Distributed Leadership and the Concept of Team: Perceptions of the Assistant Principal

by

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Distributed Leadership and the Concept of Team: Perceptions of the Assistant Principal

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ABSTRACT

Since Brown and Austin’s seminal study of the assistant principal in 1970, research has been limited regarding the growing importance of this position. The research over the past four decades on the assistant principal has shown a consistent pattern – assistant principals exercise influence mainly in the areas of clerical duties, instructional supervision, organizational duties, and student discipline with varying opportunities for instructional leadership. Assistant principals are seeking leadership roles that maximize their skillsets and talents. As principals take on more accountability issues, the need to distribute leadership becomes an important leadership task. This research project focused on assistant principals and the manner in which they perceive the distribution of leadership by their principals.

The researcher utilized a survey consisting of twenty items related to themes emerging from the literature on distributed leadership: Empowerment, Work Design, Capacity Building, Positive Work Climate, and Sense of Team Purpose. Results indicated that elements of distributed leadership were present in most schools, with the lowest scores being in the area of Capacity Building. Further, an analysis of time allocation revealed that more time is spent on discipline than on instruction, even though discipline was inversely related to elements of distributed leadership, while time spent on instruction was positively correlated with all elements of distributed leadership. Combined, the results of the present study highlight the importance of distributed leadership and time allocation among high school assistant principals.

Keywords: Assistant Principal, Distributed Leadership
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This research project is dedicated to assistant principals everywhere who make a positive difference in their schools. While their work may go unnoticed at times, assistant principals are paving the way for teachers to teach and for students to learn. This research is intended to shine light on the importance of assistant principals. They are ready to take on new roles and responsibilities that propel a school and a community to meeting the challenges of a global society. Their work is important and they deserve to be recognized as educational leaders.

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CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The concept of distributed leadership continues to be explored and developed by a host of researchers across many disciplines (Galland, 2008; Gronn, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris, 2004; Mangin, 2007; Marks & Printy, 2006; Neumerski, 2012; Spillane, 2004). The idea of distributed leadership has existed for many years in different forms and has been commonly referred to as shared or collective leadership with a focus on non-hierarchical practices. This heterarchical approach assumes that all participants in an organization bring expertise to their workplace and thus, collective cognition benefits the organization. Gronn (2008) noted the domination of individualistic approaches in the literature of leadership, but showed that all leaders in some form or another distributed leadership. Gronn’s research focused on how and when leaders distribute leadership as a form of practice. Similarly, Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) in their study of distributed leadership focused on the interaction of leaders within a context(s). They explored how participants interacted, shared responsibilities, and utilized designed routines, structures, tools, and artifacts to address a pressing issue. Spillane conceptualized distributed leadership as practices “stretched over the social and situational contexts of the school” (p. 5).

The rise of distributed leadership practice in the education field coincides with the rise of federal and state accountability measures leveled at addressing equity gaps. Principals alone could not be expected to meet the accountability measures and maintain traditional school responsibilities. Hoffman (2013) found that a typical principal could be held accountable for up to 43 different types of expectations or responsibilities. Much
of the literature for distributed leadership in the educational realm deals with teachers as a viable option for reform efforts and agents who can sustain these changes (Harris, 2004; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Mangin, 2007; Spillane, 2004). In their research of distributed leadership, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) emphatically state,

Within every school there is a sleeping giant of teacher leadership, which can be a strong catalyst for making change. By using the energy of teacher leaders as agents of school change, the reform of public education will stand a better chance of building momentum. (p. 2)

With their expertise about instructional practices, principals groom and build the capacity of teacher leaders to impact student achievement.

To date, a relatively small sample of literature exists on the “sleeping giant” of assistant principals as leaders. As members of the administrative team, assistant principals are primed to work alongside the principal to influence school initiatives, reform efforts and climate. Literature on the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals consistently show that leadership opportunities are minimal (Austin & Brown, 1970; Black, 1980; Calabrese, 1991; Cantwell, 1993; Harvey, 1994a; Koru, 1993; Norton & Kriekard, 1987; Panyako & Rorie, 1987; Potter, 1980; Rodrick, 1986; Williams, 1995). Assistant principals are pining for more roles and responsibilities that maximize their talents and allows for impactful leadership with staff and students (Robinson & Driver, 2013). A distributed leadership perspective could provide a framework in which an administrative team explores leadership roles and responsibilities. As early as the 1970s, Austin and Brown (1970) revealed that assistant principals engaged primarily in
managerial activities such as discipline, supervision, and paperwork. A study by Glanz (1994) and similar research by Sun (2012) showed that managerial activities were still the main responsibilities of assistant principals and menial work was being doled out to assistant principals. While assistant principals are required in many states to have professional credentials and training, their expertise did not match their roles. Cranston, Tromans, and Reugerbrink (2004) concluded “the closer the ideal and real roles were aligned, the higher the level of satisfaction” (p. 239). Responsibilities were being distributed, but not leadership opportunities. Sun’s (2012) updated survey of the assistant principal roles showed that instructional leadership was ranked as the number one responsibility that assistant principals believe they should be doing. While instructional leadership opportunities may be lacking at the moment for assistant principals, a distributed leadership perspective allows for the exploration of the relationship between the principal and the administrative team in terms of overall leadership. As Spillane (2005) noted “it is not that leadership is distributed, but how it is distributed” (p. 149). Robinson and Driver (2013) suggested that if principals and assistant principals operate in parallel leadership roles, assistant principals would not gain the necessary mentoring to grow their leadership skills. Additionally, Hilliard and Newsome (2013) indicated that a team approach would maximize the potential of assistant principals and effectively address school challenges. A meta-analysis of principal leadership research by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) revealed that the principal plays an important role in influencing student achievement. They discovered 21 responsibilities of the principal that had a positive correlation on student achievement. They suggested that principals could likely not master all of the responsibilities and
reasoned that at least 12 of the responsibilities should be shared within a leadership team. These responsibilities include such items as involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, outreach initiatives, and serving as a change agent. Similarly, Leithwood and Mascal (2008) proved that collective leadership has a strong influence on student achievement.

Distributed leadership is not without its faults. Many principals are reluctant to release power to others citing accountability measures from the district offices and stakeholders. Others fear the abuse of power or the time commitment necessary to build the capacity of others for leadership purposes. Distributed leadership also requires a resource shift that allows time for leaders to collaborate (Asih, 2013). In addition, principals may confuse distribution of leadership with delegation of leadership. Eric Yoak described the difference as being the manner in which leadership flows. He asserted that a distributed model allows for additional leaders to exert influence and propose leadership practice whereas in a delegation model the leader retains control and sets expectations (E. Yoak, personal communication, April 5, 2014). Furthermore, principals may worry that the other individuals might perform a leadership function more effectively and it will reflect poorly on his or her leadership ability. Or in some cases, the principal could have general concerns that the individuals leading might simply be ineffective. Through introspection and development of trust, Wilhelm (1984) proposed that principals should learn to gradually release control.

This research seeks to understand the perceptions of assistant principals regarding not only their roles on the administrative team (defined as the principal, assistant
principals, and other key leaders), but the manner and contexts in which leadership is distributed and practiced.

**Statement of the Problem**

Distributed leadership is an increasingly popular concept in high schools, but little is known regarding the distribution of leadership within the administrative team from the perspective of the assistant principal. Further, little is known about the time allocation of assistant principals and how time allocation is related to the distribution of leadership. The history of the research on the assistant principal remains minimal. In 1970, Austin and Brown produced their seminal work on the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal. They highlighted the tasks of the assistant principals as well as the archetypes. The 1980s research began to bring more depth to the roles of the assistant principal. The 1990s brought a focus on the socialization and enculturation of the assistant principal. The early 2000s brought to light the complexity of the assistant principal’s role. In addition, a focus on the team concept and instructional leadership expectations appeared. The era of accountability brought the position of the assistant principal into prominence as a possible mediating resource for the demands placed on school (Brown-Ferrigno, 2013).

While principals may not directly refer to their leadership style as distributed, the roles and responsibilities of an administrative team are shared. The distribution of leadership occurs in the interaction between the principal and assistant principals or other identified leaders. Spillane (2006) identified the manners in which leaders interact and share leadership responsibilities as collaborative, coordinated, or collective. Similarly, other researchers identified interaction as the key to a distributed perspective. They
identified several of the interaction opportunities as planned alignment, pragmatic distribution, and institutionalized practice (Gronn, 2002; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Spillane, 2006). In the business field, distributed leadership practices are seen as a viable option for creating strong and effective teams. Several researchers have noted the strong correlation of shared leadership with organizational success (Ensley, Hmielseski, & Pearce, 2006; Katzenbach, 1997). In fact, they proposed that high levels of distributed leadership patterns could be a viable predictor for startup success.

Interaction is at the center of a distributed leadership perspective. From this center, five central themes emerged from the practice of distributed leadership principles: Empowerment, Productive Work Design, Capacity Building, a Positive Work Climate, and Sense of Team Purpose (Galland, 2008; Gronn, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris, 2004; Mangin, 2007; Mankin, Cohen, & Bikson, 1996; Marks & Printy, 2006; Neumerski, 2012; Spillane, 2004; West, 2004). Empowerment refers to frequency of interaction, knowledge of job roles and levels of support between the leader and team. Productive Work Designs are the organizational models, routines and tools utilized to maximize leadership responsibilities. Capacity Building is the method by which a leader builds the expertise of and adds to knowledge within the team. Issues around a Positive Work Climate are derived from the leader placing trust in the team’s ability to initiate and accomplish a task based on its collective team members’ areas of expertise and ability. A Sense of Team Purpose is promoted within a distributed leadership model. A team can be defined in a number ways. Mankin et al. (1996) saw management teams as a group utilizing the collective expertise of the members who share responsibility for the success of the organization. Leadership is viewed as facilitating the use of the group expertise to
match the context of a challenge. A distributed leadership framework offers a lens to explore the collaborative practices of an administrative team. Together, these themes show the positive influence of distributed leadership.

The assistant principal is becoming a source of research significance as more accountability measures are being assigned to the principal. Distributed leadership provides a theory of leadership and organization action aimed at maximizing the talents and expertise of the assistant principal. It also brings to light the growing need to prepare assistant principals to take on more leadership roles and move away from managerial responsibilities. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (n.d.a) noted in the online article, The Changing Role of the Assistant Principal:

With increased accountability for student achievement, the primary role of assistant principal has evolved from that of disciplinarian and school operations manager to instructional leader. Yet APs have not dropped the bus and lunch schedules, or stopped meeting with students and parents regularly; the role as instructional leader has been added to the job description.

In addition, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (n.d.b) note in the online article, “Defining the Role of the Assistant Principal”:

Leadership seminars and the research literature have made a compelling case arguing that increased student achievement can only happen in schools where administrators are well versed in research-based pedagogy and content, especially in such crucial areas as reading, writing, and math. In addition, there has been an unanticipated twist with the advent and expansion of teacher-leaders or -coaches. Assistant principals are often delegated the management tasks that inhibit their
likelihood of being involved in a meaningful way with the instructional program.

In reviewing the team concept for administrators, there was a shortage of literature on the actual ways in which a principal builds an administrative team and the effects of his or her leadership on the team. Other gaps in the literature included the manner in which districts prepared administrators to function as a team and how assistant principals learn to lead teams in new roles such as instructional leaders or as leaders of professional development.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to survey California public high school assistant principals to determine their perceptions of how their principals distribute leadership among the administrative team and how they allocate their time. The survey was based on the concepts of distributed leadership, including Empowerment, Work Design, Capacity Building, Work Climate, and Sense of Team Purpose.

**Research Questions**

Five central themes of distributed leadership framed this research study in an effort to answer: *How do assistant principals perceive the distribution of leadership among the administrative team?* This overarching question will be guided by the following sub-questions:

1. How do assistant principals perceive the manner in which their principals empower the work assistant principals do?
2. What work designs do assistant principals identify as facilitative of their work?
3. What activities do assistant principals identify their principals doing that develop the leadership capacities of the assistant principal?

4. To what extent do assistant principals feel their principal promotes a positive work climate for the administrative team?

5. To what extent do assistant principals perceive a sense of team purpose among the administrative team?

By addressing these questions, the researcher aims to gain insights into the relationship between distributed leadership and the administrative team. Specifically, the researcher proposes to study how assistant principals perceive their principals’ actions and behaviors as distributing leadership among the administrative team and the extent to which assistant principals perceive a sense of teamwork among members of the administrative team.

**Research Design and Methodology**

This study employed quantitative survey methodology using a cross-sectional design. A survey research approach is useful when the researcher “seeks to describe trends in a large population of individuals” (Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 175). For this study, a quantitative approach allowed the researcher to explore the perceptions of distributed leadership within the administrative team. High school assistant principals from the state of California listed in the Market Data Retrieval bank were surveyed regarding the manners in which principals empowered them as leaders, provided structures to practice leadership skills, built their capacity, provided a positive work climate and promoted a sense of team purpose. Surveys allowed the researcher to study “the attitudes, opinions, or behaviors of a large group” and “make conclusions about the larger group” (p. 175). For demographic and comparative analysis, survey demographics
included the type of school (rural, urban, Title I, etc.) where the assistant principal worked, the years of experience of the assistant principal, gender, and time commitment to specified roles and responsibilities as identified by Glanz (1994) as being top priorities.

In education, researchers have used the survey research approach to explore a myriad of issues from the ways in which a principal leads an inclusive school (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013), to the implementation of RTI in a high school (Fisher & Frey, 2013), to perspectives on distributed leadership in International Baccalaureate schools (Lee, Hallinger, & Walker, 2012). Given that the purpose of this study is to explore the collaborative learning and leadership themes within an administrative team, a survey research design allows the researcher to elucidate trends and themes in an area that is lacking in the literature. Personal and school demographics were analyzed as frequencies and percentages or as means and standard deviations, as appropriate. Elements of distributed leadership were analyzed as means, and standard deviations, and response frequencies. Exploratory analyses included correlation and analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistics to assess the relationship between time allocation and demographics on elements of distributed leadership.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following concepts have been defined as follows:

*Administrative Team:* The administrative team consists of the principal, assistant principal, dean of students, and other assigned administrative positions.
Assistant Principal: An administrator who works under the supervision of a principal and carries out a variety of assigned roles and responsibilities.

Distributed Leadership: “[T]he practice of leadership [that] is shared and realized within extended groupings and networks: some of these grouping will be formal while others will be informal, and in some cases, randomly formed” (Harris, 2008b, p. 37).

Empowerment: The ability to “encourage others to undertake leadership roles and recognize expertise of staff rather than formal positions within the group” (Salfi, 2011, p. 422).

High School: For the purposes of this study, high school refers to a collection of students typically in grades 9-12.

Building Capacity: “The pooling of expertise and the sharing of these skills to ensure stronger work productivity and leadership opportunities” (Bennet, Harvey, Woods, & Woods, 2004).

Positive Work Climate: Work environment where there is a “high degree of professional trust and were relationships between staff are positive” (Harris, 2008a, p. 11).

Productive Work Design: Work models that “necessitate the creation of time, space and opportunity for groups to meet, plan, and reflect. Engaging the many rather than the few in leadership is at the heart of distributed leadership” (Harris, 2008a, p. 155).

Team Concept: “A team consists of members with a common identity and tenets, common tasks, sense of potency/success, clear definition of team membership, recognition of individual contributions, and balanced roles” (Harvey & Drolet, 2004).
Significance of the Study and Limitations

Unearthing the black box of administrative team practices provides a rich opportunity for future researchers to explore the impact of collective leadership on student achievement. Due to the sample size and nature of descriptive research, findings may not generalize to the experiences of administrators beyond those surveyed. The researcher acknowledges the limited sample as well as the variance in the district expectations and support systems for administrative teams. The researcher utilized a distributed leadership perspective to bring to light the perceptions of the assistant principal regarding their roles within the team. The surveys provided depth to the scant literature on the assistant principal. In addition, the lack of research on the administrative team prompts future dialogue about the team concept and how to best utilize the strengths and talents of a team to meet the needs of a school.
The idea that school-level leadership rests solely with the principal has increasingly become a passing notion. Leverett (2002) noted, “Achieving equitable outcomes for all learners is beyond the capacity of individual, highly talented leaders and requires the knowledge and expertise of others in the school or district organization working with a shared sense of purpose” (p. 1). As principals struggle to “transform the social practices of schools, and raise achievement through solo agency”, some seek to shift their practice to a more distributed model (Crawford, 2012, p. 611). Spillane et al. (2001) referred to this distribution as “stretching” leadership across a school’s “social and situational contexts” (p. 23). This extended leadership assists the principal in meeting the growing needs of state and federal accountability systems, while simultaneously promoting a culture of collaboration and shared decision-making. From his work on distributed leadership in Chicago schools, Spillane (2006) argued the merits of this model:

A distributed perspective offers an alternative way of thinking about leadership in schools by foregrounding leadership practice and by suggesting that leadership practice is constructed in the interactions between leaders, followers, and their situations… distributed leadership offers a framework for thinking about leadership differently. As such, it enables us to think about a familiar phenomenon in new ways that come closer to approximating leadership on the ground than many of the conventional popular recipes for school leadership. (p. 26)
The concept of distributed leadership began to appear in the lexicon of leadership in the 1950s and 1960s. Gibb’s (1954) analysis of leadership style suggested that leaders utilized a variety of strategies including activity focused on group action to accomplish tasks and goals. Gibb began a discussion of collaborative leadership that has evolved over the years. The concept of distributed leadership in modern leadership literature has taken on many forms and definitions. However, recent research on distributed leadership seems to focus on the meaningful interactions of the principal with teacher leaders (Crawford, 2012; Galland, 2008; Gronn, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris, 2004; Hulpia, Devos, & Van Keer, 2011; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Mangin, 2007; Marks & Printy, 2006; Mayrowetz, 2008; Neumerski, 2012; Spillane, 2004), largely bypassing the administrative team. If the members of this leadership team serve as stewards of a school’s vision and mission, then it makes sense that leadership should be distributed among team members (i.e. the principal and assistant principals). The distribution of leadership has been shown to foster a stronger sense of team by accessing the talents of the team members. (Ensley et al., 2006; Ensley, Pearson, & Pearce, 2003; Katzenbach, 1997; Koivunen, 2007; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001). According to Harris (2004), “The principal’s central task is to create a common culture of expectations around the use of individual skills and abilities, …maximizing the human capacity within the organization” (p. 14). Perhaps efforts to maximize school leadership capacity should start with the constituents closest to the principal – the assistant principals who make up the administrative team.

