as Twenge, Hui-Chun, Schuman, Spitzer, and Wong, have published articles that expand on the thoughts from Mannheim’s 1923 essay “The problem of Generations.” Mannheim’s essay was republished and cited in studies throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and rests at the foundation of Generational Theory (Mannheim, 1928). Generational identity theory states that generational cohort members experience common life experiences at roughly the same ages, and those events create a collective memory and understanding. Mannheim's work focused on the ‘generational location’ or the relative point on the historical time lines with respect to geography and socioeconomic factors.

It makes a great difference whether I acquire memories for myself in the process of personal development, or whether I simply take them over from someone else. I only really possess those “memories” that I have created directly for myself, only that “knowledge” I have personally gained in real situations. This is the only sort of knowledge, which really “sticks,” and it alone has real binding power. (Mannheim, 1923 p. 175).

**Generational Cohorts**

Generational groups or cohorts are defined as people who experience events at similar ages and share the common history that influences their perception. The events, people, characteristics, values, and climate of the time period, shape the perception through which members of the cohort operate, (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak 2000). Shared experiences in a generational cohort are relevant because a
Generational cohort’s values and traits are the result of experiencing a shared history at a relatively common age and level of understanding (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Generational cohorts “are stamped by some collective experience that permanently distinguishes them from other age groups as they move through time” (Spitzer, 1973 p. 1385).

In order to explain the differences between Millennial and Generation X assistant principals, this literature review summarized and analyzed research on each respective generation. Utilizing all available generational research allowed this literature review to not only differentiate between the Millennial and Generation X cohorts, it also explained how the cohorts are different from the Baby Boomers who are the currently the only other generational cohort of educators currently employed in the field. The Traditionalist generational cohort preceded the Baby Boomers and youngest Traditionalists were born in 1945 and were over 70 years old when this literature review was composed. It is reasonable to assume that most traditionalists were out of the field, and there is no compelling evidence to suggest that a sizeable population of Traditionalists remain in the field. As stated earlier in this paragraph, the Baby Boomer generational cohort was included in the literature review to demonstrate that Millennials and Generation Xers were not only different from each other, but that each of the three generations currently occupying assistant principalships and other administrative positions have unique characteristics and traits which were based on their generational identity.

**Baby Boomers 1946-1964**

Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964. The years following World War II ushered in an unprecedented level of middle class economic growth (Howe & Strauss 2007). The G.I. Bill, or “Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944” helped to create the middle class society of professionals and suburban life, by providing access to higher education and vocational training to veterans of World
Within 10 years after World War II, 2,200,000 veterans had attended college and 5,600,000 had participated in vocational training programs or on-the-job training under the G.I. Bill” (Mettler, 2002, p. 351). Baby Boomers were reared by parents who faced the harsh conditions of the Great Depression and the World War II period. They witnessed the development of the American middle class and perceived it as evidence that hard work can make the American Dream a reality (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). The economic boom was credited with contributing to the increase in the birthrate. Maples and Abney (2006) wrote that the Baby Boomers, “constitute the largest number of persons ever born in a single generation” (p. 1).

The increased wealth of the middle class was not available to all and stark contrasts between comfortable middle class living conditions and conditions of poverty became popular issues in the media and the government. In 1964 President Johnson spoke of the irony of people living below the poverty line in the world's richest country, “this administration today here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty here in America.” In part, the divide between the poor middle class could be attributed to social conditions. The segregation and discrimination against African-Americans served as an obstacle to attaining access to the middle class. The 1963 March on Washington for jobs and Freedom was a mass demonstration of protest to the social, legal, and economic oppression of African-Americans. Baby Boomers came of age during the civil rights movement. They may were faced with the reality of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a Dream Speech” and heard describe the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were promissory notes of freedom. “We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we’ve come to cash this check.”
The Baby Boomers generational location was aligned with the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War. The Baby Boomers are familiar with change on a national level and lived through a time period when authority was challenged in protest and beloved civil rights leaders and politicians were killed in their attempts to challenge the status quo. The Baby Boomers were accustomed to viewing news and entertainment on television and used the telephone for communication purposes (Howe & Strauss, 2007). The technology advances of the 1950s and 1960s included access to televisions and many events were broadcasted live or taped and quickly broadcasted shortly after recording. Lancaster and Stillman list key events that Baby Boomers may have witnessed on television as Vietnam War footage, The Moon Landing, and the assassination of President Kennedy.

Women entered the work force in increasing numbers throughout the 1950s and 1960s, but were primarily utilized in roles that had been traditionally described as suitable women's positions, such as teachers, nurses, switch board operators, receptionists, and secretaries. As the nation grew into an industrial super power, those suitable professions for women, grew into higher demand and more women were needed to fill them (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001).

The need to address social issues arose during the Baby Boomer's formative years. They were accustomed to the middle class life style and learned that consistent and focused effort could produce positive results. They firmly believed that they could change the world. They grew up under the threat of the cold war and came of age in time for the draft of the Vietnam War. “Many baby boomers came of age during a time of immense social change marked by such historic events as the civil rights movement. Baby boomers were observed to have different lifestyles and attitudes relative to previous generations,” (Baby Boomers, 2008 p. 236). The Baby Boomers’ large population caused schools to be over crowded, they were students during the integration process, and Baby Boomers went on to fill
teaching positions as the Traditionalists retired. “Boomers teachers have dominated America’s K-12 classrooms for the last two decades. They also comprise the vast majority superintendents,” (Strauss, 2005, p. 21).

Baby Boomers are often generalized to have a desire for control and autonomy in leadership positions (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Boomers have been described as loyal employees who were likely to spend long periods of time or their entire career in one organization. “Boomers are stereotypically described as achievement oriented” (Becton, Walker, & Jones-Farmer, 2014, p. 177 and O’Bannon, 2001). Boomers were also described as diligent, competitive, motivated by money (Becton et. al. and Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Lancaster & Stillman also stated that Boomers are materialistic or attached to status symbols associated with material wealth and such items and tangible representations of hard work. The term workaholic, which describes a person who routinely works 60 plus hours per week, is most closely associated with Boomers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Baby Boomers invested their time in building stellar careers, accumulating material, wealth, and leaving an impression on their organizations.

**Generation X 1965-1980**

Generation X is roughly half the size of the Baby Boomers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). “Consider, for example, that members of the Baby Boomer Generation (76 million) make up over 40% of the adult population in the United States when compared with their parents (26 million) and those who followed them – members of Generation X (46 million),” (Maples & Abney, 2006 p. 1). Generation X experienced an explosion of media formats and access during their formative years. While the Baby Boomers were the first generation to grow up with television broadcasts, Generation X had access to cable television with a wide range of programming options (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).
This new age of television media created, according Lancaster and Stillman presented Generation X with footage or news makes such as “Bill Clinton, Bill Gates, Monica Lewinsky, the Ayatollah Khomeini, Ted Bundy, Beavis and Butt-head, the Menendez brothers, Quentin Tarantino, Clarence Thomas, Newt Gengrich, O.J. Simpson, Dilbert, Dennis Rodman, supermodels, Madonna and Michael Jordan,” (Lancaster & Stillman 2002, p. 41). Generation X experienced introduction to new technology, such as microwave ovens, pagers, cell phones, home computers, cable television, VCRs, video games, and fax machines enter their homes (Lancaster & Stillman 2002). “Their constant use of technology has promoted Generation Xers to anticipate instantaneous response and fulfillment,” (Ware 2013, p. 37).

While technology made life more comfortable, Generation Xers still dealt with the difficulty of coping with domestic and international incidents. “The Iran Hostage Crisis, OPEC Oil Embargo, Three Mile Island Meltdown, Challenger, Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, Operation Desert Storm, and Los Angeles Riots shaped their thinking in their early years,” (Kuhn 2012, p. 45). Business decisions to relocate production facilities outside of the United States, through off shoring, corporate mergers, massive layoffs, and the savings and loan fiascos on the 1980s caused Generation X to harbor skepticism towards corporate commitment and job security. “They observed, as organizations reduced their workforces and their parent’s job security went astray” (Ware, 2013, p. 40).

The Baby Boomers optimistically viewed their career prospects in a booming post war economy and expected to settle into a comfortable middle class life style, by displaying career loyalty to a company that would, in turn, remain loyal to them. Generation Xer were unable to find stability in any facet of life; they saw scandals in the government, the church, a tripling of the divorce rate, and massive change in corporate America (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). The corporate changes included
massive layoffs, mergers, and off shoring of once dependable and stable jobs. This market and economic turmoil caused Xers to put more faith in themselves and expect less from institutions.

Generation X employees are generalized to collectively display a greater level of cynicism than their Baby Boomer predecessors (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). This cynicism is related to a lack of trust in organizations. The lack of trust in organizations, explains why Generation Xers are willing to leave organizations for increased opportunities for advancement. Lancaster and Stillman also described Generation Xers as desiring a loosely structured organizational management where communication and information flows, without relying on a rigid chain of command with successive levels of gate keepers.

Generation Xers do not define themselves by their work roles and they view work and career as a means to an end. Cole, Smith, and Lucas (2002) cautioned against the assumption that Generation Xers are not willing to work hard. “Contrary to stereotypical images, many Xers accept that they must work hard to survive. The diminished role of work is accompanied by an increased importance of family and other non-work relationships” (p. 3). Lancaster and Stillman referred to Generation X as the ‘latch key generation,’ due to high rate of divorce and subsequent single parent families during childhoods of many Generation Xers. Therefore, “many Xers do not want their children to be ‘latchkey’ kids” (Cole, et. al, 2002, p. 3). This research indicates that Generation Xers place more importance on leaving work to spend quality time with their children, while Boomers place more emphasis on working longer to provide for their children.

**Millennials (Generation Y) 1980-2005**
The birth range of the Millennial Generation has multiple accepted and debated starts ranging from 1978-1981. Mendelson (2013) detailed Millennials in 2013 stating that “there are gaps in values, perception, and experience that separate the millennial generation [today’s young adults born between 1980 and 2000] from older adults [50+ years of age]” (p. 324). The typical Millennial was raised by parents who were older at child birth, than the parents of Baby Boomers and Generation Xers. “About half of the Millennials are the offspring of boomers and half are the children of Gen-Xers” (Strauss, 2005, p. 12). Lancaster and Stillman stated that Millennials’ parents viewed them as trophy kids, with organized play dates under the watchful eyes and encouragement from parents.

The Millennial Generation is the largest of the three generations discussed in this literature review, and their ranks are large in number because of diversity. Millennials have a large immigrant representation, and the cohorts’ diversity is furthered by the fact that many Millennials are the children of immigrants. Kuhn approximated the Millenial generation’s immigrant population as “nearly twice the proportion that previous generations received from foreign born children that lived in the United States during their childhood” (p. 36).

Millennials have also been labeled the digital natives. Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, and Generation X migrated to the modern integration of personal, business, and educational technologies as they became available, while Millennials, in contrast have grown up relying on the technology (Aviles & Eastman, 2012). Millennials do not have a collective memory of life and work before “cell phones, personal computers, and ATMs were commonplace” (Becton, et. al, 2014, p. 177).

Mass killings, school shootings, and the airline hijacking and terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have been primary cohort identifiers for the Millennials (Suckert, 2008). Millennials have relied on technology to receive and share lifesaving information. Safety threats on college campuses,
including the tragic events of April 16th, 2007 at Virginia Tech that resulted in the loss of 33 lives, prompted schools to implement campus wide alert systems through email and SMS text messages. On April 16th, 2007 Virginia Tech used an email system, which was later upgraded to include text messaging (Lim, 2007). The text and email notifications are effective because Millennials have had access to mobile technologies like smart phones (Greenlinger, 2013). “More than eight-in-ten say they sleep with a cell phone glowing by the bed, poised to disgorge texts, phone calls, emails, songs, news, videos, games and wake-up jingles,” (Pew Research, 2010, p. 1). Seventy-five percent of Millennials have a profile on a social media account, as compared to fifty percent of Generation Xers and forty percent of Baby Boomers (Pew Research Center, 2010).

Social changes have also been an influence on Millennials; they saw the election of Barrack Obama, and Millennials of voting age. “In 2008 at the height of the Democratic Party’s advantage, 41% of Millennial voters identified with the Democratic Party, while only 22% identified with the GOP,” (Pew Research Center, 2010, p. 17). The election of the republic's first African-American president created diversity in the lineage of the executive branch, and this diversity was accomplished with a support base of Millennials, who are the most racially diverse generation in the nation’s history (Pew Research Center, 2010).

According to Becton et. al (2014), “common stereotypes for this generation include being distrustful of organizations, having a strong desire for meaningful work, holding lifelong learning as a high priority, and viewing family as the key to happiness” (p. 177-178). Lancaster and Stillman (2002) described Millennials multi taskers with high expectations for their work. Millennials “seem to easily develop a clear collective mission and high ambitions for cleaning up and rebuilding the outer world” (Kuhn, 2012, p. 40). Kuhn agreed with Lancaster and Stillman in the summation that Millenials, in
comparison to Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, are “well-educated, collaborative, open-minded, influential, and achievement-oriented” (Kuhn, 2012, p. 40).

**Summary of Generational Research**

This section of the literature review began by detailing the foundation of generational identity theory and defining generational cohorts. Mannheim and the research duo of Howe and Strauss were the primary researchers in the field. Generational cohorts are groups of people who were born during a specific window of time, and experienced significant historical events, cultural phenomena, and social norms at roughly the same developmental age. The shared historical, cultural, and social experiences may also be referred to as cohort identifiers. “An age cohort may, then be differentiated from the rest of the population because its attitudes persist while those of the majority change” (Spitzer, 1973, p. 1362).

Three generational cohorts were described in this section. Although the Baby Boomer generational cohort will not be investigated in this study, it was relevant to discuss the cohort. The discussion, of the Baby Boomer’s collective characteristics and cohort identifiers, further promotes the argument that the Generation X and Millennial cohorts are not only different from each other, they are different from each preceding generation.

Generation X’s cohort identifiers are associated with corporate closures, mergers, and offshoring. Government scandals, cable television programming and tabloid news allowed latch key kids to consume negative media and develop negative attitudes towards political and economic institutions. The research discussed in this collection of reviewed literature on generational topics generalized that Generation Xers have a tendency view organizations with cynicism and skepticism, and they may not develop trust in the process of ascending the career ladder within an organization. Generaton Xers
have career plans that are not tied to organizational success, they are likely to pursue career opportunities that in multiple organizations. Generation Xers are family oriented people who may not view overtime, increased pay, or increased responsibility as more enticing than time off from work. Generation Xers desire a work environment that allows information to flow freely and allows them to operate with creativity.

The Millennial generation’s cohort identifiers were listed global terrorism, school shootings, being trophy kids, and organized play. The research described Millennials as a large and diverse generation. Millennials are technology dependent, collaborative in nature, and socially conscious. Millennials are interested in social and environmental causes. Millennials are inclusive and envision a work environment where stakeholders collaborate to accomplish common goals. They are more interested in material symbols of achievement, than their Generation X counterparts. They are competitive in nature, but from a collective perspective.

Research on Assistant Principals

Assistant principals have a challenging and demanding workload that requires attention to student discipline, instructional supervision, daily operations of the school building, and other tasks, “the ability to multi-task is essential, as is the ability to prioritize,” (Lightfoot, 2014, p. 5). Most assistant principals will aspire to reach the level of principal (Lightfoot, 2014), but assistant principals do not always have the opportunities to develop and build the necessary experience to successfully execute the responsibilities of the principalship.

Lightfoot (2014), conducted original research for a doctoral dissertation, and investigated the relationship between Texas principals’ perceptions of their preparation for the principalship and their
work experience. The researcher’s use of correlational-quantitative methodology collected survey responses from the sample of principals. The quantitative survey data was analyzed with an ANOVA and a discriminate function analysis to measure principals’ self-perception of their preparation. The sample of principals responded to the survey questions using a five point Lickert scale and self-reported their assistant principal experiences in terms of the level of preparation for the principalship. Lightfoot’s instrument divided assistant principal experience and principal tasks into three categories “administrative skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills,” (p. 53) and the categories were used as independent variables.

Lightfoot’s results indicated that the sample of Texas principals perceived their administrative skills related assistant principal experiences as more predictive of principal readiness than their interpersonal skills and conceptual skills assistant principal experiences. The administrative skills were linked to tasks such as: student behavior, master scheduling, and supervision. The interpersonal skills were linked to tasks such as: conflict resolution and navigating political issues, while the conceptual skills referenced the ability to strategically plan for the future and communicate a vision for success. The researcher pointed out that the demand for quality principal candidates is increasing and researchers must provide practitioners with new information on the assistant principalship. “The majority of existing research on school leadership focuses squarely on the principalship and is limited with regard to any specific focus on assistant principals.” (Lightfoot, 2014, p. 72).

Oliver (2013) researched assistant principals’ perceptions of the principalship and assistant principals’ career aspirations. In depth interviews and focus groups with a sample of New Jersey assistant principals were conducted to investigate the topic. New Jersey school administrators are required to complete, New Jersey Leaders to Leaders (NJL2L), a two year preparation and mentorship
program, in order to obtain a state license. The sample of assistant principals in this study ranged in administrative experience listed between one and a half to two years.

Oliver utilized a group of school administrators as a jury of experts to evaluate the research questions, and enhanced the validity of the research process by conducting a pilot interview. Letters were mailed to 433 assistant principals, who were enrolled in the second year of the NJL2L or who had recently completed NJL2L, and received 22 responses (p. 46). Five of the 22 respondents were not eligible because they were promoted to principalships and five others failed to respond to emails or declined to participate, and the researcher settled for the final sample number of 12. Each participant was assigned a code number and all identities were maintained in confidence. A three person focus group was conducted and the other nine participants were interviewed via telephone. Oliver recorded the phone interviews and transcribed the recordings. The transcripts were analyzed and coded into over-arching themes.

The interview responses were displayed in coded themes and Oliver’s chapter four contained a detailed description and analysis of the results. Oliver stated that one of the 12 participants had no aspiration to become a principal. This fact indicates that most assistant principals will pursue a principalship. The assistant principals stated that having positive relationships with students was a rewarding aspect of the assistant principalship. The assistant principals stated that succeeding as a principal would depend on the following characteristics: Instructional Leadership (58%), Communication (50%), Visionary Leadership (41%), Flexible Decision Maker (41%), Personnel Decisions (33%), and Managerial (25%) (p. 108). “The principalship was described as being a difficult job due to time requirements and responsibilities of dealing with difficult parents, personnel decisions,
politics and discipline, while keeping constant communication and managing the day-today operations” (p. 118). Motivating factors to pursue a principalship included “having positive experiences as an assistant principal, having leadership aspirations to make a difference, financial incentives and growing as an administrator” (p. 118). Oliver’s recommendations for future research suggested assistant principals’ perceptions be investigated through a larger sample and with topics such as: the number of years in the assistant principalship, age and sex’s impact on assistant principals pursuing a principalship, and state level and school district level support of assistant principals.

Beach (2010) completed a doctoral dissertation that examined the factors which may influence an individual to pursue a career as an assistant principal or principal. Beach administered quantitative surveys to graduate students in a masters’ program in 2009 and 2010. The survey was based on an instrument known as the Administrators Index of Motivators (p. 31). The AIM tool was first used in a 2005 study, and Beach relied on the validity of an existing instrument. Beach received responses from 81 of 86 graduate students in an educational administration graduate school program, and referred to the graduate students as administration candidates.

The AIM survey questioned how likely the administrator candidates were to pursue an administrative job in the next 10 years and which factors were most influential in the decision. In chapter four, Beach revealed the results to research question one, “what do educational administration candidates perceive as conditions affecting their decision to seek or not seek a position as an assistant principal or principal?” (p. 37). Beach’s research question one is relevant because it examines an issue that is fundamental to the current proposal. In the findings Beach indicated that none of the responses to research question one were significant. “There was no distinctive pattern on a majority of the items” (p. 50). Beach asserted that additional research is needed in the field to support school leaders who
groom and develop assistant principals. “Practicing educational administrators and principals in particular, may want to take particular note of their influence on aspiring assistant principals/principals” (p. 62).

**Generational Research on School Administrators**

Westman’s (2012) dissertation examined the perceptions of the Generation X, K-8 principals in the Chicago, Illinois area. Westman mailed a qualitative questionnaire to a target sample, which was identified using data from the state board of education. The researcher developed the questionnaire and allowed an informal focus group of 11 participants to self-administer the questionnaire. The focus group confirmed that completing the questionnaire would take a principal roughly 15 minutes to complete. The focus group provided feedback on the clarity and quality of the questions. The focus group data were used to validate the questionnaire, but it was not used in the final results. The researcher relied on conventional paper mail, to avoid any potential participants’ concerns of internet security of personal information (Westman, 2010).

The questionnaire was mailed to eligible participants as identified from data obtained through the Illinois Department of Education and the Illinois State Principal’s Association. The researcher obtained responses 142 (n=142) of the 2,453 questionnaires that were mailed out. The questionnaire captured time study data, and asked demographic questions about the principals and their respective schools. The questionnaire included five open ended questions, and the responses were coded and the code data were compiled into a Microsoft Excel spread sheet (Westman, 2010).

The results indicated that principals’ amount of time spent on work related tasks was related to the range of chronological student grades offered in their respective schools. Generation X principals
in an elementary school, intermediate school, or middle school spent more on classroom observations and student discipline, while principals in K-8 spent more time on clerical non-instructional assignments. The results also indicated that school size influenced the amount of time Generation X principals spent on tasks. Principals with 400 or fewer students spent relatively similar amounts of time on specific tasks as Generation X principals of larger schools. Principals 400 to 700 students reported spending more time on “classroom observations, buildings and grounds issues, teacher meetings, attending public relations events, and on personal professional development” (p. 104). Generation X principals of schools with 701 to 1,000 reported spending the majority of their time on curriculum development. Generation X principals of schools who have more than 1,000 students in their building spend the most amount of time on student discipline, parent contact, student meetings, administrative meetings, clerical/paperwork, and other tasks including e-mails and duty supervisions (Westman, 2010, p. 104).

The questionnaire included five open ended research questions. The respondents answered the questions and returned their responses on paper and in envelopes with no identifying markings. This decision may have been useful in motivating respondents to respond freely without fear that their identities would be compromised.

Research question one asked, “why did you pursue the principalship?” (Westman, 2010 p. 105). Nearly all (n=142) of the respondents indicated that they wanted to improve education for children and they wanted to have a leadership influence in their schools. The encouragement of a mentor or former principal was reported as a common theme (n=72). A smaller group (n=4) indicated personal reasons such as, being burned out in the classroom or an increased salary (Westman, 2010). Research question two asked, “what are the most rewarding aspects of the principalship?” (Westman, 2010 p. 105). The
responses fell into two categories; the desire to see children grow and develop and the desire to see adults (teachers and parents) grow and develop in a way that helps children succeed (Westman 2010).

Research question three asked, “what are your biggest personal challenges as a principal?” (Westman, 2010 p. 105). Managing the roles and responsibilities of the job, such as state and federal mandates, garnered the highest number of responses (n=74). Difficulties with stakeholders including teachers (n=64) and parents (n=13). Research question four asked, “what personal and professional supports do you need in order to retain your professional vitality for the principalship?” (Westman, 2010 p. 105). The respondents indicated that the time required to manage the school took away from time with their own families and children. Coded themes of time away from work (n=54), the ability to set their own direction and goals (n=43), and mentoring and support groups (n=38) were recorded as desirable supports by Generation X principals.

A qualitative research study published in 2012 used data qualitative data, collected between 2007 and 2008, to investigate the relationship between a person’s generation and attraction to the principalship (Stone-Johnson, 2012). The researcher’s review of literature detailed the common roles and responsibilities of the principalship and the principal shortage. The reviewed literature indicated that the number of teachers who enrolled in master’s degree programs in leadership and administration, produced a sufficient number of graduates to replace the retiring Baby Boomer principals. The researchers reported that many educators with the requisite licensures or certificates are not pursuing administrative positions. The literature review indicated that teachers view factors associated with the conditions of the principalship, salary increase, hours away from home, increased responsibility, and they rationalize the conditions with their own extrinsic or intrinsic motivations for career advancement. The literature review covered publications on accountability, high stakes testing, and school
improvement reforms. The results based reform efforts were described as providing undesirable stress and pressure on the principal (Stone-Johnson, 2012).

The methodology examined data from earlier research to explore reasons why Generation X teachers were hesitant to apply for the principalship. The study involved midcareer Generation X teachers with between 7 and 15 years of experience. The 12 participants were secondary teachers in middle or high schools, and half of the sample worked in urban schools. The researcher interviewed each participant individually for 45 to 75 minutes and the responses were recorded and transcribed (Stone-Johnson, 2012).

Generational Theory was used to examine the reasons why midcareer Generation X teachers are not as motivated to obtain the principalship as their Baby Boomer predecessors. The data indicated midcareer Generation X teachers’ desire for career and personal life balance, freedom, and autonomy over shadows the increased power, income, and responsibility of the principalship. Participants also indicated that they valued the direct relationships with students in the classroom, and that they viewed the ideal positions as quasi administrative, and still providing some portion of the day for teaching. One participant said, “In the case of our administrators they had virtually sacrificed their lives for the job. Our principal told me that out of 180 days of school, 110 of them he was at school until 9:00 p.m. or later. That was very hard for me to deal with” (Stone-Johnson, 2012, p.11)

The principal shortage is not due to a shortage of administrative program graduates. Enrollment statistics and the number of teachers finishing master’s degrees in educational leadership indicate there are more than enough qualified educators to replace the Baby Boomer principals. The issue is that many qualified applicants are not motivated to take the next step by applying for principal administrative positions. In order to provide schools with experienced and capable educators in
leadership position, schools need to know what would make the positions more desirable. Changing the role of the principal, dividing the work load, or allowing principals to have more flexible schedules, may make the job more desirable (Stone-Johnson, 2012).

Effectively meeting the demands of the principal’s job description has always been demanding and difficult. The reward of increased self-efficacy and feeling as though the individual has a strong and positive influence on the educational process has always been a motivating factor for principals. This study indicates that Generation X teachers value their time away from work, more than they value the increased salary and responsibility. This research asserts that there is a difference between Generation X educators and Baby Boomer educators. The data were collected in 2007-2008 and the oldest Millennial educators were 27 years old at that time, thus none of the Millennial educators could have been considered as midcareer professionals. Millennials now occupy midcareer status positions and the Millenial principal was not common in 2007. Generational theory was applied to explain why Generation X teachers have different career motivations than Baby Boomers.

A study conducted using a sample of California elementary principals investigated differences between generational cohorts, in respect to perceptions of the principalship (Holman 2003). The quantitative research process was employed to examine three research questions (Holmon, 2003. p. 8-9). Research questions one and two were based on the differences in the values of Baby Boomer and Generation X elementary principals in terms of their “communication, family, technology, and work style.” Research question three has significant relationship to this research proposal, and the researchers examined at a deeper level in order to determine “to what degree are there differences between the elementary school principals among generational cohorts” (p. 9).
The descriptive study collected ex post facto data on principals representing schools with K-5 or K-6 enrollments. The random sample of 247 principals, were selected from a pool of 494 schools in the two counties involved in the study (Holman 2003). “The names of all 494 K-6 public elementary schools were written on index cards of equal size and placed in a tumbler. Two hundred forty-seven index cards were selected from the tumbler and constituted the sample schools for the study” (Holman, 2003, p. 73).

The researcher created the survey instrument and Clare Ranes, an expert in the field of generational research, evaluated the instrument to establish validity. Members of the researcher’s dissertation committee evaluated the survey and provided feedback. The final draft of the survey contained 26 items within two parts of the survey (Holman, 2003).

The selected sample of 247 principals received an email one week prior to receiving a mailed paper copy of the survey. The surveys asked the principals to select their year of birth as, “Before 1944, between 1945 and 1960, and after 1960” (Holman, 2003 p. 74). Their self-identification established the generational cohorts of reference. The principals who were born before 1944 were identified as Veterans. The return rate of the survey was 68 percent. Veterans were not included in this study, because their numbers were not sufficient to build a meaningful sample. The removal of Veterans from the data sample left only Baby Boomers and Generation Xers for comparative research among and between the two generational cohorts.

The survey responses were compiled and mean scores for each item were determined in text and in charts. The results revealed similarities in the responses of Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, “eighteen of the twenty-six survey statements contained within the instrument demonstrated no significant difference between the two groups.” (Holman, 2003, p. 119-120). Questions regarding the
issues such as maintaining a healthy balance between work and family indicated that Baby Boomer and Generation X elementary principals’ responses were not significantly different. Nearly all of the surveys indicated frustration with long hours, and personal sacrifice.

Eight of the 26 items indicated a significant difference between the populations. According to Holman (2003), “generation Xers also indicated significantly higher levels of frustration with the infringement the elementary school principalship has on family life” (p. 120). The generational differences included factors such as communication techniques, technology application, moving to new positions, and interacting with central office leadership. Generation X elementary principals demonstrated: a desire for diplomatic communication, more comfort with using technology, and more willingness to move to new positions than Baby Boomer elementary principals (Holman 2003).

The results report that there is a difference between the responses of Baby Boomers and Generation Xers perceptions of the principalship and that generational identity theory has validity in educational research. In 2002, when the Holman data were collected, the oldest Millenials were between 22 and 24 years old and were not likely to have completed the prerequisite experience benchmarks and educational programs to become elementary principals. The oldest Millennials are now between 34 and 36 years old. Research is needed to determine if the newest generation of principals has differences from Generation X and Baby Boomer principals.

Suckert (2008) studied principals in Minnesota and asserted that, “it is important to determine if there are generational differences in values among school leaders who are members of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) and Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association MESPA)” (p. 9). Suckert’s sample size and scope was limited to principals with MASSP and MESPA memberships.
The results were reached from analysis of data from “738 principals, 5 (.6%) principals were Traditionalists, 404 were Baby Boomers (54.7%), and 329 were Generation X (44.6 %), and there were no Millennials responding,” (Suckert, 2008, p. 94). The responses were collected using a web site, www.surveymonkey.com which allowed for anonymous responses. Terminal value data were collected to assess respondents’ perceptions of quality of life factors associated with the principalship. Suckert’s statements in Chapter V (2008) concluded that the, “larger number of Baby Boomers indicates that they are the majority of school administrators and in the next decade will be replaced by Generation X members. In the next decade, it can be projected that the number of Baby Boomers will decrease significantly, Generation X will increase, and Millennials will enter administration in increasing numbers,” (p. 97). One of Suckert’s (2008) recommendations for further research included, “this survey should be revisited in the future when there will be three generations of educational leaders working together: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials,” (p. 101).

Summary of the Literature Review

The scholarly works reviewed in this section consistently indicated that an educators’ generational identity is a factor in one’s perception of the principalship. The researchers paired generational identity theory and perceptions of educators, to demonstrate that the respective collective cohort experience is a phenomenon that impacts the way educators perceive career opportunities, rewards, and challenges associated with the principalship. The research concluded that an educator’s perception of a job role could influence if the educator would seek a position. The researchers consistently reported that additional research on generational cohorts would serve as a benefit to both practitioners and researchers. When comparison studies were completed, the results stated that there was a difference in the perceptions of Generation X and Baby Boomer school administrators.
Millennials were not featured in most of the data collection, but research on Millennials was suggested by the researchers. The studies were conducted when the researchers did not have access to high numbers of Millennial school leaders, because the Millennial school administrator was a relatively new phenomenon. This study was conducted during a period of time when Millennial Generation assistant principals were physically available for research and are not simply, an unknown concept of the future.
Chapter 3
Methodology

This chapter outlines the details of the qualitative research methodology of the study. The researcher purposefully sampled a group of Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals from Central Virginia public school divisions. Data were recorded in the form of rich and thick narratives, in order to investigate Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship, from a generational perspective (McMillan & Wergin, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship. The implications of the data may play an influential role the methods school division leaders utilize in recruiting, training, retaining, and promoting assistant principals to the principalship. In addition to educational administrators, the findings and implications were intended to support educational scholars as they continue to study the topic. This study should not be confused with a study on young or inexperienced administrators. This study focused on assistant principals who represented either the Millennial Generation or Generation X. The data obtained from the interviews were used to identify similarities and differences between the generational cohort members’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship.