This review of literature focuses on the concept of distributed leadership, the roles of the assistant principal, and concept of team. Research on the topic of distributed
leadership has revealed prominent themes regarding the interactions of a principal with those entrusted with leadership responsibilities (Crawford, 2012; Galland, 2008; Gronn, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris, 2004; Hulpia et al., 2011; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Mangin, 2007; Marks & Printy, 2006; Mayrowetz, 2008; Neumerski, 2012). These themes included Empowerment, Productive Work Designs, Capacity Building, a Positive Work Climate, and Sense of Team Purpose. Additionally, the author examined the traditional and changing roles of the assistant principal within an administrative team against these themes of distributed leadership (Black, 1980; Calabrese, 1991; Cantwell, 1993; Greenfield, 1985; Koru, 1993; Norton & Kriekard, 1987; Panyako & Rorie, 1987; Potter, 1980; Rodrick, 1986; Williams, 1995). Emerging literature regarding the empowerment and efficacy of assistant principals provides a stronger context within which to explore the potential restructuring of the administrative team (Byrne-Jimenez & Orr, 2012; Harvey, 1994a). This restructuring could reinforce the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal within a team concept. Kaplan and Owings (1999) suggested, “The model of shared instructional leadership in which assistant principals accept a significant role in creating a learning organization would promote greater school success for teachers and students alike” (p. 92).

Further research on distributed leadership and the role of the assistant principal might examine the ways in which administrators’ talents and strengths are best utilized to create an effective team that best serves a school and community. Greenfield (1985) noted that many assistant principals “thought educational administration would provide them with opportunities to use special abilities and aptitudes, to be creative, and to exercise leadership” (p. 14). A study of distributed leadership, as manifested within
school-level administrative teams, may reveal important understandings about how principals stretch and share leadership functions and responsibilities among the assistant principals, or fail to do so. Across the themes of Empowerment, Productive Work Design, Capacity Building, a Positive Work Climate, and a Sense of Team Purpose, such a study might further explore the characteristics and belief systems of principals who distribute leadership effectively and the contexts within which distribution of leadership takes place. An in-depth study of the principal and the assistant principals would reveal practices that maximize school leadership opportunities within the administrative team.

**Distributed Leadership**

The concept of distributed leadership represents a fairly nascent stage of leadership research (Galland, 2008; Gronn, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris, 2004; Mangin, 2007; Marks & Printy, 2006; Neumerski, 2012; Spillane, 2004). As the literature on distributed leadership expands, researchers continuously add and refine the concept. Spillane (2006) specified that, “The distributed perspective offers a particular way of thinking about leadership practice, arguing that practice gets defined in the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situation” (p. 89). Furthermore, he explained, “Tools and routines are the vehicles through which leaders interact with one another and with followers. Routines and tools provide scripts that capture repeated patterns for these interactions” (p. 84). In this case, tools refer to items such as data assessment protocols and teacher observation forms. Routines included structured times for interaction such as professional learning communities and coaching opportunities. Spillane et al. (2001) developed a theory of distributed leadership around four primary factors, including
leadership tasks and functions, task enactment, social distribution of task enactment, and situational distribution of task enactment, describing school leadership as “stretched over the schools’ social and situational contexts” (p. 23). Spillane et al. (2001) maintained that distributed leadership is “constituted in the interactions of leaders and their social and material situations” (p. 27). Harris (2008b) also underscored the importance of interactions proposing that “distributed leadership is primarily concerned with the interactions in both formal and informal leadership and the way they produce different patterns of activity” (p. 31).

This concept of interaction weaved its way through much of the research on distributed leadership, with five key themes further defining how these interactions are leveraged within schools. These themes included: Empowerment, Productive Work Design, Capacity Building, a Positive Work Climate, and a Sense of Team purpose. Much of the literature to date has focused on the distribution of leadership tasks and functions across teachers within a school, with little attention paid to the role of the assistant principal within a distributed leadership model. In a seminal study on the secondary school assistant principals, Austin and Brown (1970) determined,

There is no doubt that many of the distasteful aspects of this position are lacking in better schools where philosophical harmony reigns and where there is a planned design to make this position part of a ‘team’ approach to administration. (p. 78)

Distributed leadership provides a lens for studying this “team” perspective within the administration level.
Distributed leadership relies upon leader interactions and operates within situation specific contexts. Harris (2008a) noted that the heart of distributed leadership lies in the many points of interaction that result in shared decisions. Additionally, Harris (2008a) believed, “Distributed leadership similarly implies that the practice of leadership is shared and realized within extended groupings and networks: some of these grouping will be formal while others will be informal, and in some cases, randomly formed” (p. 37). The practice of distributed leadership requires a concentrated effort to address concerns in a collaborative fashion among different leaders. Spillane (2006) proposed,

Interactions are the key to unlocking leadership practice from the a distributed perspective. In a distributed approach, we have to start with the leadership practice, observe it, infer who the leaders are, and begin to explores the interactions among leaders, followers, and their situation. (p. 84)

As leaders converge to address school concerns, their interactions provide a framework from which shared decision-making and capacity building could flourish. An exploration of leader interactions within the themes of empowerment, productive work design, capacity building, a positive work climate, and a sense of team purpose helped further elucidate the leadership perspective.

**Empowerment**

A principal galvanizes the involvement and commitment of educators and other stakeholders to accomplish meaningful goals. Principals empower the work of school leaders through frequent interaction, based in deep knowledge of the leader roles within a school. Mangin (2007) conducted a qualitative study examining the impact of knowledge
and interaction by the principal on school instructional leadership positions. She surveyed 12 teacher leaders, 15 principals, and six district level leaders. Using open-ended questions, she rated the principals’ knowledge of teacher leader responsibilities as high, moderate, or low. She then evaluated the frequency of interaction and classified the principals as high, moderate, or low in terms of support. The principals varied in terms of knowledge of teacher leadership responsibilities and interaction with teacher leaders. Strong levels of interaction, and knowledge of the teacher leadership roles, supported and affirmed these positions. It should be noted that data-gathering methods were limited to interviews and might be expanded to include observations, providing opportunity to probe concerns related to time constraints experienced by principals, as well as their beliefs systems about certain instructional leadership roles. Mangin’s findings demonstrated that empowerment, within a distributed leadership model, built permission for formal and informal leaders to have influence on their peers and their pedagogical approaches. In working with various groups on school goals, various leaders, including the assistant principal, can serve as a conduit for action and interaction. Harris (2004) suggested, “The important delineation between forms of team-working, collegiality, collaboration, and distributed leadership is that distributed leadership results from the activity” (p. 15). Through interaction in a collaborative setting, leadership is distributed to best meet goals and sustain action. Principals play a pivotal role in creating an environment conducive to shared leadership. As Mangin (2007) pointed out, empowerment occurs within interactions among leaders including the administrative team. Harris (2012) asserted that principals take “center
stage in the work redesign required to bring distributed leadership to life in schools” (p. 8).

Salfi (2011) studied the impact of several leadership practices including distributed leadership within elementary and secondary schools in the Punjab province of Pakistan. Using a mixed-methods research design of surveys, review of literature and interviews, he found that the most successful schools had head teachers who “empowered others to lead and distributed leadership responsibilities throughout the school” (p. 414). Salfi’s item analyses regarding distributed leadership practices showed that head teachers of successful school received positive marks on their ability to “encourage others to undertake leadership roles and recognized expertise of staff rather than formal position within the group” (p. 422). Salfi’s work highlights the positive impact of empowerment by allowing members of the school community to lead and motivate others thus maximizing the talents and skillsets of the staff. Salfi also showed that empowerment included supporting and encouraging these leaders. Empowerment occurred through the interactions of the leaders. Similarly, Muijs and Harris’ (2003) literature review of teacher leadership and empowerment shows that empowerment enhances the motivation, knowledge, and self-esteem of a staff member. Empowering teachers “is powerful because it is premised upon the creation of the collegial norms in schools that evidence has shown contribute directly to school effectiveness, improvement and development” (p. 444).

Buttram and Pizzini (2009) studied the impact of distributed leadership models in the state of Delaware. The Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL) developed professional development for representatives from Delaware’s 19 school districts to
implement distributed leadership practices. The researchers interviewed a sample of administrators and teachers from six schools and distributed surveys to 13 designated distributed leadership schools and three comparison schools not involved with distributed leadership. Using t-test analyses, the researchers noted statistically significant differences in a number of different areas for distributed leadership (DL) schools and non-DL schools. Most notable was a positive change in culture. Teachers reported feeling more empowered in the DL schools. Buttram and Pizzini’s (2009) research showed that meaningful professional development around distributed leadership practices emboldens teachers to make decisions beyond the areas of curriculum, instruction and assessment (p. 20).

Distributing leadership is a practice of empowerment. Staff members are trusted to draw on their experience, knowledge, and expertise to make sound leadership decisions. The research by Mangin and Salfi suggest that empowerment could have a significant impact on not only the work climate, but on school effectiveness as well. By empowering staff members, they are able to build the confidence and capacity to influence others in a positive manner.

**Productive Work Design**

In a distributed leadership model, principals articulate collaborative strategies for closing achievement gaps and using evidence and proven practices to solve problems, make decisions, and plan strategically. Working alongside the administrative team, as well as other instructional leaders, principals could maximize the collective capacity of a staff by distributing leadership. This distribution of responsibilities requires intentional work designs through which meaningful collaboration can be sustained. Harris (2008a)
surveyed a number of schools in England that purposefully integrated
distributed leadership practices. She found a variety of work designs, ranging from
converting schools into smaller learning communities with assistant principals serving as
site leaders to infusing curriculum teams led by both teachers and administrators. In
investigating these various distributed leadership models, Harris found that each one
―necessitate[d] the creation of time, space and opportunity for groups to meet, plan, and
reflect. Engaging the many rather than the few in leadership is at the heart of distributed
leadership‖ (p. 155). From these schools, Harris (2008a) further noted the following
positive trends in utilizing distributed leadership structure:

1. Vision is a unifying force
2. Leaders have expert rather than formal authority
3. Collaborative teams formed for specific purposes
4. Communities of practice emerge
5. Individuals perceive themselves as stakeholders
6. The organizational goals are disaggregated
7. Roles and tasks are distributed
8. Enquiry [sic.] is central to change and development (pp. 112-113)

Spillane et al. (2001) studied distributed leadership across 15 K-5 and K-8 schools
in Chicago. Data revealed numerous work designs in which various leaders collaborated
within different contexts to move a school forward. Spillane’s study highlighted the need
for collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and expertise to address significant
educational challenges for these schools. The schools participated in a wide variety of
opportunities for interaction, including informal breakfast clubs that served as focus
groups to introduce and discuss school improvement plans. These plans created formal leadership positions for staff members across the school.

Principals who seek to distribute leadership roles and responsibilities are wise to secure resources, such as time and fiscal allocations, to create opportunities for assistant principals and teachers to effectively share ideas about addressing student needs. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) noted, “Such leadership allows members to better anticipate and respond to the demands of the organization’s environment. Solutions to organizational challenges may develop through distributed leadership that would likely not emerge from individual sources” (p. 531). In many cases, the hierarchical designs of schools restrict opportunities for leadership interactions that influence teacher practice and student learning. Harris (2008a) showed, “The infrastructure of schools, by design or default, is currently proving to be a barrier to long-term transformation” (p. 66).

Distributed leadership offers a structural philosophy for promoting capacity and change through formal and informal leadership interaction.

Similarly, Gronn’s (2002) research on distributed leadership highlighted different interaction formats that promoted interdependent sharing and learning. He found that shared leadership promoted the following principles:

1. Spontaneous collaboration by formal and informal leaders allowed for the coalescing of expertise by a staff. The groups were momentary and moved freely from one leadership opportunity to another.

2. Intuitive working relations formed where members relied on one another.

3. Institutionalized practices emerged with formalized structures such as professional learning communities.
Both Harris and Gronn provided insight on the importance of work design and the operational flow of a distributed leadership perspective. While, they both highlight common principles of interaction through collaboration, both studies neglected to address hierarchical barriers that could exist at both the district and union levels. For example, a district may pursue professional development with no input from staff. Unions may be cautious of “informal” leadership positions that are not formally recognized, lack compensation, and may come across as administrative in nature to fellow bargaining unit members.

Spillane et al. (2001) maintained, “A distributed perspective presses us to consider organizational structure as more than a vessel for leadership activity and more than accessories that leaders use to execute a particular task using some predetermined strategy or practice” (p. 26). Organizational structures and work design should pave the way for interactive opportunities between and among leaders in order for them to share expertise and refine focus.

In 2012, the Consortium for Policy Research in Education produced a research report evaluating the Annenberg Distributed Leadership Project (2006-2012). The Annenberg School District in Philadelphia was one of the “first efforts in the nation to deliberately take on the challenge of designing and implementing a concerted effort to build distributed leadership capacity” (Supovitz & Riggan, 2012, p. 1). In this mixed-method evaluation of the program, the researchers compared schools that participated in the program with those that served in the control group. The Annenberg Distributed Leadership Project “operationialized a distributed perspective of leadership, with the goal of creating stronger leadership structure to facilitate school improvement in urban
schools” (p. 3). The study revealed that the distributed leadership structure “can have a positive impact on leadership practice, leadership team functioning, and support for instructional improvement” (p. 1). The structure of the project relied heavily on organizing strong teams. Teams were carefully selected, trained, and supported and then were engaged with other school sub-groups or learning communities. The distributed leadership teams led professional inquiry into practice and instructional improvement. This study suggested that distributed leadership can be coalesced into a viable framework that allows for meaningful discourse among a staff.

In 2012, over 15,000 members of the European School Heads Association were invited to complete a survey regarding several elements of distributed leadership practices. 1088 responses were used for data analysis. The responses were analyzed along subgroup responses. Duif, Harrison, and van Dartel (2013) found in this study that collaboration was most indicative of distributed leadership practice by school leaders in European schools. Collaboration was valued as a means of promoting collective expertise and efficacy. The European study revealed that school leaders from this region overly value and promote collaborative practices.

Many formats and structures exist within which the distributed leadership perspective could be promoted. Richard Bolden’s (2011) research of distributed leadership literature provided a comparison of structural theories of four prominent researchers in this field. Citing the works of Gronn, Leithwood, MacBeath, and Spillane, Bolden highlighted the researchers’ ideas of collaborative practices. Bolden’s study showed that leadership functions across different approaches and theories, but the idea of interaction remained consistent among the different frameworks. The research in this
section explored various examples where distributed leadership was purposefully crafted. Accessing and sharing expertise required interactive opportunities. Simply having time to collaborate did not automatically equate with distributed leadership. The studies demonstrated that distributed leadership requires interaction that promoted action based on collective input. The studies also revealed that interaction prompted collaboration around set routines, tools, and artifacts. The use of these items promoted more meaningful and impactful interactions.

**Capacity Building**

Harris (2008a), in her case study of several reform schools, in the United Kingdom found that schools needed to build leadership capacity across the system in order to change it. A study of these schools revealed several themes of collaborative leadership whereas various staff members took on key leadership roles such as instructional specialist and project coordinators. Schools were redesigned to encourage leadership development at all levels. Harris viewed distributed leadership as the “organizational circuitry that will ensure the fast flow of innovation and change” (p. 74) and as leaders extend leadership throughout the organization, “there [was] greater potential for knowledge creation and system transformation” (pp. 74-75).

Principals identify ways to facilitate the organization’s learning and growth and effectively utilize local, state, or national assessments in ways that improve student learning. With shrinking budgets, principals could utilize the collective expertise of assistant principals and teacher leaders to provide sustainable professional development for one another and the school. Harris (2004) stated, “distributed leadership is most likely to contribute to school improvement and to build internal capacity for
development” (p. 13). Bennet et al. (2004) added that one of the key elements of distributed leadership is the pooling of expertise and the sharing of these skills. They go on to explain that the capacity of the whole organization improves as formal and informal leaders build their own capacity to lead. Spillane, Hallett, and Diamond (2003) used observations and interviews with 84 teachers from eight Chicago public elementary schools to collect data on leadership practice. This investigation was part of the Distributed Leadership Project. Teachers rated the instructional leadership influences on specific instructional activities. Spillane and colleagues found that teachers identified leadership value based on a number of interactive processes, including professional learning communities and instructional coaching positions. In addition, value was placed on such items as human capital (skills, knowledge, and expertise), social capital (ways of socializing through networks and relations of trust), and economic capital (material resources). Much like in Mangin’s (2007) study, capacity building resulted from positive interactions with leaders. These studies similarly revealed the need for expanding research of distributed leadership across a more stratified sample. Being a part of a consortium may lead to inherent bias. However, the teacher perspectives from these samples support the accepted core of distributed leadership – interaction.

Buttram and Pizzini’s (2009) study of Delaware schools found that schools that implemented a distributed leadership perspective provided more professional development opportunities. Staff members were also more likely to participate in leadership opportunities. The Delaware research project revealed that purposeful distributed leadership practice could increase the collective knowledge and efficiency of a school.
Positive Work Climate

A distributed leadership model provides opportunities to create a positive working environment evidenced by trust. Harris (2008a) espoused, “The evidence shows that schools with broad-based distributed leadership tend to have a culture where there is a high degree of professional trust and were relationships between staff are positive” (p. 11). By deepening leadership activities, staff members could engage in collaborative practices that promote shared-decision making. Tschannen-Moran (2004) proposed that these shared-decision making processes promote a culture of trust in schools. Similarly, Bryk and Schneider (2003) discovered, “Collective decision making with broad teacher buy-in, a crucial ingredient for reform, occurs more readily in schools with strong relational trust” (p. 42). Distributed leadership takes into account staff members’ various belief systems and practices and promotes a culture and climate of equity, trust, and shared values. Marks and Printy (2006) found, “When teachers interact with each other frequently and when they share leadership responsibilities with administrators, strong norms and standards for their professional work take shape over time” (p. 129). Trust serves as a conduit to allow distributed leadership to develop and flourish. Harris (2008a) found, “Where schools have purposefully redesigned their structures, with the prime aim of extending and deepening leadership activity, there is more likely to be a positive impact on culture and a subsequent impact on learning” (p. 68).

Using surveys and observations, Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, and Louis (2007) conducted a three-year longitudinal study on trust and distributed leadership in six schools of different demographics who each participated in the State Action Education
Leadership Projects (SAELPs) which were funded and promoted by the Wallace Foundation, the Education Commission of the States, and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The researchers found several positive correlations with distributed leadership and trust. High levels of trust promoted more autonomy, wider range of work activities, stronger lines of communication, and a structuring of more distributed leadership practices. While the sample was relatively small, the researchers were able to ascertain that distributed leadership practices contributed to higher levels of trusts and that this framework promoted a stronger sense of commitment and efficacy. A reflection by one of the principals who participated in study showed that

Other things that he did to promote distributed leadership reflected his sense of trust—promoting open communication, establishing collaborative work processes, expanding responsibility across the faculty, actively reaching out to the skeptics, and proactively focusing on issues of concern to teachers. (p. 496)

Buttram and Pizzini (2009) found that distributed leadership promoted a culture of trust whereas staff members felt that they could openly communicate with leaders and propose new ideas without fear of reprisal. The ability to collaborate in a positive work climate promotes and strengthens the relationships between all members of a school community. A positive work climate is conducive to developing leaders.

**Sense of Team Purpose**

Assistant principals play an important role in school leadership and their role within the administrative team has often been overlooked. A scant amount of research exists on administrative teams functions and what effective practices are utilized to maximize the team concept. Research from the business world has proven that effective
teams pool resources and talents to promote organizational success and that teams can have a positive impact on work climate and facilitate change at a faster pace (Ensley et al., 2006; Katzenbach, 1997; Mankin et al., 1996; West, 2004). The limited research on the school administrative team suggested that the principal has a profound effect on shaping the dynamics of a team. In turn, an effective administrative team has the power to promote the school’s vision by properly utilizing the strengths and talents of its members.

Much of the literature on leadership focused on specific actions that a leader undertakes to promote a culture of success. While one of the actions or conditions that a leader can do is to distribute leadership, little insight has been offered on how a team strengthens itself from a distributed perspective and operated in an effective manner. Clutterbuck (2007) viewed teams as a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performing goals, and approach, which they hold themselves mutually accountable. Harvey and Drolet (2004) observed that a team consists of members with a common identity and tenets, common tasks, sense of potency/success, clear definition of team membership, recognition of individual contributions, and balanced roles. Kozlowski and Bell (2001) outlined a more formal breakdown of the definition:

Teams are composed of two or more individuals who (a) exist to perform organizationally relevant tasks, (b) share one or more common goals, (c) interact socially, (d) exhibit task interdependencies (i.e., work flow, goals, outcomes), (e) maintain and manage boundaries, and (f) are embedded in an organizational
context that sets boundaries, constrains the team, and influences exchanges with the other units in the broader entity. (p. 6)

While used in the business world, these definitions are applicable to the administrative team in an educational setting.

While there may be varying views about the definition of team, research suggests that teams can play a pivotal role in organizational success. Studies in the business world have outlined the importance of teams (Ensley et al., 2006; Katzenbach, 1997; Kozlowski & Bell, 2001; Mankin et al., 1996). Teams can respond to a fast-changing environment, enable learning, bring financial benefits, and facilitate effective change more effectively than can a collection of individuals that does not share a common purpose in the organization (West, 2004). In addition, Mankin et al. (1996) showed that management teams could help companies achieve competitive advantage by applying collective expertise, integrating disparate efforts, and sharing responsibility for the success of the firm. From an educational lens, the team concept has been reviewed thoroughly from the teacher perspective. The administrative team, however, has not been explored fully relative to team practices.

A paucity of research exists on administrative teams and the manner in which they operate. Often times, the principal works isolated from the team. Holland (1968) expressed that

Events press in inexorably on the head of a school and will engulf him if he does not use his administrative team effectively so that he can find the time to observe, plan, organize, and to work with staff (hopefully get to know them) as well as
students, parents, and central office in order to develop a vital school relevant to the times. (p. 65)

In understanding the purpose of the administrative team, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the roles that the assistant principals undertake. Holland believed that, “The principal and his assistants need to review administrative procedures continually to make sure that these practices are the best that can be devised” (p. 61). Through effective coordination of responsibilities and collaboration, the administrative team could have a positive impact on the operational activities for a school. Danley (1979) stated, “The administrative team concept, generally proposed to bring about cooperative efforts at all levels of management in a school system, should bring about sounder decisions that would have positive effects on the school’s finances, articulation, and community support” (p. 29). Starr (1978) saw the administrative team as acting in the best interest of a school noting, “The team, in theory, discusses viable educational issues, utilizes a decision-making process to reach resolution, and then supports the consensus with singularly unity” (p. 16). Further defining the roles and characteristics of an administrative team, Lindsay (2004) suggested “an administrative team must embody the positive ideals of its school’s vision through its public statements and its private conference-room behaviors” (p. 36). Administrators serve as stewards of the schools’ collective goals and belief systems. Lindsay viewed the administrative team as a vessel through which the principal can better develop the school’s vision. She posited that principals must take an active role in building the concept of team through positive relations: “By attending to the emotional and intellectual needs of the administrative
team, a principal increases its capacity to help lead the school toward its visions and improved achievement for all students” (p. 36).

While an administrative team can move a school forward, there is no universal metric to measure team effectiveness. Teacher teams usually have specific targets and goals as a professional learning community: create common standards and benchmarks, share best practices, assess student data, and in general, support one another. Similar conditions or expectations rarely exist for the administrative team. Boles (1975) attempted to measure the effectiveness of an administrative team by studying the administrative structure of a K-12 school district in southern Michigan. In surveying team members about what they believe is expected of him or her as well other team members, Boles found, “the administrative team term was being applied to periodic meetings of individuals who were in no sense a team. It seems likely that the situation encountered is typical of all too many situations” (p. 724). Boles’ survey instrument suggested that an effectiveness ratio could be drawn from one’s own rating versus the mean rating done by others. The researcher suggested using this tool periodically to gauge the understanding of roles on an administrative team and to subsequently strengthen the team concept. Markette (2012) attempted to measure the effectiveness of an administrative team through a case study on high performing schools in Maricopa County in Arizona. Using state test scores, Markette isolated the top 5% of performing schools in Maricopa County and isolated his case study to the most diverse school. Using Hackman’s five structures and conditions (real team, compelling direction, proper work strategy, supportive context, and expert coaching) related to highly performing teams, Markette administered a survey and found these structures and conditions to be present.
His work elucidates the need to evaluate the administrative team as a unit.

Similarly, Wilhelm (1984) outlined her beliefs regarding the responsibilities of the administrative team:

1. the improvement of communication among school staff members;
2. the job of clearinghouse for current issues in the schools and community;
3. the formulation and interpretation of rules and regulations governing school operations;
4. the analysis of data on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the district’s curriculum;
5. the formulation of policies to be recommended to the board of education; and
6. to guide decisions of resource allocations

These principles are not general expectations outlined for an administrative team. Leadership from a distributed perspective could be a method to meet the myriad of responsibilities that face the administrative team as well as evaluating the team itself.

Looking at business models, there tends to be a growing fascination with distributed leadership and the performance of the management team as a unit. Ensley et al. (2006) noted that “shared leadership was found to be a particularly efficacious predictor of new venture performance” (p. 226). Their research hypothesized that “the more directive, transformational, and empowering the top leader of the firm, the higher the growth rate of the firm will be” (p. 221). The researchers sampled firms from the annual 500 list of America’s fastest growing startups and were able to obtain surveys from 164 firms. The survey consisted of questions that measured the perception of team members regarding feelings of empowerment by the team leader. The analysis showed that distributed
leadership promoted team effectiveness and had a positive impact on
organizational performance outcomes (p. 226). Another study done on top management
teams by Katzenbach (1997) echoed many of the same findings. He asserted “The extra
performance capability that a real team provides comes from a complementary mixing of
its members skills” (p. 85). Research suggested that when shared leadership occurs,
teams were more effective. Ensley et al. (2003) showed, “With shared leadership, teams
enjoy greater amounts of collaboration, coordination, cooperation, and innovation and are
better able to interpret group needs such as task interdependence and coordination” (p. 334).

Distributed leadership practices share many of the characteristics of research
findings on effective teams. By using a distributed leadership perspective, the
administrative team can be studied to show the impact of collaborative practices on the
perceptions of the team concept by the assistant principal. The distributed leadership lens
focuses on the interactions of team members. Buttram and Pizzini (2009) found that in
distributed leadership schools, teachers and administrators identified and practiced
leadership responsibilities together. From Danley’s (1979) observations of the
administrative team, he concluded that interdependence strengthens the team concept:
“For the effective performance of an administrative team, these implications suggest
requirements in at least three areas: cooperative planning, coordinated implementation,
and cooperative evaluation” (p. 30). Danley viewed the connections of shared leadership
and decision-making in maximizing the strengths of the whole administrative team. The
perceptions of the assistant principal present multiple opportunities to explore the
manners in which a principal distributes leadership and its impact on team culture.
Kanner (1977) observed, “Many teacher groups see the administrative structure of the public schools as being traditionally paternalistic and therefore standing in direct opposition to the drive increased professional status for teachers” (p. 36). Likewise, the structure of the administrative team could restrict the professional contributions of an assistant principal who expects his or her skillsets or expertise to complement the team concept. Tyson (2008) summed up the impact of a professional administrative team: “Dynamic administrative teams are in the best interest of the whole school community, but most importantly, they are in the best interests of students” (p. 46).

**Conclusion**

A balance of solo and distributed leadership allows a principal to fully access the collective expertise of a staff. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) suggested that distributed leadership “reduce[s] the chances of error arising from decisions based on the limited information available to a single leader” and “develops among organizational members a fuller appreciation of interdependence” (p. 530). Transformative principals distribute leadership to assistant principals and other leaders to collectively meet the mission, vision, and educational purpose of a school while producing a strong professional culture. Harris (2008a) demonstrated, “The evidence shows that schools with broad-based distributed leadership tend to have cultures where there is a high degree of professional trust and where relationships between staff are positive” (p. 11).

Interaction undergirds the practice of distributed leadership. Principals cultivate interactions between leaders through multiple facets. A principal may institute professional learning communities requiring frequent meeting times. A principal may
coordinate leadership teams with the purpose of providing professional
development or leading instructional initiatives. Regardless of the methodology,
purposeful and frequent interaction defines distributed leadership and allows for schools
to fully access the expertise of a staff. As points of interactions emerge, themes of
Empowerment, Productive Work Design, Capacity Building, a Positive Work Climate,
and a Sense of Team Purpose take root. Often overlooked, however, is the role of the
administrative team in a distributed leadership model. The principal has the opportunity
to define the leadership opportunities for assistant principals and create a distributive
model that also highlights the strengths and talents of the administrative team.
Distributed leadership offers a framework in which to explore how the team concept is
developed within the administration level and the manner in which these teams share and
act upon collective knowledge.

**The Roles and Responsibilities of Assistant Principals**

Working under the supervision of a principal, assistant principals are assigned
roles and responsibilities in accordance with school needs. With varying roles and
responsibilities, assistant principals have opportunities to play a pivotal role in shaping
the educational and social beliefs of a school. Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett (2011)
stated, “As schools continue to face demands to improve student performance, the role of
the assistant principal can be critical for school improvement” (p. 265). Austin and
Brown (1970) indicated that that the assistant principal is seen as “pretty much the person
who actually kept things going” (p. 23). In her review of literature on the assistant
principal, Cantwell (1993) acknowledged the need to recognize “the assistant
principalship as a leadership role in its own right” and to identify a “clearer definition of
the leadership functions that are appropriate and particular to the roles” (p. 65). Although limited, research on assistant principal leadership roles, from the 1950s to current times, showed that the influence of assistant principals was mainly confined to the areas of clerical duties, instructional supervision, organizational duties, and student discipline (Black, 1980; Calabrese, 1991; Cantwell, 1993; Harvey, 1994a; Koru, 1993; Norton & Kriekard, 1987; Oleszewski et al., 2011; Panyako & Rorie, 1987; Potter, 1980; Rodrick, 1986; Williams, 1995). Due to lack of role clarification and empowerment, Cantwell (1993) noted, “The assistant principal tends to feel powerless and isolated professionally compared to the principal” (p. 52). In his distributed leadership study of Chicago schools, Spillane (2006) found in 84 teachers studied that 83.3% saw principals influencing their teaching with only 28.6% holding a similar view regarding assistant principals. Additionally, 8.3% of teachers identified administrators as influential leaders just by position (p. 48).

Research on the assistant principal revealed consistent themes of role clarification, efficacy, empowerment and restructuring, highlighting the need to explore the expansion of leadership responsibilities and expectations for the administrative team. By title, the role of the assistant principals suggests aspects of leadership. However, confusion regarding the ideal role versus the actual role of assistant principals creates mixed messages about the leadership influence being asserted by assistant principals. Working from a distributed leadership perspective, as “more responsibility is being placed in the hands of the principals, more responsibility must necessarily be placed with assistant principals” (Clemons, 1989, p. 33). Principals might reconsider the role of the assistant principal and what it means for overall school leadership and performance.
Muijs and Harris (2003) posited, “One of the key questions is how leadership is distributed to and through the deputy or assistant head and what it means for their roles” (p. 7). Furthermore from their research, they suggested, “The role has also evolved in response to the recognized need to distribute leadership more widely to secure long term improvement in time of change” (p. 6). In exploring distributed leadership through the lens of the assistant principal, it is essential to explore in more detail the themes of role clarification, efficacy, empowerment and restructuring.

**Role Clarification**

Assistant principals, entering the administrative field for the first time, often struggle with embodying the responsibilities of the position and their belief systems about leadership. Read (2012) noted that “newly appointed vice-principals whose expectations for their new roles are far different from the reality will perform less well in the vice-principal’s role” (p. 14). In order to maximize the potential of the assistant principalship, schools and school districts benefit from clearly defined expectations and explicit definitions of the role. Many disillusioned assistant principals never achieve their ideal perception of the position. Sun (2012) conducted a mixed methodology study using surveys and in-depth interviews to examine the influences of the accountability and reform era, brought about by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), on the role of the assistant principal. Applying instruments from the Glanz (1994) study on ideal versus real roles of the assistant principal, Sun surveyed 133 assistant principals and compared her findings with those of Glanz. Sun’s (2012) research confirmed that, eighteen years later, many of the themes and rankings were similar (p. 65). Many assistant principals continued to view their work as managerial in nature with the one change being in instructional leadership.
Assistant principals reported a significant rise in time spent on this leadership function, signaling the need for a new role descriptor for researchers and practitioners moving forward. Sun also highlighted the differences between what assistant principals think they should do in 2010 with that of Glanz in 1994. Sun’s study revealed that current assistant principals aspire for more instructional leadership opportunities such as curriculum development, evaluation teachers, and formulating school goals (p. 166). The Sun and Glanz comparative studies highlighted the need for principals to review, refine, and distribute opportunities that maximize the roles of assistant principals. As Sun showed, the roles of the assistant principal are shifting as the political and educational climate changes with the times. Currently, assistant principals assume more impactful roles. Harvey (1994a) proposed a distinct role clarification emerging for the deputy/assistant head in which he/she took on educational leadership roles and helped shape the school culture.

As the role of the assistant principal shifts toward more educational or instructional responsibilities, assistant principals are emerging as leaders with specific and matching expertise. Robinson and Driver (2013) argued that as assistant principals take on more instructional practices they should be released from more managerial duties.

**Efficacy**

Based on an open-ended survey of 164 assistant principals, Glanz (1994) reported that, although respondents indicated that teacher training, staff development, and curriculum development were the three most important duties that should take up most the their time, in reality, most of their time was taken up disciplining students, undertaking lunch duties, and school scheduling (pp. 283-287). Glanz’s study not only
revealed role dissonance within the position of the assistant principal, but also illustrated issues of efficacy. Assistant principals were not able to engage in work they deemed meaningful and important, because their time was engulfed by student management. To become more efficacious, assistant principals need time to practice broader leadership skills sets. Busch, MacNeil, and Baraniuk, (2012) surveyed a stratified sample of 361 assistant principals asking one primary question: “There is probably a lot of advice you could give to someone preparing to become an assistant principal, but if there was one piece of advice you could give what would you advise?” Using interpretative analysis along coded themes, as well as follow-up interviews with principals, they categorized the following themes in terms of popularity of skillsets needed to be successful:

1. Knowledge (42.6%) This included how to: prepare for the job, deal with difficulties, make decisions, advocate for students, and work with a variety of people

2. Skills (37.12%) This included how to: build relationships, listen actively, be flexible, communicate effectively, maintain high expectations, and to create organizational structures

3. Attributes (20.22%) Positive traits included: being virtuous and trustworthy, maintaining a positive attitude, not taking things personal, and being patient

These responses highlighted the important skillsets not necessarily covered in an administration preparation program. For example, knowledge of the job did not revolve around decision-making models or soft skills that promoted positive relational strategies. In addition, certain character attributes could bolster the resiliency of beginning
Administrative preparation programs seemed poorly aligned with the current practices and expectations of the assistant principal. Oleszewski et al. (2011) found that assistant principals expressed needs in the area of instructional leadership and budgeting and finance. In a distributed leadership model, principals can help build the capacity of assistant principals in these noted areas. As Marshall and Hooley (2006) noted, “When principals see the assistant principal only as someone to do undesirable tasks, they lose the opportunity to multiply administrative efficacy” (p. 20).