Study Design and Rationale

Qualitative research methodology was applied in this study. “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Mirriam, 2009, p. 5). Creswell (2009) explained that an
unknown or little researched phenomenon is best explored with qualitative research methods. All qualitative research relies on underlying philosophy of phenomenology, which is focused, “on the experience itself and how experiencing something transformed into consciousness (Mirriam, 2000, p. 24).

**Research Design Justification**

Members of a generational cohort experience cohort-identifying events at similar chronological ages and they share a common history, based on real world experiences (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). The participants who were interviewed for this study all experienced life events in the frame of their respective generational cohort’s and they are assistant principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The shared history associated with the two groups of participants generational identities are the phenomenon in the center of this qualitative study. In order “to get at the essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience, the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection” (Mirriam, 2009, p. 25).

Each research question served as an open-ended interview question. The researcher asked probing and clarifying questions to better understand the participants’ perceptions. According to Maxwell (2013) the research questions determine the type and level of understanding the results ultimately produce, and the “interview questions are what you ask to gain that understanding” (p. 101). The use of probing and clarifying questions helped produce the data, in the form of rich and thick narratives, which reflected the meaning of the Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principal experiences.
Research Questions

This study explored five research questions, which were based on Westman’s (2010) research on Generation X principals.

1. What (if any) are the motivating factors in the assistant principal’s decision to pursue a principalship?
2. What (if any) rewards does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
3. What (if any) challenges does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
4. What (if any) central office level support does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
5. What (if any) future career opportunities does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

Setting and Sample Selection

The sample was composed of Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals from public school divisions in Virginia. The researcher contacted individuals throughout a professional network of colleagues of public school administrators. Information about this study was shared with doctoral candidates at Virginia Tech, and some of the doctoral candidates provided names of individuals who met the criteria for this qualitative study. The researcher sent recruitment emails that explained the criteria for participation and a brief description of the study, and the recipients were encouraged to forward the recruitment email to Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals, or other educators who could distribute the email to possible participants. The researcher purposeful sampled Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals. “The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (or documents or visual material) that
will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell, 2009, p. 178).

The researcher did not expect to gain access to a large number of participants. The invitations eventually generated a sufficient pool of eligible participants, and the researcher was able to meet the dissertation committee’s recommendation of 12 participants as an adequate study population. The target sample included: two Generation X elementary assistant principals, two Generation X middle school assistant principals, two Generation X high school principals, two Millennial Generation elementary assistant principals, two Millennial Generation middle school assistant principals, and two Millennial Generation high school assistant principals. The researcher collected contact information from the potential participants via email. The researcher applied probability sampling to the pool of potential participants (Maxwell, 2013), by grouping the assistant principals by generation and school level and randomly selecting participants when more than two eligible participants were available for interviews. The researcher initially planned to collect responses from potential participants over a three-week period, after the invitations to participate were distributed by email. Table 5 illustrates the design of the target sample of 12 study participants.
Table 5

Research participants and coding template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant identifier</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Generational Cohort</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>School Setting</th>
<th>Student Population</th>
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<td>Generation X</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
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<td>B</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>450</td>
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<tr>
<td>GXM1</td>
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<td>Generation X</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
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<td>W</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection Procedures

The faculty of Virginia Tech’s Graduate School of Education influenced the research design and methodology of this study by instructing courses on research methods, qualitative data collection, and data analysis, and dissertation composition among other courses for the completion of the degree program. In accordance with university guidelines, the researcher completed the requirements for the Training in Human Subjects Protection Certification (Appendix A). The dissertation committee approved this study at the conclusion of the prospectus examination. The researcher composed the Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects (Appendix B) as one portion of an application to the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the IRB approved the procedures for data collection, management, and analysis (Appendix C). The researcher distributed a Recruitment Letter (Appendix D) and a Recruitment Flyer (Appendix E) via an email that was forwarded throughout a network of professional associates and other educational administrators in central Virginia. The email distribution produced the requisite number of 12 participants.

After the target sample group of Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals was obtained, 12 interviews were conducted with two cohort pairs at each respective level of school-based administration. The narratives from the interview transcript data provided the researcher the opportunity to describe similarities and differences within and between generational cohorts, and within and between school levels.

The five research questions were phrased in first person format and served as interview questions. The researcher asked each research question and allowed the participants to respond to the open ended questions. The researcher asked clarifying and probing questions after each research question. According to Creswell (2009) four or five open-ended questions are appropriate for a
qualitative study. Four of five interview questions with “probes for the 4-5 questions, to follow up and ask individuals to explain their ideas in more detail or to elaborate on what they have said,” (p. 183) was the researcher’s objective during the interview process.

The research questions were adapted from Westman’s (2010) dissertation on Generation X principals. Westman mailed a paper copy of the Principal’s Perceptions Questionnaire to the participants. Westman analyzed the data and reported on findings, but did not conduct interviews with the participants. This study did not generate a high volume of responses, such as Westman’s 142 participants, but through the qualitative interview process it reached a deep level of qualitative understanding about Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship.

**Instrument Design**

Because the questions and procedures did not mirror Westman’s work, the researcher collaborated with other Virginia Tech doctoral candidates to evaluate the research questions. The collaboration with peers from the Virginia Tech doctoral cohort was intended to validate the research questions and scrutinize the research process. Feedback from the dissertation committee during the preliminary, drafting, and prospectus process was synthesized into the final draft of the research questions. Because the research questions were used as open-ended interview questions, the critique and refining of the research questions were the de facto instrument validation.

**Instrument Validation**

The researcher used a Millennial Generation high school principal as the pilot participant. The pilot interview helped the researcher to estimate the amount time that each interview would last, think
of potential follow up questions, and norm the interview process. Feedback from the pilot interview participant helped the researcher improve the experience for the formal participants and develop appropriate clarifying and probing questions. The pilot interview was recorded and the researcher to refined the skills of interviewing, audio recording, note taking, transcription, document security, coding, and data reporting. A Virginia Tech doctoral candidate who was conducting a qualitative study and successfully defended a qualitative dissertation during this research project, reviewed the transcription and coding from the pilot interview. The feedback from consultation with the peer classmate and critical friend increased the integrity of the data validation.

**Data Treatment**

The researcher provided a synopsis of the proposal that included the purpose and nature of the study for distribution to potential sample participants and other relevant actors (Creswell, 2009). The recruitment literature included the researcher’s Virginia Tech email address and the potential participants received literature on the nature of the study via email. “The proposal should identify what data the researcher will record and the procedures for recording data” (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). The email informed recipients that this research would not encroach on their professional or personal lives’ by adhering to the following protocols.

1. Participants’ names would not be published and confidentiality would be maintained by limiting personal identifying information to letter and school level. I.E. Participant 1 – Middle School Assistant Principal
2. School divisions would not be identified by name, and would only be described with nonspecific modifiers. I.E. A suburban school district in Virginia.
3. All documents and audio recordings containing personal information would be secured.
This study did not encroach on the assistant principals’ personal or professional anonymity, and participants had the option to voluntarily contact the researcher, using the contact information in the email distribution. The researcher did not harass or make excessive attempts to contact participants who do not respond after receiving one reminder via email. This study maintained strict adherence to the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board’s guidelines.

**Data Management**

Each interview and was recorded in MP3. In addition to the recordings, hand written notes were composed during each interview and entries were logged in a reflective journal after each interview. “Even if an interview is taped, I recommend that researchers take notes, in the event that the recording equipment fails” (Creswell, 2009, p. 183).

Each interview recording was transcribed into a typed document. The researcher used a website application [www.otranscribe.com](http://www.otranscribe.com) to transcribe the audio recordings. The web application allowed the researcher to slow the playback speed of the audio files, insert time stamps into the transcripts and notes, and rewind the audio files to accurately transcribe the recordings. A typed copy of each interview transcript was emailed to the study participants as a member check, which allowed the participants to validate their responses. Member check emails were distributed to each participant after the transcripts of the MP3 recordings were typed. The member check procedure was recommended by the dissertation committee, and allowed participants to review the transcripts of their interviews and provide input, in regards to the accuracy of the transcripts. The member check procedure was intended to strengthen the validity of the interview and transcript data by allowing participants an opportunity to request corrections and omissions to the written record of their interview responses.
Data Analysis Techniques

Twelve member check emails were sent, and six participants responded to the member check email. None of the six participants, who responded to the member check email, requested a transcript edit. Once the member checks were completed, the transcripts were analyzed for common themes in the responses. “Data analysis involves collecting open-ended data, based on asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by participants,” (Creswell, 2009, p. 184). The responses were coded and categorized into the common themes.

The researcher used a website www.dedoose.com to store the coded theme data. Creswell (2009) stated that computer programs will not replace human coding, and that researchers must read each transcript line by line to identify themes, but “the basic idea behind these programs is that using the computer is an efficient means for storing and locating qualitative data,” (p. 188). Creswell suggested that a researcher can predetermine themes before the analyzing transcripts, or allow the themes to emerge during the data analysis. The themes emerged from the transcript data during the data analysis. The coded data were presented as generalizable and transferable themes in chapter four of the study.

Summary of the Methodology

The researcher solicited feedback from the dissertation committee, regarding the research design and methodology, and applied the feedback to develop an acceptable research protocol. The researcher gained approval from the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, and gained access to a sample of assistant principals representing Generation X and the Millennial Generation by utilizing a professional network of colleagues. Once the pool of participants was identified, the researcher investigated the five research questions by conducting interviews. The interviews were recorded,
transcribed, and coded for data analysis. The results of the data collection were presented as coded themes in chapter four.
Chapter 4
Presentation of Data and Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship. A pool of twelve assistant principals was obtained, with the purposeful inclusion of two Generation X elementary assistant principals, two Generation X middle school assistant principals, two Generation X high school assistant principals, two Millennial Generation elementary assistant principals, two Millennial Generation middle school assistant principals, and two Millennial Generation high school assistant principals.

In each of the 12 interviews, the five research questions were presented as qualitative interview questions. The interviews were recorded and the interview recordings were transcribed. Each transcript was emailed to the corresponding participant for a member check, and after the member checks, the transcript data were analyzed using www.dedoose.com and coded themes were applied to the data. When at least three of the six participants in either generational group provided interview responses which were consistent with a particular theme, the researcher identified that particular code as a major coded theme. The remainder of this chapter focused on the findings of the coded transcripts and the themes that emerged from the analysis of coded data.

Research Questions

RQ1 What (if any) are the motivating factors in the assistant principal’s decision to pursue a principalship?
RQ2 What (if any) rewards does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
RQ3 What (if any) challenges does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
RQ4 What (if any) central office level support does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

RQ5 What (if any) future career opportunities does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

**Millennial Generation Assistant Principals’ Responses to RQ1**

RQ1 What (if any) are the motivating factors in the assistant principal’s decision to pursue a principalship?

**Theme: Personal Motivation to Reach Children**

Millennial Generation Assistant Principals reported that their Personal Motivation to Reach Children was a dominant motivating factor in their decision to pursue a principalship. When the interview transcript data such as, “right now this is a great learning experience for me and I feel so passionate about education” (MGE2, 26) or “seeing children succeed to me is important” (MGM1, 15) were analyzed, it was assigned to the coded theme, personal motivation to reach children.

All six Millennial Generation Assistant Principals made statements that were consistent with the personal motivation to reach children theme. MGE1 shared a success story about her students, “I was able to watch them flourish and make great progress and to me that’s very rewarding,” (54-55). Responses that expressed a personal desire to see students succeed were consistent throughout all six participants. “The first reason why I wanted to pursue going into educational leadership is having a positive impact on students,” (MGM2, 11-12). The assistant principals communicated a sense of pride in being an educator, and they all communicated a strong affinity for children and education.
MGH1’s personal motivation to reach children was best described in lines 19 and 20.

Impact the quality of education for all the kids in a school. So at the heart of why I do what I do, it’s all about trying to elevate myself to have an opportunity to have a greater impact in the lives’ of students.

**Theme: Support Teachers and Students**

Four of the six Millennial Generation assistant principals responded with various statements, which were coded into the theme, Support Teachers and Students. Support Teachers and Students, was categorically applied to transcript data that related to making procedural changes in a school and improving the quality of educational services in a school. “I guess that I would be interested in pursuing a principalship, so that I can in turn help more teachers” (MGE2, 26-28). The Millennial Generation assistant principals stated that they wanted to make a difference in education. Their responses indicated that supporting teachers was an important step in making positive contributions to education.

In lines 22 through 24 MGH1 reflected on the career journey from classroom teacher to principal and the opportunity to influence more teachers and students and as a principal.

As a classroom teacher I was able to impact the lives of 125 to 150 students. As an assistant principal, I'm part of the team, but I work more with 400 or 500 students, and as a building principal you know, you're having that opportunity to impact the lives of 1,000 or 1,200 students, depending on where you are. So that's kind of really what drives me.
MGH1 described the role of a building principal as, “having an opportunity to work with teachers, parents, and the community to impact the lives of children” (27-28). MGM2 stated that a greater level of influence would be obtained “by making that next move, in my building I can be able to create change, positive, meaningful change” (20-21). MGM1 also wanted to support teachers “I have lots of knowledge that I can share with staff members and teachers, and so I want to be in a position to be able to do that and to make effective changes within a school” (MGM1, 9-11).

Theme: Responsibility and Autonomy

Responses that expressed a desire for decision making power, and being the primary leader of the building were categorically liked to the code, Responsibility and Autonomy. Four of the six Millennial Generation assistant principals indicated responses that were consistent with Responsibility and Autonomy. MGM1 assertively declared, “I want to be a leader of the school” (18). MGM2 discussed the fact that an assistant principal can have a strong impact on the operation of the school, “but as far as making overarching decisions for the school, that is ultimately going to rest on the shoulders of the principal” (19-20). MGH2 said the “biggest motivating factor is, I like to be the leader, I like to be looked up to as the leader, I know it's not always easy and the most liked job, but I feel like I can handle it” (21-22). MGE2 expressed a similar sentiment, as an assistant principal “I'm allowed to make a lot of decisions and we work well as a team at this point. But if I were a principal I think I would want to implement things” (30-32).

Generation X Assistant Principals Responses to RQ1

RQ1 What (if any) are the motivating factors in the assistant principal’s decision to pursue a principalship?
Theme: Encouragement from Leaders

The most frequently occurring coded response category for Generation X assistant principals was Encouragement from Leaders. The Encouragement from Leaders code was applied to transcript data that indicated that a principal or central office administrator identified the participant as a potential leader and encouraged the participant to seek an administrative endorsement or a leadership position. Four Generation X assistant principals responded in this manner, and indicated that they were classroom teachers when the Encouragement from Leaders influenced their careers.

GXM2 was “closely working with the assistant principal I had at the time, and she encouraged me to go for an administration degree. I did that and got a job within months of getting the degree” (5-7). GXM1 said the principal “pulled me aside and said ‘you need to go back to school and get your administration paperwork’ ” (18-19).

Actually my superintendent who I worked for at the time, asked me when I was going to get an administrative endorsement, and I laughed and said I have no money and I really haven't been teaching that long, and he said “well you need to do it” (GXH1, 13-15).