**Empowerment**

Within the current accountability climate, “the assistant principal’s role is expanding and maturing, and in the era of school-based management, it will grow and become a more responsible occupation, with added prestige and respect” (Clemons, 1989, p. 36). A principal can expedite the importance of the assistant principal position by creating “the structures and attitudes that facilitate participation” and recognizing his/her responsibility to “provide their professional colleagues with opportunities for satisfying work, adequate support, advanced training, and effective resources” (Marshall & Hooley, 2006, p. 21).

A 1991 survey of deputy heads by the Western Australian Primary Deputy Principals’ Association revealed several themes regarding job satisfaction. Like their American administrative counterparts, Australian deputy heads experience conflict about ideal and actual responsibilities. In this study, 403 deputy principals, 179 principals, and 138 teachers completed a questionnaire about deputy principal work characteristics. The data indicated a lack of professional identity and negative self-perceptions regarding the role of the deputy head (Harvey, 1994a). While this study took place in Australia, it is
easy to see that similar patterns emerge regarding the assistant principal across educational systems. These common trends could be due, in part, to traditional school hierarchies that limit meaningful opportunities for assistant principals to exert leadership influence. The survey, however, did provide insights regarding noted challenges for addressing the negative self-perceptions of the deputy head and possible remedies. Challenges included:

1. unrealized expectations for being a member of an executive team of administrators, where working relationships are characterized by collegiality rather than hierarchical control;
2. a lack of control over the determination of their work duties and the reactive nature of their work day;
3. insufficient recognition of their professional effort from colleagues and parents;
4. limited resources and opportunities for professional development; and
5. unfulfilled career expectations for promotion to the principalship (Harvey, 1994a, p. 27)

Harvey also suggested “empowerment occurs when deputy principals collectively scrutinize and reflect upon their practice and become active in transforming their roles” and “is needed to improve the professional identity of deputy principals and their contribution to educational leadership” (p. 29). In addressing the challenges, Harvey derived ten strategies based on the organizational theories of Bolman and Deal, to empower the assistant principal. Assistant principals should:
1. develop a high level of awareness of their own view of the purpose of the role and of how this guides day-to-day practice;
2. increase emergent roles and decrease traditional facets;
3. acquire a central location in the network of social relationships and system of communication;
4. focus on the demonstration of educational leadership across a range of facets of administration and teaching;
5. develop capacity as an initiator, facilitator, advisor, and resource person rather than a director or controller of other school participants and resources;
6. give priority to creating the necessary conditions which allow for the operation of an authentic executive team;
7. seek opportunities for professional development which enhance their capacities as educational leaders;
8. reduce teaching responsibilities if one has a teaching role;
9. communicate with teachers so that their needs for administrative support can be met using alternative arrangements;
10. seek opportunities for secondments [sic.] and work experience which enable them to develop their professional attitudes, knowledge, and skills in alternative work environments (pp. 30-36).

The study by Harvey elucidates the need for empowering assistant principals as to ways that might maximize their talents and recognize their contributions. While there are some limitations to the study, due to the population size and the relevance of findings to different educational systems, Harvey provides insights on how the principal can be
supportive of the assistant principal. Advocacy by a principal could foreground the important role an assistant principal plays in a school. Paskey (1989) noted, “For this to happen, the principal must realize his or her commitment to the profession, be willing to share the instructional leadership role, and not be too consumed by ego” (p. 95).

**Restructuring**

Little attention has been paid to the formal structure and collaborative practices within the administrative team. The use of distributed leadership practices by principals has yielded a positive impact on student achievement (Harris, 2008b; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Spillane, 2004), but has been primarily associated with teachers and principals (Harvey, 1994b). When reviewing the literature on assistant principals and their shifting roles within the administrative team, a focus on restructuring the position emerges (Glanz, 1994; Harvey, 1994b; Sun, 2012; Williams, 1995). This restructuring naturally calls for a review of the purpose of the administrative team as well. Harvey (1994b) noted that “reconceptualization of the deputy principalship is urgent and has the potential to bring a number of benefits” (p. 21). These benefits include enhanced work satisfaction, more significant contribution to education, and preparation for a successful transition to the principalship. Most of the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal are doled out by the principal with little attention to how to use these roles to maximize the educational and social impact of the administrative team on school practices and policies (Austin & Brown, 1970; Glanz, 1994; Harvey, 1994b). The notion of the team requires a more critical lens at the administrative level. Sprague (1973) asserted that
implementing the administrative concept in our secondary schools should be a high priority of school administrators. Not only does the team approach have the potential of alleviating many frustrations of assistant principals and making the job a more attractive career position, but it also enhances effective communication, decision-making, and supervision within a school. (p. 28)

A host of research suggests that little has changed since the 1950s in regards to the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal (Austin & Brown, 1970; Glanz, 1994; Harvey, 1994b; Shoho, Barnett, & Tooms, 2012). An examination of recent literature on the assistant principal suggests that more attention is being placed on the assistant principal and the manners in which to effectively maximize their contributions to a school. Kaplan and Owings (1999) noted that assistant principals should take on more instructional leadership roles. They suggested, “Assistant Principals can effectively share instructional leadership roles to increase a school’s success as a learning organization for students and educators” (p. 80), but would “need principals who want leadership partnerships, who will mentor and support the AP’s professional growth, and who are willing to restructure the school administration to make shared instructional leadership happen to benefit student achievement” (p. 82). A shift to more instructional leadership roles marks a stark contrast to the traditional roles developed for assistant principals. Recent research suggests that assistant principals can take on more leadership roles and responsibilities within the team concept (Harvey, 1994b; Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Williams, 1995).

A focus on the restructuring of the assistant principal roles and responsibilities reveal an emphasis on shared leadership especially in the area of instruction. However,
little knowledge exists in how the administrative team actually works in a collaborative fashion. Williams (1995) stated, “Assistant principals play an important role in developing and sustaining an effective school leadership team. This role becomes more productive for assistant principals when shared responsibilities and the team management approach are emphasized” (p. 75). As schools have moved toward more distributed leadership opportunities such as professional learning communities or learning organizations, the administrative team has remained largely unexamined as its own collaborative group. Shared leadership and collaboration presents an opportunity for assistant principals to realize their full potential. Oleszewski et al. (2011) suggested that the role of the assistant principal could be reconfigured to that of a co-principal (p. 281). Under this model, leadership and responsibilities are shared equally. Harvey (1994b) noted that assistant principals discovered “unrealized expectations for being a member of an administrative team, where working relationships were characterized by collegiality rather than hierarchical control” (p. 17).

Harvey (1994b) posited,

The administrative team and a clearly articulated culture which defines the focus of the professional effort become critical to coordination of the various committees and working parties. Both the principal and the deputy principals should have responsibility for building a collaborative culture that serves to focus the collective educational endeavor of school participants. (p. 20)

In addition, he noted that “deputy principals also seek a greater sense of shared decision making with the principals for broader range of administrative responsibilities” (p. 16). From a distributed perspective, the reconstruction of assistant principal roles as well as
the purposeful interactions of the administrative team presents an exciting opportunity for impactful leadership. “The emergence of the administrative team in many education systems heralds the onset of a new professional relationship between the deputy principals and other school participants” (p. 16).
CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY

Survey research methods were employed to understand the dynamics of the high school administrative team. Survey research designs are “procedures in quantitative research for administering a survey or questionnaire to a small group of people in order to identify trends, behaviors, or characteristics of a large group of people” (Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 175). Specifically, the researcher explored the themes of distributed leadership and their impact on the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal within a team concept. The assistant principal has the potential to contribute in a positive fashion to the overall goals of a school. However, the limited research on assistant principals suggests that in many cases they are undervalued and/or underutilized. Their skillsets are often not maximized in the organizations structure of an administrative team. Distributed leadership offers a lens and framework for studying how an administrative team might be able to maximize the talents of the assistant principals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to survey California high school assistant principals in order to determine their perceptions of how principals distribute leadership among the administrative team. The survey was based on the concepts of distributed leadership, specifically Empowerment, Work Design, Capacity Building, Work Climate, and Sense of Team Purpose.

Research Questions

The overarching question of this study was: How do assistant principals perceive the distribution of leadership among the administrative team? The following research questions guided this study:
1. How do assistant principals perceive the manners in which their principals empower the work assistant principals do?

2. What work designs do assistant principals identify as facilitative of their work?

3. What activities do assistant principals identify their principals doing that develop the leadership capacities of the assistant principal?

4. To what extent do assistant principals feel their principal promotes a positive work climate for the administrative team?

5. To what extent do assistant principals perceive a sense of team purpose among the administrative team?

**Population**

All high school assistant principals in California listed in Data Market Retrieval were invited to participate in this study. The survey was sent electronically to assistant principals via the Qualtrics survey tool. There are approximately 2096 assistant principals listed in Data Market Retrieval for the state of California. Within the survey, assurances were made to ensure the confidentiality of participants’ responses.

**Instrumentation**

The survey instrument was created for this study (see Appendix A), and consisted of twenty items related to themes (see Appendix B) emerging from the literature on distributed leadership (Crawford, 2012; Galland, 2008; Gronn, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris, 2004; Hulpia et al., 2011; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Mangin, 2007; Marks & Printy, 2006; Mayrowetz, 2008; Neumerski, 2012; Spillane, 2004). These themes were explored based on assistant principals’ perceptions of their interactions with
principals. The research suggests that principals and assistant principals work under parallel conditions. Where their paths cross indicate interaction and leadership opportunities from a distributed perspective. The context of the situation affected the manner and time for interactions to occur. They are not fluid, nor sequential, but show how distributed leadership could occur under different circumstances. The survey intended to highlight these interactions. The survey was approved by the Institutional Review Board of San Diego State University (see Appendix C).

Five questions were developed for each of the themes of Empowerment, Work Design, Capacity Building, Positive Work Climate, and Sense of Team Purpose. Each question utilized a Likert scale asking participants to rank their responses from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. All questions were framed in a similar format to promote clarity and consistency. There are three parts to the survey:

1. Demographics: Respondents will be asked to list their gender, years of experience, type of school in which they work (Title I, school size, etc.), and self-reported API scores

2. Roles and Responsibilities: Respondents will be asked to list the time they spent on managerial duties, instructional leadership, student supervision, and community liaison work.

3. Distributed Leadership and Team Concepts: Respondents will be asked to complete a Likert survey on four major concepts of distributed leadership as well as the team concept.

For content validity, two experts in the field reviewed the survey: Dr. Shoho and Dr. Barnett. Dr. Shoho is the Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Support
and Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio where he has been for the past 20 years. He has produced a number of research studies on the assistant principal including serving as the editor for the book titled *Examining the Assistant Principalship*. Dr. Barnett is a Professor in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Likewise, he has published research on the field of educational leadership in a number of educational journals including *Education Administration Quarterly* and *Journal of School Leadership*. Both Dr. Shoho and Dr. Barnett responded with several suggestions for improving the quality of the survey. All suggestions were embedded into an updated survey. The survey was also field-tested with three assistant principals for purposes of clarity and readability. The survey on average took ten minutes or less to complete. The distributed leadership data were disaggregated by demographics and by time allocation.

**Data Collection**

All public high school assistant principals in California listed in the Market Data Retrieval Data bank were invited to participate. Survey respondents were informed of the confidential nature of the survey and the right to not respond to every question. The survey was constructed on the Qualtrics system and disseminated via email. Two follow-up emails were sent after two and four weeks. A return rate of approximately 18% allowed the researcher to draw strong conclusions about distributed leadership and the assistant principal. To ensure confidentiality, no survey questions asked for specific or identifying school or personal information. Qualtrics was set so that all survey responses could not be traced to the original emails addresses. All surveys collected were protected
through a password enabled website to which only the researcher and committee chair had access. The Qualtrics survey tool allowed the researcher to quickly analyze and disaggregate data.

**Data Analysis**

Personal and school demographics are presented as frequencies and percentages or as means and standard deviations, as appropriate. Elements of distributed leadership are presented as means, and standard deviations, and response frequencies. For repeated measures, ANOVA was used to determine significant differences between elements of distributed leadership, as well as to determine significant differences between items within each element of distributed leadership. Bar graphs are provided to supplement the analysis included in test form. Exploratory analyses included correlation and analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistics to assess the relationship between time allocation and demographics on elements of distributed leadership. Exploratory analyses were tested at the threshold $p < .05$ for statistical significance.

**Summary**

Understanding the complex nature of leadership and the administrative team required deep research from a quantitative approach. Using a survey research design allowed the researcher to fully engage the assistant principals in dialogue regarding their roles and responsibilities as well as understanding the perspective of the principal in reinforcing or restructuring these roles. Understanding the manners in which a principal distributed leadership allowed for the researcher to create a multi-faceted description of the administrative team and how talents and resources will be best maximized.
CHAPTER 4—RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to survey California high school assistant principals to determine their perceptions about how their school principals distribute leadership among the administrative team. A survey was designed for this study that included the distributed leadership elements of Empowerment, Work Design, Capacity Building, Work Climate, and Sense of Team Purpose. Survey invitations were electronically disseminated and data were collected using Qualtrics, an online survey platform.

Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the question: *How do assistant principals perceive the distribution of leadership among the administrative team?* Five elements of distributed leadership were addressed:

1. How do assistant principals perceive the manner in which their principals empower the work assistant principals do?
2. What work designs do assistant principals identify as facilitating their work?
3. What activities do assistant principals identify their principals doing that develop the leadership capacities of the assistant principal?
4. To what extent do assistant principals feel their principal promotes a positive work climate for the administrative team?
5. To what extent do assistant principals perceive a sense of team purpose among the administrative team?

Additionally, through exploratory analyses, this study also explored the role of time allocation in distributed leadership, and the impact of personal and school demographics
on the elements of distributed leadership. This study is timely because the concept of distributed leadership is becoming increasingly popular, but little is known about the perceptions of high school assistant principals in regard to distributed leadership. In this way, the present study fills an important gap in the educational leadership literature.

**Survey Response Rate**

Invitations to participate were distributed to 2,096 California High Schools, and 384 respondents logged on to the survey website and submitted results, a response rate of 18%. Of the 384 who began the survey, 364 completed the survey sufficiently to be included in the analyses addressing the research question of this study (N = 364).

**Data Analysis**

Personal and school-level demographics were analyzed as frequencies and percentages. Research questions were analyzed as means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for each element of distributed leadership, with response frequencies for individual items provided in table form. Bar graphs reflecting the mean and the standard error of the mean (SEM) are provided for each element of distributed leadership to augment the results descriptions provided in the text. Exploratory analyses included correlation (Pearson’s “r”) and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to assess the role of time allocation in distributed leadership, and the impact of personal and school demographics on the elements of distributed leadership, using the threshold p < .05 for statistical significance. Additionally, the Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to assess the internal reliability of each 4-item element of the distributed leadership scale.
Demographic Descriptives

Personal demographic descriptives included gender, years of experience as an administrator, years of experience on the same team, and aspirations toward the principalship. School-level demographic descriptives included the size of student body, the school’s Title I designation, and its Academic Performance Index (API) score. Personal demographic descriptives are summarized in Table 1 and School-level demographic descriptives are summarized in Table 2.

Personal Demographics

Participants were equally divided between males (182 of 364, 50%) and females (182 of 364, 50%) (Table 1). Most assistant principals had 4-7 years of experience (33%) or 0-3 years of experience (29%), followed by 8-10 years of experience (20%) and 11+ years of experience (17%) (see Table 1). Most assistant principals had 2-4 years of experience with the same team and principal (53%), followed by 0-1 years (25%), 7+ years (12%), and 5-6 years (11%) of experience with the same team and principal (Table 1). Most assistant principals indicated the aspiration to become a principal (62%), while 18% indicated no interest in becoming a principal and 21 were undecided regarding their aspiration to become a principal (Table 1).

School Demographics

Most High Schools had 2001-2500 students (27%), more than 2500 students (21%), or 1501-2000 students (21%), while fewer schools had 1001-1500 students (15%), 501-100 students (9%), or fewer than 500 students (7%) (Table 2). Participating High Schools were well divided between having Title 1 designation (48%) and not having Title
Table 1

**Personal Demographic Descriptives**

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<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 designation (52%) (Table 2). Most High Schools had an API rating of greater than 800 (35%), 751-800 (25%), 701-750 (18%), or 651-700 (13%), while fewer High schools had an API rating of 601-650 (6%) or under 600 (3%) (Table 2).
Table 2

School Demographic Descriptives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 500</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501 - 1000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001 - 1500</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1501 - 2000</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 - 2500</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2501+</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title 1 Designation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 600</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601 - 650</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>651 - 700</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>701 - 750</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>751 - 800</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800+</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Demographic Descriptives

This sample of High School assistant principals had even an representation of males and females, with a wide range in terms of years of experience in general, and years of experience with the same team and principal. Most respondents indicated an aspiration to become a principal. This sample included large and small schools, a wide
range of API ratings, and similar representation of Title 1 and non-Title 1 designation. For these reasons, this sample was considered to be adequate to address the research questions of this study.