GHX1’s former superintendent was not the only person to notice leadership potential in the participant. When an “an opportunity came to my school system through a grant for me to take classes for free and I was highly encouraged by colleagues and division leadership for me to take advantage of it” (15-17). GXE2 credited a master’s level instructor for encouragement into a building level leadership position. “I wanted to do something in curriculum and instruction, or I wanted to work for the DOE, and my instructor was just like, ‘you don't want to do that, you want to be a principal’ ” (26-27).
Theme: Support Teachers and Students

Three of the six Generation X assistant principals provided answers that were categorized into Influence Teachers and Students. GXM2 said “I think the biggest motivating factor would be to help students in staff in a way you haven't been able to do, and to try ideas you've developed over the years through your experiences” (17-20). GXE2 said “I think that maybe being in administration would put me in the position to do things for kids that I couldn't do in the classroom” (7-8). GXE1 said “I feel like the rewards [and] the motivating factors for wanting to become a principal are just how many more people you can reach in that role” (36-38).

Theme: Responsibility and Autonomy

GXM2 said that assistant principals have an opportunity to influence the school “well you always have your own vision of how you think the school should be run. As an assistant principal your vision takes a back seat to the principal’s” (13-14). GXM2 also added “sometimes my ideas, my strategies, or whatever have to take a backseat to what [the principal] wants to do, and that's ok. That's my job” (23-24).

GXM1 described the assistant principal’s role in the statement below:

The assistant principal is involved a lot in the day to day details of the school, and a lot of the time the principal is involved in the overarching things; the staff development plan, the theme, the vision, where we’re headed and the assistant principal will carry those much smaller missions out (36-38).

GXM1 said that the leadership growth gained through the assistant principal’s position prepares assistant principals for the principalship, although GXM1 planned to be become a building principal,
but expressed a desire to spend more time growing as a leader. “I’m not at the place yet where I want to be a principal. I know that will happen someday” (30-31). GXH2 said progressive increases in his level of leadership and responsibility during his career were both satisfying and motivating. He was promoted from assistant coach, to head coach, to athletic director, but his ultimate desire was a promotion to principal. He said that becoming a principal would validate his career, and said he had and intrinsic motivation to lead the school. “I feel like I’m capable and qualified to do the job and so really that is my number one. I never had aspirations to be a career assistant principal” (13-14).
Table 6

Summary of Research Question One Responses

**RQ1 What (if any) are the motivating factors in the assistant principal’s decision to pursue a principalship?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Theme</th>
<th>Millennial Generation Assistant Principals</th>
<th>Generation X Assistant Principals</th>
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<td>Support Teachers and Students</td>
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<td>GXE1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MGM1</td>
<td>GXE2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MGM2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MGH1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility and Autonomy</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement from Leaders</td>
<td>MGH1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of RQ1 Responses**

Two coded themes, Support Teachers and Students and Responsibility and Autonomy were representative of at least half of the participants in both generational cohorts of assistant principals.
Five Millennial Generation assistant principals provided answers that were consistent with the Personal Motivation to Reach Children theme, while only two Generation X assistant principals mentioned Personal Motivation to Reach Children. Encouragement from Leaders was applied to four Generation X assistant principal’s interview transcripts, as compared to only one Millennial Generation assistant principal’s interview transcript.

**Outlying responses to RQ1**

Several coded themes only accounted for one or two responses in either generational cohort of assistant principals, and those codes were considered as outliers for research question one. Increased Salary, MGM2 was motivated to make more money and support his family. “I think another factor is obviously monetary and being able to better supports my family” (MGM2, 12). “The opportunities for the pay scale on a teacher's salary are different than the leadership's potential, so that is also a factor as well” (13-14). GXH2 said “there should be a monetary gain” (17) in becoming a principal.

GXE1 felt that Career Advancement was a reward of the principalship. “It opens up more opportunities for you, if you want to go on to possibly work for a university at some time or go back to school to get you doctorate and you know pursue your own career” (38-40). One participant MGE1, was not interested in pursuing the principalship. “I thought I wanted to quickly move up to being a principal and then move on to superintendent but at this point in my life I can honestly say that’s not a goal of mine anymore” (33-36).

**Millennial Generation Assistant Principals’ Responses to RQ2**

RQ2 What (if any) rewards does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
Theme: Title

Five of the six Millennial Generation assistant principals said that Title was a reward of the principalship. The Title code was applied to statements that related to opportunities and perks of the principalship. Millennial Generation assistant principals discussed the accolades that principals receive when their schools are successful, training and professional development opportunities, and benefits of holding the title of building principal. MGE2 said that holding the title is a reward, but it is probably a more significant reward for other educators. “The title would be a reward, but that doesn't pop into my mind when I say, what are the rewards?” (42-43).

MGM1 (32-33) said “I guess when then the school does well, then the principal is the one to get the credit. Hopefully if the school does well then, you get that positive attention.” MGM2 also elaborated on the concept of the school’s success record being linked to the principal’s reputation. “I guess you could say name recognition. If your school is succeeding in passing these high stakes standardized tests, that's something that’s definitely attributed to the principal and not to the assistant principal” (48-49). MGH2 (38-39) said “if the school is successful it is a direct reflection on the principal, rightfully so or not that's how it is.

Transcript data related to accountability measures were included in the Title theme. The interview data indicated that the reward of accountability was more closely linked to the principal’s record, than the assistant principal’s record. The data indicated that accountability measures could enhance the value of the principal’s professional reputation. MGE1 said “one reward that I think the principal would enjoy is when their school does meet accreditation,” (68). MGE1 added “with our SOL, you know when our school is able to pass all of our SOLs” (69-70). MGM2 said SOLs are “something that definitely attributed to the principal and not to the assistant principal,” (49).
In lines 39 through 42 MGH2 described how accountability measures could reflect positively on the principal.

So what would be a big reward is if you know you bring your school into accreditation or they meet their AYP, they meet the benchmarks that they are supposed to meet under your leadership. It shows that you are able to delegate and not micro management. It shows that all around cohesiveness is there that starts with the principal.

**Theme: Support Teachers and Students**

Four of the six Millennial Generation assistant principals associated Supporting Teachers and Students as a reward of the principalship. When participants made statements related to helping teachers reach students or building the professional capacity of teachers, the responses were coded as Influence Teachers and Students. MGE1 (76-78) responded to the question by saying that being successful in the tasks of supporting teachers and students can be a personal reward for a principal.

Well you know seeing growth in students as well as well as seeing growth in teachers in our school system is a reward. I think that is a personal well-being as the building leader, it gives you that reassurance you are doing your job and doing it right.

MGE2 said the assistant principal has an important role in terms of supporting teachers, but having a greater level of influence as a principal would be a reward. “I'm still so passionate about instruction and best practices, so I would probably increase that more than what I already do now” (47-48). MGH1 stated “the intrinsic feeling that you get, knowing that you really made an impact in the lives of kids on a grand scale,” is a reward of the principalship. MGH2 (37-38) said “I would say being a successful leader and with that I would say being respected by your assistant principals, by your staff,
and by your students because you do a good job in leading them and in managing them.” MGH2 added “I can motivate people to want to do their jobs better to want to go above and beyond as opposed to just that bare minimum” (47-48).

**Theme: Increased Salary**

Three of the six Millennial Generation assistant principals indicated that increased salary was a reward of the principalship. MGM2 mentioned that a higher salary would be earned as a principal, and for the purposes of this study, it was counted as a reward of the principalship, although MGM2 went on to state that “I don't know if you consider financial pay like I said before to be a reward, I mean technically, it's not a reward, it's a part of your compensation for doing your job, but obviously that would be higher as a principal,” (52-53). MGE2 (38) said “wow, the first thing that pops into my mind is a pay raise, that's certainly a reward.” MGH1 said “I think obviously in the principalship there is greater pay and from a financial standpoint” (43-4). Antithetically MGM1 said “it’s not all about the money” (36).

**Generation X Assistant Principals’ Responses to RQ2**

RQ2 What (if any) rewards does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

**Theme: Support Teachers and Students**

Support Teachers and Students was the most frequently occurring coded theme for research question two. Four of the six Generation X assistant principals indicated that Supporting Teachers and Students was a reward of the principalship. GXE1 said that working with teachers as they pursued leadership positions was an important reward. GXE1 discussed working with two teachers who needed
help preparing for their administrative application processes, and both of the teachers earned the leadership positions. “We did mock interviews and I looked over their resumes” (66). GXE1 said “To have them go up into leadership roles is rewarding and I feel like you would get that even more so as a principal because you are able to task them with different leadership roles” (67-69).

GXE1 conveyed a sense of responsibility to help teachers develop. “I have had amazing mentors that have spent so much of their own time investing in my own growth, and I need to pay it forward to others” (88-90). GXE2 said that educational initiatives and the top down leadership approach can have a negative impact on teachers, but that principal attitudes can help teachers cope with system wide changes. “I think that whatever principals expect teachers to do, we should be able to do it, and it's really our attitudes that will change their perceptions of what they have to do” (32-33).

GXE2 elaborated on the concept of the principal’s attitude influencing teachers by telling a story about working with a former principal who delegated the task of managing a program. This principal spoke negatively about the program and the principal’s negativity caused teachers to perceive the program as negative. “But as a principal I think if the attitude is right, that's what I mean by leading, and they will follow you in that matter” (34-35). GXH1 (30-32) talked about the principal’s opportunity to create a positive environment where teachers and students can succeed.
I mean the rewards are just seeing kids succeed in any position. I’d say, as the building principal seeing teachers succeed and kids succeed, and being a hub of your community and offering a good place where people feel good about their kids going to school.

**Theme: Increased Salary**

Three of the six Generation X assistant principals indicated that Increased Salary was a reward of the principalship. GXE1 said “I think to be honest financially its more money in the role” (54-55). GXM1 said “of course it comes with an increased pay” (59).

GXM2 spoke about Increased Salary, but qualified the statement by saying that some assistant principals can earn a comfortable living, and the Increased Salary may not be a significant motivation to take on the challenges of leading some schools. GXM2 said that with the years of experience and a doctorate degree, a move up to principal may not generate a significant increase in pay (55-56).

It's about quality of life. You know why rock the boat? Which like a said to go to a different school or a different school division right now would significantly rock my boat, so the money would have to be there to take on something like that.

**Theme: Title**

Three of the six Generation X assistant principals indicated that the perks of the Title of principal was a reward of the principalship. GXE2 mentioned that principals are offered professional development and training activities that are not available to assistant principals. GXE2 said “professional development in your leadership skills” (45) is a perk of the principalship that assistant
principals are not given. GXM2 also said that professional development was a reward of the principal’s Title (36-40).

To participate in district leadership opportunities. I don't get that opportunity as an assistant principal, as my principal does. My principal gets invited to be a part of different committees and attend different conferences and present at conferences [and] I don’t get an opportunity because I'm the one staying back running the building while they do that. So I think the reward for an assistant principal would be to become more involved in not only your school but your district and maybe professional organizations that you don’t get to do as an AP. For me that's what I see anyway.

GXH2 (23-28) said that the duties of the assistant principal’s job are important, but only the principal receives credit when the school is successful.

We are kind of back to that prestige factor. There is always the accolade you get, for example when the school is accredited now, no one ever says, boy that assistant principal sure does do a good job helping everybody. So I would like to be recognized for the hard work I put in. I meet with young people every day and talk about grades, I don't just do discipline, and cover games, I work with kids, just as hard during the day. I've spent two hours with the principal going over SOL scores, about kids and our plan for them. But that's not something that would ever get recognized outside of here.
Table 7

Summary of Research Question Two Responses

RQ2 What (if any) rewards does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Theme</th>
<th>Millennial Generation Assistant Principals</th>
<th>Generation X Assistant Principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>GXE1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MGE2</td>
<td>GXE2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MGH1</td>
<td>GXH1</td>
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<td>GXE2</td>
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<td>Increased Salary</td>
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<td>GXE1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MGH1</td>
<td>GXH2</td>
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</table>

Summary of RQ2 Responses

The coded transcript data were similar for both Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals for two coded themes, Support Teachers and Students (four each) and Increased Salary (three each). Five Millennial Generation assistant principal’s responses were coded with Title as compared to three Generation X assistant principals. Responsibility and Autonomy was applied to
three of the Millennial Generation assistant principal’s interview transcripts, but only to two of the Generation X assistant principal’s interview transcripts.

**Outlying responses to RQ2**

Responsibility and Autonomy was only coded for two of the Generation X assistant principals, but they both conveyed a strong desire for an increased level of decision making and authority, and their interview responses were noteworthy. GXH2 expressed a desire to lead and be seen as the leader. “Well there is always the reward of being the leader of the building” (22). GXH2 said becoming a principal means “you have your own school. Those are all your folks, it's like being the head coach of a team, but it's like you are the head coach of a building” (30-31). GXM1 (68-70) said “getting to do what you want to do in the school and build it up the way you want to build it” was a reward of the principalship.

Career advancement was an outlying response to research question two. Only one participant described career advancement as a reward of the principalship. GXM1 said that retirement could be as many as 40 years away, and becoming principal was the next likely position in what would be long career as an educator (62-65).

I’m almost 30 and I have 40 years left probably and I’m not going to be a principal 35 of those years so the principalship will set me up for whatever is next after that. If I do this for 5 more years, I’ll be 35, if I stay 7 more years as a principal I’ll be 42, and then there’s 30 more years after that. 12:25 so that will be a step in the right direction. I don’t mean that like I’ll be ready to become a superintendent, because I don’t know if that is anything that I will ever want to be.
Millennial Generation Assistant Principals’ Responses to RQ3

RQ3 What (if any) challenges does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

Theme: School and Community Relations

The School and Community Relations code was applied to responses related to dealing with parents, community members, or elected officials. Five of the six Millennial Generation assistant principals stated that negotiating School and Community Relations was a challenge of the principalship. MGE2 expressed concerns about meeting the needs of a school community. “I know the community will talk and you know, you have to have tough skin when it comes to those kinds of roles because you are not going to make everybody happy” (65-66).

MGM1 said that as an assistant principal “you sometimes deal with unhappy parents, you deal with unhappy community members, there's always someone that's unhappy. I think a lot of the times you try to solve the issues before they get to the principal” (MGM1, 40-41). MGM1 said that the principal was ultimately responsible for dealing with communication issues because “especially in a small town like this they want to go right to the principal” (41-42). MGM2 said leading a school building, while handling the negative climate of local politics was a challenge of the principalship (66-69).

Another challenge is the landscape of the community. I don't want to use broad brush strokes and make a blanket statement for every school division. But in a lot of school divisions it seems like education is being attacked, by community members, parents, lot of people outside of the school.
The Millennial Generation high school assistant principals also said that local politics was a challenge of the principalship. MGH1 said “getting to know your community” (73) was an important task. “I'm learning now in (school district), the kind of small town politics of it all is something that's really big, so I foresee those kinds of things as challenges, transitioning from an assistant principal to a first year principal” (74-75). MGH2 said that principals need “the support, sometimes especially in my situation of the community [and] the school board” (60). MGH2 (61-65) described the difficulty of meeting the challenges of running a school, when the work environment is devoid of support.

You're doing what you feel is right in your building, because that's where you are, but somebody from the outside says ‘no it has to be done this way.’ So the lack of the trust in the leadership that's put in those spots could be a challenge that locally we have faced. And there's going to be day to day challenges with students [and] with parents, because everything is going to come back to you. So you are going to have those situations that occur multiple times a day, that aren't always going to be easy quick fixes.

**Theme: Managing Staff**

The Managing Staff theme was applied to interview transcript data from research question three that mentioned written and verbal communication regarding the leadership, motivation and evaluation of certified and classified members. Four of the six Millennial Generation assistant principals identified Managing Staff as a challenge of the principalship. According to MGH2, principals need to change various aspects of their schools, but staff members are not always supportive of the changes. MGH2 said that clear and effective communication could help principals met the challenge of working with difficult staff members. “You have got motivate them all” (57) but “you are always going to have
that teacher who just refuses to do” (58) as directed “so it's going to be a challenge every day to
continue and not hound that teacher, but to try to find a way to motivate them that's outside of the box”
(59-60).

MGH1 said principals can enhance their effectiveness by “establishing trust and understanding
the culture and climate of the building” (68). MGH1 said changing the norms and practices in a school
building are a challenge. “Anytime there is a new leader in the building there are certain things that are
in place” (69-70) and the principal’s challenge is to help the staff improve by convincing them that all
proposed changes are in the interest of improvement. MGH1 said that in order for a principal to
transform a school and create change, the principal must effectively communicate with the faculty:

In an effort to move forward a challenge would be that you make, [and] that you present the
appropriate data to individuals, as to why you are doing what you're are doing. In an effort to
be transparent and to make sure that that they have a say in understanding why we are doing
what we are doing and also that that have some say so in how to get to where you’ve got to go.
(70-73).

MGE2 said that as an assistant principal “I check in with our teachers now, I check in with our
special education teachers to make sure they are on track, doing what they are supposed to be doing”
(80-82). MGE2 continued by explaining that the task of monitoring staff assignments would likely
increase as a principals. MGE2 appeared confident and excited to accept this challenge. “I like giving
that feedback, whether it’s positive or if it's those critical conversations, I like supporting teachers
through the evaluations. Not an, I'm out to get you kind of thing, but to offer support (73-75).
MGM2 said principals face the challenge of working with staff members who consistently underperform, but the policy and practice in a school district may not allow a principal to efficiently replace ineffective teachers (86-94).

Unfortunately it is very clear to me that in education you can have teachers that underperform, that do not display professionalism, that are not holding to the standards that we expect as administrators, for them to be held to. Then at the same time you see that you have plans of improvement you have letters in files that are being issued. It is extremely difficult to dismiss those teachers once they have continuing contract status, and that is very harmful to the education field as a whole. If you have underperforming workers that sometimes it seems completely impossible to get rid of, and that's in a right to work state, that's not even talking about a unionized state, where it is virtually impossible to be able to let go of staff that are underperforming, so that would be a big, or my biggest view of challenges today. It can be done, but when I have conversations with the administrative staff at my school the biggest thing that I always hear talked about is lawsuits. Everyone is scared of litigation.

**Theme: SOL Accountability**

The SOL Accountability code was applied to responses regarding the challenge of the meeting the standardized testing requirements associated with the Virginia Standards of Learning. Three of the six Millenial Generation assistant principals provided interview responses that were consistent with the SOL Accountability code. MGM2 expressed frustration with the task of designing and implementing a curriculum that fosters student creativity and communication while maintaining state accreditation that is based on maintaining high pass rates on standardized tests (60-64).
We’ve been breeding a culture where testing students left and right in these high stakes SOL formats is the lynch pin and ending point for everything, but at the same time we have people that are saying that we are trying to preparing students for the 21st century and to be higher level thinkers and also to be creative and all these other things and yet we are giving one size fits all tests, and teaching to the tests, and drilling and killing to be able to pass these tests.

MGM1’s statements described SOLs as a significant challenge for principals. “I would say the biggest things that I notice right now are the SOL scores and that pressure to meet accreditation” (MGM1, 46-47). MGM1 explained that assistant principals play a role in the delivery of the educational services, but that the pressure of high stakes testing affects principals more so than assistant principals. “We both work towards the goal but ultimately it’s going to fall down on the principal, because they are supposed to be the instructional leader” (47-48). MGM1 said that school division leaders look to principals for answers when schools do not meet accreditation standards. MGH2’s answer also reflected an understanding that principals shoulder the weight of their school’s accreditation rating. MGH2 said many of the challenges of the principalship “would be unforeseen to me now because I have never experienced them” (55). MGH2 was said that the success of a principal was uncertain “if you don't meet the benchmarks” (56).

**Theme: Responsibility and Autonomy**

The Responsibility and Autonomy coded theme was applied to transcript data that related to authority and decision making of the principalship. This code was listed as a reward of the principalship in research question two, but conversely it was listed as a challenge of the principalship in research question three. MGE2 said applying school policy and law to decision making and
management of the school influence the “choices you have with certain situations, which I'm learning that now, but when you get to that role you've got to make those decisions” (53-54). MGE2 added that principals have a high level of Responsibility and Autonomy “because this is your building, and you're in charge of students and staff and everything (MGE2, 59-61).

MGM1 said that the principal is ultimately responsible for the school building. “When anything goes wrong it all falls on you. You have to take the heat for things. You are expected to take the heat for things” (39). This statement described the negative aspect of the Responsibility and Autonomy. While an assistant principal can rely on the principal for support and is somewhat absolved from total responsibility, principals do not have that benefit “ because everything is going to come back to you” (MGH2, 63-64).

**Generation X Assistant Principals’ Responses to RQ3**

RQ3 What (if any) challenges does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

**Theme: School and Community Relations**

Five of the six Generation X assistant principals said that dealing with School and Community Relations were a challenge of the principalship. GXE2 said helping children through issues with their learning and in their behaviors, becomes more difficult when parental involvement is low. “I think getting parents to come in is a challenge” (GXE2, 58). GXM1 mentioned parental involvement from a different perspective and recalled, “dealing with phone calls from parents of elementary school students who do not even come here yet, but they want to talk with us before their child arrives here” (86-87).
GXE1 said “if you were an assistant principal going to a new school as principal it would be challenging to learn the community” (104-105). GXH1 expressed frustration with the political influence of outside actors. “You’ve got so many special interest groups that come in and think that their cause is the greatest, and they don’t realize how that impacts the rest of the whole building” (48-49). GXM2 said the political dynamics of the principalship are a challenge of the principalship. “The biggest challenge for me is the political aspect” (60). GXM2 said principals can be impacted by the influence of the “school board, or the board of supervisors, or another principal within your area” (61). “These influences that you have to work on, it’s a political game that some people are good at or some people are not” (61-62).

GXM2 said that the political challenge can undermine a principal’s judgement and decision making. “When you're trying to make the right decisions for your kids and your student body and your staff, but you're feeling that political pull to do something that you don't feel fits your building. How do you manage that?” (65-67). GXM1 said “we have children from elected local politicians, so they are like VIPs, and hey expect every email to be responded to quickly” (87-88). Both GXM2 and GXM1 said they have observed their respective building principals struggle to deal with political influences. “I see my principal struggling with that” (GXM2, 65).

**Theme: Responsibility and Autonomy**

Four of the six Generation X assistant principals indicated that responsibility and autonomy was a challenge of the principalship. “You have so much responsibility, and first is the safety of the students and staff, and just being able to go to sleep at night making sure that you have everything in
place” (GXE1, 96-98). Being the principal means “you were the last one to make the decisions so it’s all going to fall back on you” (GXE1. 95-96).

GXE2 offered a unique perspective, “my husband is a principal, so I can't imagine two of us in the same house” (72). GXE2 anticipated that additional responsibility would “come from I guess the meetings and stuff, that as an assistant principal I don't have to go to. The reports and stuff that may have to be done that I don't necessarily have to do,” (72-74) as an assistant principal.

GXM1 said the challenge of meeting “the expectations are changing and so that is a different type of pressure. All of that falls on his [the principal] shoulders and he gives us a ton of responsibility, but ultimately they [various stakeholders] want to know, that the buck stops with him [the principal]” (89-91). GXH2 (39-44) articulated a distinct difference between the assistant principal’s and the principal’s level of responsibility and autonomy.

I think there is a different level of commitment when you are the principal. When you are the assistant principal you are always one step removed from any problems with the central office, and there's always that level of removal. Whenever there's a problem it always comes back to the principal. The principal is responsible for just about everything. Also it is easier for me an as assistant principal, to say to myself 'that's too bad but ultimately that’s the principal's issue to deal with.' You can never do that when you are the principal, you get blamed for things that are not your fault, and you also get credit for things that you probably didn't have a lot to do with either.
Theme: Managing Staff

Three of the six Generation X assistant principals provided interview responses that were consistent with the criteria for the Managing Staff Code. GXE1 said that teachers are sometimes more comfortable venting their problems and frustrations to the assistant principal. “You know sometimes staff members come to the assistant to vent or give feedback and they might not go to the principal” (102-103). GXE1 said that principals must become familiar with a faculty’s history and perceptions of “the non-negotiables, the things that you can’t change the things that you need to change, and then if they [teachers] are willing to change” (105-106).

GXH1 mentioned the need for principals to understand their teacher’s capabilities and needs. “Knowing what their strengths and weaknesses are, so you know what to delegate to who in order to have the most effective building you can have” (46-47). GXH1 said creating a work environment that is “most conducive for your kids to do the best they can do” (47) as a challenge of the principalship.

GXM1 discussed the difficulty of managing staff in the context of a testing and results oriented climate. According to GXM1 principals are charged with the task of making sure that teachers produce passing scores, but “you can’t be so cut throat with teachers and you can’t just demand. If we do that to them, then it translates down, and they will start treating the students that way” (98-99). GXM1 said that a demanding high pressure environment will ultimately have negative impacts on students. “I’ve learned that lesson. That you need to be encouraging and you need to be emotionally supportive” (101-102).
Theme: Personal Sacrifice

The Personal Sacrifice coded theme was applied to transcript data relating to principal duties that require time away from home and the impact on the principal’s personal and family life. “It's hard to find the balance, I've spent years working on that, especially in high school administration with all the after school activities” (GXH1, 54-55). GXH1 said that students always want to see their principal at their school plays, games, and events (55-58).

I mean I love it, and I love spending time with the kids and they're always asking 'are you coming tonight?' and you know I’ve already been to two things that week, and I have personal things that I want to take care of or I want to spend time with my family, it's always painful to tell a student no, because you just can't do everything there's no way.

GXE2 said “time management and that may be more personal than anything, that's a challenge” of the principalship. Things can quickly and unpredictably come up that require principal’s to work longer hours than anticipated. GXE2 did not live within the county of her employment, but chose to transfer her daughter, when she began working as an assistant principal. “That's why I had to bring my daughter to school here. Just for peace of mind I had to have her here” (75-76).

GXE1 (111-114) talked about the challenge of meeting a demanding school schedule and its impact on her personal life.

I think the balance between family and work; you could work yourself to death as an assistant principal or as principal. I have two young children, so giving them 100 percent as a mom and also giving my school 100 percent is a challenge and knowing when you have to cut work off, because it could never cut off.
Table 8

Summary of Research Question Three Responses

RQ3 What (if any) challenges does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Theme</th>
<th>Millennial Generation Assistant Principals</th>
<th>Generation X Assistant Principals</th>
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<tbody>
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Summary of RQ3 Responses

The data in Table 8 indicates that School and Community Relations was the most frequently used coded theme for research question three. Five of the six participants in both respective generational cohorts of assistant principals said that dealing with School and Community Relations issues was a challenge of the principalship. Five Generation X assistant principals and three Millennial Generation assistant principals indicated that Responsibility and Autonomy was a challenge of the principalship. Managing Staff was applied to four Millennial Generation assistant principals and three Generation X assistant principals.

SOL Accountability was applied to the transcript data of three for three Millennial Generation assistant principals, but SOL Accountability was only consistent with two Generation X assistant principal’s transcripts. Personal Sacrifice was applied to three Generation X assistant principal’s interview transcripts, but it was not consistent with any of the Millennial Generation assistant principal’s interview responses.

Outlying responses to RQ3

E2 50 and MGM2 76-82 provided responses regarding how Managing Resources can challenge a principal to allocate limited budgeted funds and manage a school with less than adequate staffing. “The first challenge that comes to my mind is budget. I'm a part of budget now, but I think that would be a challenge for me that I would want to learn more about, before pursuing that role” (MGE2 50-51). MGM2 mentioned that budget issues in 2008 resulted “riffing [jobs lost due to the school division cutting positions through a reduction in force] of a lot of the teaching professionals and instructional support staff, and administrators” (77-78). MGM2 explained that past cuts have been difficult for
school divisions to overcome. “They are hiring four new positions next year and that is just going to have us break even with where we were in 2008. So it's been a long slow climb to try and fill positions that have been lost.

School Improvement Partners were described by one participant as a challenge to principals. MGE1 said that turn around partners, contractors, and state mandated outside instructional coaches can impede a principal’s ability to manage the school (94-95).

When you see that our school does not meet or reach our goals you know that we are paying for personnel to provide us with additional resources and supports, but they are not doing in the manner that you feel will be conducive to your environment, then that is definitely a challenge.

**Millennial Generation Assistant Principals’ Responses to RQ4**

RQ4 What (if any) central office level support does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

**Theme: Open Communication**

The Open Communication coded theme was applied to interview transcript data regarding principals and central office administrators sharing information in a transparent and direct manner. Five of the six Millennial Generation assistant principals indicated that central office administrators could support principals through Open Communication, and that poor communication between principals and central office can negatively impact principals.

MGE1 spoke about the need for Open Communication within a school division. “I believe there should be open communication, you know with a monthly meeting, if not more frequently than that.
“We all need to understand that we are working for the same purpose” (106-108). MGE2 said as a principal she “would hope to build working, positive relationships with central office staff and know their strengths too and know who to call if I need assistance with certain situations” (90-92).

MGM2 elaborated on the importance of Open Communication between building principals and central office administrators (142-144).

I think it's also important that you know you have communication with your curriculum coordinator and your testing coordinator at the county level because there's a lot that goes into vertical alignment and curriculum and making sure that everything is you know being dealt with appropriately at each grade level.

According to MGH1 Open Communication is an essential function of a supportive relationship between a principal and the central office staff. Principals need a central office team that supports them by “certainly being clear about the division's mission and vision, but also working closely with the building level principal to be supportive in dealing with challenging situations” (92-93). The central office staff can support principals by “being open to communicating and consulting with the principal about the condition of education in the building” (MGH1, 96-97).

MGH2 said that communicating with central office provides a needed level of support for principals. A principal needs “that person that you can go to who has been in your shoes, who you can go to for advice” (MGH2, 80-81). Although Open Communication between principals and central office can create a supportive relationship, MGH2 said that central office holds the responsibility of respecting the principal’s boundaries. “I think the support is definitely necessary but you need to have the happy medium between support and micromanagement” (84-85).
Theme: Trust in Decision Making

The Trust in Decision Making theme was applied to transcript data that referenced a principal’s need for support in administrative decisions and a principal’s need to direct school operations without micromanagement from central office administrators. The assistant principals reported that central office support for principal’s decisions regarding student discipline was a critical factor in the principal’s ability to lead the faculty and interact with parents. Three of the six Millennial Generation assistant principals provided interview responses that were consistent with the Trust in Decision Making coded theme.

According to MGE1 an unsupportive relationship with central office administrators can negatively impact a principal (113-116).

I think that has a negative effect on the principal's attitude or how they perceive their job. Especially when you feel that you know that there can be success, but there's barriers and those barriers are internal barriers that are preventing you and your school from getting where you need to be.

MGH2 said that principals make important decisions and “a lot of times what you decide is going to get appealed above you, so you are going to need that relationship that you can work with” in order to successfully lead a school (79-80). MGH2 (85-87) said that in the future she wanted to become a principal and share a positive working relationship with central office administrators.

I'd hope when I get to that role that the central office staff would believe that I was the right person, so they would be able and have the confidence to support me in the decisions that I
make, but also know that I would be calling on them a lot to help guide some of the decisions that I make.

MGM2 said that student disciplinary cases and other matters that may be appealed to the superintendent or another central office administrator at the superintendent’s discretion, can be difficult situations for a principal, but central office administrators and superintendents can support principals by reinforcing the principal’s decisions when parents seek recourse through the appeal process. MGM2 recounted his experience observing his principal interacting with parents. “There were numerous occasions where parents would say, ‘well I'm going to take this to the superintendent’, and the principal would always say ‘you have every right to’ ” (124-125). During the appeal process “the hope is always that we are going to be supported in our decision and not have things come back” (125-126). MGM2 said “you want to feel like your decision is something that is being supported by the higher level of the central office because everyone should be on the unified vision of what you're trying to accomplish in the district” (127-128).

**Theme: Training and Professional Development**

Four of six Millenial Generation assistant principals stated that Training and Professional Development was a support that principals need from their central office administration. The Training and Professional Development coded theme was assigned to transcript data that indicated a need for technical and practical knowledge regarding financial, procedural, and instructional processes. MGM1 said she has had an opportunity to work with nearly every aspect of the school administrative procedures, but she would need more professional development on financial matters to be a successful
principal. “The budget process, I would say is the area that I am the least familiar in. So that would be something that I would definitely want training on” (MGM1, 63-34).

MGM2 said middle school assistant principals routinely absorb the duties and responsibilities related to student discipline, and do not have as many opportunities to work on student data. “I think especially being a new principal there is a lot of training you need as far as taking on more of the data aspect” (MGM2, 132). From MGM2’s perspective “a principal is doing more of the things on the overarching scope like data analysis, data collections, and disaggregation of data for SOLs” (133-134).

MGH2 she would want her central office to provide support in the form of Training and Professional Development in master schedule building and in special education practices and procedures. MGH2 like MGM2 said that the assistant principal’s work was typically focused on tasks such as discipline. MGH2 described many of the duties associated with her role as “the bottom of the barrel” (91). She explained, “I was doing and I still am doing the discipline, the truancy, the maintenance, and the facilities that lower level stuff to kind of get my feet wet” (MGH2, 94-95). MGH2 said “before I become a principal I would need a lot more work with guidance with the scheduling aspect [and], in special education.” (92). MGH2 said her teaching experience exposed her to “the basics [of special education], but I'm not well versed in the administration of it” (92-93).

MGE2 also said central office Training and Professional Development could support her as a principal. MGE2 said earlier in the day, before the interview, she faced the challenge of handling a difficult and out of control student. “The very first thing that comes to my mind is the Mandt training, or handle with care. I have not had that yet, and I've been asking for it” (96-97). MGE2 said dealing with volatile situations can place educators at risk, and that proper Training and Professional Development can protect them legal issues. In addition to training on how to best protect children and
teachers when a child needs to be restrained, MGE2 said that Training and Professional Development in “in special education” (92) was needed because principals must be aware of all “laws and binding rules, and I would want more [Training and Professional Development] on that” (102-103).

**Generation X Assistant Principals’ Responses to RQ4**

RQ4 What (if any) central office level support does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

**Theme: Open Communication**

Three of the six Generation X assistant principals described open communication between the central office and the principal as a support to principals. GXM1 said the central office staff in his division takes great effort to visit the building, and have conversations with the school administration. GXM1 said principals should be able to have an open and honest dialogue with central office, in order to address issues, as hiding issues will not help to resolve them. “We don’t cover up our mess,” (108) because “this is the struggle, this is the good the bad and the ugly. We are trying to get better, but they need to see what we are going through on a daily basis” (108-109).

GXM2 said she formerly worked as a principal in a school division with poor communication between central office administration and the principal. As a principal “I would want to feel comfortable calling and asking a question, if I don’t know it, I know the first time I became a principal that comfort level was not there” (90-92). GXM2 later explained “In any new position you can't be expected to know all the ins and outs of being a principal because you haven't been a principal” (115-116).
GXM2 said she her current principal benefits from the support of Open Communication with the central office, and she said she would hope to have the same type of communications network as a principal (94-97).

So even though I'm not the one who makes the direct calls to the superintendent or the director of instruction at this time, I know my boss has that relay, and that the principal can do so and he's encouraged to do so, and he's never belittled for doing so, and XXX County has created a great communication avenue for principals, so if I were to ascend to a principalship I would need it to remain open.

GXH2 said Open Communication between central office and the principal are critical, and the accountability of measures such as the SOLs make Open Communication more important than in years past (50-54).

Well I would have to say that, that has changed over the years. When I first started as an administrator I really didn’t give a lot of value to the central office as a means for helping me. And some of that was the way that I perceived them, and some of that was the way that they interacted. Things have changed with the onset of SOLs and accountability and OTG [on time graduation] so I think, building the proper relations with the CO staff especially the SOL coordinators for the district as well as your subject areas that are continual weak spots, especially math in most places. I have really begun to understand the importance of working with those central office members.
Theme: Trust in Decision Making

Three of the six Generation X assistant principals indicated that central office administrators can support principals by valuing the decisions of principals, and by avoiding micromanagement, which could limit a principal’s authority and influence. GXE1 said she needed a relationship with central office that provided “the trust to know that I'm making the correct decisions” (123-124). GXE2 said she “knowing that they've got my back and I’m doing the best I can” (103-104) was a function of central office showing Trust in Decision Making. GXH2 (49-50) said a central office that displays Trust in Decision Making can contribute to a positive work environment.

I would specifically want folks that can allow me to make decisions, and speak with me in a way that promotes my own growth. But also allows me to make mistakes and doesn't judge me based on those mistakes. I can't be scared to make mistakes or ask questions.

Theme: Training and Professional Development

Three of the six Generation X assistant principals provided interview responses that were consistent with the Training and Professional Development coded theme. “If I'm expected to implement something in the building, I'm really expecting you to make sure that I have the training that’s required. And I think that we don’t grow in our roles unless we get that professional development” (GXE2, 95-97). GXE2 expressed frustration with the availability of professional development and conferences for assistant principals. “I'm looking for something now, for assistant principals to go to, because it's like everything they have is catered to a principal or a teacher” (97-99). GXH1 said her school division has a successful program to support principals. “Well we've really
gotten an initiative going for professional development the last couple of years on increasing student engagement and effective lesson planning” (64-65).

GXH1 said she would like more Training and Professional Development on budgeting (78-80).

I’d love the opportunity to have more work with the budget and deal with people that do things differently and see how they’re doing it and making it work, and what works for them and their population. I would love that opportunity and I’ve voiced that for a few years now.

GXH2 also said managing the school budget was an important task for principals and also his greatest need for professional development. “I would need some seasoning on how to use specific accounts and what you can and can't use accounts for and how to move money and ways to divide up money and look at those types of activities” (66-67). GXH2 closed by saying “I think the principal has got to understand money, because it is so limited and you can't make mistakes with that” (68-69).

**Theme: Visibility**

The Visibility theme was applied to transcript data that described central office administrator’s physical presence in the school building as a support to principals. Three of the six Generation X assistant principals indicated that Visibility was a support for principals. GXE1 “I would want central office to come and be active in the school; observing me and the teachers and give me feedback on how I can grow” (124-125). GXM1 said the central office administrators in his school division have an active presence in the buildings. They come in for “walkthroughs and see what the teachers are doing and how the students are performing” (110-111). “I really appreciate when they are there” (112-113). GXH1 also said she viewed central office Visibility as a support to principals. GXH1 complimented
her central office staff for coming into the building and pairing with school administrators to conduct classroom walkthroughs (66-70).

Most of them sat with me in the post observation meeting and I felt like in general that was very effective, just actually having their presence in the building. Instead of just telling them about issues and having them hand me resources or telling me how to deal with a particular teacher or personnel issues, just having their presence, I think, has made a huge difference and I feel like it has been very effective. It's been 10 years, this is my 10th year in the county, and I feel like this is the first time this has really happened.
### Summary of Research Question Four Responses

**RQ4 What (if any) central office level support does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Theme</th>
<th>Millennial Generation Assistant Principals</th>
<th>Generation X Assistant Principals</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Communication</td>
<td>MGE1</td>
<td>GXM1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MGE2</td>
<td>GXM2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MGM2</td>
<td>GXH2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>MGH2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training and Professional Development</td>
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<td>GXE2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MGM1</td>
<td>GXH1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MGM2</td>
<td>GXH2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MGH2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust in Decision Making</td>
<td>MGE1</td>
<td>GXE1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>GXE2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>GXH1</td>
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**Summary of RQ4 Responses**

The data in Table 9 indicates that Open Communication was the most frequently used coded theme for research question four. Eight of the twelve participants, including five of the six Millennial Generation assistant principals and three of the six Generation X assistant principals provided interview
responses that indicated that Open Communication between central office administrators and principals was a support for principals.

Seven of the twelve assistant principal participants’ interview transcripts indicated that the central office could support principals by providing Training and Professional Development. Four Millenial Generation assistant principals and three Generation X assistant principals indicated that Training and Professional Development was a central office level support of the principalship. Six assistant principal participants, including three from each cohort made statements to the researcher during the qualitative interview process that indicated central office administrators could support principals by showing Trust in Decision Making. Three Generation X assistant principals indicated that central office administrators could support principals with Visibility in the school building. None of the Millenial Generation assistant principals provided responses that were consistent with this coded theme.

**Outlying responses to RQ4**

Two noteworthy trends emerged during the qualitative analysis, but there were not considered major themes because they were not shared by at least half of the participants from either generational cohort. One minor theme was central office supporting principals by Providing Resources. The Provide Resources coded theme was attached to transcript data that references principals’ need for structural facilities, technological devices, staffing, and funding for their schools. Four assistant principals, including two from each generational cohort, provided interview responses that were consistent with the Provide Resources coded theme. MGH1 said the central office administration
should “be sure that the principal has the resources, the budget, whether it be instructional resources, support resources, personnel, or whatever the case may be.”

Three participants, two Millennial Generation assistant principals and one Generation X assistant principals indicated that a New Administrators Program was a support that the central office should provide for principals. The participants said this New Administrators Program could be provided with a mentor or group meetings for new principals. MGM2 (165-142) said his school division currently has a New Administrators Program.

One of the great things that XXX County does is they have a workshop. Usually like once a month they'll have the assistant principals or principals if they're new, or anybody that's new in administration, but right now it's just assistant principals. They have these half-day workshops where we talk about various aspects of administration, and get support and feedback and practice on observations and various aspects of the job pertaining to administration. To be able to have a forum to talk about things that we have seen and answer each other questions and be able to kind of feed off of each other, kind of like a PLC for administrators. It's been invaluable to me as a first year assistant principal, and I've been learning very quickly a lot of the things that I would need to be doing as an assistant principal or maybe down the line as a principal.

**Millennial Generation Assistant Principals’ Responses to RQ5**

RQ5 What (if any) future career opportunities does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
Coded Theme: Central Office Administration

The Central Office Administration coded theme was applied to interview transcript data, which mentioned typical Central Office Administration positions such as supervisor, director, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. All six Millenial Generation assistant principals indicated that a position in the Central Office Administration was a future career opportunity associated with the principalship. When MGE1 responded to this question, she said “moving up to being an assistant superintendent, being a superintendent or taking a leadership role at the central office” (135-136). MGE1 qualified the statement by saying that although Central Office Administration positions were available to principals, she is not interested in pursuing them. “Those roles appealed to me at one point” (MGE1, 136). MGE2 also associated Central Office Administration positions with the principalship; however she was not interested in a position that was primarily involved with management. “I wouldn't mind something at central office level if it was geared towards curriculum and instruction. If I still had a chance to make an impact on instruction, because that's my true passion” (MGE2, 116-118).

When research question four was posed to MGM1 she confidently said “I would say a central office position, like assistant superintendent and eventually even superintendent one day” (70). MGM2 said “logically past being a principal? Central office staff, either HR, curriculum and instruction or one of the many other positions at central office” (148-149) and he added “assistant superintendent or superintendent” (150) were Central Office Administration that he associated with the principalship. MGM2 elaborated on his career aspirations and his motivations to seek a Central Office Administration Position (158-161):

For me personally I think I would like to pursue, in the future, a central office position in curriculum and instruction and as a director or assistant superintendent. Because as I talked
about before, because typically the higher you are on the leadership scale or spectrum, the more impactful I think you can be. As far as how much change you can bring about in making a positive impact in the lives of children. So that’s something that I would like to pursue.

According to MGH1, “an effective principal opens the door for him or herself to kind of move on up the ladder if you will, to being a superintendent or some other position at the central office level” (116-117). As a former mathematics teacher, MGH1 said the Central Office Administration positions that were most attractive to him were related to numbers and figures (119-120):

Numbers, whether it's student performance data [or] it's finance. Those kinds of things I actually enjoy, so a long term goal for me, I would say, is to be in a position where I’m a director of research and planning, or assistant superintendent of school finance.

MGH2 said sitting behind the principal’s desk can create opportunities for Central Office Administration positions, and she also said principals develop a unique perspective that will benefit them for the rest of their careers. “I think it opens up pretty much every door in some way into the central office level” (MGH2, 107) and “in order to do anything effectively at the central office level you need to have the building level experience” (108-109).

**Generation X Assistant Principals’ Responses to RQ5**

RQ5 What (if any) future career opportunities does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
Coded Theme: Central Office Administration

The Generation X assistant principal participants unanimously (six out of six) associated the principalship with future career opportunities in Central Office Administration. “I think after you are a successful principal you have the opportunity to go to central office in some type of role” GXE1, 132-133). GXE1 explained that the skills acquired and sharpened by working as a principal would be valuable in many Central Office Administration positions. “I feel like if you do well at your job that could always be what opens the doors” (GXE1, 134-135).

GXE2 associated the principalship with becoming a superintendent, although she personally did not plan to become a superintendent. “I think being a principal will open doors to being a superintendent, but that’s not a career goal for me, because I don’t desire to do that” (GXE2, 125-126). GXE2 said “I think it will put you in a position to be a director” (144). GXM1 said “the future for principals, anywhere they want to go “as APs we only have one step up, to be principal. But principals they could go anywhere. I’ve seen job postings on job sites for assistant superintendent, human resources reps, staff development, school improvement office, discipline review,” (132-134). GXM1 said he was not interested in pursuing a central office level in the immediate future. He said his long range plan would involve moving to the central office level later in his career. Like GXE2, GXM1 said he would like to advance his career to Central Office Administration, but he did not desire to become a superintendent. “Director is as high as I would ever want to go. And I’m not saying I’m ready for that now, but maybe one day down the road. I can’t see myself ever wanting to be a superintendent” (GXM1, 137-138).

GXM2 said leading a building as principal was a prerequisite for Central Office Administration (122-125).
Well I think many central office level positions are not open to people who have not led a building, so if an AP aspires to be a director of instruction, or a deputy superintendent, assistant superintendent, or superintendent, if you have not led a building then those doors are closed. So if that is something that an AP aspires to, then you have to show your prowess and your strength to run a building as a leader. And manage the staff and manage your own assistant principals, so I think that's important.

GXH1 discussed opportunities to lead division wide initiatives in a Central Office Administration position. “Our division wide on time graduation counselor is going to be retiring after this year and everyone seems to think I'm the best fit to move into that,” (GXH1, 91-92). GXH1 was satisfied working at her current level, and she had reservations about leaving her current role, because of the close bonds she has students. “It’s kind of a quandary because I don't aspire to be a high school principal” (94-95) and “I'm not ready to move out of my job right now because I don't want to be away from kids” (96-97).

GXH2 responded to research question five with the following statement “I think the principalship gives you opportunities to move on to other things if you are so interested” (73) such as “a central office position like a HR person” (74). GXH2 had an interest in pursuing a Central Office Administration position, but admitted that he could also entertain the thought of working as a principal for the rest of his career (75-77).

I've got to be able to check off the box that says I have been a principal, because that's what people want to see, they want to see that you have been a principal. In order to get an upper central office position, I'm going to have to have spent time as a principal. I may love that principal job so much that I don't want to leave it.
Coded Theme: Higher Education

The Higher Education coded theme was based on Generation X assistant principals’ association between securing a principalship and becoming an instructor or a professor at a college or university. Three of the six Generation X assistant principals were representative of the Higher Education theme.

GXE1 (136-142) explained her interest in teaching at the college level.

I think that opens up many more doors such as teaching as an adjunct professor or even going full time as a professor. I think there is something for me beyond being a principal, but I want to be a principal for many years and gain a lot of experience and do well and then I think sometimes like I said. I’d like to go back and get my doctorate teach at the college level one day. Or going back to what I said at the very beginning, being a student teacher supervisor, because that's what led me to where I am. I love observing teachers, especially new teachers, you know the freshness and how excited they are and being able to give feedback there. So ultimately maybe something like that.

At the time of this interview GXM2 was instructing online classes as an adjunct instructor for a private university. “I don't think you need to be a principal to move towards adjunct professorships and things of that nature, although I think it helps somewhat, but I don't think it's required” (125-127). She explained “I'm doing something pretty similar now, and there are many in my group now that are APs like me or central office staff that are not running a building” (127-128). GXH2 said he had an interest in instructing a school law course and he associated “teaching at the collegiate level” (74) with the principalship.
Table 10

Summary of Research Question Five Responses

**RQ5 What (if any) future career opportunities does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Theme</th>
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<th>Generation X Assistant Principals</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MGE2</td>
<td>GXH2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of RQ5 Responses**

Two coded themes, Central Office Administration and Higher Education, emerged during the data analysis of the qualitative interview transcripts. All twelve assistant principal participants associated the principalship with future career opportunities in Central Office Administration. The Higher Education coded theme was applicable to three of the six Generation X assistant principal participants. Two of the six Millennial Generation assistant principals associated the principalship with future careers in Higher Education.
Outlying responses to RQ5

Outlying responses to research question five included Doctoral Program Acceptance, Private Consulting, and State DOE Careers. Doctoral Program Acceptance is not a true career opportunity in and of itself, however two assistant principals (MGH2 and GXE1) associated the principalship with being accepted into a doctoral program. Doctoral Program Acceptance can lead to career advancement, and for that reason it was considered noteworthy as an outlying response.

The Private Consulting coded theme was applied to responses from two participants. MGM2 and GXE2 said the principalship could be associated with career opportunities as trainers, speakers, and representatives in Private Consulting agencies. “Sometimes you have a principal who takes a job in the private industry of education or consulting or being some sort of an executive in an educational management company” (MGM2, 154-155). Two participants, MGH1 and GXM2 associated the principalship with future career opportunities at the State Department of Education. GXM2 said principal experience was beneficial “if you ever wanted to work in Richmond at the state DOE” (GXM2, 128-129).

Two additional noteworthy themes, Proximity to Students and Challenges of the Superintendency, emerged although they were not future career opportunities. Three Generation X assistant principals stated that they were hesitant to seek future career opportunities outside of the school building because they would sacrifice their Proximity to Students. For example GXE2 said of taking a Central Office Administration position, “I’d be out of the building and not with the kids” (146). Four participants, two from each generational cohort, mentioned Challenges of Superintendency in their responses to research question five. This concept was considered to be noteworthy because negative statements such as “I just don’t know if the superintendent is where I want to be” (MGH1, 125)
and “I can’t see myself ever wanting to be a superintendent” (GXM1, 138) were unsolicited and unexpected.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the qualitative data analysis process and introduced the coded themes which emerged during the data analysis process. The findings were presented as coded themes regarding each of the five research questions. When three participants, or half, from either generational cohort responded with similar answers to a question, their answers were considered a major coded theme. A table was used to display the major coded themes for each research question, and a brief discussion of noteworthy outlying themes for each research question was presented. Outlying themes did not meet the criteria of major themes, because fewer than three members of either generational cohort answered in a manner, which was indicative of the outlying theme.

RQ1 What (if any) are the motivating factors in the assistant principal’s decision to pursue a principalship?

The purpose of this question was to determine participants’ perceptions of the specific motivations for becoming principals. Two coded themes Support Teachers and Students and Responsibility and Autonomy were major themes for both generational cohorts. The Support Teachers and Students code described responses related to the assistant principals’ motivation to help teachers and students meet educational objectives. The Responsibility and Autonomy code was applied to interview responses that conveyed a motivation to make impactful decisions and set a vision for the school.

Two coded themes Personal Motivation to Reach Children and Encouragement from Leaders were major themes for only one generational cohort. Personal Motivation to Reach Children described
responses relating to the motivation to help children develop personally and emotionally. Personal Motivation to Reach Children was a major theme for the Millennial Generation group. Encouragement from Leaders was applied to transcript data that indicated that a former supervisor identified a participant’s leadership potential early in the participant’s teaching career and suggested that the participant pursue a career in educational administration. Encouragement from Leaders was a major theme only for the Generation X assistant principals.

RQ2 What (if any) rewards does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

The purpose of this question was to investigate the participants’ perceptions of personal rewards of the principalship. Four codes formed major themes for both generational cohorts: Support Teachers and Students, Title, and Increased Salary, and Responsibility and Autonomy. The Title code related to interview responses related to the opportunities, prestige, and perks of being a principal. The Increased Salary code was applied to responses that referenced the opportunity to command a higher salary as a principal.

RQ3 What (if any) challenges does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

The purpose of this question was to investigate the participants’ perceptions of the tasks and difficulties of the principalship. Four codes emerged as major themes for both generational cohorts: School and Community Relations, Responsibility and Autonomy, Managing Staff, and SOL Accountability. The School and Community Relations theme was applied to responses regarding handling media issues, communicating parents, and the political environment. Managing Staff represented interview responses related to monitoring the work of teachers. SOL Accountability was applied to transcript data that referenced high stakes testing and its impact on school accreditation and
student success. Personal Sacrifice was applied to interview responses which discussed the impact of long work hours, stress, and responsibility on a principal’s personal life. Personal Sacrifice was only a major theme for Generation X assistant principals.

RQ4 What (if any) central office level support does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

The purpose of this question was to investigate the participants’ perceptions of a supportive central office. Three codes became major themes for both cohorts: Open Communication, Training and Professional Development, and Trust in Decision Making. Open Communication described interview responses regarding the participants desire for a transparent relationship with their central office. Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals both said the central office should support principals by providing Training and Professional Development in special education, school law, and relevant instructional and administrative best practices. The participants said central office could provide Trust in Decision Making as a support for principals by avoiding micromanagement practices and supporting principals in student disciplinary concerns.

The Visibility code was applied to qualitative interview transcript data regarding the participants’ perception of central office leadership’s physical presence and frequent visits to the school building as a support for principals. Visibility was a major theme for Generation X assistant principals.

RQ5 What (if any) future career opportunities does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

This question’s purpose was to gain an understanding of what careers the participants perceived as available to educators with principal level experience. All participants from both generational
cohorts associated Central Office Administration with the principalship. Positions such as supervisor, director, and assistant superintendent were typical responses under the coded theme. Higher Education, which referenced career opportunities to instruct graduate courses at the collegiate level, was only a major theme for Generation X assistant principals.

Chapter five explains the researcher’s perceptions of the findings, discuss the implications of the findings for practitioners and researchers, draw conclusions of the findings, suggest future research, and reflect on the activities involved in this study.
Chapter 5
Findings and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship. The findings and their implications should help school division superintendents, assistant superintendents, and human resources as they work to recruit, support, evaluate, and promote Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals. The findings of this study contribute valuable information to the body of existing scholarly research on Generational Identity Theory’s role in educational management practices. This chapter begins with a brief review of chapters one through four. This chapter contains a discussion of the findings and their implications for school division leaders and educational researchers. Recommendations for future research and the researcher’s personal reflections conclude this chapter.

Review of the Study

Chapter one discussed the concept of the principal shortage, which became a popular topic for researchers and practitioners during the 1990s (Bowles, 1990). Researchers used population demographics and employment statistics to predict that the majority of the principal vacancies in the 2000s would be created by the retirement of Baby Boomers principals (Whittaker, 2001). Generational Identity Theory suggests that a group of people who were born within a select range of calendar years will grow up and collectively experience significant historical events in a chronological sequence and the members of their generational cohort will also collectively experience the cultural norms of a time period (Schuman & Scott, 1989). The collective experiences of respective generational cohorts
contribute to similarities among the members of a particular generational cohort and differences between members of generational cohorts (Howe & Strauss, 2007). When the first wave of Baby Boomer Principals retired, they were initially replaced by younger Baby Boomers and eventually by the oldest members of Generation X. As the last of the Baby Boomer principals retire, younger Generation X principals and Millennials are beginning to move into the position. Understanding the concept of generational identity theory and its impact on an individual’s perceptions can be valuable in the work place (Costanza et. al, 2012; Cennamo & Gardner 2008). This study focused on assistant principals, because assistant principals are typically the school division employees who are most likely to be promoted to the principalship. This study utilized five research questions and the sought to collect data that would benefit school division superintendents as they select and lead Generation X and Millennial Generation assistant principals. The following research questions were used:

1. What (if any) are the motivating factors in the assistant principal’s decision to pursue a principalship?
2. What (if any) rewards does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
3. What (if any) challenges does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
4. What (if any) central office level support does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?
5. What (if any) future career opportunities does the assistant principal associate with the principalship?

The literature review in chapter two synthesized scholarly work on generational identity theory, assistant principals, and generational research on school administrators, and presented an argument which supported generational identity theory and its usefulness for school division leaders. The
reviewed literature stated that some differences between and similarities among school administrators could be attributed to generational identity theory. The reviewed literature included studies on Millennials, Generation Xers, and Baby Boomers. The literature review discussed studies that compared Baby Boomers with Generation X, however none of the reviewed literature directly compared groups of Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals. The absence of available literature on the topic further illustrated the need for this study. This study was designed to provide meaningful data on generational identity theory’s impact on assistant principal’s perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the principalship. The data from this study will help to fill a void in the existing body of research. Earlier researchers expressed a need for this type of study (Suckert, 2008 and Holman, 2003).

Chapter three described the methodology, sample, interview protocols, and data management procedures. Several books were used to select and justify an appropriate methodology, but Creswell (2009) was the most used resource in forming the methodology. The researcher distributed a recruitment letter throughout a network of educational administrators via email. As eligible and willing participants responded to the recruitment letter, their names were added to the pool of potential participants. The researcher purposefully selected 12 assistant principals, with six Millennial Generation assistant principals and six Generation X assistant principals. Each generational cohort of assistant principals included two elementary, two middle, and two high school assistant principals. The researcher interviewed each participant and recorded the interviews in MP3 format. The audio recordings were transcribed and the typed qualitative interview transcript data was analyzed into coded themes. The data were managed in accordance with the criteria of the Virginia Tech IRB and the identity of each participant was maintained in strict confidence.
Chapter four shared the findings for each research question, and discussed examples of the transcript data, which were consistent with the major coded themes of the qualitative interview transcript data. The researcher reported themes that were representative of at least three of six members of either generational cohort as a major coded theme. The major coded theme responses for research question were reported for both generations in text and additionally in chart format. All interpretations and rationale for why themes were evident was reserved for chapter five. The findings in this chapter are derived from the analysis of data related to Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals’ responses to the interview questions. The findings are divided into two sections: the commonalities among Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals and the differences between Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals.

Summary of the Findings

Findings one through seven represent similarities among Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals:

Finding 1. Millennial Generation assistant principals and Generation X assistant principals both had a strong personal desire to influence teachers and students.

Four of six Millennial Generation assistant principals and three of six Generation X assistant principals indicated that the participants were intrinsically motivated to influence teachers and improve the quality of education. The coded transcript data from RQ1 and RQ2 supported this finding, which is consistent with Westman (2010) who concluded that Generation X principals are motivated to improve the quality of education for students and children. Assistant principals have an intrinsic drive to help students (Oliver, 2013). Oliver’s sample of first and second year assistant principals likely included
members of the Millennial Generation, but the data does not explicitly reference the ages or generational identity of Oliver’s participants. Beach (2010) identified “anticipated satisfaction associated with making a difference as a principal” (p. 53) as a motivation for administrative candidates to pursue a principalship.

Finding 2. Millennial Generation assistant principals and Generation X assistant principals were both motivated by the title, increased salary, and responsibility and autonomy of the principalship.

Four of six Millennial Generation assistant principals and three of six Generation X assistant principals were attracted to the responsibility and autonomy of the principalship. The coded transcript data from RQ1 and RQ2 supported this finding, which was consistent with Oliver (2013) who said that assistant principals desire higher levels of responsibility and more decision making authority. Oliver asserted that assistant principals are motivated by leadership aspirations to make a difference in schools. Assistant principals are typically tasked with student discipline and other influential administrative issues, but leadership aspirations to make a difference are rooted in an educator’s desire to “be a principal who makes a difference by applying their vision and philosophy of education” (Oliver, 2013 p. 79). Beach (2010) determined the following statements: “opportunity as a principal to implement creative personal ideas” and “greater control over one’s work schedule as a principal” as significant reasons why administrative candidates were attracted to the principalship (p. 52).

Finding 3. Millennial Generation assistant principals and Generation X assistant principals both perceived School and Community Relations as a challenge of the principalship.
Five of six Millennial Generation assistant principals and five of six Generation X assistant principals felt that managing communications issues with parents and the larger community was an area of difficulty for principals. Ten of 12 assistant principals from the entire group of participants described school and community relations as a challenge of the principalship. The coded transcript data from RQ3 supported this finding. The participants said central office administrators or school board members could erode a principal’s authority and undermine the principal’s ability to lead the school by promising an influential parent a schedule change or by allowing parents to circumvent the principal. The participants acknowledged that the appeal process was a necessary portion of parent’s due process rights, but they feared that central office administrators sometimes granted parents’ appeals to appease them and to make problems go away.

Westman’s (2010) findings said dealing with parental issues was a challenge for Generation X principals. Finding three of this study confirms that Westman’s finding that parental issues are a challenge for Generation X principals are applicable to Generation X assistant principals and Millennial Generation assistant principals at identical levels. Oliver (2013) said assistant principals identified dealing with difficult parents as a deterrent to applying for principal positions.

Finding 4. Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals both perceived Managing Staff as a challenge of the principalship.

Four of six Millennial Generation assistant principals and three of six Generation X assistant principals said that motivating, leading, supervising, and observing staff were challenges of the principalship, and the coded transcript data from RQ3 provided evidence of the finding. Generation X principals according to Westman (2010) identified dealing with teachers as a challenge of the principalship “twenty-one percent of principals who responded to the questionnaire stated that teachers
presented the biggest challenges of the principalship” (p. 132). Finding 4 of this study is consistent with Westman’s conclusion that managing teachers was a significant challenge for Generation X principals, and finding 4 indicates that Westman’s research can be transferred to Millennial Generation assistant principals.

**Finding 5. Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals both said principals need a transparent relationship with the central office administration.**

Five of six Millennial Generation assistant principals and three of six Generation X assistant principals want to work with a central office administration which provides open communication and respects the principal’s authority over building level issues. The coded transcript data from RQ4 supported this finding. When Westman (2010) asked Generation X principals the research question “what personal and professional supports do you need in order to retain your professional vitality for the principalship?” (p. 116) “honest feedback and support from Superintendents and supervisors” (p. 116) emerged as a coded theme to the question. This finding indicates that Westman’s finding on Generation X principals has transferability to Millenial Generation assistant principals.

**Finding 6. Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals both expect their central office administration to provide training and professional development for principals.**

Four of six Millennial Generation assistant principals and three of six Generation X assistant principals expect their central office administration to provide training and professional development to principals. The coded transcript data from RQ4 supported this finding. The participants said training in communication, special education, data analysis, and budgetary allocations would be beneficial to them as principals. One Generation X elementary assistant principal said she unsuccessfully looked for
professional development opportunities which focused specifically on assistant principals. Westman (2010) concluded that mentoring and support was critical for Generation X principals. One Millennial Generation assistant principal participant in this study praised his central office administration for providing regular meetings and training for new administrators. Once again Westman’s conclusion regarding Generation X principals has transferability to Millennials.

Finding 7. Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals both associated the title of principal with future careers in central office administration.