**Research Questions**

Five research questions were addressed, encompassing assistant principal perceptions of Empowerment (RQ1), Work Design (RQ2), Capacity Building (RQ3), Positive Work Climate (RQ4), and Sense of Team Purpose (RQ5). Each distributed leadership element consists of four items, and results are provided for each item in addition to the results for each scale.

**Research Question 1: Empowerment**

RQ1 asked, “How do assistant principals perceive the manners in which their principals empower the work assistant principals do?”

Participants averaged 4.08 (SD = 0.84) across the four Empowerment items. Empowerment descriptives are displayed in Table 3 and response frequencies for each Empowerment item are displayed in Table 4.

**Table 3**

*Empowerment Descriptives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss Roles with Principals</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Knowledge of My Roles</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Promotes My Work</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowers Decisions</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

Empowerment Response Frequencies by Item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discuss roles with principal.** For the item “I meet with my principal consistently to discuss my roles,” participants averaged 3.90 (SD = 1.15) (Table 3, Figure 1). Most participants agreed (145 of 364, 40%) or strongly agreed (131 of 364, 36%) with this statement (Table 4). Response frequencies are provided in Table 4.

**Principal knowledge of my roles.** For the item “My principal is knowledgeable about my roles,” participants averaged 4.26 (SD = .97) (Table 3, Figure 1). Most participants agreed (126 of 364, 35%) or strongly agreed (184 of 364, 51%) with this statement (Table 4). Response frequencies are provided in Table 4.

**Principal promotes my work.** For the item “The principal promotes my work with the staff,” participants averaged 4.07 (SD = 1.04) (Table 3, Figure 1). Most
Figure 1. The manners in which principals empower the work of assistant principals.

Participants agreed (124 of 364, 34%) or strongly agreed (155 of 364, 43%) with this statement (Table 4). Response frequencies are provided in Table 4.

Principal empowers decisions. For the item “I feel empowered by the principal to make decisions on my own,” participants averaged 4.08 (SD = 1.09) (Table 3, Figure 1). Most participants agreed (134 of 364, 37%) or strongly agreed (159 of 364, 44%) with this statement (Table 4). Response frequencies are provided in Table 4.

Summary of RQ1. Scores were generally high for Empowerment, averaging roughly 4 (“agree”) on the 1-to-5 scale used. RQ1 results are summarized in Figure 1.

Research Question 2: Work Design

RQ2 asked “What work designs do assistant principals identify as facilitative of their work?”

Participants averaged 4.15 (SD = .70) across the four work design items (Table 5). Work Design descriptives are displayed in Table 5 and response frequencies for each Work Design item are displayed in Table 6.
Table 5

*Work Design Descriptives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team Meets Regularly</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Uses Focused Agenda</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles Match Strengths</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Team Collaborates</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

*Work Design Response Frequencies by Item*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Team Meets Regularly</th>
<th>Team Uses Focused Agenda</th>
<th>Roles Match Strengths</th>
<th>The Team Collaborates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response</strong></td>
<td><strong>Count</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>Count</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Team meets regularly.** For the item “The administration team meets regularly,” participants averaged 4.52 (SD = .82) (Table 5, Figure 2). Most participants agreed (101 of 364, 28%) or strongly agreed (131 of 364, 36%) with this statement (Table 6). Response frequencies are provided in Table 6.

![Work Design](image)

*Figure 2.* The manners in which principals are facilitative of the work of assistant principals.

**Team uses focused agenda.** For the item “When we meet as an administration team, we have a focused agenda,” participants averaged 3.85 (SD = 1.06) (Table 5, Figure 2). Most participants agreed (154 of 364, 42%) or strongly agreed (184 of 364, 30%) with this statement (Table 6). Response frequencies are provided in Table 6.

**Roles match strengths.** For the item “My roles match my strengths,” participants averaged 4.17 (SD = .90) (Table 5, Figure 2). Most participants agreed (151 of 364, 41%) or strongly agreed (151 of 364, 41%) with this statement (Table 6). See response frequencies in Table 6.
The team collaborates. For the item “The administration team collaborates on school goals,” participants averaged 4.07 (SD = .99) (Table 5, Figure 2). Most participants agreed (154 of 364, 42%) or strongly agreed (139 of 364, 38%) with this statement (Table 6). Response frequencies are provided in Table 6.

Summary of RQ2. Scores were generally high for Work Design, averaging roughly 4.15 (“agree”) on the 1-to-5 scale used. RQ2 results are summarized in Figure 2.

Research Question 3: Capacity Building

RQ3 asked, “What activities do assistant principals identify their principals doing that develop the leadership capacities of the assistant principal?

Participants averaged 3.73 (SD = .87) across the four capacity building items (Table 7). Capacity Building descriptives are displayed in Table 7 and response frequencies for each Capacity Building item are displayed in Table 8.

Discuss growth with principal. For the item “I meet regularly with my principal to discuss my growth as an administrator,” participants averaged 3.13 (SD = 1.23) (Table 7, Figure 3). Most participants agreed (117 of 364, 32%) or disagreed (92 of 364, 25%) with this statement (Table 8). Response frequencies are provided in Table 8.

Access to professional development. For the item “I have access to professional development,” participants averaged 3.90 (SD = 1.07) (Table 7 Figure 3). Most participants agreed (138 of 364, 38%) or strongly agreed (123 of 364, 34%) with this statement (Table 8). Response frequencies are provided in Table 8.

Principal builds leadership. For the item “My principal builds my leadership skills,” participants averaged 3.85 (SD = 1.07) (Table 7, Figure 3). Most participants
Table 7

*Capacity Building Descriptives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss Growth with Principal</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Professional Development</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Builds Leadership</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Encourages New Roles</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

*Capacity Building Response Frequencies by Item*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The manners in which principals build the capacity of assistant principals agreed (136 of 364, 37%) or strongly agreed (121 of 364, 33%) with this statement (Table 8). Response frequencies are provided in Table 8.

**Principal encourages new roles.** For the item “My principal encourages me to take on different roles,” participants averaged 4.05 (SD = 1.03 (Table 7, Figure 3). Most participants agreed (143 of 364, 39%) or strongly agreed (142 of 364, 39%) with this statement (Table 8). Response frequencies are provided in Table 8.

**Summary of RQ3.** Scores were generally average for Capacity Building, averaging 3.73 (“agree”) on the 1-to-5 scale used. RQ3 results are summarized in Figure 3.

**Research Question 4: Positive Work Climate**

RQ4 asked, “To what extent do assistant principals feel their principal promotes a positive work climate for the administrative team?”
Participants averaged 4.0 (SD = .88) across the four work design items (Table 9). Positive Work Climate descriptives are displayed in Table 9 and response frequencies for each Positive Work Climate item are displayed in Table 10.

Table 9

Positive Work Climate Descriptives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust within the Team</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak Openly with Principal</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deal with Internal Conflict</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Contributions</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trust within the team.** For the item “There is a high level of trust within the team,” participants averaged 4.13 (SD = 1.08) (Table 9, Figure 4). Most participants agreed (116 of 364, 32%) or strongly agreed (174 of 364, 47%) with this statement (Table 10). Response frequencies are provided in Table 10.

**Speak openly with principal.** For the item “I speak openly with my principal without fear of repercussion”, participants averaged 4.16 (SD = .88) (Table 9, Figure 4). Most participants agreed (101 of 364, 28%) or strongly agreed (188 of 364, 52%) with this statement (Table 10). Response frequencies are provided in Table 10.

**Deal with internal conflict.** For the item “The administration deals effectively with internal conflicts,” participants averaged 3.79 (SD = 1.06) (Table 9, Figure 4). Most
### Table 10

*Positive Work Climate Response Frequencies by Item*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Trust within the Team</th>
<th>Speak Openly with Principal</th>
<th>Deal with Internal Conflict</th>
<th>Recognize Contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>13 4</td>
<td>18 5</td>
<td>13 4</td>
<td>13 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>26 7</td>
<td>18 5</td>
<td>36 10</td>
<td>22 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>35 10</td>
<td>39 11</td>
<td>64 18</td>
<td>66 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>116 32</td>
<td>101 28</td>
<td>153 42</td>
<td>148 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>174 48</td>
<td>188 52</td>
<td>98 27</td>
<td>115 32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.* The manners in which principals promote a positive work climate.
participants agreed (153 of 364, 42%) or strongly agreed (98 of 364, 27%) with this statement (Table 10). Response frequencies are provided in Table 10.

**Recognize contributions.** For the item “I am recognized for my contributions,” participants averaged 3.91 (SD = 1.03) (Table 9, Figure 4). Most participants agreed (148 of 364, 41%) or strongly agreed (115 of 364, 32%) with this statement (Table 10). Response frequencies are provided in Table 10.

**Summary of RQ4.** Scores were generally high for Positive Work Climate, averaging roughly 4.0 on the 1-to-5 scale used. RQ4 results are summarized in Figure 4.

**Research Question 5: Sense of Team Purpose**

RQ5 asked, “To what extent do assistant principals perceive a sense of teamwork among the administrative team?”

Participants averaged 4.12 (SD = .69) across the four work design items (Table 11). Sense of Team Purpose descriptives are displayed in Table 11 and response frequencies for each Sense of Team Purpose item are displayed in Table 12.

**Role on the team.** For the item “I understand my role on the administration team”, participants averaged 4.43 (SD = .82) (Table 11, Figure 5). Most participants agreed (137 of 364, 38%) or strongly agreed (204 of 364, 56%) with this statement (Table 12). Response frequencies are provided in Table 12.

**Viewed as a team.** For the item “The school views the administrators as a team,” participants averaged 4.07 (SD = .98) (Table 11, Figure 5). Most participants agreed (152 of 364, 42%) or strongly agreed (139 of 364, 38%) with this statement (Table 12). Response frequencies are provided in Table 5.
Table 11

*Sense of Team Purpose Descriptives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role on the Team</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewed as a Team</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Purpose and Goals</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Interdependence</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12

*Sense of Team Purpose Response Frequencies by Item*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Role on the Team</th>
<th>Viewed as a Team</th>
<th>Team Purpose and Goals</th>
<th>Team Interdependence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5. The manners in which principals promote a sense of team purpose.

**Team purpose and goals.** For the item “Our team has a purpose in relation to school goals,” participants averaged 4.21 (SD = .87) (Table 11, Figure 5). Most participants agreed (156 of 364, 43%) or strongly agreed (155 of 364, 43%) with this statement (Table 12). Response frequencies are provided in Table 12.

**Team interdependence.** For the item “The administration team works in an interdependent fashion,” participants averaged 3.78 (SD = 1.07) (Table 11, Figure 5). Most participants agreed (152 of 364, 42%) or strongly agreed (98 of 364, 27%) with this statement (Table 12). Response frequencies are provided in Table 12.

**Summary of RQ5.** Scores were generally high for Positive Work Climate, averaging roughly 4.12 (“agree”) on the 1-to-5 scale used. RQ5 results are summarized in Figure 5.

**Summary of RQ1 – RQ5**

Assistant principals were asked to rate their perceptions of the manners in which their principals distribute leadership within the administrative team. These elements of
distributed leadership included Empowerment, Work Design, Capacity Building, Positive Work Climate, and Sense of Team Purpose.

While ratings were generally similar across elements of distributed leadership, ANOVA revealed significant differences, $F (4,360) = 63.3, p < .0001$. Scores were highest for Work Design and Sense of Team Purpose, while Capacity Building was significantly lower than all other distributed leadership elements ($p < .0001$) (Table 13 and Figure 6).

Table 13

*Summary of Empowerment, Work Design, Capacity Building, Positive Work Climate, and Sense of Team Purpose*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Design</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Work Climate</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Team Purpose</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each sub-scale set of questions ($N = 4$) were measured for internal consistency through a Cronbach Alpha analysis. All sub-scale items measured high for internal consistency (Empowerment = .80, Capacity Building = .78, Work Design = .68, Positive Work Climate = .73, Sense of Team Purpose = .84). When combined across all 20 items, Cronbach’s Alpha = .94.
Figure 6. Summary of empowerment, work design, capacity building, positive work climate, and sense of team purpose.

**Exploratory Analyses**

**Time.** Assistant principals were asked to complete a time analysis of their roles and responsibilities, asking, “On an average day, what % of your day is spent on the following:”

- Discipline (i.e., handling referrals, interventions, etc.)
- Testing (i.e., coordinating state exams, district benchmarks, etc.)
- Supervision (i.e., passing periods, lunch, school events, etc.)
- Administrative (i.e., finances, athletics, master schedule, etc.)
- Instruction (i.e., developing curriculum or professional development, classroom observations, department meetings, etc.)
- Parent or Community Meetings (i.e., conferences, IEPs, parent associations, etc.)
- “Other”
The time survey was set such that each participant’s responses equaled 100%. Figure 7 demonstrates that assistant principals reported that they spent the highest proportion of their time on discipline (23%) followed by administrative work (18%). Equal time was spent on the areas of Supervision and Instruction (17%). Assistant principals spent less time on Parent and Community Meetings (12%) and Testing (10%). The least amount of time was spent doing “other” duties (3%) (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Time allocation of assistant principals (N = 364).

**Time allocation and distributed leadership elements.** Pearson’s correlation (“r”) was used to assess the relationship between Time Allocation components and individual Distributed Leadership Elements, with each participant contributing one Time Allocation score and one Distributed Leadership Element score for each comparison (N = 364). Time spent on discipline negatively correlated with Empowerment (r = -.14, p < .01), such that the more time spent on discipline, the lower the empowerment. Time spent on discipline negatively correlated with Capacity Building (r = -.12, p < .02), such that more time spent on discipline, the lower the capacity building. Time spent on
discipline also negatively correlated with a Positive Work Climate \( (r = - .10, p < .05) \), such that more time spent on discipline, the lower the positive environment perceptions (Table 14).

Table 14

*Correlations Between Time Allocation and Distributed Leadership Elements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Stat</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Meetings</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* E = Empowerment, C = Capacity Building, W = Work Design, P = Positive Work Climate, and T = Sense of Team Purpose.
Time spent on instruction showed a positive correlation with each element of distributed leadership (each p < .05). Time spent on instruction positively correlated with Empowerment (r = +.12, p < .03), such that more time spent on instruction, the higher the empowerment. Time spent on instruction positively correlated with Capacity Building (r = +.12, p < .02), such that greater the time spent on instruction, the higher the capacity building. Time spent on instruction positively correlated with Work Design (r = +.10, p < .05), such that the more time spent on instruction, the greater assistant principal perceptions of principals being more facilitative of their work.

Time spent on instruction positively correlated with Positive Work Climate (r = +.13, p < .01), such that the more time spent on instruction, the higher positive work climate. Finally, time spent on instruction positively correlated with Sense of Team Purpose (r = +.17, p < .001), such that the more time spent on instruction, the stronger the sense of team purpose. Time was not significantly correlated with other elements (p > .05).

**Time allocation and gender differences.** Males (M = 18%, SD = 10%) spent significantly more time on supervision than females (M = 16%, SD = 8%), F (1,362) = 4.78, p < .03. No other significant differences were found between genders in time allocation and (p > .05) (Figure 8).

**Time allocation and years of experience.** Time allocation components were not significantly correlated with years of experience as an assistant principal (each p > .05).

**Time allocation and years on the same team.** Time allocation components were not significantly correlated with years on the same team (each p > .05).
Figure 8. Time allocation by gender.

Time allocation and aspiration. Time allocation components were not significantly correlated with aspirations to be a principal (each \( p > .05 \)).

Time allocation and size of school. The larger the school, the more time assistant principals spent on supervision \( (r = +.11, p < .03) \). No other significant correlations were found between size of school and time allocation (each \( p > .05 \)).

Time allocation and Title I. Schools designated Title I spent a significantly higher percentage of their time on discipline \( (M = 26\%, \ SD = 18\%) \) than non-Title I schools \( (M = 20\%, \ SD = 17\%) \), \( F(1, 362) = 8.30, p < .004 \). Schools designated Title I spent a significantly lower percentage of their time on Parent and Community Meeting \( (M = 11\%, \ SD = 8\%) \) than non-Title I schools \( (M = 13\%, \ SD = 13\%) \), \( F(1, 362) = 8.12, p < .005 \). Percentage of time spent in the area of administrative duties was trended lower in Title I schools \( (M = 17\%, \ SD = 9\%) \) than Non-Title I schools. \( (M = 19\%, \ SD = 12\%) \), but this difference did not achieve statistical significance, \( F(1,362) = 3.86, p = .06 \).
**Time allocation and API.** The higher a school’s Academic Performance Index (API), the lower the time spent in the area of discipline ($r = -0.16, p < 0.002$). No other significant correlations were found between API and time allocation (each $p > 0.05$).

**Years of experience and elements of distributed leadership.** As years of experience increased, assistant principals perceived their principals as providing more Empowerment ($r = +0.15, p < 0.01$), more constructive Work Designs ($r = +0.14, p < 0.01$), a more Positive Work Climate ($r = +0.13, p < 0.01$), and a greater Sense of Team Purpose ($r = +0.14, p < 0.01$).

**Gender and elements of distributed leadership.** Positive Work Climate was significantly higher for males (M = 4.09) than females (M = 3.90), $F (1,362) = 4.40, p < 0.04$. No other significant differences were found between gender and elements of distributed leadership ($p > 0.05$). Figure 9 displays elements of distributed leadership by gender.

**Years on the same team and elements of distributed leadership.** As years on the same team increased, assistant principals perceived their principals providing more constructive work designs ($r = +0.11, p < 0.04$). No other significant correlations were found between years on the same team and elements of distributed leadership ($p > 0.05$).

**Aspiration and elements of distributed leadership.** Participants who indicted the aspiration to be a principal were significantly lower in Positive Work Climate (M = 3.91, SD = 0.93) than participant who did not indicate the aspiration to be a principal (M = 4.14, SD = 0.77), $F (1,362) = 5.87, p < 0.02$. Sense of Team Purpose was somewhat lower in participants who indicted the aspiration to be a principal (M = 4.07, SD = 0.73) than
Figure 9. Gender differences in elements of distributed leadership.

those who did not endorse the aspiration to be a principal (M = 4.21, SD = .63), but this
difference did not achieve statistical significance, F (1,362) = 3.60, p = .06. Other
elements of distributed leadership were similar between aspiration groups (each p > .05).