All 12 assistant principal participants said that becoming principals could advance their careers to the level of central office administration. The coded transcript data from RQ5 supported this finding. They believed their education and training were sufficient to perform central office administrative duties, but principal level experience would make them more marketable and successful. Oliver (2013) described principal candidates desire to move into principalships as the next step. The reviewed literature did not discuss assistant principal’s long range career plans. The Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals in this study may have concluded that the central office was the next step beyond the principalship.

Two of six Millennial Generation assistant principals and two of six Generation X assistant principals said they found the role of superintendent unattractive because of political influences and community relations issues. Statements such as “it's political and I just don't want to be put in that position where I have to go against my integrity” (GXE2, 127) indicate that some assistant principals have developed negative perceptions of the superintendency because of school division politics. MGH1 said “It starts with the board of supervisors, and then it influences the superintendent to make decisions that a lot of times that may cater to one group more than the other” (134-135). Four of the
assistant principals’ indicated that a change in the political climate is needed to make the role of superintendent more desirable and to properly provide educational services to children. The existing research on assistant principals did not present information assistant principals’ long range career plans.

Findings eight through twelve represent differences between Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals:

Finding 8. Millennial Generation assistant principals were more likely to perceived high stakes testing as a challenge of the principalship.

Three of six Millennial Generation assistant principals, but only two of six Generation X assistant principals said SOL Accountability was a challenge of the principalship. The coded transcript data from RQ3 supported this finding. SOL scores and pass rates can have a major impact on a school’s accreditation standing, students’ graduation rates, teachers’ summative evaluations, and a principal’s employment status. The pressure of high stakes testing was a concern for a total five out of 12 participants who represent a portion of the pool of applicants for principal vacancies in Central Virginia. Finding 8 from this study was consistent with Westman (2010), who concluded that accountability mandates were among the principal’s biggest professional challenges.

Beach (2010) reported that administrative candidates would have to consider the reality of job security as a factor before applying for a principalship. Beach said accountability measures sometimes require schools to change leadership in order to comply with mandates such as reconstituted schools. Beach said the decision to remove or fire a principal is not always related to the principal’s leadership ability when accountability related staffing decisions are made. Beach provided anecdotal information
about a principal who dismissed even though this particular principal “was characterized by district officials as an outstanding educator and leader” (p. 59).

Finding 9. Generation X assistant principals perceived the physical presence of central office administrators in the school building as a support for principals, but Millennial Generation assistant principals did not.

Three of six Generation X assistant principals said central office administrators can support principals by visiting the school building and working with the building level administration to meet educational challenges. The coded transcript data from RQ4 indicated that none of the Millennial Generation assistant principals made statements positive or negative statements regarding central office administrators’ presence in the building. Generation X assistant principals said central office administrators can support principals by collaborating during the teacher observation process to norm the principal’s observation process to the school division’s standards. This collaborative effort could serve as training for principals and spread best practices to principals throughout the school division.

Greenlinger’s (2013) research on Baby Boomer superintendents’ leadership of Millennial Generation principals concluded that superintendents can and should support principals by assigning members of their central office cabinet to the individual schools as a support structure to principals. Greenlinger’s participants identified “strong and reliable support from the Superintendent’s Cabinet as a key to success” (p. 67).

Finding 10. Generation X assistant principals were encouraged to pursue administrative roles early in their teaching careers, while Millennial Generation assistant principals were not.
Four of six Generation X assistant principals were encouraged to become educational leaders early in their teaching careers, while only one of six Millennial Generation assistant principals received the benefit of encouragement from a supervisor. This finding was supported by the coded transcript data from RQ1. Principals and higher ranking school administrators can contribute to the pool of applicants for administrative positions by identifying teachers with leadership ability and growing their leadership capacity. Four Generation X assistant principals had this direct experience, but only one of the Millennial Generation assistant principals were groomed or tapped for leadership roles.

Westman (2010) examined Generation X principals and determined that encouragement from a supervisor motivated Generation X principals to apply for their positions. Participants praised their school divisions for creating quasi administrative positions such as administrative intern, senior teachers, and dean of students. Entry level quasi administrative positions can increase the pool of administrative candidates within a school division and allow assistant principals to focus more of their time on instructional leadership tasks. One of the Generation X assistant principals in this study said her school division had an associate principal position. The associate principal position allows for a more formal and structured approach to sharing the principal’s responsibility and it also creates a pipeline of principal candidates to fill future vacancies.

Finding 11. Generation X assistant principals perceived personal sacrifice as a challenge of the principalship, but Millennial Generation assistant principals did not.

Three of six Generation X assistant principals said personal sacrifice was a challenge of the principalship, but none of the Millennial Generation assistant principals shared this concern. The coded transcript data from RQ3 supported the claim that the stress and long hours of the principalship could negatively impact a principal’s personal life. Half of the Generation X participants expressed
concerns that the duties, school board meetings, community events, and other after hour’s obligations of the principalship could cause principals to sacrifice time away from home and family.

Holmon’s comparison of Baby Boomer and Generation X elementary principals concluded that generational differences were a factor in the differences between groups. Both generational cohorts were frustrated with the long hours and demands of their jobs, but “Generation Xer elementary school principals perceive the principalship to be a more significant infringement on family life than do BabyBoomer elementary school principals” (Holmon, 2003 p. 136). Beach (2010) similarly concluded that principal candidates associated the principalship with the sacrifice of personal and family time.

**Finding 12. Generation X assistant principals were more likely than Millennial Generation associated the principalship with future careers in higher education.**

Three of six Generation X assistant principals and two of six Millennial Generation assistant principals said becoming a principal could lead to employment as a college or university instructor. The coded transcript data from RQ5 provided support for this finding. Their interest was directed towards teaching courses in an adjunct capacity while working full time as a principal or central office administrator. One Generation X assistant principal and one Millennial Generation assistant principal said they would like to supervise and support aspiring teachers by instructing education courses. This finding indicates that assistant principals have expressed an interest in teaching college courses, and it is reasonable to consider the possibility that principals also have an interest in instructing at the college level. None of the reviewed literature addressed this finding.
Implications for Practice

Superintendents and other central office administrators with the responsibilities of recruiting, selecting, training, evaluating, and ultimately promoting assistant principals to the principalship should engage in the following practices.

- Support Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals’ desire to make a positive impact on teachers and students. Superintendents and human resources directors should publicize the opportunities that principals have to work with teachers and students on their web sites and other publications, in order attract principal applicants to their school divisions. Principal’s job advertisements and job descriptions should include statements that focus on building relationships with students and supporting teachers. Finding one provided support for this implication with data from RQ1.

- Create job responsibilities and programs that prepare assistant principals for the responsibility that accompanies the increased decision making power of the principalship. Findings one and two support this implication with data from RQ1 and RQ2.

- Protect school building administrators from political issues by fostering positive relationships with and between local politicians and activists. Finding 7 and the transcript data from RQ5 provided evidence for this finding.

- Assess assistant principals’ and principals’ professional development needs and provide professional development opportunities that reflect the results of the professional development needs assessment. Finding 6 and RQ4 provided support for this finding.

- Provide principals with adequate staffing resources in terms of school counselors, directors of testing, curriculum supervisors, and highly qualified classroom teachers to meet the rigor
of SOL accountability, and Millennial Generation assistant principals reported SOL accountability as a challenge for the principalship. Finding 6, Finding 8, RQ3, and RQ4 indicate that SOL accountability and adequate staffing and resources are concerns for principals.

- Maintain open communication with principals and avoid affecting principals’ authority and autonomy with micromanagement. Finding 5 and RQ4 supported this implication.

- Collaborate with principals to develop career plans and provide opportunities for principals to participate in job shadowing, training, and professional development for the central office administrative positions of their choice. Finding 7 and RQ5 supported this implication.

- Identify Millennial Generation teachers with leadership potential and encourage them to seek the education and training that will prepare them for administrative positions. Finding 10 and RQ1 provided support for this finding.

- Forge partnerships with neighboring school divisions and universities to utilize principals as instructors for college courses. This action would allow qualified principals to instruct in an adjunct capacity and provide programs for endorsement and recertification purposes. Rural school divisions, which are typically not close to a university campus, would reap the greatest benefit from this collective effort to bring university courses to K-12 educators in a face to face traditional setting. Finding 12 and RQ5 indicated that Generation X assistant principals had a desire to instruct university level courses.
Suggestions for Future Research

The following suggestions for future research on Millennial Generation and Generation X school administrators will contribute valuable information to the field:

- Conduct a quantitative study on Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals.
- Conduct a study of superintendents’ perceptions of Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals’ needs for support and professional development.
- Conduct a study on Millennial Generation and Generation X principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the superintendency.
- Conduct a study on Millennial Generation and Generation X administrative candidates (teachers who have administrative endorsements) perceptions’ of the assistant principalship.
- Conduct a study on Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals in a state other than Virginia.

Conclusions

This study contributes information to an important topic, but more research is needed on Millennial Generation and Generation X school administrators. The educational community widely accepts the belief that school principals have a significant impact on the quality of education in K-12 schools. The findings and implications in chapter five of this study should provide school division leaders with data that will help them to select, support, train, and promote Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals to the principalship. This study suggests that school division superintendents should utilize knowledge on the similarities and differences among and between their
Millennial Generation and Generation X assistant principals to build better leadership teams in their school buildings thus increasing the success of their students and teachers. Educational practitioners and researchers should examine this study and determine if the implications for practice and suggestions for future research truly provide a tangible benefit to the field of public education in the coming years.

Reflections

It was an honor to participate in this educational project. Every phase of this process sharpened my skills as an investigator, critical thinker, interviewer, writer, listener, and most importantly as an educational leader. This study allowed me to conduct interviews with talented and dedicated school administrators, and their passion for educating children was impressive. Because of this study I am confident in my ability to read, comprehend, analyze, and challenge a wide variety of data sources. I will employ the skills I developed during this process, to lead schools more effectively in the future. I will be more aware and proactive in understanding generational differences in the workplace and I am curious about the way future generations will impact the field of school administration in the coming years.
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Appendices

A. Training in Human Subjects Protection Certification

B. Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

C. IRB Approval

D. Recruitment for Potential Participant Letter

E. Recruitment Flyer
Appendix A

Training in Human Subjects Protection Certification

Certificate of Completion

This certifies that

Freeman Darnell Carter

Has completed
Training in Human Subjects Protection

On the following topics:
Historical Basis for Regulating Human Subjects Research
The Belmont Report
Federal and Virginia Tech Regulatory Entities, Policies and Procedures

September 8, 2012

David Moore, IRB Chair
Appendix B

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Generation X and Millenial School Administrators’ Perceptions of the Challenges and Rewards of the Principalship

Investigator(s): Freeman Carter dcart32@vt.edu 804-212-6002
Name E-mail / Phone number
Carol Cash, EdD ccash48@vt.edu 804-662-7288
Name E-mail / Phone number

I. Purpose of this Research Project

The purpose of this dissertation study is to collect data on Generation X and Millennial generation assistant principal’s perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship. Generation X members are identified by birth years between and including the years of 1965 and 1981, while Millenial generation members were born in 1982 and later years. The results of this research are intended to aide school division superintendents, personnel directors and human resources directors in their efforts to recruit, support, and retain, and promote assistant principals.

II. Procedures

This dissertation study will be conducted using qualitative methodology. Participants will be given the opportunity to participate in an interview, which may occur, face to face, by phone, or on chat software such as Google Hangouts, Web Ex Skype or Facetime. The interview will be recorded, and notes from the interview will be compiled into a data analysis spreadsheet. Participants will be invited to attend a focus group which will allow them participate in a group discussion with other participants in this study. The focus group may occur, face to face, by phone, or on chat software such as Web Ex.

III. Risks
No school division or individuals will be identified. Participant names, names of schools, and specific school division will not be published. Participants will be reported as a numbered persons such as, Participant 1.

IV. Benefits

No promise or guarantee of benefits will be made to encourage participation. Participants will receive no tangible or intangible benefits for participation. School division leaders may derive the benefit of understanding assistant principal’s perceptions of the principalship, from a generation perspective. This data may influence how school division leaders conduct recruitment, support, and retention efforts of their school administrators as a result of this research.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The researcher will collect the names of participants for record keeping purposes only. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Each recording and transcription will be given a number that names and work places of all participants will be maintained in strict confidence.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study’s data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

Participants will not receive compensation for participating in this dissertation study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for all potential participants to know that they are free to withdraw from this dissertation study at any time without penalty. Participants may decline to answer any and all questions, and will not be coerced to respond to a question.

Please note that there may be circumstances under which the investigator may determine that a participant should not continue in the study.

In accordance with the compensation section of this document, there will be no type of compensated for participation in this study.

VIII. Questions or Concerns
Any questions about this dissertation study, should be directed to the researcher via email 
dcart32@vt.edu Dr. Carol Cash cash48@vt.edu is the dissertation committee chair and may also be 
contacted regarding this study.

Should there be any questions or concerns about the study’s conduct or your rights as a research 
subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, please contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David 
M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

IX. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I 
hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

________________________________________________________________________________________ Date______________

Participant’s signature

________________________________________________________________________________________

Participant’s printed name

*You may return this document by scanning and emailing the consent page to dcart32@vt.edu

(Note: each participant must be provided a copy of this form. In addition, the IRB office may stamp its 
approval on the consent document(s) you submit and return the stamped version to you for use in 
consenting subjects; therefore, ensure each consent document you submit is ready to be read and 
signed by participants.)
Appendix C

MEMORANDUM

DATE:       June 11, 2015
TO:         Carol S Cash, Freeman Darnell Carter
FROM:       Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires April 25, 2018)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Generation X and Millenial Assistant Principals’s Perceptions of the Challenges and Rewards of the Principalship
IRB NUMBER:  15-592

Effective June 10, 2015, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As:        Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6,7
Protocol Approval Date:       June 10, 2015
Protocol Expiration Date:      June 9, 2016
Continuing Review Due Date*:   May 26, 2016

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Intern IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.
Appendix D
Recruitment Letter for Potential Participant Letter

Dear assistant principal,

Like you, I am an assistant principal by a public school division in the Commonwealth of Virginia. I am also a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech’s Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program. My research is based on assistant principal’s perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship. This qualitative study is depends on a sample group of assistant principals who represent Generation X (born between 1965 and 1981) the Millennial Generation (born between 1982 and 1991). This group of Generation X and Millennial assistant principals will represent elementary, middle, and high schools.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please contact me via email. You will be listed as a potential participant and a random number of potential participants will be selected to complete a brief questionnaire and participate in an interview which will take approximately 30 minutes of your time. The interview process will be conducted between April and July 2015. The interview may occur face to face, by phone, or web based (Skype, Google Hangouts, FaceTime, Web Ex, etc.) Neither your name, nor your school division will be reported or published and your identity and personal information will be maintained in confidence.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or my advisor, Dr. Carol Cash, using the contact information below. Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

If you know of anyone who is eligible to participate in this study, please share this letter with them.

Sincerely,

F. Darnell Carter  Carol Cash, EdD
Doctoral Candidate  Clinical Associate Professor
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804-212-6002  804-662-7288
Appendix E

Participants Needed for Study of Millennial & Generation X Assistant Principals

If you are an elementary, middle, or high school assistant principal and your year of birth qualifies for: group 1 1969 - 1978 or group 2 1982 – 1991, please consider participation in this study.

Participation in this study will require one interview with the researcher. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes, and the interview will be audio recorded. The results from this study will be used in a dissertation and may be published. The name, identity, and place of employment of each participant will be reported anonymously.

The Goal of this research project is to explore Generation X and Millennial assistant principals’ perceptions of the challenges and rewards of the principalship.

Please share this document with any assistant principals who may be eligible to participate.

To participate or request additional information please contact:

Darnell Carter
dcart32@vt.edu
804-212-6002

or

Dr. Carol Cash
ccash48@vt.edu
804-662-7288