Size of school and elements of distributed leadership. There were no statistical
significance correlations found between the size of the school and distributed leadership
elements (each p > .05).

Title I and elements of distributed leadership. There was no statistical
significance between Title I designations and distributed leadership elements (each p >
.05).

API and elements of distributed leadership. API did not significantly correlate
with distributed leadership elements (each p > .05).

Summary of exploratory analyses. Assistant principals spend the highest
proportion of their time on discipline, administrative work, supervision, and instruction.
Time spent on discipline negatively correlated with Empowerment, Capacity Building,
and a Positive Work Climate. Time spent on instruction was positively
correlated with Empowerment, Capacity Building, Work Design, Positive Work Climate,
and Sense of Team Purpose. The higher a school’s API, the lower the time spent in the
area of discipline. Larger schools spent more time on supervision than smaller schools.
Title I schools spent significantly more time on discipline and less time on parent and
community meetings. Assistant principals with aspirations to be a principal were lower in
their perceptions of a positive work climate. More years of experience were associated
with more empowerment and more years spent on the same team was associated with
more constructive work designs. Males spent more time on supervision and endorsed a
more positive work climate than females. Time allocation was not significantly
associated with years of experience, years on the same team, or aspirations to be a
principal.

**Summary of Major Findings**

This survey of assistant principals in California revealed that perceptions of
distributed leadership could have statistically significant differences by demographics
and time in regards to the research questions. Some personal profile highlights of the
survey signified that: (a) males and females were divided equally (50%); (b) 33% of the
respondents had 4 – 7 years of experience; (c) 53% spent 2 – 4 with the same team
members; (d) 62% had aspirations to become a principal. School profiles signified that:
(a) 27% of the assistant principals worked in schools with a population size of 2001 –
2500; (b) 52% of the schools did not receive Title I funds; (c) 35% of the schools had an
API over 800.
For research question #1, “How do assistant principals perceive the manner in which their principals empower the work assistant principals do?”, participants averaged 4.08 (SD = 0.84) across the four empowerment items. Correlation analysis (Pearson) revealed that as years of experience increased, assistant principals perceived their principals as providing more empowerment ($r = +.15, p < .01$). Time spent on instruction showed a positive correlation with the empowerment element of distributed leadership (each $p < .05$).

For research question #2, “What work designs do assistant principals identify as facilitative of their work?”, participants averaged 4.15 (SD = .70) across the four work design items. As years on the same team increased, assistant principals perceived their principals providing more constructive work designs ($r = +.11, p < .04$). Time spent on instruction showed a positive correlation with the Work Design element of distributed leadership (each $p < .05$).

For research question #3, “What activities do assistant principals identify their principals doing that develop the leadership capacities of the assistant principal?”, participants averaged 3.73 (SD = .87) across the four work design items. Time spent on instruction showed a positive correlation with the Capacity Building element of distributed leadership (each $p < .05$).

For research question #4, “To what extent do assistant principals feel their principal promotes a positive work climate for the administrative team?”, participants averaged 4.0 (SD = .88) across the four work design items. Positive Work Climate was significantly higher for males ($M = 4.09$) than females ($M = 3.90$) for, $F (1,362) = 4.40$. Participants who indicated the aspiration to be a principal were significantly lower in
Positive Work Climate (M = 3.91, SD = .93) than participants who did not indicate the aspiration to be a principal (M = 4.14, SD = .77), F (1,362) = 5.87, p < .02. Time spent on instruction showed a positive correlation with the Positive Work Climate element of distributed leadership (each p < .05).

For research question #5, “To what extend do assistant principals perceive a sense of team purpose among the administrative team?”, participants averaged 4.12 (SD = .69) across the four work design items. Time spent on instruction showed a positive correlation with the Sense of Team Purpose element of distributed leadership (each p < .05).

Time spent on instruction showed a positive correlation with each element of distributed leadership (each p < .05). Time spent on discipline showed a negative correlation with elements of Empowerment, Capacity Building, and a Positive Work Climate.
CHAPTER 5—DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the distributed leadership practices of high school principals from the perspective of the assistant principals, and to assess how assistant principals allocate their time. Invitations were sent to 2096 California public High Schools to participate in this online survey.

The primary research question was: *How do assistant principals perceive the distribution of leadership among the administrative team?* This included five elements of distributed leadership:

1. How do assistant principals perceive the manner in which their principals empower the work that the assistant principals do?
2. What work designs do assistant principals identify as facilitative of their work?
3. What activities do assistant principals identify their principals doing that develop the leadership capacities of the assistant principal?
4. To what extent do assistant principals feel their principal promotes a positive work climate for the administrative team?
5. To what extent do assistant principals perceive a sense of team purpose among the administrative team?

Additionally, exploratory analyses were conducted to assess how assistant principals allocate their time, and how such time allocation and relevant demographics are related to the five elements of distributed leadership.
This chapter begins with a review of major findings in the context of published literature, followed by the implications of these findings. Limitations of the study and areas for future research are then examined and the chapter then ends with a conclusion.

**Review of Findings in the Context of Published Literature**

**Research Question 1: Empowerment**

Research Question 1 asked, “How do assistant principals perceive the manner in which their principals empower the work assistant principals do?” Participants generally scored high on empowerment, though the scores ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree for the four items of empowerment, indicating wide individual variability.

Empowerment is an important component of distributed leadership because it provides opportunities for principals to engage in meaningful interactions with staff and team members (Mangin, 2007). Principals who empower others can maximize the talents and skills of a staff (Harris, 2004). Additionally, distributed leadership cultivates a culture of growth (Salfi, 2011), and an empowering team environment increases levels of organizational commitment (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Rinehart and Short (2003) also found a positive relationship between teacher empowerment and job satisfaction. More importantly, Sharp (2009) found a positive relationship between empowerment and teacher effectiveness, and Imig, Ndoye, and Parker (n.d.) found that the higher the teacher empowerment, the higher the student achievement.

One component of Empowerment is discussing roles. Most participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that, “I meet with my principal consistently to discuss my roles.” Buttram and Pizzini (2009) found that distributed leadership schools are
higher than non-distributed leadership schools in metrics measuring meeting regularly, deciding roles collectively, and asking teachers to take on leadership roles. Buttram and Pizzini (2009) also noted that staff members knew more about the job duties performed by each member of the team in distributed leadership schools than in non-distributed leadership schools.

To be effective in the empowerment aspect of distributed leadership, a principal should be knowledgeable about the roles of the assistant principal, in order to promote the work of the assistant principal, and to empower them to make decisions on their own. Hall (2008) highlighted the importance of providing praise and recognition to assistant principals. Buttram and Pizzini (2009) found that distributed leadership schools differ from non-distributed leadership schools in more frequently recognizing the contributions of staff and in encouraging and empowering teachers and staff to try out new ideas.

While scores were generally high for empowerment in the present study, 28% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with at least one of the four Empowerment items and 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed with more than one item. This indicates that there is much room for dialogue in terms of the Empowerment element in California public high schools.

Research Question 2: Work Design

Research Question 2 asked, “What work designs do assistant principals identify as facilitative of their work?”

Work Design is essential to a distributed leadership perspective as it guides the manners in which meaningful collaboration can be sustained (Harris, 2008b). Work Design includes meeting regularly with a focused agenda, matching strengths to roles,
and collaborating to meet school goals. Principals can create formal and informal structures in which teams can effectively collaborate. Principals can shift typically hierarchal models to allow leadership to flow from many levels and leaders (Spillane et al., 2001). Principals can also allocate resources such as time and money to provide more collaboration opportunities (Suppovitz & Riggan, 2012). Buttram and Pizzini (2009) found that schools with high levels of distributed leadership practices redesigned work structures that resulted in more engagement with school operations and more pride in school accomplishments (p. 19).

Participants scored higher in work design than other distributed leadership elements. This is important because Buttram and Pizzini (2009) found that teams met more regularly in distributed leadership schools than non-distributed leadership schools. Croft and Morton (1977) found that it is important to match strengths to roles because skilled assistant principals with expertise and administrative ability had higher job satisfaction when tasked with administrative tasks rather than clerical tasks, while Hall (2008) found that job satisfaction increased when assistant principals were given the opportunity to improve the curriculum and create budgets. Duif et al. (2013) found that collaboration was indicative of distributed leadership practice in European schools, while Buttram and Pizzini (2009) found that distributed leadership schools rated higher than non-distributed leadership schools in promoting a culture of collaboration.

**Research Question 3: Capacity Building**

Research Question 3 asked, “What activities do assistant principals identify their principals doing that develop the leadership capacities of the assistant principal?” From a distributed leadership perspective, the Capacity Building element is essential for creating
effective leaders. Effective Capacity Building includes meeting to discuss growth, providing access to professional development, building leadership skills, and encouraging the development of new roles and capacities. A distributed leadership framework calls for leaders to utilize the collective experiences and skillsets of a staff (Harris, 2008b). As leaders share knowledge, the staff builds capacity around best practices for teaching and leadership (Spillane et al., 2003). Professional development is important, and Buttram and Pizzini (2009) noted that distributed leadership schools provided more meaningful professional development than non-distributed leadership schools. Buttram and Pizzini (2009) also found that teachers and staff were more likely to be asked to participate in leadership development activities or share leadership duties in distributed leadership schools than in non-distributed leadership schools. Busch et al. (2012) demonstrated how assistant principals can and do benefit from learning from other assistant principals, which includes the development of leadership skills. Unfortunately, opportunities for professional growth are limited for many assistant principals. However, Kwan and Walker (2012) found that, while limited time and resources constrain the professional development of assistant principals, developing the capacity of assistant principals is important because they form a natural pool for future principal selection.

Participants scored significantly lower in capacity building than in other elements of distributed leadership in the present study. In particular, 25% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “I meet regularly with my principal to discuss my growth as an administrator”. An additional 19% were neutral, so less than half of participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This finding highlights the
need for California High School Principals to meet regularly with their assistant principals to discuss capacity building and their growth as administrators and leaders.

**Research Question 4: Positive Work Climate**

Research Question 4 asked, “To what extent do assistant principals feel their principal promotes a positive work climate for the administrative team?” A positive work climate includes trust, the freedom to speak openly without repercussion, dealing effectively with conflicts, and providing recognition for contributions.

A distributed leadership framework promotes a positive work climate through trust and empowerment (Tschannen-Moran, 2004), because leaders feel entrusted to take initiative to move a school forward. A positive work climate promotes stronger communication and collaboration between team members. A positive work climate is a conduit that allows leadership opportunities to flourish (Smylie et al., 2007).

Smylie et al. (2007) emphasized that trust is the foundation for the development of distributed leadership and distributed leaders. Building on a foundation of trust, Suppovitz and Riggan (2012) found that teams that operated in a distributed leadership framework deepened relationships and developed their own mission and identity. Further, Buttram and Pizzini (2009) found that distributed leadership schools were rated higher than non-distributed leadership schools in creating a culture of trust. Buttram and Pizzini (2009) also found that teachers did not fear reprisal for trying out new ideas or stating their opinions in distributed leadership schools as compared to non-distributed leadership schools. Avoiding and mediating conflict is also important to a positive work
environment, as Hall (2008) found that positive work relationships contribute to job satisfaction in assistant principals.

Among Positive Work Climate items in the present study, the lowest degree of agreement was found for the item, “I am recognized for my contributions.” Arrowsmith (2007) found that recognition is an important component of a positive distributed leadership work climate, because trust and recognition reinforce each other in distributed leadership schools. DeFlaminis (2011) emphasized how recognition of their contributions makes leaders feel valued, which contributes to the perceptions of a positive work climate. Therefore, it is important for principals to recognize the contributions of assistant principals if they are to move towards fostering a positive work climate in California public high schools.

**Research Question 5: Sense of Team Purpose**

Research Question 5 asked, “To what extent do assistant principals perceive a sense of team purpose among the administrative team?” Distributed Leadership works best when there is a Sense of Team Purpose. Sense of Team Purpose includes role clarity, viewing administration as a team, having team goals, and working in an interdependent fashion.

A distributed leadership perspective invites principals to move beyond solo leadership and entrust others to help lead a school (Danley, 1979). Teams can blend the talents of the group to more quickly address school goals and respond to changes in a more efficient manner (Katzenbach, 1997). Such teams represent many of the collective goals and beliefs of various groups (Lindsay, 2004). Hulpia (2009) suggested that a
“leadership team is characterized by cohesion, communication, participation, unity and shared values” (p. 176).

Distributed leadership promotes the sharing of leadership practices across many different levels. At schools sites, leadership opportunities can exist within many types of teams (e.g., Grade Level Teams, Faculty Advisory Committee, etc.). A strong Sense of Team Purpose promotes influence at many levels and with many types of individuals. Buttram and Pizzini (2009) found that distributed leadership schools were rated higher than non-distributed leadership schools in explaining responsibilities for leadership activities.

Hackman (2002) stressed the importance of both interdependence and of having a compelling vision for the team’s purpose. Lindsay (2004) suggested that “an administrative team must embody the positive ideals of its school’s vision through its public statements and its private conference-room behaviors” (p. 36), while Danley (1979) concluded that interdependence strengthened the team concept. According to Katzenbach (1997), “With shared leadership, teams enjoy greater amounts of collaboration, coordination, cooperation, and innovation and are better able to interpret group needs such as task interdependence and coordination” (p. 334).

While participants in the present study had the highest level of agreement with the statement, “I understand my role on the administration team,” they had the lowest level of agreement with the statement, “The administration team works in an interdependent fashion.” These findings suggest that roles are clear, but that California public high school principals have much room for improvement in promoting a Sense of Team Purpose through interdependence.
Exploratory Analyses in the Context of the Published Literature

Time Allocation

Assistant principals in the present study reported that they spent the highest proportion of their time on discipline. This finding was consistent with Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, and Donaldson (2002) who found that student management occupied most of the time of the assistant principal. Similarly, Scott (2011) found that the most time consuming tasks for assistant principals were discipline and student management, to the detriment of other important roles, like instructional leadership. This present study’s results are also consistent with Glanz (1994), who found that assistant principals spent most of their time on discipline and supervisory work, and consistent with Sun (2012), who also found that assistant principals spend more time on discipline than on other important roles, like instruction. In the present study, the greater the time allocated for discipline, the lower the amount of time allocated for instruction.

Time Allocation and Distributed Leadership Elements

In the present study, it was shown that the more time assistant principals spent on discipline, the lower their endorsement of Empowerment, Capacity Building, and Positive Work Climate. In contrast, the greater the amount of time allocated for instruction, the greater the endorsement of all measured distributed leadership elements: Empowerment, Work Design, Capacity Building, Positive Work Climate, and Sense of Team Purpose. These findings suggest that time that assistant principals could spend on instruction is being consumed by tasks related to discipline.
Gender

Male and female assistant principals were generally similar in elements of distributed leadership and in time allocation. Male assistant principals spent more time on discipline, yet had higher scores for Positive Work Climate, but no other gender differences were detected. Similarly, Scott (2011) found no gender differences in task expectations among assistant principals, while Hall (2008) found no gender differences in job satisfaction or career aspirations across elementary school, middle school, and high school assistant principals, and Vlachadi and Ferla (2013) found no gender differences in perceptions of shared responsibility and distributed leadership in Greek primary, secondary and high schools. In contrast, Duif et al. (2013) found that in European schools, females tended to perceive leadership practices as being more distributive than males. While these studies provide mixed results, present findings indicate that male and female assistant principals may be generally similar in distributed leadership elements and in terms of time allocation, but that more research will be needed to determine why male assistant principals may spend more time on discipline tasks and may have a somewhat higher sense of a Positive Work Climate.

Years of Experience

Assistant Principals with more years of experience perceived their principals as providing more empowerment, more constructive work designs, a more positive work climate, and a greater sense of team purpose. While Scott (2011) found no relationship between years of experience and job expectations or job performance, Vlachadi and Ferla (2013) found a positive relationship between years of experience and perceptions of shared responsibility in primary, secondary and high schools in Greece, and Duif et al.
(2013) found that, in European schools, as experience increased, the perception of leadership being distributed increased.

**Size of School**

In this research, a positive correlation was found between the size of a school and the time spent on discipline. As assistant principals spent more time on discipline, measures of the elements of distributed leadership decreased. Large schools present a myriad of challenges in terms of student management. Assistant principals are expected to take a more active role in discipline than other areas. Scott (2011) found similar results: the assistant principals in his study spent more time on student management as the school size increased. Duif et al. (2013) in their analysis of distributed leadership in European schools found that the larger the school, the lower the perception of leadership as being distributed (p. 39). It might prove to be too difficult to decrease discipline duties in larger schools. Principals may consider work design strategies that allows for assistant principals to at least have focused time during the day to attend to instructional activities.

**General Discussion**

From the research of the assistant principal and distributed leadership elements, a number of intriguing discoveries emerged. The most poignant of these discoveries is the need for more dialogue and research regarding the conditions that can maximize the capacities of the assistant principal so that they may better serve a school community.

**Relationship with the Principal**

While this study focused on the perceptions of assistant principals and distributed leadership, it is important to highlight the role of the principal. In his research of the assistant principal and preparation for the principalship, Hall (2008) found that assistant
principals were most influenced by the principal with whom they work. Hall asserts that more emphasis should be placed on collaboration efforts between the principal and assistant principal to ensure stronger capacity for future principals who usually come from the assistant principal pool. Hoffman (2013) found that principals engaged in over 43 responsibilities. A need for distributed leadership practice allows for principals to not only meet the needs of their job, but to maximize the capabilities of the administrative team members. Often, principals are reluctant to distribute leadership responsibilities. As indicated in the data analyses, the area of capacity building rated out as the lowest priority as perceived by assistant principals concerning their principals. As assistant principals prepare to become principals, it would be prudent for assistant principals to gain valuable insights and mentoring from the principal. Madden (2008) revealed that the tasks that assistant principals perform do not adequately prepare them for the myriad of responsibilities that the principalship requires. Future research should review how principals might use a distributed leadership perspective to better build the capacity of assistant principals in preparation for them to become effective principals.

**Team Concept**

A dearth of literature exists on the concept of administrative teams. The literature review focused primarily on business models for building teams and rating their effectiveness. Using a business model to understand administrative teams presents a number of challenges. As revealed in the demographic data, many administrative teams rarely stay together longer than five years and in many cases, administrative teams are formed through district placements without consideration for team member strengths and relationships that have been built. Principals are rarely trained to actually focus on the
concept of the administrative team. Instead, delegation tends to occur with principals assigning work to the assistant principal that may or may not match the strengths of the individual.

From a distributed perspective, leadership is dispersed through the interaction of the principal and assistant principals. These interactions can result in assistant principals feeling empowered, building skills sets, and operating in a positive work climate. The data analyses for Sense of Team Purpose revealed that assistant principals identified strongly with elements of teamwork. However, no question was developed to discuss the actual effectiveness of the team. A metric for team effectiveness could include school data such as student achievement and school climate improvement. Team effectiveness can also be discussed in terms of overall team and individual efficacy. Members can be surveyed to rate their growth on agreed goals or competencies. Team members can also review work design and create new structures to support more time allocation toward school priorities.

**Roles and Responsibilities of the Assistant Principal**

The roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal do not actually maximize the position. Assistant principals are still mired in the work of discipline and student management more so than other areas such as instruction and curriculum. To maximize the potential of the assistant principal position, consideration must be taken of the manners in which assistant principals spend their time. Principals need to consider new ways to examine the administrative team and create a work design that allows for assistant principals to spend more time in areas such as instruction. Building on distributed leadership practices, principals can draw on a framework that allows for
assistant principals to collaborate and contribute more effectively. At the heart of a distributed leadership practice is interaction. Principals should interact more frequently with assistant principals to garner more ideas that facilitate the work of an administrative team. In redesigning the administrative team’s roles and responsibilities, the principal may shift their attention to connecting school goals or results with the work of the team. Discussions can occur on a consistent basis to shape the team member’s strengths towards certain school goals based on data. Additionally, assistant principals can use a distributed leadership framework to work in a collaborative manner with stakeholders.

**Implications**

A number of implications arose from the study of the assistant principals around perceptions of distributed leadership practices which suggest that assistant principals are yearning for leadership opportunities that allow them to engage in more meaningful and impactful activities. Furthermore, if principals can maximize the roles and responsibilities of their assistant principals, then the administrative team as a whole can exert stronger influence over school culture and student achievement.

**Capacity Building**

The research indicated that assistant principals rated principals lowest in the distributed leadership area of capacity building. As a majority of assistant principals (62%) indicated in this research that they aspire to become principals, it makes sense that they would seek or welcome opportunities to practice leadership skills that would prepare them for the principalship. Assistant principals form a natural pool from which to select
future principals. Yet without proper leadership experience and mentoring, the assistant principal may lack the tools to thrive as a principal.

In an effort to create stronger assistant principals and future principals, current principals may consider developing strategies to build the capacity of assistant principals. Principals can focus on interactions that facilitate more instructional leadership knowledge and experience. A focus on capacity building ultimately paves the way for principals to focus on leadership practices that better serve teachers and students. Principals can use a distributed perspective to coach assistant principals and provide them with meaningful tasks. Assistant principals who maximize their talents and feel that their work matches their expertise are more satisfied with the job. This important finding is further discussed in the Areas for Future Research section later in this chapter.

**Time Allocation and Discipline**

Research indicated that time spent on discipline had a negative correlation with empowerment, capacity building, and positive work climate. In addition, Title I schools spent significantly more time on discipline than other schools.

**Empowerment.** The research indicated that assistant principals spent a majority of their time in the area of student discipline. Spending more time in discipline showed a negative correlation with empowerment such that the more time they spent on discipline, the less empowered they felt. Assistant principals are still spending an inordinate amount of time in student management. If assistant principals spend a large proportion of their time in discipline, they start to lack opportunities to do more meaningful work in the areas of instruction. Assistant principals may begin to feel that their work does not match their expertise. Principals could consider alternatives for releasing assistant principals
from minor discipline issues. Principals could engage teachers and counselors in strategies that can mitigate minor issues. Freeing up the assistant principal’s time from discipline allows the principal to empower the position of the assistant principal as one that can focus on other aspects of school leadership. Issues regarding restructuring the assistant principal position are discussed in the Areas for Future Research section later in this chapter.

**Capacity building.** Spending more time in the area of discipline showed a negative correlation with capacity building such that the more time they spent on discipline, the less opportunities for professional development arose. Without professional development, the assistant principal can become underprepared for a variety of tasks and responsibilities. Preparation for the principalship is minimized. As with all educational roles, the assistant principal needs access to opportunities to maximize his/her talents and strengths to better serve teachers, students, and the community. Principals can help build the capacity of assistant principals through mentoring opportunities and developing protocols or alternatives for student discipline management. Freeing up the assistant principal’s time for professional development builds a stronger administrator who can better serve the school community.

**Positive work climate.** Spending more time in the area of discipline showed a negative correlation with Positive Work Climate such that the more time spent on discipline, the less likely it is that an assistant principal feels that their work climate is positive. Spending a vast amount of time on discipline can be mentally draining. It can require assistant principals to engage in long investigations, or in trying to calm upset students and/or parents. Assistant principals are left feeling that they way they spend
their time is not matching their talents or training. Instead, the more time they spend on the discipline issues, the less time they have on other job responsibilities. When students view an assistant principal primarily as a disciplinarian, the assistant principal may not feel like a part of the school community. A negative image of the position develops regarding administrative roles and responsibilities. Ultimately, assistant principals can burn out by spending too much of their time on discipline and neglecting other job responsibilities. Principals can utilize a distributed perspective to share the load of discipline with other members of the school such as counselors and teacher teams. Mitigating the time spent on discipline can increase an assistant principal’s positive outlook on his/her job and work climate.

**Title I schools.** Schools designated Title I were found to spend more time than other types of schools in the area of discipline. If assistant principals in these schools are spending even more time in the area of discipline, other leadership opportunities that can propel the school forward may be neglected. Principals can consider allocating Title I funds for stronger intervention programs for students at risk. Many students in Title I schools face pressing issues of poverty such as nutrition, hygiene, and lack of parental support. Assistant principals can be a vital asset in bridging these gaps by being involved in community leadership programs and bringing more resources to the school. These interventions might curb many discipline issues. Title I schools often carry the perception of being “bad” schools because of safety concerns. Yet here, instead of focusing on discipline in a reactive manner, discipline issues could be mitigated through the leadership efforts of assistant principals. Assistant principals can exert influence by
creating more meaningful intervention strategies and focusing on instructional leadership that promotes more engagement in the classroom.

**Time Allocation and Instruction**

Research indicated that time spent on instruction had a positive correlation with every distributed leadership element.

**Empowerment.** When assistant principals focus their attention toward instructional leadership, they are empowered by tasks that match their expertise. Assistant principals can develop skills that impact teaching and learning. They are empowered to make decisions that positively affect student achievement. When assistant principals are viewed as instructional leaders, they are empowered as valuable allies for teachers and community members.

**Work design.** Assistant principals must negotiate work experiences and structures that facilitate their strengths and talents. In spending more time on instruction, assistant principals seek collaboration efforts with teachers and other instructional leaders. These collaborative efforts focus on resources and professional development that improves teaching and learning. Assistant principals are able to work within a structure that promotes their ability to support teaching and learning.

**Capacity building.** As assistant principals seek more meaningful leadership experiences in the area of instruction, they will require professional development that builds skillsets supportive of teaching and learning. Assistant principals could engage in professional learning communities to better develop their skills and gain an understanding of teacher needs. Principals need to consider devoting more time and resources toward developing the assistant principal as an instructional leader. Building
the capacity of the assistant principal could lead to more capacity building opportunities for teachers. With an improved instructional pedagogy, assistant principals can contribute or lead professional development for teachers.

**Positive work climate.** Spending more time in the area of instruction expands the influence of the assistant principal. As a viable source for professional development and advocacy, assistant principals thrive in a setting that recognizes their talents and contributions. Creating a Positive Work Climate for assistant principals can increase work output and overall job satisfaction. Principals can facilitate more opportunities for the assistant principal to engage in instructional leadership that includes liaison work with departments, leading professional development opportunities, and evaluating curriculum programs. A Positive Work Climate is essential for the growth of the assistant principal and the administrative team.

**Sense of team purpose.** As assistant principals focus more on instruction, the administrative team is viewed in an increasingly positive light. Assistant principals begin to align their talents and resources toward meeting achievement goals for all students. The administrative team develops a stronger sense of team purpose as their work impacts teaching and learning. The administrative team can supply resources and advocacy for teacher projects and professional learning communities. Assistant principals become engaged and part of an important process. Feeling fulfilled, assistant principals become more satisfied with their roles and responsibilities. As a team, principals and assistant principals are unified in improving instruction.
Maintaining the Team

The research indicated a positive correlation between the amount of years of experience assistant principals garner and stronger perceptions of empowerment, work design, positive climate, and sense of team purpose. As assistant principals become more adept in their roles and responsibilities, they are able to create a comfort zone for work productivity. Principals could utilize a distributed perspective to motivate and mentor assistant principals. As assistant principals feel satisfied with their job duties, they are more likely to stay in their positions. In retaining assistant principals who feel value in their work, principals are building stronger candidates for future principals. This research highlights the need for district leadership to provide ongoing professional development and support to foster the growth of the assistant principal. Assistant principals need time to mature and expand their skillsets. With support and mentoring in a distributed leadership framework, assistant principals could with experience become stronger leaders for their communities.

The research did show that as assistant principals become more experienced, there is a negative correlation with capacity building. Perhaps as assistant principals mature, they do not feel the need for more professional development or their principals do not afford these opportunities in light of experience. Assistant principals could plateau if not given opportunities to explore new theories and practices. Principals need to assume that all assistant principals regardless of experience still have areas ripe for improvement.

The research also indicated a positive correlation between years of experience on the same team and work design. A Sense of Team Purpose forms over time. Work design that matches the strengths of the assistant principals could motivate them to stay
and be productive on the same team. A distributed leadership framework empowers assistant principals to take on meaningful work that could increase job satisfaction. Principals who cultivate an atmosphere of teamwork can create assistant principals who produce influential programs and projects. It is critical for administrative teams to stay together in order to build individual and group efficacy.

**Gender**

The research indicated no major differences in perceptions of distributed leadership across genders. Principals should not differentiate roles and responsibilities based on gender. Maintaining equity provides administrative teams with diverse perspectives and talents.

**Aspiration**

The research indicated a negative correlation between assistant principals who aspire to become a principal and their perception of a positive work climate and a sense of team purpose. Perhaps assistant principals who aspire to become principals are seen as wanting to “climb the ladder” and are not fully present in their current role. If they are perceived as looking down on the assistant principal position, there could be tension within the team. While it would seem that principals would want to foster the growth of these assistant principals, they may feel threatened that their job is being sought after. From a distributed perspective, principals could engage aspiring principals in more satisfying roles and responsibilities to show the value of the assistant principal position. Principals should identify and pay special attention to understanding the needs of aspiring assistant principals.
**Research Implications**

Using a survey methodology was a relatively easy format that revealed important leadership practices and issues for assistant principals. The research implies that principals can help add more depth and value to the assistant principal’s role by creating more opportunities to engage in instructional practice rather than discipline. The current research on the assistant principal showed that a majority of their time is still being spent on student management. More time needs to be spent understanding the perceptions of the principal and how he/she engages assistant principals through mentoring and professional development opportunities. Finally, the research also implies that administrative teams need to be cultivated. Are principals prepared to take on this challenge? How can principals evaluate the effectiveness of their team? The future of the principalship is tied to the future of current assistant principals. Distributed leadership has shown promise in elevating the status of the assistant principal and the team. Identifying administrative teams with high levels of distributed leadership elements could provide future researchers with the tools and perspectives needed for maximizing the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals.

**Limitations**

This research project on assistant principals and distributed leadership involved several limitations. In light of multiple analyses models used to interpret data, consideration must be taken of the sample, measures, and design this study used.

**Limitations of Sample**

The survey was limited by sample size. Only high school assistant principals from California were invited to participate in this research. The views of principals,
district office personnel, parents, and teachers were all excluded in this survey. Duif et al. (2013) in their analysis of distributed leadership in European schools found that “school leaders believe significantly stronger than teachers that leadership practice is distributive and also perceive a stronger distributive behavior among their professionals at school” (p. 33). The roles and responsibilities of assistant principals may vary between primary and middle school levels as well as from state to state. Tashi (2013) found that there were no statistically significant differences in grade levels with shared responsibilities in Bhutanese schools. Private and specialized schools (pathways, continuation, charters, magnet, schools within schools) were also excluded. Information on these types of schools might reveal different work structures or increased/decreased roles and responsibilities for the assistant principal. Also, high schools exist which have developed co-principal models that have changed the role of or negated the need for assistant principals. Others have hired deans who are in charge of discipline issues freeing up the assistant principal. Identifying these schools could provide strong opportunities for comparison. Global consideration could produce even stronger elements of discussion based on multiple models of the administrative team and assistant principal equivalents from different nations. Duif et al. (2013) in their analysis of distributed leadership in European schools found vastly different perspectives on distributed leadership across European countries (p. 37).

Of the 2096 surveys disseminated, 364 respondents sufficiently completed the survey for a return rate of 18%. While 18% represents a reasonable number of participants to draw data from, what is not evident whether the participants are truly representative of the overall assistant principal demographics of California (% of women,
years of experience, size of school, etc.). It is difficult to ascertain whether the data that the researcher did not have might be more a representative sample. In addition, the demographic information regarding the assistant principal’s race was excluded. Perceptions of leadership opportunities and support might differ by one’s racial background.

The researcher utilized Market Data Retrieval system to collect emails for high school assistant principals in California. The email results were collected at that moment in time and does not account for new assistant principals added or those who recently left the job. It is highly possible that this list is not exhaustive of all assistant principals in California.

In regards to the administrative team concept, the researcher was not privy to how many participants (if multiple assistant principals exist at the school site) completed the survey from each school. Depending on one’s roles and responsibilities, assistant principals could have completely different responses to the survey. In Kwan and Walker’s (2012) study of responsibilities of assistant principals in Hong Kong and their level of job satisfaction, the researchers list over 60 responsibilities that assistant principals might participate in on a regular basis. The responsibilities were coalesced into seven overarching categories: External Communication and Connection, Quality Assurance and Accountability, Teaching (Learning and Curriculum), Staff Management, Resource Management, Leader and Teacher Growth and Development, and Strategic Direction and Policy Environment (pp. 76-77). If the survey was specified toward similar categories, assistant principals might report a stronger or lower sense of team purpose depending on assignment of responsibilities.
This survey was conducted for the current setting of the participants. As one cohort, a longitudinal study could reveal the development of the assistant principal. The data as interpreted represents the current perceptions of the assistant principal in regarding distributed leadership practices. There is no information about past or future trends for the survey questions.

**Limitation of Measures**

This survey was limited by the measurements it used being constrained to five sub-categories with four questions each. One measure per construct might not be conceptualized in the same manner that others would view it. The use of four questions limits the breadth and depth of each category. Additionally, the Likert-scale allowed for a spectrum of only “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Furthermore, using only one measurement device (a single survey) to capture the data limits the data analyses for triangulation purposes. The researcher did not ask open-ended questions that would have provided further insights or garner feedback on what might participants might need from principals to maximize their position’s potential. Also, several questions were designed to explore the concept of time in relation to developing capacity and sense of team. Stronger questions and/or descriptors could have been developed to articulate what is meant by terms such as “consistent” or “regularly” to maintain consistency in responses.

The use of surveys limits all participants to self-reporting data. There is no objective third party measure. The responses could be biased for a variety of reasons. Some might be more perceptive of the principal distributing leadership. Others might be on an expedited track to the principalship and might seek more coaching opportunities from the principal. In some cases, a principal may distribute leadership to assistant
principals with more experience or a stronger leadership background.

Additionally, the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal vary with some focusing mainly on instruction.

Self-reported data might also vary depending on the course of events during the day or week and the time when the participants completed the survey. Pressing issues might influence participants to rush through the survey or a challenging event might change the perception of the role of the assistant principal for that time period.

Participants were asked to respond to the survey according to their current position. Given that the survey was disseminated in the beginning of the year, some assistant principals may have received or been relieved of certain roles and responsibilities. Assistant principals who are new to the position may not have enough experience to fully respond to or even understand the questions.

**Limitations of Design**

The survey was limited by design. The survey was disseminated at the beginning of the school year using an electronic survey program (Qualtrics). Surveys were emailed to the participants’ school email addresses. It is possible that many of the participants were not able to access the survey due to school filters on electronic devices. Additionally, the timing of the survey dissemination may have conflicted with the priorities of the assistant principal for the beginning of the year. Some of the assistant principals may have been wary of the authenticity of the email survey and fearful of a computer virus.

A cross section for types of professional development or leadership preparation programs would elucidate the effects of these capacity-building opportunities. A before
and after study would reveal the manners in which assistant principals could maximize their time usage and increase opportunities for leadership.

A longitudinal approach could show the growth of the assistant principal over time and reveal the manners in which they perceive the distribution of leadership over time. While perceptions of distributed leadership might increase simply due to time, information could be added to the research design to highlight specific new practices or interactions with the administrative team that facilitated the assistant principals’ growth.

This survey was intended to reveal perceptions of assistant principals concerning the manners in which their principals distribute leadership. It did not reveal whether assistant principals or even schools actually benefitted from a distributed leadership model. There are no measures for outcomes such as job satisfaction, student data (achievement, discipline, etc.), or future goals. Perception data could have also included how assistant principals would distribute leadership if they were the principal.

The study was also limited by the concept of work design. Specific statements about the actual structure of the position and its roles and responsibilities were not clearly outlined. The statements did not take into account other issues such as work flow and job satisfaction.

Areas of Future Research

The results of the survey and subsequent data analyses offer multiple opportunities to add to the dialogue of the assistant principal. Specifically, when analyzing the concept of distributed leadership, there were several areas in which the researcher concluded that further research could show the positive impact of this framework on the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal.
**Replication**

To increase the opportunity for stronger and more diverse points of analyses, the researcher concluded that several changes would augment the quality of the results. Future research should include a larger, more diverse sample that includes different grade levels, private schools, different states and countries. Additionally, future research could include multiple measurement constructs that incorporate open-ended questions. A longitudinal study could reveal the evolution of assistant principals’ perceptions of leadership as they mature and take on new responsibilities or work for new principals.

**Effects of Leadership Programs**

There are multiple ways in which assistant principals obtain their administrative credentials. In addition, there are multiple ways in which their leadership capacities develop. Future research on the assistant principal and distributed leadership could include comparison studies on different participants’ preparation programs. For example, such a comparison study could include assistant principals who attended a university program compared with those who opted to test for the credential. Additionally, comparison groups could include the amount and types of professional development opportunities that assistant principals could access over the year or have accessed in the past. Principals’ perception for distributing leadership could vary depending on programs and professional development.

In reviewing preparation programs, research could also include their impact on school outcomes such as graduation rates, state exams, and reduction in absenteeism.
Identifying programs that produce effective principals could add depth to the study of distributed leadership practice and its development as part of a formal training program.

**Teamwork**

While there is more research developing in terms of the assistant principal, there is a scarcity of research on the administrative team concept. Results of this study revealed that teams rarely worked together beyond five years. Assistant principals may leave the team for other opportunities, may be reassigned to other schools, or may be removed from the position. For the time that teams do exist with the same members, future research could assess the sense of team purpose by surveying how members rate each other and the team. Using team surveys from the business world, research could also measure perceptions of effectiveness using objectives such as school achievement and climate (discipline, sense of belonging, etc.) data. Future research could also focus on how the principal uses this data to reassess and possibly, redesign the roles of the assistant principals to improve team dynamics and maximize the roles and responsibilities of team members.

**Job Satisfaction and Retention**

Future research is needed to determine how distributed leadership might mitigate the factors that drive down job satisfaction and retention. Assistant principal roles and responsibilities are correlated with job satisfaction and retention (Black, 1980; Calabrese, 1991; Cantwell, 1993; Harvey, 1994b; Koru, 1993; Norton & Kriekard, 1987; Oleszewski et al. 2011; Panyako & Rorie, 1987; Potter, 1980; Rodrick, 1986; Williams, 1995). Kaplan and Owings (1999) showed that shared-leadership increased job
satisfaction and professional growth. Croft and Morton (1977) found that the highest degree of satisfaction was in the performance of duties that required a higher degree of expertise and administrative ability, as opposed to clerical-related duties. As they reported, “Satisfaction, therefore, becomes a function of the degree of skill and ability which is perceived in the performance of a task by an assistant principal” (p. 57). Perception data could be added to this survey to include specific items about job satisfaction and retention, towards the goal of employing distributed leadership principles in a manner that strengthens the job satisfaction and retention of quality assistant principals.

**Impact of Distributed Leadership Practice on the Staff**

Distributed leadership has been studied extensively at the teacher level. The studies suggest that building the capacity of teachers for leadership increases student achievement and sense of purpose for teachers. In developing distributed leadership practices within the administrative team, future research could focus on how assistant principals within these teams impact teacher effectiveness in the classroom. Future research could also delve into the manners in which assistant principals develop their own abilities to distribute leadership in a meaningful fashion among staff leadership groups (e.g., faculty advisories, department chairs, etc.).

**Restructuring the Assistant Principal Position**

Future research is needed to determine the optimal restructuring of the assistant principal position. Instruction time was significantly, positively correlated with each element of distributed leadership in this study, such that the greater the amount of time assistant principals spent on instruction, the higher the distributed leadership scores in
empowerment, work design, capacity building, positive work environment, and sense of team purpose. In contrast, the more time spent on discipline, the lower the scores for the distributed leadership elements of empowerment, capacity building, and positive work environment.

These findings were consistent with two decades of research that suggested that the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principals need to be reexamined and restructured to include more instructional leadership opportunities and support (Glanz, 1994; Harvey, 1994b; Sun, 2012; Williams, 1995). As Kaplan and Owings (1999) suggested, “Assistant Principals can effectively share instructional leadership roles to increase a school’s success as a learning organization for students and educators” (p. 80), but would “need principals who want leadership partnerships, who will mentor and support the AP’s professional growth, and who are willing to restructure the school administration to make shared instructional leadership happen to benefit student achievement” (p. 82).

Restructuring the assistant principal position to include a greater instructional role and more instruction time could provide more opportunities to utilize assistant principal strengths and abilities to work closely with teachers and students towards fostering student achievement. Additionally, the assistant principal position could be restructured to create stronger and more frequent interaction opportunities with the school principal. These interactions could provide assistant principals with meaningful mentoring and professional development. A distributed perspective promotes the idea that assistant principals can work alongside principals to promote teacher development and student achievement.
The restructuring process may require a shift in the perspective of the principals in regards to the traditional roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal. The restructured assistant principal position could be personalized to include more instructional leadership roles in such a way that each assistant principal could engage in work that maximizes their strengths and individual development. To optimize the restructured role of the assistant principal, the excessive time assistant principals spend on discipline needs to be examined.

Research consistently indicates that assistant principals spend a significant amount of their time in the area of discipline (Austin & Brown, 1970; Glanz, 1994; Harvey, 1994b; Shoho et al., 2012; Sun, 2012). Other research indicates that assistant principals are seeking more impactful roles and responsibilities that stretch beyond student management (Glanz, 1994; Harvey, 1994b; Sun, 2012; Williams, 1995). Assistant principals spent more time on discipline than on instruction in the present study. Further, as discipline time increased, elements of distributed leadership decreased. Thus, assistant principals were not maximizing their skills to promote instructional leadership practice that could ultimately result in student achievement.

Therefore, future research is needed to determine how the role of the assistant principal could be shifted away from discipline and towards spending more time on instruction. For example, a restructured role for the assistant principal could include strategies to utilize other resources, such as teachers or counselors, to address discipline issues, thus freeing up the assistant principal to provide instruction. It is also possible to hire student management deans to handle school discipline, relieving the teachers and
other areas of administration, including principals and assistant principals, from the responsibility and time consuming aspects of enforcing school discipline.

Lastly, to optimally restructure the assistant principal position, it will be crucial to incorporate feedback into the restructuring interventions. In addition to striving towards an assistant principal role that emphasizes instruction and minimizes time spent on discipline, it is important to determine how these changes might impact the job satisfaction of assistant principals and the academic achievement levels of students. For a restructuring effort to optimize the role of the assistant principal to be fully effective, the primary beneficiary should be empirical improvements in student achievement, because the most important role of the assistant principal is ultimately to foster student achievement.

**Conclusion**

The results of this research suggest that assistant principals are ready for expanded leadership roles. Assistant principals are seeking more opportunities to exert influence in the areas of instruction, curriculum, and school climate. If assistant principals are expected to take on these roles, principals and district leaders need to provide meaningful professional development to maximize their strengths and talents through positive interactions with the principal. By using a distributed leadership perspective, principals can redesign the traditional roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal.

A distributed perspective allows for assistant principals to develop stronger leadership experiences in conjunction with the principal. While assistant principals in this research for the most part perceived that their principals practiced distributed leadership
elements, many assistant principals still spent a significant amount of time in the area of discipline. This focus on discipline creates fewer opportunities for more impactful work. Principals can facilitate the work design of assistant principals and allow them to take on more instructional leadership roles. Time spent on instruction had a positive correlation with Empowerment, Work Design, Capacity Building, Positive Work Climate, and Sense of Team Purpose. If assistant principals are given more opportunities to access these elements of distributed leadership, they may develop the skills to distribute leadership to other staff members. The distribution of leadership allows for a school to fully access the talents and ideas of all of its members.

Assistant principals are ready to take on the mantle of shared leadership. Distributed leadership offers a framework in which the work of the assistant principal is valued, developed, and promoted. Combined, the results of the present study demonstrate the importance of distributed leadership and time allocation in high school assistant principals.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

Qualtrics Survey Design
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study:

Distributed Leadership and the Concept of Team:

Perceptions of the Assistant Principal

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ricardo Cooke, Doctoral Candidate enrolled in the Educational Leadership Department at San Diego State University. You are invited to participate in this research project because you are an assistant principal in California who is part of an administrative team.

The purpose of this research project is to conduct an investigation utilizing a survey methodology to analyze how assistant principals perceive how principals distribute leadership within the administration team.

The procedure involves completing an online survey that will take approximately 11 minutes. As this is an online survey, participants can complete the survey in the location of his/her choice. Your responses will be confidential and we do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address.

The questions presented in the survey are focused on acquiring data about your views regarding the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal within a team concept. Your responses will be analyzed in relation to aggregated demographic information.

Data gathered about your responses will be completely confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you or your place of
work. Survey results will be aggregated, and no individual respondents will be identified. The results of this study will be used solely for scholarly purposes only.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or skip any question that you are not comfortable in answering. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time while taking the survey. Completing this survey will contribute to the research on the assistant principal. If you have any questions or concerns about the research study, please contact Ricardo Cooke at (619) 204-1656 or ricardo.cooke@gmail.com. You may contact the IRB for questions or concerns regarding this study at 619-594-6622 or e-mail at irb@mail.sdsu.edu.

Clicking on the “agree” button below indicates that:

- You have read the above information.
- You have voluntarily agreed to participate.
- You are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the “disagree” button.

Demographics

Personal

Gender:  M or F

Years of Experience as an Assistant Principal:  0-3  4-7  8-10  11+

Years on the team w/ the same Principal:  0-1  2-4  5-6  7+

Aspiration to be a Principal? Yes, Undecided, No
On an average day, approximately what % of your day is spent on the following:

(Must add up to 100%)

- Discipline (i.e. handling referrals, interventions, etc.)
- Testing (i.e. coordinating state exams, district benchmarks, etc.)
- Supervision (i.e. passing periods, lunch, school events, etc.)
- Administrative (i.e. finances, athletics, master schedule, etc.)
- Instruction (i.e. developing curriculum or professional development, classroom observations, department meetings, etc.)
- Parent or Community Meeting (i.e. conferences, IEP, parent associations, etc.)

School

Size of school: Under 500  500-1000  1000-1500  1500-2000  2001-2500  2500+

Title 1 School?  Y or N

Current API Score: Under 600  601-650  651-700  701-750  751-800  801+

Please answer the following questions on a scale of 1 to 5.

1 = Strongly Disagree  2 = Disagree  3 = Neutral  4 = Agree  5 = Strongly Agree

Empowerment (DL)

1. I meet with my principal consistently to discuss my roles.
2. My principal is knowledgeable about my roles.
3. The principal promotes my work with the staff.
4. I feel empowered by the principal to make decisions on my own.

Capacity Building (DL)

5. I meet regularly with my principal to discuss my growth as an administrator.
6. I have access to professional development.

7. My principal builds my leadership skills.

8. My principal encourages me to take on different roles.

**Work Design (DL)**

9. The administration team meets regularly.

10. When we meet as an administration team, we have a focused agenda.

11. My roles match my strengths.

12. The administration team collaborates on school goals.

**Positive Work Climate (DL)**

13. There is a high level of trust within the team.


15. The administration deals effectively with internal conflict.

16. I am recognized for my contributions.

**Sense of Team Purpose (Team)**

17. I understand my role on the administration team.

18. The school views the administrators as a team.

19. Our team has a purpose in relation to school goals.

20. The administration team works in an interdependent fashion.
APPENDIX B

Survey Questions Mapped to Literature Review
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>DL Element</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I meet with my principal consistently to discuss my roles.</td>
<td>Empower</td>
<td>Mangin, 2007; Harris, 2004; Salfi, 2011; Muijs &amp; Harris, 2003; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009;</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. My principal is knowledgeable about my roles.</td>
<td>Empower</td>
<td>Mangin, 2007; Harris, 2004; Salfi, 2011; Muijs &amp; Harris, 2003; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009;</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. The principal promotes my work with the staff.</td>
<td>Empower</td>
<td>Mangin, 2007; Harris, 2004; Salfi, 2011; Muijs &amp; Harris, 2003; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009;</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. I feel empowered by the principal to make decisions on my own.</td>
<td>Empower</td>
<td>Mangin, 2007; Harris, 2004; Salfi, 2011; Muijs &amp; Harris, 2003; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I meet regularly with my principal to discuss my growth as an administrator.</td>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
<td>Harris, 2008b; Harris, 2004; Spillane et al., 2003; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009; Bennet et al., 2004</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>I have access to professional development.</td>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
<td>Harris, 2008b; Harris, 2004; Spillane et al., 2003; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009, Bennet et al., 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>My principal builds my leadership skills.</td>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
<td>Harris, 2008b; Harris, 2004; Spillane et al., 2003; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009, Bennet et al., 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>My principal encourages me to take on different roles.</td>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
<td>Harris, 2008b; Harris, 2004; Spillane et al., 2003; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009, Bennet et al., 2004</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>The administration team meets regularly.</td>
<td>Work Design</td>
<td>Harris, 2008b; Spillane et al., 2001; Gronn, 2002; Suppovitz &amp; Riggan, 2012; Duif et al., 2013, Bolden, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>When we meet as an administration team, we have a focused agenda.</td>
<td>Work Design</td>
<td>Harris, 2008b; Spillane et al., 2001; Gronn, 2002; Suppovitz &amp; Riggan, 2012; Duif et al., 2013, Bolden, 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. My roles match my strengths.</td>
<td>Work Design</td>
<td>Harris, 2008b; Spillane et al., 2001; Gronn, 2002; Suppovitz &amp; Riggan, 2012; Duif et al., 2013, Bolden, 2011</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The administration team collaborates on school goals.</td>
<td>Work Design</td>
<td>Harris, 2008b; Spillane et al., 2001; Gronn, 2002; Suppovitz &amp; Riggan, 2012; Duif et al., 2013, Bolden, 2011</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There is a high level of trust within the team.</td>
<td>Positive Work Climate</td>
<td>Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Byrk &amp; Schneider, 2003; Marks &amp; Printy, 2006; Smylie et al., 2007; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I speak openly with my principal without fear of repercussion.</td>
<td>Positive Work Climate</td>
<td>Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Byrk &amp; Schneider, 2003; Marks &amp; Printy, 2006; Smylie et al., 2007; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009</td>
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<td>14. The administration deals effectively with internal conflict.</td>
<td>Positive Work Climate</td>
<td>Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Byrk &amp; Schneider, 2003; Marks &amp; Printy, 2006; Smylie et al., 2007; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. I am recognized for my contributions.</td>
<td>Positive Work Climate</td>
<td>Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Byrk &amp; Schneider, 2003; Marks &amp; Printy, 2006; Smylie et al., 2007; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I understand my role on the administration team.</td>
<td>Sense of Team Purpose</td>
<td>Markette, 2012; Ensley et al., 2006; Katzenbach, 1997; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009; Danley, 1979</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The school views the administrators as a team.</td>
<td>Sense of Team Purpose</td>
<td>Markette, 2012; Ensley et al., 2006; Katzenbach, 1997; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009; Danley, 1979</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Framework</td>
<td>Reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Our team has a sense of team purpose in relation to school goals.</td>
<td>Sense of Team Purpose</td>
<td>Markette, 2012; Ensley et al., 2006; Katzenbach, 1997; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009; Danley, 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The administration team works in an interdependent fashion.</td>
<td>Sense of Team Purpose</td>
<td>Markette, 2012; Ensley et al., 2006; Katzenbach, 1997; Buttram &amp; Pizzini, 2009; Danley, 1979</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

IRB Permission
### IRB Protocol Main Menu

| Research Title: | Distributed Leadership and the Concept of Team... |
| Investigator: | Cooks |
| Review Type: | Exempt - Prospective Data Collection |
| Status: | Approved |
| Status Date: | 04/27/2014 |
| Submission Date: | 09/25/2014 |

### Protocol Development

| Contact Info | Contact information (PL, Co-PI) for this protocol. | Complete |
| Protocol Summary Info | Summary information for this protocol. | Complete |
| **Page One** | | |
| **Page Two** | | |
| Protocol Document | Protocol document section outline. 21 out of 21 sections complete. | Complete |
| Consent Form | Consent form development and submission guidelines. | Complete |
| Supporting Documents | Add, delete, update supporting documents attached to this protocol. | Complete |

Submit This Protocol: Submit this protocol to the IRB for review. A final check will be run to ensure all components of your application are included.

### Protocol Maintenance

- **Modifications (0)**: Submit/View Modifications to this protocol.
- **Adverse Events (0)**: Submit/View Adverse Events for this protocol.
- **Progress Reports (0)**: Submit/View Progress Reports for this protocol.

### Protocol Utilities

- **Protocol History**: View the transaction history of this protocol.
- **Message/Notifications**: View email notifications pertaining to this protocol.
- **Full Document Viewer**: View a printable version of this protocol.

For questions about submitting an IRB application, please contact the IRB office at (510) 898-6622 Monday through Friday between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm.