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BECOMING AN ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL: NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES BETWEEN TEACHING AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

by

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To Anne Strilchuk, my grandmother (Baba), who held in such high esteem the educated woman.

ABSTRACT

The question that this study addressed was how Catholic educators from diverse experiential backgrounds negotiate personally persuasive and authoritative discourses in fashioning their identities as assistant principals. The inquiry is framed by poststructuralist perspectives on identity and uses as a methodology an ethnographic interview approach in an effort to understand the transition from teacher to assistant principal. Interviews with three first-year assistant principals in two Catholic school districts in a Western Canadian province formed part of the data. To obtain the school district's perspectives, I also interviewed district-level personnel who were responsible for leadership formation. Documents from the Ministry of Education that included the newly developed provincial standards for principals as well as documents from the two school districts were also analyzed. The research findings reveal that beginning assistant principals negotiate their identities as educational leaders when they assume a role and that the expectations of the role existed before their arrival. These expectations are the authoritative discourses that shape the educational leader within the school district and that are negotiated with the personally persuasive discourses of the leader. The tensions that new assistant principals in the study negotiated were conflicting discourses of leadership and the dissonance between the challenges and affirmations regarding participants' deeply held values and the traditional institutional demands on administrators and between the role expectations and the autonomous decision making of leaders. The implications of emphasizing questions of identity in leadership development shift the thinking on the assistant

principal beyond the organizational structure of the role. School districts must better attend to the development of the identity of their educational leaders by restructuring leadership training programs and ensuring the effectiveness of mentoring programs. New assistant principals must themselves address the differences between role and identity and direct attention to the importance of developing and strengthening their identities as educational leaders.

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A special quotation that has sustained me over these many years of studying, researching, and writing is one from Gandhi that captures the joy and challenges at each turn. He wrote that "every step of the journey *is* the journey."

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AERR:	Annual Education Results Report
AP:	Assistant Principal
MCSD:	Mission Catholic School District
SRI:	Stanford Research Institute
TCSD:	Trinity Catholic School District

CHAPTER ONE:

THE QUESTION OF BECOMING AN ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Research Question

In 2002 a projected increase in principal retirements necessitated significant efforts in my school district to recruit teachers into educational administration, and I was interested. I was curious, however, about how taking on a leadership role affects a person. Would I be changed in some way in the transition to the role of an assistant principal (AP)? What did my and other school districts value in terms of the skills necessary to learn to lead, particularly in Catholic schools? What might be the school community's expectations of their leaders? In my experience as an educator I encountered the diverse leadership approaches of individual principals or APs. Their respective approaches often varied in the degree of authority that they exhibited over the staff they managed and as a result of the level of instruction in the school. As well, no particular postsecondary educational background stood out as more gainful in becoming an educational leader; an administrator might have studied for a master's degree in curriculum, educational psychology, educational administration, religious studies, or technology. It seemed that these administrators both achieved and understood leadership in very distinctive ways. How then did educational administrators make sense of their roles?

A Shift in Identity

As I stepped back from my own experiences, the question of becoming an AP seemed to coalesce around a shift in identity. In Britzman's (2003) research

the teachers fashioned their identities by negotiating a variety of authoritative and personally persuasive discourses. Drawing on the work of Bakhtin (1981), Britzman explained that the shaping of identity is a result of the constant struggle between discourses that reflect "authoritatively sanctioned and conventionally taken-for-granted ways of understanding, speaking, and acting" (p. 39) and internally persuasive discourses that "pull away from norms" and admit "a variety of contradictory social discourse" (p. 43). Bakhtin characterized this struggle between authoritative and personally persuasive discourses as "a sharp gap" and as a "dialogic relationship" that forms the basis for how we become who we are, or our "ideological becoming" (p. 342).

My study built on Britzman's (2003) work on teacher identity in which she extended Waller's (1961; as cited in Britzman, 2003) question, "What does teaching do to a teacher" (p. 25) to study the contradictory realities of learning to teach. In my own attempt to answer the question "What does *leading* do to a leader?" I explored how Catholic APs negotiate their new identities as educational leaders as they move from teaching roles to administrative roles. The question that this study addressed, then, is "How do Catholic educators from diverse experiential backgrounds negotiate personally persuasive and authoritative discourses in fashioning their identities as APs?"

The inquiry was framed by poststructuralist perspectives on identity that were anchored in Britzman's (2003) study of teacher identity and Bracher's (2006) work on foregrounding identity. A poststructuralist orientation informed my research questions on leadership and identity, and I examined the underlying

assumptions and types of discourses from which particular practices originate, power relations, and values (Britzman, 2003; Weedon, 1997). Hall (1996) suggested that identities are constructed through discourses and that "we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices" (p. 4). He also pointed out that identities "emerge within the play of specific modalities of power" (p. 4). Bracher's work on identity and learning helped me to understand what happens to a person's identity when change and learning occur or are resisted.

Ethnographic Interview Approach

I used an ethnographic interview approach as a method of inquiry in an effort to understand the transition from teacher to AP. My focus was on how identities are negotiated. My question revolved around how individual APs fashion their educational leadership identities in relation to authoritative discourses that authorize the practices of leadership and that set out the expectations associated with the AP role. I explain discursive practices of leadership and raise concerns about why some discourses privilege certain practices over others. Authoritative discourses, according to Bakhtin (1981), bind us with their "power already fused to it" (p. 342) and are accepted without critical examination because they become normalized within a culture and then naturally reproduced.

Using ethnography was an appropriate approach for engaging with the research question that this study posed because of my presence in the everyday life of APs; it enabled me to better understand APs and the school leaders who

surround them as their identities are formed. Researchers who engage in ethnography and who use an ethnographic interview as the primary means of data collection explore the meaning that participants make of their work (Spradley, 1979). Drawing on the narratives of participant APs, I anticipated analyzing their words to identify the discursive practices of leadership that shape their identities as educational leaders.

Because my administrative appointment as a first-year AP coincided with my doctoral studies, I decided that it would be necessary to adopt the position of participant observer to focus on the exploration of my own work and the work of others who were in the same position as beginning APs. Within this paradigm I sought to develop new understandings of my professional practice "through systematic study . . . of professional action in a particular setting" (Tricoglus, 2001, p. 136). Tricoglus reminded us that practitioner research "has the potential to build the ability of individuals . . . to engage in critical reflection, challenge 'conventional wisdom,' and thereby contribute to the production of knowledge about teaching and learning" (p. 136). To fulfill these requirements, it was necessary that I distance myself from the AP role to more critically examine my own practice. The difficulties of trying to be both a participant and an observer emerge in this process of articulating the story of learning to lead, critiquing its practices, and taking into account the voices of other untried APs as well as their school-district leaders.

I conducted this study in two Catholic school districts in a Western Canadian province. The data collection consisted of the narratives of two

interviews each with three beginning APs in junior high schools within these two districts. The responses to the interview questions provided information on the participants' backgrounds, their understanding of leadership and their role, and the impact of becoming APs on their personal and professional lives. I also interviewed district-level personnel responsible for leadership formation to obtain their perspectives. I asked the district leaders in my study to describe their roles within their respective districts, their role in leadership formation and training, and their conceptions of leadership.

A third component of the data collection was the document analysis of texts, which comprised the two school districts' policies on the role of the AP as well as the evaluation criteria for administrators, their annual reports to the ministry, general information on the school districts on their Web sites, documents from the Ministry of Education that included the newly developed provincial standards for principals, and my research journals.

Leadership and Identity: My Own Journey to Leadership

My own journey into a leadership position spanned over 20 years as an educator. Prior to becoming a teacher in 1983, I studied for a Bachelor of Arts degree in classics and political science, followed by several years of working as a store manager in a bookshop. During this time I volunteered in elementary and junior high classrooms and was inspired to enter the Faculty of Secondary Education in a university in southern Alberta to pursue a degree with a specialization in French as a second language. I had formerly been a student in French immersion. After-degree education programs at the time often crammed

all required courses into a 12-month span. Ultimately, I was disappointed in my teacher education program, which offered only one option for subject-area specialization and overall devoted little time to curriculum and teaching methods. The instruction that I received in the French as a second language teaching methods class did not easily enable a more generalized application to other subject areas. Consequently, this made my teaching in core subject areas more reliant on teacher guides.

Beginning to teach coincided with beginning to parent. Over eight years and three children later, I accepted temporary contract positions at a number of different elementary and junior high schools. The variety of subject-area assignments, responsibilities, and roles proved to be at times exhilarating and occasionally deeply discouraging. I accredit part of the impetus for further study towards a master's degree to these tumultuous years of part-time teaching because I felt the need to become much more flexible in understanding a wider scope of core curriculum. I completed a master's degree program in secondary education with a focus on social studies, but also with many courses in English language arts. Shortly thereafter, I accepted a full-time position as a junior high teacher.

From Teacher to Consultant

After five years of full-time teaching, I obtained a position as a curriculum consultant with my district and moved more definitively toward a leadership role in teaching and learning. My responsibilities involved primarily supporting teachers in the implementation of curriculum as well as staff development, but I

also participated on district and provincial committees, which broadened my understanding of the protocols and practices employed at both levels.

Leadership Formation and Training

In 2006, after six years in a consultant role, I enrolled in my school district's leadership formation and training program. The district encouraged "aspiring leaders (teachers seeking a first position in leadership, newly appointed assistant principals, department heads, and consultants)"[1] to take its Leadership Formation and Training Program for a "reflective look at leadership in a Catholic school environment" (p. 1). The program consisted of 10 two-hour sessions after school throughout the year, led by a district principal who worked with the Leadership Services Department. The program aimed to focus on "the essence of Catholic Educational leadership within the constructs of a school-based Professional Learning Community" (p. 2), and the various components of the program addressed "the religious, instructional and managerial aspects of Catholic Educational leadership through the lenses of faith and learning, professional reading and dialogue, guest presentation, group work/sharing, celebrations, two assignments, and journaling" (p. 2). Successful completion of this program potentially qualified the participants for credit towards a graduate-level program at a local university.

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[1] I acquired in person the document entitled "Formation and Training Program for School-Based Leadership Positions 2006-2007: Application Information and Procedures, Leadership Services Department" from the school district that I call St. Colette Catholic Schools (2007). For the purposes of confidentiality, I refer to the school district by this pseudonym throughout this document.

That year 30 teachers and consultants participated in the program with six principals, who acted as facilitators. The topics included teacher leadership, the institutionalization of professional learning communities as part of a school's culture, and the strengthening of the understanding of a Catholic identity. Groups of participants explored a perspective on leadership from Stephen Covey's business world and read articles from educational writers on diverse topics such as professional learning communities (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005), school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni, 2000), emotional intelligence (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002)**,** and teacher leadership (Lambert, 1998, 2003).

The principle underlying most of the readings reinforced the importance of establishing professional learning communities as a means of improving teaching and learning and fostering better staff relationships. Several years ago my district mandated professional learning communities in all schools to facilitate collaborative practice, which is understood to be an integral component of a shared leadership approach. Other themes that emerged from the program were the importance of developing personal relationships with staff, an emphasis on adaptability and change regarding school culture, and understandings of teacher leadership.

Entering Educational Leadership

It was curious to me how quickly my immersion into the world of educational administration took place. As part of its staffing cycle, my district announced administrative positions in March, six full months before the start of

the next school year. In March 2007 one of my district's senior administrators contacted me to inform me that I had been assigned as an AP in an elementary/ junior high school. I was familiar with the school's location, a middle-to-high socioeconomic neighbourhood, populated predominantly by families of white-collar professionals. The school served 630 students from kindergarten to Grade 9 and had over 50 teachers, support staff, and teaching assistants. Because of the school's size, two APs support the principal; my co-AP came to the school that same year, but with four years of experience in the AP role.

My relationship with the school began soon after the senior administrator's call because the principal invited me to participate in many of the school's organizational activities to set up practices for the following year. Although my principal explained that APs new to a school were under no obligation to involve themselves in the school's operation at this time, I saw this as an opportunity to begin to shape my administrative role, and I gladly accepted. Before the end of June the three of us had accomplished several tasks germane to the beginning of the following school year. Although I had little interaction with students during those spring months, I began to develop relationships with staff.

Reflecting on My First Year as an Assistant Principal

My transition into an AP role during August and September, although eased by the advice and presence of my principal and co-AP, nevertheless occurred at an accelerated pace. Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson (1995) posited that first-year APs usually do not assume their role fully understanding what it involves and that shock and surprise typically characterize the first weeks. They

noted that first-year AP can perceive change as either distressing and trying or energizing and capacity building. My first two months as an AP were not exceptions to this dynamic.

When I arrived at my new school, I anticipated becoming a full administrative participant. In previous university course work I had read many books and articles that positioned leadership as distributed, shared, and inclusive; and this model seemed practical to a first-year AP who was eager to become a partner immersed in educational administration. The extent to which power and administrative tasks are shared, however, is the principal's decision and is based upon his or her prior experiences and understandings of leadership. A principal in my district can act with great autonomy within his or her school; however, this more traditional autonomous approach to school administration is slowly being replaced by a more collaborative and relational model. The decisions in my school were often shared through discussion within a loosely hierarchical administrative structure. For a new AP, there was a great benefit to this inclusionary approach because it gave me an opportunity to talk through the situations I encountered and eventually to gain more confidence in using my own judgment.

In the research journal that I kept throughout my first year as an AP, I wrote very little about the positive outcomes that I experienced and much more about the times when the job generated angst. I recalled feeling excited and open to something new as well as uncertain about my abilities. Although I relished learning to solve problems related to an unusual growth in school population, I

struggled with issues of staff performance such as a teacher's habitual tardiness in arriving at school, as well as with problems related to student discipline. On several occasions teachers expected expedience in meting out consequences for misbehaving students, and often with little desire for discussion. I feared being perceived as weak and indecisive if I did not take quick action, but I was also hesitant about being perceived as unfair as a result of not having fully investigated the situation. These events tested my relationships with teachers and students and compelled an ongoing examination of my resolve and my values. I was struggling to make sense of this new role.

Significance of the Study

The role of the AP has not shifted noticeably in the past 30 years in spite of its importance to leadership in schools. Most research on APs focuses on the bureaucratic organization of the AP role (Armstrong, 2005; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Matthews & Crow, 2003; Retelle, 2003; Weller & Weller, 2002), on recruitment (Armstrong, 2005; English, 2008; Hartzell et al., 1995; Marshall & Hooley, 2006), and strategies for improvement (Armstrong, 2005; Hatt, 2005; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Matthews & Crow, 2003; Retelle, 2003; Weller & Weller, 2002). This inquiry into how educators negotiate personally persuasive and authoritative discourses in fashioning their identities as APs is situated in existing research on the AP and educational leadership. Few studies, however, linked identity formation and the AP role (Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1994; McWilliam, 2000), and even less research has addressed the discourses that authorize what contemporary leadership looks like in an educational setting

(Allan, Gordon, & Iverson, 2006). In this study, in an attempt to reveal the authoritative discourses of leadership that have shaped three new APs, I explored their perspectives as they constructed their identities as educational leaders.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter one has introduced the research question through the lens of my own journey toward leadership. My question focuses on how beginning APs from diverse experiential backgrounds fashion their educational leadership identities in relation to personally persuasive and authoritative discourses.

Chapter two reviews the literature on APs and educational leadership with a particular focus on the identity formation of APs. In this respect, I examine poststructural perspectives on identity formation and discuss how they help to understand the formation of educational leaders.

Chapter three describes my approach to this study using an ethnographic interview. The chapter discusses the research design, data collection, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study. Because the study begins autobiographically, I make my positioning as a researcher explicit.

Chapters four and five present an account and my interpretation of conversations with three beginning AP participants and an examination of the perspectives of two school districts based on interviews with a district leader from each district and district documents. Chapter four discusses Mission Catholic School District (MCSD), which is a medium-sized rural district in a Western Canadian province that serves over 6,700 students in 18 schools. Chapter five focuses on Trinity Catholic School District (TCSD), an urban Catholic school

district in a medium-sized city in a Western Canadian province, with 80 schools and over 35,000 students.

Chapter six discusses how each of the school districts in my study took up particular discursive practices of leadership that the three AP participants and their district leaders enacted. I discuss the impact of diverse understandings of leadership on school districts and AP identities, the values that the participants hold that contradict the traditional institutional demands of administration, and the tension for the three APs over compliance with authority and autonomous decision making.

Chapter seven presents my conclusions about the conflicting discourses that circulate within the two districts and their schools and the importance of appreciating that neophyte educational leaders, like teachers, must negotiate their identities.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE ROLE AND IDENTITIES OF ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

To investigate how Catholic educators from diverse experiential backgrounds negotiate personally persuasive and authoritative discourses of leadership, I will (a) review the literature on the history of the AP role, (b) examine the relationship between the AP role and identity formation through the lens of two books that represent mainstream literature on new AP leadership, and (c) present an overview of the literature on diverse understandings of educational leadership. The questions of identity in the study are framed by poststructuralist theory on authoritative discourses of leadership that shape educational leadership practice. These authoritative discourses are discerned in relationships of power within schools and school districts, neoliberal influences that impact educational practices, and discourses of Catholic educational leadership.

Assistant Principal Role and Educational Leadership Origin

of the Assistant Principal Role

According to Glanz (1994), the AP role likely emerged from the roles of two teacher supervisors. During the 1920s teachers in larger schools were selected and designated to be special supervisors to help less-experienced teachers in a subject area. These teachers, usually female, were selected to be APs but had no independent authority, nor did they evaluate colleagues. There was also a general supervisor, who was usually male, had more authority than the special

supervisors, and assisted the principal in the logistical operations of the school. He was considered the primary assistant. The special supervisory role disappeared in the 1930s, and in the 1940s and 1950s the title *assistant principal* began to appear in the literature.

Kelly (1987) explained that APs took on more administrative responsibility in schools because of increasing demands on the principal's time. Matthews and Crow (2003) noted that, over time, factors such as the changing social demographics of cities and schools and the creation of larger school districts have influenced the principal's role. Secondary principals began to teach less, and in inner cities administrative assistants were needed to deal with poverty issues and the larger number of students. Eventually, hiring APs also freed principals for instructional leadership tasks. Marshall and Hooley (2006) reported that the position of the assistant did not actually arise from any "clear and thoughtful planning" (p. 2) in terms of what assistants might accomplish, but simply evolved as a supporting role to the principal. In the 1970s, Matthews and Crow pointed out, the AP role gained more significance with respect to the operation of the school. They noted references to the assistant as "subordinate to" or "parallel with the principal" or as a "specialist" and even a "henchman" (p. 20). Today, according to these writers, the principal and AP roles can function in a parallel fashion, but do not in all cases.

The Changing Role of the Assistant Principal

The multitudinous duties and tasks assigned to the AP are somewhat overwhelming and at times surprisingly dissimilar between schools (Hartzell

et al., 1995). Marshall and Hooley (2006) affirmed that APs often act as disciplinarians, but they also deal with social-justice issues such as immigration and poverty. APs are also expected to maintain the norms and rules of the school, play a role as mediators, maintain order in an institutional setting, and manage the many issues that children bring to the school.

Apart from school management, APs' responsibilities during the day are numerous. Issues of community relations, curriculum and instruction, special education programming, and personnel are key components of the range of tasks. Hartzell et al. (1995) noted that in a very short time, first-year APs

> had to alter their long-held perspective on schools, enter a new peer group, redefine relationships with former colleagues, and establish working associations with a new group of subordinates, while taking on unfamiliar, multiple, rapidly paced, and sometimes highly emotional tasks. (p. 125)

Weller and Weller (2002) suggested that, to be successful in this job, the AP should be able to work with teams and understand how to improve instruction and implement curriculum. In a survey of APs in 2000, Weller and Weller found that 25% of the participants lacked the necessary leadership skills for some of these tasks. They also observed that the APs felt that they were the most inadequately prepared to motivate teachers, develop curriculum for the 'real world,' resolve conflict, work effectively in teams, and deal with the politics of the job.

Assistant principals learn to comply with the dominant values of their school districts, according to Marshall and Hooley (2006); however, in instances of conflict they tend to rely on their own value systems to make decisions. The authors explained that APs put aside policies in favour of fairness, caring, and

openness. In their examination of the unstated rules or discourses on educational leadership, Marshall and Hooley observed that APs eventually come to understand the "limits on their roles and their expression of value" (p. 55); they learn to curb their risk-taking behaviours, and when the need arises, they remake policy quietly and discreetly, bending the rules as necessary to help students. The AP is well advised by the district to demonstrate commitment, keep disputes private when they arise, know school and district policies thoroughly, and avoid being labelled a troublemaker (Daresh, 2001; Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

Appeal and Challenges of the Assistant Principal Role

Although Marshall and Hooley (2006) reported that many teachers are highly motivated to apply for school-based administrative positions, some perceive the AP role as too challenging. In their study Marshall and Hooley found that teachers who consider the assistant principalship a desirable career also believe that they are qualified and that others encourage them to take risks. They maintained that, following their entrance into educational administration, new APs transform themselves from teachers into administrators through an "anticipatory socialization" (p. 36) process. Marshall and Hooley explained that, during this process, interested teachers develop or enhance favourable attitudes towards educational leadership and separate themselves from other teachers; they find ways to demonstrate their own leadership abilities. According to Marshall and Hooley, teachers interested in educational administration often learn from the role modeling of their principals, or they take on supplementary responsibilities as department heads and participate on committees or in special projects, all as part

of the acquisition of administrative skills. Hartzell et al. (1995) contended, however, that many of the tasks associated with running a school are invisible to teachers. These tasks are often hidden or completed behind the scenes to ensure a smooth flow within the school and to impede interruptions to teaching and learning. Consequently, teachers are not always aware of the scope of an administrative position and may be surprised when they become APs.

Marshall and Hooley (2006) identified several reasons for not applying for the job of AP. They cited Wynn's (2003) study of female teachers with leadership potential who perceived the extra stresses that assistants experience as a deterrent to seeking the position; some of the barriers are distantiation from children in the classroom, the need to relinquish teaching time, encounters with principals who favour hierarchical control and subvert the efforts of APs, and the time in the role that is consumed by managerial tasks rather than instructional leadership. Marshall and Hooley also cited teachers' feelings of ambiguity with respect to the mediation of students' identities and values and fear of retribution in disciplining students as possible deterrents.

Another challenge that Marshall and Hooley (2006) noted was that recruitment and selection procedures typically favour candidates who conform to the traditions and normative practices of the school. They added that there may be little room for *creative* educational leadership because recruitment practices support conformist work requirements. Blackmore, Thomson, and Barty (2006) asserted that the conservative practice of hiring committees gives rise to *homostability*, a term that they used to describe the extent to which these types of

committees hire people like themselves. This approach, they contended, results in little risk and little consideration for alternatives; people outside the conservative role who challenge existing practice and have conflicting feelings about educational administration and incumbent administrators are less likely to be hired. Marshall and Hooley pointed out that such candidates may be perceived as "less trustworthy" and "not loyal enough" (p. 14) to become administrators.

Assistant Principal Role and Identity

Much of the existing research on APs focused on the bureaucratic organization of the AP role rather than on how the role relates to identity; thus, the literature is replete with issues of recruitment, the nature of the AP role, socialization into the role, the demands of the job, the benefits of mentoring, and strategies for success (Hartzell et al., 1994; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Matthews & Crow, 2003; Weller & Weller, 2002). Although these areas may relate to the outward experience of the AP, they do not take into account AP subjectivities and the ways in which beginning APs negotiate identity, and they do not discuss the discursive practices of leadership that shape these identities.

The change of roles and the transition from being a teacher to taking on the additional expectations of leadership imply the negotiation of new identities. The change involves not only what new APs do within the role, but also who they are and what it means to be an educational leader. Carson (2005) remarked in the context of curriculum change that change involves "a conversation between the self (identity) and new sets of circumstances that are external to the self" (p. 3). APs' subjectivities have already been deeply formed by their personal histories

and are now confronted by a set of new relationships and different perspectives that are shaped by conceptions of leadership, the school community, teachers, and students.

Construction of the Leadership Role

This study investigated how new APs assume an educational leadership role. English (2008) suggested that educational leadership is like a performance that "involves a role and that [the] role is learned, meaning acquired" (p. 121). He maintained that the role of a school administrator is culturally defined and that it fits into a larger social order embedded in a bureaucratic structure that legitimizes, not the authority of the leader, but the authority of the *office* of the leader. According to English, the role has "its own constructions, pretensions, mythologies, conceits, perceptions, and lies" (p. 121), and the expectations of the role determine the way that leadership plays out for an individual.

To emphasize his point that educational leadership is like a performance, English (2008) drew a comparison between an actor playing a role and an educational leader doing the same. Both recognize the social construction of the scene or context (for example, a school embedded in a larger environment). Actors and administrators are simultaneously outsiders who are watching events unfold and insiders who are interacting with other players. All of the players and actors, according to English, have the ability to peer inward and reflect on how they feel about the story that is unfolding. This theatre analogy created an image for me of a new AP playing a role within a particular context that is socially constructed. The analogy also opened up a space to delineate the often hidden

aspect of identity formation. The identity of an AP is indeed impacted by the role based on the choices and negotiations that he or she makes to consent to or resist the existing discursive practices in the "scene" (p. 124) or within the expectations of the community.

The Relationship Between Identity and the Administrative Role

When a person takes on the role of an educational leader, questions of identity do not seem explicit in the everyday world of school, nor are they easily found in the existing body of research on APs. To further explore this relationship between identity and the administrative role, I selected two books from the mainstream literature on leadership that I believe reflect the type of information on educational leadership that is the most familiar to me and to my administrative colleagues and that might typically influence training programs for new APs: Matthews and Crow's (2003) *Being and Becoming a Principal: Role Conceptions for Contemporary Principals and Assistant Principals* and Hartzell et al.'s (1995) *New Voices in the Field: The Work Lives of First-Year Assistant Principals*. Both of these texts focus on the complexity of educational leadership roles and tasks as well as on accounts of the socialization process that is essential for new APs to successfully assume the role. Although there are implications for identity formation, there is no explicit mention of how AP identities are shaped or of the discourses that shape them.

In their reconceptualization of the educational leadership role, Matthews and Crow (2003) pay no overt attention to identity. The discursive practices of leadership that shape the role of the school administrator, they claimed, are rife

with misconceptions about what it means to lead, and they therefore contribute to problems with how the administrative role might be enacted. The prevailing misconceptions of leadership that they described suggest that leadership is a concept that is interchangeable with management, that leadership resides primarily in only one person, and that the leader is assumed to be born to the role. Conversely, Matthews and Crow emphasized that leadership can be more accurately understood as an influence relationship between leaders and followers, that it reflects learned behaviour, and that it encompasses many more complex tasks than those of a manager and includes such constructs as learner, leader, mentor, supervisor, politician, and advocate. For Matthews and Crow, the reconceptualization of the principal role is therefore commensurate with society's continual reshaping of authoritative discourses, which have most recently reflected a push for standards-based reform and more public scrutiny. As well, other areas influenced this reshaping of leadership, such as shifting demographics and technology advances, all of which require an approach to leadership that emanates from more than just the person at the top. The nature of the administrative role is therefore in an evolutionary state as a result of the continually shifting understandings of leadership.

Rather than emphasize questions of identity, Matthews and Crow (2003) identified and classified the tasks, responsibilities, and duties associated with the administrative role, as well as ways in which new APs might best manage their complex position. In their book they did not use the word *identity*; it is not in the index, nor is it a heading or subheading in the body of the book. They mention the

word *self-awareness* within the context of current research on the importance of emotional intelligence and the need to be aware of how to manage one's own emotions. However, Matthews and Crow acknowledged the importance of what individuals bring to the administrative role and how the existing skills of the educator will impact practice (which is related to identity formation). New principals, they argued, can either make the role their own in ways "not previously expected" (p. 3) or accept the role as it has been established within the context of the school. In other words, they can assert their own ideas of leadership when they take on the role, or they can fit in with established administrative practices.

Although Matthews and Crow (2003) asserted that the role of the AP functions in a parallel fashion to the role of the principal, beginning APs are more apt to take on already established roles because they lack the requisite experience and confidence to understand the tasks involved in their role. The authors also stressed the need for new APs to discover the school's values, "which may be contradictory to their previous teaching or internship experiences" (p. 274), but they did not discuss how new APs reconcile contradictory values with their own beliefs, experiences, and values. The implications of Matthews and Crow's understanding of leadership is that the educational administrator is expected to cooperate and comply with accepted practices in a school community to be effective in the role of AP. The omission of any discussion on identity formation obfuscates the internal struggle that new APs face in developing their sense of themselves as including the identity of an AP.

Hartzell et al.'s (1995) second commonly used book, *New Voices in the Field: The Work Lives of First-Year Assistant Principals*, is based on a five-year study on the everyday realities that new APs face in secondary schools in the United States. They focused on the socialization process that prepares beginning APs for an administrative role and on what the experience of being an AP feels like to offer educators a preview of what awaits APs in the office. Hartzell et al.'s intention was to describe first-year AP experiences in "human terms" (p. ix) that give voice to the insights of new APs in a more personal way. Hartzell et al. drew on stories from beginning secondary APs about their professional and personal experiences in the transition from teacher to administrator and the adjustments that they had to make. They revealed that, upon beginning the role, APs lack an understanding of the nature of the role and the skills that are deemed essential to performing the role effectively.

With respect to the identity formation of new APs, Hartzell et al. (1995) observed that the new administrative role has caused professional and personal changes in APs. However, they did not overtly suggest the development of identity as a significant factor in preparing APs for the role of principal. Rather, the authors emphasized the constants in the role such as student discipline and attendance, the different measures of time and duty from those in the classroom, the redefinition of relationships with former colleagues, the management of new relationships with school staff, and the emotional impact of becoming an AP as a result of unexpected experiences. Although the socialization of educators into the complex role of an educational leader impacts their future behaviour, Hartzell

et al. described them as being formed, not as AP identities, but as more effective workers. The question of identity in their book, however, is evident in their discussion of how the retelling of experiences threatens or reinforces the self-image of new APs and their subsequent appreciation of their participants' willingness to be vulnerable and set aside ego to reveal the depth of their experiences. Although the used the word *identity* only within the context of discipline, for example, as in "so deeply ingrained in AP identity" (p. 46), they also imply it in the "psychic costs to the AP" (p. 46) when support from other administrators is lacking.

Hartzell et al.'s (1995) entire study is an examination of the personal experiences of the AP, but not explicitly about AP identity and identity formation in spite of its format in which they relate the narratives of their participants. It seems that the point of relating narratives on becoming an AP is to show how the experience affects the life story of the participants; for example, by exploring what learning to lead *does* to new APs as they negotiate their new administrative role. The study is, at best, a description of how a discourse of socialization operates to assist first-year APs in their transition to educational administrators and the strategies that benefit initiates as they deal with the many challenges and demands of the job.

In these texts and in other mainstream leadership literature, there is little discussion of what the conflicts and contradictions inherent in the AP role mean to the developing identity of an AP. There is also little reference to the authoritative discourses of leadership that shapes administrative practice and the identity of an

AP. Absent is a conversation about AP identity as a thing negotiated or as something that matters to the enactment of the role. Possibly, this lack of attention to identity implies that AP identity is, on the surface, of no real outward concern or consequence to a school district or to a body of research because it is essentially the AP's job to fit the role when he or she fills it. In other words, becoming an AP is less about the impact of the administrative *fit* on the self and identity and more about the visible, technical, and procedural aspects of gradual socialization into the role. I argue, however, that the question of identity merits much more attention, both in research on educational leadership and within the actual place of school.

Perspectives on Educational Leadership

The perspectives on leadership in the literature both inform and confuse the reader's understanding of how leadership is enacted. The concept of leader has a long history and many interpretations of what constitutes good leadership within contexts that are quite dissimilar. The nature of leadership as well, from an educational perspective, challenges the new administrator to make sense of the various subject positions that a leader may assume.

Conceptions of Educational Leadership

Pairing the words *educational* and *leadership* creates an interesting redundancy with regard to their interpretation. To lead and to educate share similar etymologies, according to the Oxford English Dictionary Online. *Lead* has origins in both German (*leaden*) and Latin (*ducere*) and means, literally, "to go with a load" (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2010b, Par. 1), which suggests

that as you journey, you carry something weighty or perhaps of importance. *Educate* is from the Latin *educere* and means "to lead out" (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2010a, Par. 1). An educator, then, is a leader who makes known or brings forth that which is important. But what is important, to whom is it important, under what circumstances is it important, and who decides? In his exploration of the origin and history of leadership, Burns (1978) contended that people's diverse conceptions of leadership lead to ambiguous and confusing understandings. In other words, our shared understanding of what leadership is, is not shared at all. This literature review continues the struggle to encapsulate so complex a concept.

English (1994) pointed out that connotations of leadership stem from narratives on the great deeds of ancient male Greek heroes and that a leader's quick action, creativity, powers of observation, and sense of the theatrical continue to characterize certain leaders today. Burns (1978) drew on his own study of great men in history to suggest a distinction between two types of leadership: transactional, which depicts leadership as an exchange relationship between leaders and followers, and transformational, which is characterized as causative, morally purposeful, elevated, and a collective endeavour. He posited that what counts as leadership should serve to improve humankind, to lead upwards, and to make better citizens and should not be a personally self-serving act. Otherwise, leadership should be considered as power wielding or tyranny.

Building on Burns' (1978) conception of leadership, other researchers attempted to clarify its nature and broaden its scope. Foster (1989) asserted that

leadership has a dialectical character, which implies that leadership and followership cannot occur without each other. He observed that leadership and followership are often exchangeable and entwined in a series of mutual negotiations within a social community and are, therefore, both context bound. He contended that leadership is therefore not simply a matter of focusing on the individual qualities or personality traits of a leader. This focus on the leader or on the leader's personality minimizes the importance of the role of followers or of the leader's situation and suggests that a leader with "a certain set of traits is crucial to having effective leadership" (Germain, 2008, p. 2). English (2008) proposed that the popular media obscure the nature of leadership by creating "the illusion that leaders are special people who have [from birth] traits, habits, behaviors, or supernatural qualities" (p. 121).

Burns (1978) also pointed out the important influences of such diverse people as Niccolo Machiavelli and Dale Carnegie in constructing a definition of leadership, the former for his advice on coercion and inhuman manipulation of others and the latter for his strategies "to arouse in the person an eager want and then to satisfy it" (p. 447), both attempts to persuade others to do something that the influencer wants them to do. Leithwood and Duke (1999) drew on Yukl's (1994) study to suggest that leadership as a social-influence process involves a leader or group who exert influence over others or over a group to structure the activities and relationships. Yukl (2002) added that this process occurs with much variety in terms of who exerts influence and how much. Rost (1991) also

described leadership as an influence relationship and distinguished between direct influence and the facilitating of others' influence.

The concept of leadership as heroic or as residing in a person with the right traits continues to be attractive and contested, according to English (1994). He maintained that the work of an effective educational leader day to day is far from daring and gallant; on the contrary, he suggested that it is quite unheroic in the Homeric tradition. English (2008) emphasized that leadership is a fabricated social construction and not a "genetic capacity" (p. 120). Leadership is more the product of human interactions and negotiations than of any great individual's stepping forward (Foster, 1989).

Models of Educational Leadership

In an attempt to develop a relational conception of educational leadership, Leithwood and Duke (1999) categorized models of contemporary leadership practice based on an analysis of the educational leadership literature over a 10-year span; they described these models as transformational, instructional, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent. They opened up questions about the similarities and differences amongst leadership categories in terms of key relationships and influence. Other models of leadership are variously described as shared (Lambert, 2002), distributed (Hatcher, 2005; Spillane, 2006), and inclusive (Ryan, 2006). I will frame this particular discussion of leadership with three of Leithwood and Duke's models of leadership because they are the most germane to this study; the categories are (a) transformational leadership which, as I

mentioned previously, has its genesis in the work of Burns (1978); (b) moral leadership; and (c) managerial leadership.

Transformational leadership. There are varying interpretations of transformational leadership, according to Leithwood and Duke (1999). They pointed out that the focus of transformational leadership ranges from the "transcendence of self-interest by both leader and led" to higher levels of commitment and "capacities of organizational members to result in greater productivity" (p. 49). Foster (1989) noted that a transformational leadership approach involves the cultivation of small social changes that make a difference to a group and that occasionally generate a complete restructuring of society. It expands the basis for leadership because it is a practice centered not on the self, but on others, and it is oriented towards the transformation of social relations both incrementally and significantly. Larger, more significant structural changes that arise from transformational leadership models are evident in areas such as the critical examination of feminism and racial awareness (Capper, 2003; Laible, 2003; Méndez-Morse, 2003).

Hallinger (1992) posited that the transformational leader emerged in the 1990s as a result of the introduction of site-based management and the subsequent inclusion of teachers and parents in the decision-making process. He asserted that teachers, as acknowledged sources of expertise, now had opportunities to implement their own ideas to improve schooling; in other words, the school itself became the initiator of change. Teachers could assist in problem finding based on information that they gathered on student achievement at the school site, and then

problem-solve. Principals became the leaders of teacher leaders; their task was to develop their teachers' instructional leadership skills as well as to work with them on collaborative endeavours (Blase, 2004; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Glanz, 2006; Marzano, 2003; Schmoker, 2002). Hallinger contended that this process of leading was no longer a discretionary and private act by a single leader, but open to public scrutiny.

Moral leadership. Leithwood and Duke (1999) averred that another model of educational leadership, moral leadership, presented a variety of different understandings as well. Some moral leadership approaches focus on the leader's values and ethics, whereas others consider the "nature of values and how conflicts among values can be resolved" (p. 50). English (1994) asserted that a standard for determining moral leadership is a record of people's actions—their habits and character—and some concept of their most private thoughts to "grasp [their] intent or purpose" (p. 167). According to Foster (1989), a moral leader carries a responsibility to be a cause of civic moral education and not just to be "*personally* moral" (p. 56). He suggested that the ethical commitment of leadership, based on moral relationships, is geared toward the democratic values of a community and underpins a communal search for the good life.

Sergiovanni (2000) maintained that moral leadership provides a leader with the sources of authority necessary for effective leadership practice because it emphasizes the bringing together in a school community of diverse people, a shared vision, and common ideals with a common cause. Matthews and Crow (2003) regarded moral and ethical leadership as grounded in early connections

between principals and the ministry. The principal's work was perceived as having great spiritual importance; being religious, they pointed out, was an early criterion for principal recruitment and selection. According to them, public schools have now pushed away the discursive threads linked to religion, but within Catholic systems (and other schools centered on a particular faith), participation in the church community and an outward display of Christian values continues to keep dynamic the conversations about morality.

Moral leadership may also be approached as an investigation into the relationships between various stakeholders as well as the distribution of power within an organization (Leithwood & Duke, 1999).

Managerial leadership. A model of leadership that draws attention to the relationship between leadership in education and leadership in business management is managerial leadership. In Leithwood and Duke's (1999) research, managerial leadership focuses on "the functions, tasks, or behaviours of the leader" and presupposes that, if these tasks are competently carried out, "the work of others in the organization will be facilitated" (p. 53). They indicated that much of the literature in their analysis treated management and leadership as distinct and competing concepts. To emphasize these distinctions and comparisons in terms of task type, they identified the major tasks of management as implementing policy, maintaining organizational stability, and "ensuring that routine organizational tasks are 'done right,'" whereas they described leadership tasks in a parallel configuration as setting policy, instigating organizational change, and making sure that 'the right things get done'" (p. 53).

Foster (1989) suggested that managerial writers have appropriated the language of leadership, "translated [it] into the needs of bureaucracy," and fed it back to educators, so that this particular discourse of leadership "appears as a way of improving organizations, not of transforming our world" (p. 45). Educational leadership, he added, has been further reduced to a 'how-to' manual for would-be managers. Although schools share common managerial requirements for organization, structure, and stability with the business community (Sergiovanni, 2000), management is not the same as leadership.

English (2008) posited that managers do not generally question many aspects of organizations, whereas leaders may be more apt to engage in examinations of "purposes, procedures, and organizational borders" (p. 14). According to Foster (1989), the goals of the education leader should be related to social change or human emancipation and not to performance as defined by goal achievement, reflected in the needs of an organization in business. Leadership in business is often used to attain various objectives by using power to benefit not the community, but the individual. These objectives tend to treat people as means and focus primarily on achievement and what works, rather than on "creating the public" (Dewey, 1916; as cited in Carson, 2005, p. 1).

The purposes of education rooted in managerial models of school leadership are often aligned with requirements for accountability in national or provincial educational reform (Heck & Hallinger, 1999; Levin, 2001; Taylor, 2001; Wallace, 2004; Young, 2002). McWilliam (2000) contended that schools are gradually being reshaped into corporations to improve productivity and that

school administrators are under increasing pressure to "develop themselves as enterprising leaders and managers" (p. 75).

The Concept of Teacher Leadership

The concept of teacher leadership as a model of leadership underpins the role of the new AP. In the two school boards that I examined, building teacher leadership was the primary focus of their leadership training and formation programs. Teacher leadership as a concept emerged in the early 1990s with the onset of broad-based movements in education such as school-based management and professionalism (Murphy, 2005). According to Murphy, no longer did the traditional view of the principal as hierarchical with power flowing down shape all school sites. As part of a restructuring of schools, the principal role became that of a transformational leader (Hallinger, 1992). According to Blase and Kirby (2000), transformational leadership is based on Burns' (1978) belief that this type of leader helps to develop followers by paying them individual attention; for example, by attending to their professional growth and challenging the existing order. They further pointed out that the two requirements for effective teacher leadership are the administrator's commitment to developing teachers and the teachers' commitment to expanding their roles beyond the classroom, as well as becoming more accountable for these activities. Lambert (2003) agreed that the role of the teacher leader complements the function of the school administrators because the teacher's expertise is recognized and valued and supports the many leadership tasks that evolve in the school. Blase and Kirby explained that teachers must subsequently seize the opportunities that administrators offer because they

afford them more decision-making power. Murphy noted that teacher expertise is now the basis for influence in these relationships.

Teacher leadership is difficult to reduce to one understanding, similar to conceptions of leadership. Danielson (2006) identified nine dispositions of a teacher leader that included a deep commitment to student learning, open-mindedness and humility, perseverance and willingness to work hard, creative flexibility, and a tolerance for ambiguity. Murphy (2005) investigated over a dozen studies, each with a unique understanding of teacher leadership and its purposes. Some teacher leaders, he explained, are motivated by career advancement, whereas others perceive that stepping up their participation in school is a vehicle to build a professional community to improve student learning. Wasley (1992; as cited in Murphy, 2005) added that teacher leadership engages colleagues in improved practice. Lambert (1998) reminded us that teacher leaders act out of a sense of self and shared values. She also observed that a nurtured adult learning environment enables the development of teacher leadership and that every teacher has "the right, responsibility and capability to become a leader" (Lambert, 2003, p. 33). According to Lambert, the knowledge, skills, and attributes of an effective teacher include the development and support of a culture for self-reflection, the promotion of collaborative decision making, and the ability to work with others to construct knowledge through inquiry. Overall, the concept of developing teacher leaders implies a relationship between leaders and followers that is relational and reduces hierarchical distinctions.

Poststructuralist Interpretation of Identity

In this study poststructuralist theory framed the question of identity around discursive practices of leadership that affect the identity formation of subjects who are becoming APs. Poststructuralist theory is represented by a diverse range of theories that examine the relation between language, subjectivity, power, and social organization. Weedon (1997) reminded us that by including power relations and values, poststructuralism explores the underlying assumptions and types of discourses from which particular questions arise and locates them socially and institutionally. She explained that poststructuralism originated in Saussure's work on structural linguistics that described language as a chain of signs made up of signifiers (written images or sounds) whose relationship to its signifieds (meanings) is arbitrary and without fixed and intrinsic meanings. Lye (1997) described poststructuralism as a "set of theoretical positions, which have at their core a self-reflexive discourse which is aware of the tentativeness, the slipperiness, the ambiguity and the complex interrelations of texts and meanings" (¶ 1). Britzman (2003) agreed that all meaning is an active construct, wholly dependent upon language and context. She observed that language both produces and limits our understanding of how society and reality are constructed.

Identity, Discourse, and Poststructuralism

A poststructuralist perspective on identity describes the concept of self not as unitary, fixed, or stable (Hall, 1996), but as a configuration that occupies "various culturally based sites of meaning" (Lye, 1997, Part II). Hall posited that identities are constructed "within, not outside discourse [and] produced in specific

historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices" (p. 4). He explained that how we represent ourselves depends upon the ways that we have used "the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming" (p. 4) within these discourses. Weedon (1997) asserted that the self is in fact a fragmentation of selves, exemplified by the variety of subject positions taken up in social interactions. Fairbanks and Ariail (2006) pointed out that some subject positions are invoked by specific and familiar storylines such as mom, dad, teacher, and principal and that the familiarity of these roles overdetermines their meanings. They emphasized that when an individual negotiates his or her response to a particular subject position, this creates opportunities for creative responses, agency, and even a transformation of the individual's subject position.

Cultural Myths and Identity Formation

In her work on the identity formation of new teachers, Britzman (2003) provided an example of how identities are negotiated. She claimed that problems with identity emerge for student teachers as they take on the role of teacher and that this tension in becoming a teacher is reframed as an ongoing social negotiation. Britzman (1994) proposed that people (she referred primarily to student teachers) consent to representing themselves by certain discourses and that these discourses are "already overburdened with the discourses of others" (p. 56). In other words, student teachers may experience moments of struggle in their attempts to reconcile those constructs that currently define them as teachers (their history, education, situation, and understandings of experience) with the

expectations associated with their new role usually laid out by others. Some of these expectations take the form of what Britzman (2003) called *cultural myths* to become the discursive practices that shape teacher identities. According to Britzman, these discursive practices "narrate a heroic story of a self-made profession that can rise above beleaguered education" (p. 6). She explained these myths as follows: First, everything depends on the teacher, and learning is only constructed simultaneously with teacher control. Second, the teacher is the expert; the teacher knows how to teach and knows everything that there is to know about the material. Third, teachers are born, not made; in beginning to teach, the teacher has to undergo a trial by fire to confirm either that his or her skills are innate or that they are learned.

To expand this view into educational administration, APs face similar myths as normative practices in the leadership field. Everything may appear to depend on the leader, who may present him- or herself as the sole producer of knowledge; and, as English (2008) posited, connotations of leadership that derive from hero narratives continue to characterize leaders today, for the most part, with a trial by fire. APs formulate conceptions of what it is to be a good administrator from these types of cultural myths and measure them against their own internal discourses and actual practices. Their understandings of leadership practices are conveyed in school-community expectations, district directives, books and articles, policy manuals, and administrator-evaluation documents, as well as in the narratives of others in the field. Hence, if their perception of themselves as

"good" leaders is destabilized in the process of becoming leaders and as a result of the conceptions of others, then identity becomes a site of struggle.

Identity, Learning, and Resistance

Bracher (2006) described identity as "a sense of oneself as a force that matters in the world" (p. 6). This sense of self is generated by our individual experience of "continuity, agency, distinction, belonging, and meaning" (p. 6), all unique qualities essential to identity that provide us with feedback from the world and assist in interpreting our effect on others. To foster an adequate sense of self, Bracher explained that we need "recognition" (p. 7), which means that we have a basic need to be appreciated, validated, and acknowledged by others. People gain recognition in the ways that they present themselves, either by self-describing and expressing their attitudes or by attempting to manage others' impressions of themselves. Recognition, according to Bracher, is also a fundamental motivator in supporting or interfering with learning, including learning that takes place in institutional settings.

Bracher (2006) observed that learning is motivated by a person's effort to maintain and enhance identity. Every time we learn something, Bracher pointed out, our very identity is destabilized because, to some extent, we resist the new knowledge and change. When new APs take on the role of educational leaders, they typically learn the tasks associated with their role but they also learn about themselves and their identity, and they may also resist this knowledge. Britzman (1998) argued that when the knowledge encountered is perceived to threaten one's ego, it may provoke a crisis within the self. Drawing on work from Anna

Freud, Britzman observed that because people work hard to assert their sense of continuity, their response may be a refusal to learn when the knowledge "at first glance seems senseless, dangerous, or worrisome" (p. 10). This refusal or resistance may be a brief occurrence as the self negotiates links to existing understandings and integrates the information or sensation. Conversely, resistance may take the form of a defence mechanism that disallows the linking for any number of reasons. Bracher contended that enacting defence mechanisms prevents identities from "becoming more integrated, complex, and capacious" (p. 53) and that a healthy approach to greater integration occurs through the process of working through.

Authoritative Discourses That Shape Educational Leadership Practice

Authoritative discourses are frameworks or conditions within a culture that shape human perception and identity sometimes through the use of "special and sacred language" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342), but also at times, authoritative discourses are expressed through the use of everyday words (English, 1994). Bakhtin characterized authoritative discourses as "moral" or as "the word of a father, of adults and of teachers" (p. 342) to underscore the great power of authoritative discourses over the way that we think and behave. Bakhtin described authoritative discourses as embodying various contents such as "generally acknowledged truths," "the official line," and "the authoritativeness of tradition" (p. 344), which all require unconditional allegiance from those within the sphere of influence. Britzman (2003) drew heavily on the work of Bakhtin to describe

ways in which authoritative discourses, or the "persistency of particular worldviews, orientations, dispositions, and cultural myths that dominate our thinking" (p. 27), make available or deny certain practices in educational life. Authoritative discourses, according to her, are articulated and enshrined in texts and practices, and their influence is evident in how we interact in families, institutions such as school, and places of worship. Popkewitz (1987) agreed that discourse sets the conditions by which events are interpreted and individuals located. He added that discourse is the space that defines people from birth and, subsequently, the space that in fact shapes their identity. Allan et al. (2006) noted that some discourses can be recognized by the ways in which they have become taken for granted and naturalized, but most are, in fact, invisible.

Authoritative discourses become normalized practice and are commonly accepted by cultural groups without critical examination. Consenting to them generally makes sense because the discourses affirm or reinforce familiar practices. However, there are some practices shaped by these external authoritative discourses that a person's internal position challenges. For Bakhtin (1981), it is at this intersection of challenge, in the "struggle and dialogic interrelationship" of personally persuasive discourse and authoritative discourses, that the "history of an individual ideological consciousness" (p. 342) is determined; it is here that identity is negotiated. Bakhtin explained that, at some early point in our lives, our consciousness awakens to ideological life. However, this awakening occurs in a world of discourses unfamiliar to us and from which

we "cannot initially separate" (p. 345) ourselves. He added that, at the moment when thought begins to work in

> an independent, experimenting and discriminating way, what first occurs is a separation between internally persuasive discourse and authoritarian enforced discourses, along with a rejection of those congeries of discourses that do not matter to us, that do not touch us. (p. 345)

Our consciousness, or personally persuasive discourse, then begins to engage in an ongoing process of selectively assimilating the words (ideas, practices) of others and of continually negotiating new meanings about ourselves and about the world around us.

Woven throughout this literature review are hints at broad discourses that in effect shape perceptions of leadership and greatly influence leader identity. Some of these authoritative discourses are closely connected to one another, and others compete for dominance and control. Certain authoritative discourses that I have distinguished are more discernible in structures such as the tension in power relationships in schools, the effect of neoliberal policies on leadership practices, and the impact of Catholic discourses of leadership. However, more elusive authoritative discourses also shape leadership behaviours and identities. These discourses, upon examination, reveal the cultural myths and the expectations surrounding leadership roles that develop in a society and become the accepted norm in a school community; they are equally powerful discursive practices that a first-year AP may encounter upon assuming a new administrative role.

Power and Authoritative Discourses of Educational Leadership

Structures that authorize contemporary leadership are produced by social power, context, and relationship (Allan et al., 2006). Citing Sawicki (1991), Allan

et al. noted that the traditional configurations of power—power is possessed, flows from the top down, and is primarily prohibitive or repressive—construct the leader as one who wields most of the power and operates in a hierarchical structure populated by followers or minions. Foucault's (1980; as cited in Allan et al., 2006) power theory, they claimed, reframes this type of traditional power as more generative rather than coercive and prohibitive. This reconceptualization of power no longer focuses analysis on the leader who possesses power, but on the leader as one who is constituted through the exercise of power and the power relation networks. The concept of individual leadership, according to Allan et al., now shifts from notions of personal autonomy to an understanding of power as shared in consensual and collaborative ways. These authors also drew on Allen's (1999) conceptual distinctions that frame power in three modalities—power-over, power-with, and power-to—to reflect various degrees of intentionality, collective action, and empowerment within leadership relationships.

Authoritative Discourses of Autonomy and Relatedness

Allan et al. (2006) developed a conceptual framework to identify two dominant discourses of leadership: one, a discourse of autonomy that subsumes the discourses of masculinity and professionalism; and the other, a discourse of relatedness. They drew on Foucault's (1978) work to explore forms of productive power that connect to discursive structures that shape leader identity. Their discursive leadership framework offered a good starting point for a discussion on the images of leadership that unfold in my research participants' narratives. A

brief overview of each of the discourses of autonomy, relatedness, professionalism, and masculinity follows.

The discourse of autonomy, according to Allan et al. (2006), shapes images of an autonomous, masculine leader who is self-governing, morally principled, and "independent from close interpersonal relationships" (p. 49); the solo leader's close association with masculine constructs shapes the subject position of a tyrant. Conversely, they described the subject position of a leader-facilitator, shaped within a discourse of relatedness, as an alternative to the autonomous leader. This nontraditional way of thinking about leadership reconceptualizes power as shared with others in a seemingly leaderless environment comprised of self-organizing and temporary networks. The discourse of relatedness focuses on process and extends its influence to the ideals of shared and participative leadership models. Allan et al. suggested that the intersection of the discourses of relatedness and autonomy produces the subject position of negotiator. The characteristics of the negotiator draw on the qualities of both the autonomous and the relational leader; here, they not only assume "the leader's right to self-govern" but also his or her obligation to "delineate and critique [the] social conditions" (p. 56) that impact goal attainment and promote social-justice ends. As well, Allan et al. noted that the negotiator position receives political legitimacy in exchange for sharing power with what they called the *endorsing community*.

The discourse of professionalism, according to Allan et al. (2006), is characterized by a focus on the individual improvement, professional

development, and specialized knowledge of the consummate educational expert. In developing a self-reflective leader who adheres to the regulation of standards and whose goals are to have or to gain credentials, it is a discourse that is considered to be "inherently good or morally right" (Allan, 2003; as cited in Allan et al., 2006, p. 51). The subject positions that are taken up within the framework of this discourse include the expert and the beneficiary. Linked with the masculinity discourse, however, the discourse on professionalism produces images of leaders as heroes, statesmen, and warriors and often combines constructs of toughness with expertise in the field. The masculinity discourse takes for granted that masculine traits represent desired leader behaviours. Allan et al. explained that this type of autonomous leader advances the collective purpose of the group by being attuned to the needs and aspirations of his or her followers, but does not work for individual recognition alone. Furthermore, the warrior subject position, more distanced from the discourse on professionalism, operates in an environment akin to a battleground. Many familiar analogies are used with this construct in schools; for example, "leaders draw fire" and "teachers work on the front line."

Neoliberal Authoritative Discourses That Shape Educational Leadership

Valuing efficiency. In his review of the literature on educational leadership, English (2008) posited that the dominant authoritative discourse in the educational field today remains a discourse of efficiency in its "models, standards, and approach to preparation" (p. 145). He pointed out that the foundations of this discourse—the influence of scientific management combined with the concept of

total quality management—continue to influence organizations because it is thought that any organization can always become more effective and efficient. English noted that for nearly 100 years the discourse of efficiency has prevailed to reinforce a paradigm that calls for education to be run like a business. He added that very little will change in this regard partly because of the many laws that demand increased accountability and are linked with the move to a globalized economy.

Research that has chronicled the effects of globalization on education practices and policies has suggested that the Anglo-American shift to a globalized economy is evident in discourses that emphasize managerial and market accountability (Blackmore, 2004; Levin, 2001; Taylor, 2001; Wallace, 2004). Some of the ways that these discourses have been taken up in education reform are embedded in new managerialism and performativity discourses that are "articulated within a lexicon of enterprise, excellence, quality and effectiveness" (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000, p. 255). The shift from a welfarist state to new forms of governance is a move away from discourses that reflect beliefs anchored in such values as caringness, value for all children equally, democratic participation, and social transformation (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000). Gewirtz and Ball noted that the emphasis arising from new managerialism discourses is, moreover, focused on the "instrumental purpose of schooling," the goals of which are to raise standards and performance "as measured by examination results, levels of attendance, and school-leaver destinations" (p. 256). They asserted that new managers or leaders

lead with vision towards the above purposes and that this type of leadership is largely uncritical.

Valuing performativity. Like discourses of efficiency, performativity discourses are rooted in the marketplace. Performativity, according to Ball (2003), is foregrounded as the performances of individuals or organizations that "serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality,' or 'moments' of promotion or inspection"; and as such, within a field of judgement, they are "represented by the worth, quality or values of an individual or [of an] organization" (p. 216). Blackmore (2004) explained that performativity leads to more compliance with institutional practices because teachers (and presumably other educators) have no control over government policies; as a result, there is less critical dialogue as fear and anger are played out.

Wallace (2004) proposed that the effects of performativity involve significant shifts in the purposes of schooling as represented in the media and public policy texts and "the homogenizing effects of globalized capitalism on social, political, and economic values" (Manzer, 2003; as cited in Wallace, 2004, p. 2). Wallace argued that public schooling has been commodified to reproduce particular values that are rooted in the marketplace rather than in the public good. Ball (2003) explained that the rhetoric on educational reforms has an inordinately broad scope in that they establish a new form of control that makes it possible to govern in an advanced liberal way. However, within this structure, he pointed out, teachers "are encouraged to 'add value' to themselves, improve their productivity, strive for excellence and live an existence of calculation" (p. 217). Blackmore

(2004) confirmed that in restructured school systems, teachers are recognized more for their performance outside the classroom; she added that principals have also reduced their focus on educational leadership in favour of "image and financial, personnel and resource management" (p. 444). Ball noted that the self rather than the collective takes precedence and that pressure to be competitive and to perform is evident in site-based management discourses that encourage institutions "to make themselves different from one another, to stand out, to 'improve' themselves" (p. 219) within the constraints of reduced budgets (Taylor, 2001; Young, 2002), thus replacing older forms of cooperation and collective relations.

Authoritative Discourses of Catholic Educational Leadership

In this study I have focused on APs in Catholic schools, which necessitates addressing aspects of the particular ideological beliefs and meanings that constitute discourses of Catholicity. As I discussed in chapter one, a Catholic school must serve all people without judgment and be committed to the cultivation of human values, which are also Gospel values. Gospel values are rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, which Groome (1998) described as signifying a "special outreach to the poor, oppressed, and marginalized" (p. 369), and this then becomes the impetus for social justice. Gospel values are variously described as constituting respect for life and dignity for each individual, trust in God, servant leadership, compassion, mercy, and justice (Notre Dame Preparatory School, 2007). Each Catholic school district articulates these values in its religious programs, mission and vision statements, and evaluation documents, as

well as in its annual reports for the province's Ministry of Education. However, there is tension between discourses of Catholicity and current educational reforms that are shaped by marketplace discourses.

Sergiovanni (2000) explored whether the gospel message of "community and service" as the "preeminent purpose of Catholic education" (p. x) could enable the preservation and growth of Catholic institutional cultures within the context of reform in the United States. Building on Habermas' (1987) theoretical framework of communicative action, which posits that all of "society's enterprises" (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. ix) or organizations have a lifeworld and a systemsworld, Sergiovanni examined the impact of reform initiatives in American public schools. He observed that these initiatives led to the colonization of a school's lifeworld by the systemsworld, and the resultant impact was more significant for publicly funded than for private schools. In this province the public school system includes Catholic and other religious schools that are therefore subject to the same provincial reforms. To some extent, Catholic school districts seem to have become institutions with little ability to resist this colonizing effect.

In this chapter I reviewed the literature on the role of the AP, its origins, how it has changed in the past 80 years, and its many appeals and challenges. I described the relationship between the AP role and identity formation, primarily by closely examining two books that represent the mainstream literature on new-AP leadership. I examined the literature on diverse understandings of educational leadership that include transformational, moral, and managerial perspectives and reviewed the concept of teacher leadership. Poststructuralist theory frames

questions of identity in my study around authoritative discourses of leadership that shape educational leadership practice. The authoritative discourses that I identified from the data in the study, which are accepted, resisted, or negotiated by the personally persuasive discourses of new APs, are evident in the relationships of power within schools and school districts, neoliberal influences, and discourses of Catholic educational leadership.

In the next chapter I explain how I gathered and interpreted the data using and ethnographic interview to understand the identity formation of first-year APs.

CHAPTER THREE:

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THE IDENTITY FORMATION OF ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

An Ethnographic Approach

The methodology that I used in the study was an ethnographic interview. The purpose of using interviewing as my "primary mode of data collection" (Merriam, 1988, p. 72) was to obtain the perspectives of the participants by drawing on their past and present experiences and by encouraging them to voice their thoughts and understandings as they negotiate their identities as educational leaders. This methodology supports a poststructuralist orientation, which emphasizes language and the analysis of the spoken words of the participants (Spradley, 1979).

Background to Ethnography

Traditional ethnography, according to Agar (1996), forms part of a body of social, cultural, and human research that grew out of Western traditions of scientific research and was developed to accommodate inquiry about humans and other conscious beings. Wolcott (2003) reminded us that the purpose of any ethnographic study is "to provide description and analysis regarding human social behaviour" (p. xv), whether of a particular group of people or of some special human process. Ethnography is such an approach, and, as a qualitative methodology, it makes explicit and public the ways of understanding humans and ways of knowing the world (Agar, 1996; Britzman, 2003). Britzman explained that, through ethnography, we construct and organize people's experiences to be

able to make sense of what happens to us. She contended, however, that this very act of constructing and organizing on the part of the researcher problematizes traditional ethnography.

Problems With Traditional Ethnography

Britzman (2003) argued that the reader of an ethnographic account is drawn into a narrated world and into the subjectivities of its residents, expecting the ethnographer to produce the truths of the cultural secrets. She cautioned that the textualized qualities of such an account provide easy access to a culture by blurring "traditional distinctions among the writer, the reader, the story, and how the stories are told" (p. 243). Britzman also questioned the authority of language in ethnography. She called attention to the ambiguity and elusiveness of language with respect to what the participants and the researcher say and alerted the reader to be watchful for what they leave unsaid. Carspecken (2001) emphasized the importance of the way that language is "used rather than the way individuals experience perception" (p. 7) in his attempt to circumvent inaccuracies in representations of social life. He explained that there is no ground for determining the accuracy of one representation over another. Carspecken also observed that representations are always acts of power that have the potential to subjugate the peoples and cultures that are described to the researcher. Pignatelli (1998) pointed out that, because the crisis of representation is strongly linked to the role of the researcher as a producer of knowledge, authors must "continually invent ways to extend interpretive power beyond [their own] borders" (p. 405). From a poststructuralist stance as a researcher and producer of knowledge, and with

respect to the subjective experiences of new AP participants in two Catholic school districts, I have striven to maintain my awareness of my own sense of power-as-author throughout this creative process of cultural representation. I acknowledge that the descriptions and interpretations in this ethnographic study can only be partial and biased within the larger cultural context of the experiences of APs, and I acknowledge that my own interests have shaped this study.

Research Design

Data Sources

My research inquiry consisted of collecting information from four main sources: (a) two interviews with three APs within the first year of a school-based administrative position, two of whom were employed in the same Catholic school district and one in a second Catholic school district; both school districts are in a Western Canadian province; (b) one interview with each of two educational leaders at the district level who guide leadership formation within their respective Catholic school districts and who provided a school district perspective and context for the APs in the study; (c) Web-based and print documents from the two Catholic school districts that included their foundation statements, evaluation criteria, three-year plans, and annual reports; and (d) Web-based documents from the province's Ministry of Education.

Selection of Participants and Influential Leadership Texts

For this study on how new APs negotiate their identities as school-based leaders, I selected three urban and rural Catholic school districts in a province in Western Canada based on their proximity and on permission from their

superintendents to conduct research. In spite of the fact that I gained entry into all three boards, one of the boards had no first-year APs at the junior high level that year, and, as a result, I focused my research on the other two boards.

My contact with a colleague in the MCSD (a pseudonym), enabled me to secure an introduction to the superintendent and to obtain permission to approach potential participants. The MCSD is a large rural district that employs 330 teachers in 18 schools and serves over 6,700 students. The district was formed in the mid-1990s, which brought together three formerly independent school districts, two of which were established in the late 1800s. The governance of this board reflects a traditional structure that includes trustees, the superintendent, the deputy superintendent of Leadership Services and Human Resources, the assistant superintendent responsible for Learning Services, a director of Student Services, a director of Technology Services, and five consultants connected with Learning Services and Religious Services. The district's mission is to be a welcoming, Christ-centered learning community within an environment rooted in Catholic principles.

The other school district that permitted me to approach its staff for this study was TCSD (also a pseudonym). This urban school district, located in a medium-sized city, employs over 1,800 teachers in 80 schools with 35,000 students. The district has existed for over 100 years and delivers the curriculum within a Catholic context and with a mission and vision that inspire and prepare students to learn and to serve God in one another, which results in the optimization of the human potential of the students in its trust. The structure of

TCSD includes the trustees; superintendent; assistant superintendents of Leadership, Learning, Technology, Facilities, Human Resources, and Religious Services; and more than 30 consultants who support teachers and students in religious instruction, special education, technology, and curriculum.

In each of the two participating Catholic school boards I contacted a staff member at the district level who was responsible for leadership training programs. The district leaders, who were senior administrators, in turn gave me the names of APs who met my criteria of APs who were working at the junior high level (Grades 7 to 9) and had assumed their positions within the last one to three years. I chose Catholic school districts in an attempt to capture a unique perspective that links faith formation and the formation of Catholic educational leaders and because I currently work in a Catholic district. A benefit of the research personally was to deepen my own understanding of the experience of others within a similar faith-based environment. van Manen (2003) asserted that "we gather other people's experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves" (p. 62). I am also curious about how the discourse of being Catholic shapes the administrative experience. There is a shifting focus in the leadership literature that explores how to make life more spiritual and meaningful (Doetzel, 2005). What influence do acknowledging and sharing spiritual experiences and rituals have on the shaping of Catholic leaders? In what ways are these influences being eroded by other discourses?

Each of the school boards at the district level had at least three senior administrators who qualified as district leaders who influenced leadership in their

jurisdictions. The district leader role enhances the leadership capacity of staff in the school district through a range of initiatives: the selection and succession planning of school-based administrators, leadership development programs, and, possibly, partnerships with Catholic educational institutions. Leadership development programs typically include a program for staff members who are considering school-based leadership for the first time and for APs who have demonstrated their readiness for an appointment to the principalship in the near future; a program that provides training, support, and mentorship to first-year principals; and an initiative to encourage and offer collegial support to first-year APs. Other district-leader responsibilities include liaising with postsecondary institutions in the area of graduate programs for school-based leaders, collaborating with district principals to offer support and advice to school principals, and supporting principals in their work of supervising and evaluating teachers.

The interviews that I conducted with district personnel who guided the leadership formation programs in two Catholic school boards helped me to gather information and anecdotes on their respective district's leadership-related practices and perspectives. I supplemented their interviews with documents that originated in each district.

In the process of recruiting AP participants in three boards in Western Canada, I intended to balance the number of women and men and considered factors such as age and whether they had children at home to ensure a diversity of perspectives. I was also cognizant of subject-area specialties to avoid duplicating

context. Because of my desire to investigate primarily the experiences of new APs at the junior high level, I preferred to enlist participants only at secondary schools.

During the recruiting process I engaged many APs in casual conversation about their inception into educational administration. It soon became apparent that APs who were in their second or third year of administrative work had already lost their sense of tentativeness and were now more philosophical about their beginning months as administrative leaders. Because it was my intention to capture the initial experiences in the transition from teacher to educational leader, my pool of potential participants suddenly shrank because far fewer people met the criterion of first year at a junior high school. In fact, one board had no first-year APs in junior high school, a second board had one male, and a third board had two new APs, a male and a female. I contacted each of these prospective participants by e-mail and followed up soon after with a phone call to clarify the scope and intent of my research. The three new APs all agreed to be interviewed: Brian was is in his early 40s, Roger was in his late 30, and Maxine was in her mid-40s. All are Caucasian, of Canadian descent, and married; Brian and Maxine have children. Brian spent most of his 18 years as a teacher and department head of physical education and social studies in a high school, whereas Roger had taught a variety of subjects including French, Italian, mathematics, social studies, religious studies, and English language arts for 14 years, almost exclusively in junior high. Maxine had taught for 15 years in elementary schools, then after three years as a project manager, she taught junior high for three years. All of these research participants seemed genuinely interested in engaging in conversation on

the process of becoming an AP and how the identities of new APs are negotiated. The new APs especially seemed to appreciate the opportunity to voice their experiences.

Of the many possible texts that contribute to the formation of AP identities, I gathered, examined, and analyzed a selected number that pointed towards leadership practices within each of the two school boards. The purpose of gathering these data was to gain an understanding of the discursive practices that shape the thinking and actions of school leaders. The texts included each school district's general information on its Web sites; for example, mission and vision statements, three-year plans, and annual reports. I also acquired administrator evaluation documents as well as provincial documents that described educational reforms, including newly proposed standards to streamline principals' practice; and, finally, one district's policies that guide the leadership practice of APs.

Role of the Researcher

Tricoglus (2001) described the researcher as inevitably a part of the research scene, and it is "therefore necessary to identify for one's self the role being sought" (p. 144). My researcher position was more one of practitioner researcher than participant observer. In many ways I was more fully present to this investigation because, like my participants, I was equally immersed in the process of becoming an AP. My objective to come to a deeper understanding of how APs in Catholic school districts experience their social and cultural worlds also compelled me to continually rethink my assumptions about leading within a Catholic context and the extent to which I uncritically accepted certain discursive

practices as normal and right. My understanding of the school site and its nuances, however, served me well because I was an interviewer who could genuinely engage in meaningful dialogue and conversation with participant-colleagues. As I mentioned previously in this chapter, I was mindful of the impact of my presence and status as a colleague and new AP on my interpretations as well as on my language use, particularly with regard to educational jargon that might hamper clarity.

Methods of Data Collection

The methods of data collection that I drew on to investigate ways that APs negotiate identities as they become educational leaders included interviewing educators and recording our conversations, collecting documents as sources of information, and maintaining a journal.

By conducting a qualitative interview, I aimed to study "the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of individuals" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 38). According to Carspecken, the goal of the qualitative interview is to encourage the participants to describe events in which they remember taking part, elicit their recollections of incidents and specific action situations, and then articulate their interpretations. For all interviews I used a narrative interview method, which is an approach that draws on the biographical-interpretive method and the autobiographical narrative interview (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Hollway and Jefferson pointed out that the information from these narratives originates in the free association of the participant and is not always under the control of the interviewer. The free-association process invites participants to self-select experiences, which thereby

allows researchers to gain access to the events that they determine to be the most significant and relevant. The principles that guide this method include the use of open-ended questions, the avoidance of "why" questions, follow-up on themes by using the narrative order and phrases of the interviewee, and acknowledgement that the stories that the interviewer elicits are choices that the storyteller makes. I noted Hollway and Jefferson's emphasis on the importance of eliciting stories intact from the participants, with the intention of drawing out concrete details to explore certain experiences to the fullest.

I developed a structural framework to gather data that provided a focus for analysis and interpretation (see Appendix A). This framework guided the interview discussions, the flow of the interpretation of the interviews, and the analysis. My interview questions focused primarily on four areas to investigate the experiences of new APs: preparation for the administrative role; the impact of becoming an AP on relationships with family, colleagues, and students; conceptions of leadership; and issues of conflict in forming AP identities. I asked the district leaders in my study to describe their roles within their respective districts, their roles in leadership formation and training, and their conceptions of leadership.

Although I had planned two interviews (see Appendixes A and B for sample interview questions), I did not rule out the possibility of a third should information be lacking. The second interview with the APs took place within two months of the first one, once I had gained a perspective on the first interview and had "a reading of the person that [was] sensitive to all the details offered"

(Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 43). The purpose of the second interview was to explore themes that had emerged and to fill in gaps. In the transcripts I assigned pseudonyms to the participants and their institutions. I typed the transcripts myself for ease of reading, notation, and coding.

The main data phase began in March 2008, and all of the interviews took place within four months of that time. I interviewed the two district-level participants once and the three AP participants twice, each approximately three weeks apart, and I arranged for one supplementary interview. The interviews were no longer than one hour in duration, and I conducted them on an individual basis either at the school site or at a location mutually convenient to me and the participants. I was the sole transcriptionist of these tape-recorded interviews, and all participants gave their informed consent to use the data that they generated in this research study. I performed member checks with all participants to ensure the accuracy and adequacy of our conversations.

The second strategy that I used to collect information was to review documents that were germane to the identification of certain perspectives and discourses in each of the school boards. These documents included policies on the role of the AP as well as the evaluation criteria for administrators. I also reviewed documents from the Ministry of Education that included the newly developed provincial standards for principals; this document will influence the structure of future leadership programs and evaluation documents. Finally, I recorded in a journal my impressions and reflections after each interview and transcription and referred to these notes as required.

Data Analysis Procedures

The interview questions. The interview questions provided information on the participants' backgrounds, their understanding of leadership and their role, and the impact of becoming an AP on their personal and professional lives. The participants' responses formed part of my interpretation of the interview data, in which I also described my impressions of each of the participants, at times inferring qualities and attitudes from their body language and voice tone. The interpretation also included the perspectives of the participants' respective school districts. As well, I developed an interpretive summary that was guided by the following questions:

1. How did the district and the AP(s) understand conceptions of leadership? Where did their understandings intersect? Diverge?
2. How did the district and the AP(s) understand what the role of the AP is and how a teacher might best prepare for it as he or she moves from teaching to leading?

As I collected, transcribed, and reflected upon the interview data, I engaged in a preliminary analysis, and at several junctures restated and clarified the research question and theoretical perspective on identity.

Coding the data. One of my first goals in coding and analyzing the transcripts from the interviews and the various sources of information was to understand the discursive practices of leadership that circulate in particular school districts. Following Carspecken's (2001) advice, I intended to identify certain words that the participants used and to attend to the semantic structures that

position people within power relationships. Other useful strategies were to look for contrasts between and similarities to other terms that worked together and to examine pragmatic structures such as roles, patterns, and activities (Carspecken, 2001). I developed three questions to guide this process: (a) What are APs' understandings of what leadership is? (b) What is the district's understanding of what makes an effective leader? and (c) What power structures are in operation? Working across the interviews numerous times, I identified categories, patterns, and themes that are part of particular discursive leadership practices and that emerged as authoritative discourses.

A second goal was to use a coding procedure with the interview data to answer and analyze the question "What does learning to lead *do* to an educator?" I colour-coded the interview sheets of each AP participant, cut into strips all of their speech units, and sorted and organized their experiences of becoming educational leaders. I organized the themes that emerged from this process into six categories that described the challenges and conflicts that the new APs encountered during their transition from teaching to a leadership role, and I combined some of the themes to better highlight their contradictory natures. These themes comprised the personally persuasive discourses of the participants; they included the following: (a) Becoming a new AP both demands the AP's compliance with existing authority, policies, and practices *and* gives the AP the power and authority to act; (b) taking on the AP role problematizes *and* opens up understandings of educational leadership; (c) becoming a new AP both hampers *and* opens up opportunities to develop educational leadership skills and

competencies; (d) the transition from teaching to leading challenges *and* affirms the AP's beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning; (e) a beginning AP experiences changes and enhancements to school-based relationships; and (f) assuming the role of AP both problematizes *and* opens up opportunities for change and growth. I sought feedback on the accuracy and adequacy of these findings from two colleague administrators in the educational community and revised them as necessary.

Finally, I combined the authoritative discourses that emerged and the personally persuasive discourses of the participants to develop three themes that I analyze in chapter six. Each theme is central to the negotiation of AP identity:

1. Various authoritative discourses of leadership are circulating in training programs for aspiring leaders (i.e., top-down management, collaborative leadership, neoliberal business practices). They are in conflict not only with one another, but also with some internally persuasive discourses of aspiring leaders in a Catholic school system (i.e., ethic of care, social justice). How do the participants experience and negotiate these conflicting discourses?
2. First-year APs are required to negotiate among personally persuasive discourses of community, collegial relationships, and institutional expectations of leadership. How do the participants experience the challenges and affirmations of these deeply held values and traditional institutional demands of administration?

3. Becoming a new AP demands the AP's compliance with both the existing authoritative discourses of leadership responsibilities, district policies, and practices and the expectation that educational leaders will exercise autonomous power and authority. How do the participants negotiate this tension between these role expectations and autonomous decision making?

Ethics

Because this study involved the participation of human subjects, I was cognizant of issues of power and privilege and the need to consider any potential ethical problems beyond common, everyday risk. I therefore addressed the ethical considerations by submitting an ethics application form in adherence with the ethical guidelines of the Faculties of Education and Extension and the Augustana Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta.

I explained the purpose and nature of my research to all of the participants individually, either in person or by telephone, and sent them a written letter and consent form that described the research study in more detail and clearly outlined their right to opt out without penalty should they choose to do so. I reminded the participants of their rights at the beginning and end of each interview in the event that their original intentions had changed. No participants chose to opt out of this research study. With respect to the participants from the two participating school jurisdictions, I have no authority over hiring, evaluation, transfer, or promotion; my relationship is solely as a colleague and scholar. With respect to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality issues, I cannot guarantee the participants'

anonymity, but I have made every effort to ensure confidentiality by using pseudonyms to protect their identities. I also changed the names of all schools and school districts, as reflected in the transcripts and documents that I have mentioned in this research. I have stored the original transcripts and all original data in a locked drawer in my home and will keep them for a period of five years after the completion of this study. I did not involve research assistants, transcriptionists, interpreters, and/or other personnel to carry out any research tasks.

Although I do not anticipate any threat or harm to the participants, I believe that some risk is involved in terms of trust in engaging in an open dialogue about actions and feelings; in other words, the participants may have felt or now feel vulnerable. From the onset and during the interviews, I anticipated building a professional and friendly relationship with the participants by being empathic, showing vulnerability myself, withholding judgment, and offering ongoing support. In the event that I encounter any of the research participants after I have completed this research, I hope to be attentive to any lingering effects, positive or negative, on the participants themselves and to demonstrate increased thoughtfulness and tact when we meet.

Limitations

This study was restricted to two school districts in one area, in one province in Canada. The findings in this study are not generalizable to all junior high schools, nor are they generalizable to the experiences of other new APs, but

they might be transferable to other school situations and settings. The reader will be in the best position to determine their transferability.

In terms of limitations related to sampling, during the year that I conducted the interviews and gathered the data within the consenting school boards, there were only three new APs in junior high school, and although they all agreed to participate, the sample is small. A third limitation is with respect to the data procedures. No observations were deemed necessary for two reasons: My research question was centered on identity formation more than on role (which is the observable part), and because I am in an AP position myself, I was familiar with the context of the research, the nature of the work, and the world of educational administration.

In this chapter I explained how an ethnographic approach supported my research on how new APs negotiate authoritative and personally persuasive discourses to fashion their identities as leaders. I described the research design and data-analysis procedures, which included selecting the participants and texts on educational leadership from two Catholic school districts, literature on educational leadership, and documents from the province's Ministry of Education, as well as coding the data and developing themes. Finally, I discussed the ethical considerations related to human participants and the possible limitations of this study.

In chapters four and five I report the findings from the data collection from two Catholic school districts and three first-year APs. I also analyze leadership training, the structure of the experience of new APs, and conceptions

of leadership from the perspective of the school district and analyze the preparation and induction into the administrative role from the perspectives of the new APs.

CHAPTER FOUR:

BECOMING AN ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL IN MISSION CATHOLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

In the next two chapters I report the findings from the data from two Catholic school districts and three first-year APs for my investigation of how new APs fashion their educational leadership identities in relation to persuasive and authoritative discourses. In this chapter I begin with the structural framework that I used to explore the formation of AP identities, followed by the findings from MCSD, a medium-sized rural district in Western Canada, which describe leadership training, the structure of the experience of new APs, and the conceptions of leadership from the perspective of the school district. Last, I describe the preparation for and induction into the administrative role from the perspective of Brian, a first-year AP who is a new educational leader in this district. I used a pseudonym for both Brian and his school district to maintain their anonymity.

Structural Framework to Investigate the Formation of Assistant Principal Identities

This research is part of my own journey and experience in becoming an AP. Because of my own role as a new AP, my interactions and relationships with the participants were more collegial than academic. Our conversations took place in an atmosphere of engagement and genuine mutual interest within a context of shared stories and recollections. Many times I held back my own version of a similar situation, and many times an exchange of experiences would have

enhanced the discussion. The APs were comfortable with the prospect of my recording two one-hour conversations in their school offices after school hours. I met with the district leaders in their offices at their respective school boards for a one-hour interview, also outside of school hours. At the beginning of each of the conversations with the participants, we established a rapport and camaraderie, and this eased any tension. In many ways the contiguous nature of the study—I was both a participant and the researcher—changed the way that I assumed the role of AP. As I asked questions of the participants and listened to their responses, our conversations directly influenced my future actions as an educational administrator. Their collective experiences became valuable information for me as I continued to learn the role.

The structural framework that I used to gather data created a focus for analysis and interpretation. I used this framework to guide the interview discussions and the flow of my interpretation of the interviews with new APs. I asked the district leaders in my study to describe their roles within their respective districts, their role in the leadership formation and training of prospective and new APs, and their conceptions of leadership to ascertain the districts' perspectives. In the following section I describe in detail four topics with regard to how teachers form AP identities by using my own experience as a new AP to provide a context for the interpretation of these topics. The four topics are (a) preparation for the administrative role; (b) the impact of becoming an AP on relationships with family, colleagues, and students; (c) conceptions of leadership; and (d) issues of conflict in forming AP identities.

Preparation for the Administrative Role

The circumstances and events that prepare a teacher for a school-based administrative role vary between districts and from person to person. Through interview questions, I attempted to draw out stories of formal and informal preparation in the development of leadership skills and understandings. My own transition from teacher to leader was both an easy and a difficult process, which I acknowledge is appropriately ambiguous, as is the nature of the AP role. My six years as a curriculum consultant gave me a distinct advantage over teacher colleagues who were assuming school-based administrative positions for the first time. As a consultant, I had developed a broader perspective of my own school district and how it functioned, formed professional relationships with many district personnel, strengthened my communication and presentation skills, deepened my understanding of curriculum and assessment practices, served on provincial committees, and was exposed to a wide variety of leadership styles in many schools and other educational venues. I attended my district's leadership formation program in 2006-2007, which served primarily as an introduction to the literature on school culture, professional learning communities, and teacher leadership.

My first placement as an AP was in a sizable K-9 school that partnered me with two very experienced administrators: a second AP and a principal. As a result, the tasks that two normally share were spread among three administrators, which was exceedingly helpful to my initiation into leadership. However, I soon learned that what I thought I knew about the role and about leadership did not

quite match the reality of being in an AP position. The skills that I had developed were indeed helpful, but they were potentially superfluous or inadequate. I walked into a predetermined role that had been in place and into which I was expected to step, no matter my skill set. It was assumed, nevertheless, that I was up to the many managerial tasks, coaching duties, organizational needs, and assortment of requests from the school community. I became adept at guessing what needed to be done and was frequently guided by the responses of others.

Impact of Becoming an Assistant Principal on Relationships

I asked my AP participants questions about the impact of learning to lead on their personal and professional relationships to consider how they reconciled newfound authority and dealt with "buy-in" into their new role. For me, parent, student, and teacher expectations were apparent at the onset of the school year, although the responsibilities of the AP were slow to emerge and not clearly set out. Members of the school community often wanted and expected immediate answers to their many questions. I was at times unsettled by requests to speak to the nuances of the school's admission policy or by my ignorance of commonplace school information such as bus schedules, student movement, supervision schedules, timetabling—things that I would normally pick up through experience, but that needed to be communicated in a timely manner.

A second impact of learning to lead was my loss as a teacher of the physical space of a classroom to serve as a home base in which to keep resources and display student work and visual pedagogical aids. I was assigned to teach two classes of social studies to Grade 7 students in a home economics laboratory that

was organized around four very large tables. Twenty-eight students were crowded into a space that was at times distracting because of the array of forgotten sewing needles or the aroma of freshly baked muffins. I was not accustomed to this classroom ambiance, but it was the only room that could accommodate my teaching schedule.

It is difficult to gauge the impact of becoming an AP on my relationship with members of my family; the time became blurred with the additional commitment of academic pursuits. However, I had less time overall with my spouse and especially with my aging parents; I was more likely to be doing homework alongside my three university-aged children.

More visible was the impact on my professional life as a new administrator. My relationships with a handful of teachers whom I knew at the school had already been established to some extent through my consultant role. I had presented professional development sessions to staff and parents at this school on several occasions over the years. Some staff assumed that this was not my first assignment as an AP and were therefore surprised at a certain level of doubt or hesitation that I occasionally displayed to what they perceived were simple requests and expectations.

Conceptions of Leadership

To elicit from new APs their understandings of leadership, I asked them to describe their images of leadership at its best and its worst, as well as to articulate their own leadership style and to create a metaphor of leadership that reflected their approach. Yukl (2002) noted that "researchers usually define leadership

according to their individual perspectives and the aspects of the phenomenon of most interest to them" (p. 2), and I anticipated that the research participants would do the same.

Throughout my first year as an AP, I struggled with the many understandings of leadership that emerge in this role, whether they originated from my own subjective experience or from the perspectives and expectations of others. I was surprised by both the tension and the tentativeness that arose in me when I was making certain decisions. I wanted to be perceived as fair, reasonable, capable, and strong; yet I often found myself wondering what actions actually led to this perception. What is a leader's appropriate response? Was I being too harsh, too lenient, too vulnerable, or perhaps not creative enough? In an attempt to gain an acceptable solution, I found myself engaged in a constant negotiation to ensure that the dignity of everyone involved in the issue remained intact; of course, a happy outcome was not always the end result. My co-administrators were instrumental in both advising me on and debriefing these situations. Together, we worked within a shared leadership model, because my current principal places a high value on building the leadership capacity of all staff and students. He exemplifies a type of leadership in which relationships are most important, and he maintains that all decisions must, in some way, elevate the situation.

Another understanding of leadership that gave me pause was the concatenation of leading and managing. Did the distinction really matter? Were managerial tasks not characteristic of the leader role according to my district's administrator evaluation document? As educators, do we not laud the business

literature on leadership and attempt to emulate its organizational structures? But the more I learned from studying leadership in university coursework, the more I recognized just how fragile and confusing our shared understandings of leadership were. How might school districts and other APs make sense of this?

Issues of Conflict in Forming Assistant Principal Identities

In the process of becoming new APs, those who are learning to lead are shaped by multiple and complex factors, such as discursive practices of leadership and other people's overfamiliarity with the AP role. Parents, teachers, students, secretaries, and custodians—all of these others play a role opposite an administrator based on their years of observation, and they create conditions and expectations that might not be comfortable for the new AP. Hartzell et al. (1994) reminded us that very few teachers, for example (as part of those "others"), get a close look at the school's administrative operation or are always aware of the complexity of the work involved when they become APs. They develop ideas of what the role is and how the new AP might structure relations of power, because the stable identity of the person in the role is often assumed. Britzman (2003) pointed out that teachers' identities become overpopulated with superficial knowledge about the role and that gender—female and male identities—also impacts the expectations of the role. I believe that a similar tension also works to construct the new AP.

For me, conflicts between my identity as an AP and the AP role seemed at times quite manageable, and then insurmountable. My knowledge of curriculum and assessment practices, for example, from my former role as a consultant

enhanced my effectiveness as an instructional leader. I was comfortable engaging in conversations about pedagogy with teachers and was not so uneasy about the prospect of supervising teacher practice. On the other hand, my relationships with teachers were not always smooth. During the first reporting period in November, the three administrators in my school shared the task of giving teachers written feedback on a draft copy of their report cards. One of the "seasoned" male teachers assigned to me angrily entered my office the next day. He claimed that I had insulted his integrity and professionalism by questioning the grades of "insufficient achievement" that he had given to certain students and by writing observations that, in his opinion, distinctly lacked positive feedback. He claimed that none of his previous administrators had ever contested any aspect of his report cards. This teacher was forceful and passionate in his indignation, and after calming him down with an explanation of my rationale, I burst into tears. I cannot say whether I was embarrassed or hurt by his accusation, but I was completely unprepared for such a challenge to my authority. My two male administrative colleagues, in a later discussion, suggested that I was the victim of a bullying tactic, perhaps because I am female and "smaller." My relationship with this teacher, although guarded after this event, remained courteous and professional.

Format for Presenting the Interview Data

In chapters four and five I present my interpretation of my conversations with my research participants as pairings of perspectives from two Catholic school districts. Each pairing comprises the point of view of the district and the perspective of one or two new APs from the same school district. This approach

helped me to establish a context of leadership for new APs because it directly linked the discursive leadership practices of the district with the experiences and understandings of the new AP. The format that I use to present the interview data from the AP participants includes descriptive passages and the participants' own words. Because this research is integrally tied to AP subjectivities, it was my intention to retain as closely as possible the individual participants' original language and their intended meaning by conducting member checks.

In this chapter I describe the MCSD and its perspective on the transition from teacher to administrative leader, followed by the story of Brian, a school administrator who is a new AP in the MCSD.

School District's Perspective on Becoming an Assistant Principal

At the time of this research, MCSD, a medium-sized rural district in a Western Canadian province, served over 6,700 students in 18 schools and employed 330 full-time teachers.[2] It was the third largest Catholic school district in the province and was governed by seven elected school trustees, whose mandate was to ensure that the district's policies and practices reflected Catholic principles and values. The trustees acted in conjunction with the superintendent of MCSD, who worked with a deputy superintendent and an assistant superintendent responsible for Learning Services; two directors, one of Student Services and the other of Technology Services; and five consultants connected with Learning

[2] I accessed the documents entitled "About Us: Quick Facts," "Trustees," "About Us: Mission and Vision," "Annual Education Results Report 2007-2008," "Role of the Principal for School Administrator Evaluation," and "Administrative Procedures Manual" online from the school district that I call Mission Catholic School District (2008). For the purposes of confidentiality, I refer to this school district by this pseudonym throughout this document.

Services. The deputy superintendent position included responsibility for two departments, Leadership Services and Human Resources, and the role involved guiding the development of leadership training programs and placing and evaluating school-based administrative leaders. In this capacity the deputy superintendent was also responsible for identifying teachers with the potential for AP positions and worked with APs who were interested in becoming principals.

MCSD's mission statement emphasizes the importance of giving students quality learning opportunities through "Christ-centered programs rooted in Catholic principles." Staff members are expected to model morals and core values, prayer, respect, and high expectations to meet the district twin goals of forming "good people" and attaining academic excellence. MCSD was responsive to the current practice of providing choice to students and parents. On its Web site it advertises a variety of special programs designed to meet the needs of its many students; these include a cyber school, sports academies, arts programs, International Baccalaureate programs, and home schooling.

Also on the MCSD Web site are the yearly reports on jurisdiction performance that the Ministry of Education mandated: the "Three-Year Education Plan" and the "Annual Education Results Reports" (AERRs), both measures that aim to ensure that school districts are accountable for their results and their use of resources to provide quality programming and address areas for improvement. The "Three-Year Education Plan" is a report that outlines the district's goals (aligned with the goals of the province) over three years, strategies for improvement, and a budget. The AERR gauges the district's progress toward

achieving the goals and the outcomes of its "Three-Year Education Plan." Both reports involve the district's review of any local measures as well as a summary of accountability measures that the ministry sends annually to each school district. This accountability report includes the results of district surveys conducted earlier in the school year that the ministry coordinates for school staff; students in Grades 4, 7, and 10; and their parents to determine their levels of satisfaction with their school and school district with respect to goals that the ministry has set out. The report also includes measures that address the school district's achievement on provincial exams, its diploma participation rate, and the percentage of students eligible for a provincial scholarship. Reported are the school district's and province's current results, the previous year's results, and the previous three-year average; the school district is then ranked on its achievement and improvement and receives an overall rating "excellent," "good," or "acceptable," or "issue to be addressed."

The 2007-2008 AERR contained messages from the MCSD's Board of Trustees and superintendent about the benefits of Catholic education such as opportunities for students to perform service projects and develop further spiritually, as well as the district's highlights, goals, future challenges, and financial results and a report on its capital and facilities. The goals and outcomes that MCSD developed were clearly connected to the data on the district in the accountability report. MCSD's goal for "the education system to meet the needs of all students, society, and the economy" is aligned with the provincial goal of high-quality learning opportunities for all staff and students. The goal in the

AERR was paired with a survey question designed to determine the extent to which parents and students were satisfied with the overall quality of basic education in the MCSD. The AERR described the strategy to manage this outcome as an action research project that involved research from Gallup University and was based on the work of Dr. Gary Gordon to build engaged schools. The district had already begun to implement a staff selection process for both instructional staff and administrators that enabled the human resources department "to select and interview the most talented people to work with students." It also incorporated a districtwide Gallup survey aimed at measuring critical areas of the school climate that directly affect teacher engagement. After having used this new process for a year, the district was confident that it was "proving to be reliable and was yielding positive results."

A second district goal that supported the same provincial goal was to ensure that MCSD staff "experience passion, purpose and conviction." This goal was developed in conjunction with a survey question designed to measure the extent to which teachers were satisfied with staff morale in the schools. The strategy identified to manage teacher satisfaction was to find a way to fully engage staff members in their work so that they can provide "students with the highest degree of service and educational expertise." MCSD once again drew on research from Gallup University to develop what it called "a strength-based organization" (the school) to generate in staff more passion for and fulfillment from their work. According to a district leader, the underlying theoretical approaches included in the Gallup research were also "applied to the district's

negotiations process, its professional development model, and to human resources practices for selection and hiring of professional staff." MCSD's faith identity as a Catholic district was also an integral part of this formative process, which the district contended was further supported by the strength-based professional development included in the Gallup approach. Both of the strategies described above were integral components of MCSD's practice in shaping leadership training and professional development.

Leadership Training in the School District

Before the 2007-2008 school year, MCSD approached the recruitment of teachers into administrative positions by offering a leadership development program to answer a key question about a vocational call to administrative leadership. *Vocation* suggests that a person responds to a spiritual summoning to perform a type of special work or function with a particular set of values and, in the case of MCSD, *Catholic* values. More than 50 teachers from this Catholic district took up the call over a period of four years to participate in a program that included discussion on the different meanings of leadership and the district's criteria for leaders, as well as a focus on what individual teachers had to offer the district. Interested teachers met approximately seven times from January through December, culminating at year end with an opportunity to apply the following January for an administrative-based appointment for the next school year. The leadership program's topics of discussion were shared monthly with principals to encourage teacher-leader/administrator conversations about leadership at the school level. Part of the formation and training program also included one or two

opportunities for the teacher leaders to job-shadow a principal in a school at a different level. The district believes that job shadowing helps teachers to gain a visual understanding and a sense of the school culture and is an opportunity to encounter different leadership perspectives, usually at a level unfamiliar to the teacher. The teachers were assigned books and articles to read on topics such as Catholic leadership and how to develop more effective communication skills. As a culminating activity, the teachers responded to the question "Am I called to administrative leadership?" in writing.

Foundation of leadership programs. A team of MCSD administrators who served on a district-level committee that the deputy superintendent established developed the curriculum for the district leadership program. This committee operated as a focus group that offered advice and consultation on this and other leadership development programs. The MCSD approach was to focus professional development for prospective administrators on a document called the "Role of the Principal for School Administrator Evaluation." This document was the basis for school-site administrator evaluation and the foundation for the development of the district's leadership training programs. The district had designed the role of the principal around cultural, instructional, and managerial/ organizational leadership perspectives. In addition to these understandings of leadership, the "Role of the Principal" document also outlined the desirable personal and professional attributes of accomplished school administrators, as well as their skills in the area of interpersonal relationships (see Appendix C). Each role description in the "Role of the Principal" document was exemplified by

a detailed list of possible specific responsibilities for an administrator. However, an unexpected quality that MCSD considered worthwhile to evaluate was part of the skill set for the development of interpersonal relationships. To develop positive (interpersonal) relations with stakeholders, principals were assessed on how well they established partnerships with community agencies and organizations within the school community, on how well they established procedures for effective communication, and, surprisingly, on their propensity for entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneur* is first and foremost a term associated with business—a person who organizes and manages a business with considerable initiative and risk. How and for what purposes did entrepreneurship become a desirable skill for a school principal in the MCSD? Whatever the reasons, this mindset might have been a contributing factor in the district's recent shift in its approach to leadership formation.

A new approach to leadership formation. To maximize its limited resources to interview the "best" people for teaching and administrative positions, MCSD partnered with an organization that used a preliminary assessment tool to screen applicants to the school district based on a ranking system. In 2007 the district purchased online tools and services from the educational end of the Gallup Organization. I have described the rationale for this partnership with Gallup elsewhere in this chapter as part of the strategies that MCSD devised to offer all staff in the district high-quality learning opportunities.

Gallup Consulting Education Practice (Gallup, Inc., 2009b) is an American Web-based prescreening tool that identifies potential administrative

candidates. The strategy involves measuring talent by using an assessment tool called *PrincipalInsight.*" Gallup, Inc. (2009d) described talents as naturally existing "recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied" (p. 184) by a person. MCSD believes that the research upon which this assessment was based was solid with regard to what the best principals do, not only because it was based on Gallup's claim that the results are consistent with principal applicants' responses, but also because it reflected the performance expectations that the district itself identified as part of the role of the principal.

As well, Gallup Consulting Education Practice (Gallup, Inc., 2009b) offers *TeacherInsight*, which is also a talent indicator for teachers. The district considered this a valuable tool, like its predecessor from the Stanford Research Institute (SRI). According to one of MCSD's leaders, both of these tools were easy to use and highly predictable for the hiring of staff. MCSD's decision to buy services from Gallup had its roots partially in the religious work of a Catholic educator that underpinned the district's desire to identify its staff's God-given talents and gifts as part of the ministry of Catholic education. The Gallup program's approach to identifying talents seemingly fit the values, core mission, and vision of the school district because the leaders moved towards finding and working with their own strengths.

For MCSD teachers who were interested in leadership formation, the procedure for applying to the district began with the completion of an online assessment using *PrincipalInsight* from Gallup, Inc. (2009b). Although the deputy superintendent reviewed all applicants in the school district who completed a

PrincipalInsight assessment, he or she focused primarily on the names at the top of the list based on a ranking of the results and then worked down the list to schedule interviews. The district believes that at times it is somewhat more difficult for a large panel of interviewers with different ideas on talent to accurately assess the potential of a candidate and that the *PrincipalInsight* talent indicator would eliminate this ambiguity. The questions from the district's administrative application form were then aligned with the behaviour descriptive interview approach, because these questions also have a high level of predictability of future behaviours.

After the interview process the deputy superintendent met with each of the applicants and debriefed the interview and the assessment. The purpose was to have someone at the district level describe to each applicant what the panel had learned about him or her and then to suggest what the applicant might do with this new information. The deputy superintendent focused on the identified talents and used this information from the Gallup assessment to help the teacher, especially in the event that the teacher's application for a school-based administrative position was unsuccessful.

According to MCSD, in addition to *PrincipalInsight*, *StrengthFinder* was also a useful component of the Gallup, Inc. (2009a) program. *StrengthFinder* is an online tool that results in a personal assessment of an individual's top five strengths. Gallup, Inc. (2009d) described *strength* as "the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a specific task [but that] must be developed and are the product that results when one's talents are refined with

acquired skills and knowledge" (p. 184). All current administrators in the district were required to access this tool to complete a questionnaire, and the senior administration then analyzed the results. Some examples of what might contribute to a person's individual strengths were being a "learner" or an "arranger" and "having great empathy." The district encouraged teachers and administrators to spend their time on their top strengths while they did their work and to downplay any character weaknesses.

Developing an administrative team. A benefit of identifying strengths, according to the district, was that this process was an integral component of planning how to match administrative team members. MCSD matched the specific strengths of the AP with those of a principal. As a result of this newfound understanding of strengths, the district believes that it was doing a better job overall of fitting people into various school situations as a team and fitting them to the culture of the community. If successful candidates' strengths did not match those of existing principals, the district was reluctant to place them in a situation that would not work for them or for the school and advised them to find ways to enhance their teacher leadership at their school sites.

Leadership course curriculum. A group of senior administrators that included the superintendent, deputy superintendent, and assistant superintendent determined the course curriculum for leadership training at MCSD. The curriculum was based on their collective sense of what they perceived was occurring in the field and on what they had gleaned from the observations of other administrators. They generated ideas for content through a process that involved

extrapolating information from the professional growth plans of administrators. A district leadership formation and training program was not offered in 2007 because the district was in the process of changing its format. The transition began that year with the reorganization of the selection process of administrators to include Gallup's online assessment tools and with the expansion of leadership development to encompass a broader base that built ground-level leadership capacity in other areas besides administration. The district believes that its leadership development program did not have to lead directly to formal administrative positions in the school, but that teachers could go back to schools where they were encouraged to become the best teacher leader or the best department head within the school environment.

The curriculum for developing capacity in potential educational administrators originally drew solely from the "Role of the Principal" document to incorporate specific training on policies and procedures in the district, as well as on professional development topics such as spiritual and managerial leadership. A shift in curricular focus included ways for administrators to use their strengths to build engaged schools; this topic has largely been influenced by resources published by the Gallup Organization. The district's leadership training also included individual review of the results from the assessment *StrengthFinder* to individualize a growth plan (Gallup, Inc., 2009a).

District Structuring of the Experience of a New Assistant Principal

The deputy superintendent and the assistant superintendent of MCSD facilitated an orientation at the beginning of the school year for first-year APs and

principals new to their positions. The purpose of the orientation was to familiarize this group of new administrators with the work of the district's Human Resources and Learning Services departments. Following this introduction, all APs attended the principal meetings once a month and partook in their professional development sessions. The agenda for these meetings was replete primarily with items that concerned leadership and the principal and did not typically address any issues specific to the role of the AP.

Some of the topics that unfolded in professional development sessions during that year and that impacted all of MCSD's administrators were spiritual leadership, administrative policies and procedures, classroom walk-throughs as part of supervision and monitoring, training for new people on the Instrument for the Observation of Teaching Activities (an evaluation tool that involves a collaborative approach between the teacher and the evaluator), and the development of interview skills for administrators. As well, people from the Gallup Organization offered a session on working with strengths and building engaged schools. The same committee that organized the leadership program often determined these topics.

School District Conceptions of Leadership

Diverse values and underlying assumptions influence how leadership is understood and practiced in a particular school district. In MCSD, educational leadership has been enacted primarily from the perspectives described in the "Role of the Principal for School Administrator Evaluation" document that encompass cultural, instructional, and managerial/organizational leadership

approaches. Overall, the principal as an educational leader is responsible for the achievement of the mission and educational goals established for the school and the district and for the implementation of board policies and administrative directives. The principal role includes accountability for maintaining a high standard of education in the school through ongoing supervision and evaluation of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities. In addition, and with the assistance of the AP, the principal oversees school-based decision making (management) and school councils, the planning and control of the expenditure of school funds, the evaluation and reporting of student learning and development, and the supervision of all school staff. The AP's role also includes other duties, responsibilities, and obligations as assigned by the principal.

MCSD has a strong link between leadership development and human resources because of the joint responsibilities inherent in the deputy superintendent position. The district had sought more precision in people's potential had for various district jobs by hiring the best possible staffs; this was also part of the impetus for establishing a partnership with the Gallup Organization. The district vision of leadership was shaped around the notion of talent, which is an indicator of whether someone will repeatedly perform at a higher level. This vision of leadership is intended to ensure that the most talented people are available to the district's students.

The district believes that the implementation of this program would have the potential for greater efficiency in improving teacher and student performance.

It impacted every aspect of MCSD's practices related to the recruitment of teacher leaders and the development of leadership in educational administrators.

On Becoming a New Assistant Principal: The Case of Brian

Background and Context

In the fall of 2007 Brian became a new AP at Our Lady of Guadalupe Junior High School, an urban school located in a central, mid-socioeconomic neighbourhood. The school is one of 18 in the MCSD; it employs 25 teachers and 10 support staff, who serve 500 students from Grades 7 to 9.

Brian graduated in secondary education with a double major in physical education and social studies. He described his motivation to become an educator as a desire to have an impact on students and learning. He started his teaching career at an elementary-junior high school in another rural district 60 kilometres from MCSD. After three years he moved into a high school teaching position within the same district and taught there for 15 years; he served as a physical education department head for 11 of those years. During this time he developed and taught a new sports medicine curriculum. From 2003 to 2007 Brian completed a master's degree program in educational leadership at one of the provincial universities.

Preparation for the Administrative Role

Brian's identity as an educational leader was being formed long before he became a leader. His experience as a department head and his graduate work towards a master's degree helped to prepare him for the educational leadership role of AP. In the position of department head of a large high school, Brian was

responsible for supervising seven people and managing a budget line of $130,000.00. His knowledge of curriculum in sports medicine, physical education, and social studies also contributed to his credibility as a teacher and a leader. As a student in pursuit of a master's degree, Brian had switched from curriculum studies to educational leadership and administration within the first few months because he felt that the educational leadership program offered him opportunities to study leadership from different perspectives. He chose to concentrate on courses on leadership styles (e.g., transformational, instructional, and managerial) rather than on what he called just "straight administration" or how the school is run.

As culminating activities for his master's degree, Brian completed two internships, one that involved an exploration of sustainable leadership based on the work of Hargreaves (2003) and the other the ambitious development of 23 individual projects, many with staff at his high school. These projects ranged from the creation of exams to the organizing of a separate physical education class for the school's special-needs students. Brian commented that he learned many lessons from his experience with implementing the numerous projects; for example, he was surprised at the large number of opportunities open to teachers outside their own classrooms. He also observed that some of his colleagues resented his involvement in their classrooms or departments, whereas others embraced it. Although Brian also had had many experiences as a teacher leader in his previous district, he expressed disappointment with its leadership preparation program. It had been continually cancelled by senior district staff because of low

interest, and Brian's ability to move forward as a prospective administrator was continually frustrated. However, his desire to become an administrator precipitated his application to and acceptance by MCSD in 2007.

Induction Into the Role of Assistant Principal

District support for new assistant principals. From Brian's perspective, new administrators were inducted into MCSD in a variety of ways; for example, leadership meetings on relevant topics were held monthly for all principals and APs. Earlier in the year the district had introduced a program that described how to teach and lead by focusing on personal strengths and by nurturing the strengths of others. This program was based on publications and resources from the Gallup Organization and included an online component for district staff that required the completion of a one-hour test to reveal their strengths. Brian explained that individual strengths were then matched to create "the right mix of people in administration." For example, this assessment revealed his principal's strength as a "developer," which was then matched with Brian's identified strength as a "learner." Brian considered the online assessment of his strengths extremely accurate, although he was surprised at the top five on which the Gallup program advised him to focus. Out of 64 possible strengths, Brian revealed that he is primarily a learner, achiever, and relater and is empathic, and he explained that there was a "piece" on responsibility. He described the program as a directive "not [to] worry about your weaknesses any more and [to] really build on your strengths and then use the strengths of others to fill in the gaps that you might have."

Brian's opinion of this approach to professional development was that it was generally successful throughout the district in spite of initial collegial skepticism. He added, however, that administrators were still "finding their way through the whole concept." The district, according to Brian, expected school leaders to provide time for their staffs to complete the online assessment to determine the strengths of the people in the school. The results—a list of individual teachers' strengths—were then to be posted in the staff room so that others would know whom to approach for help with their weaknesses. Brian observed that, in the end, it might not matter what the individual strengths were, but that there were benefits to finding five essentially good qualities on which to focus. An additional dimension to this assessment, Brian added, was that the deputy superintendent of Human Resources was looking at it as part of the hiring process for teachers and principals. Brian considered the online test very reasonable and teacher based, but he commented on the district's disinclination to permit applicants to see their own test scores and their rankings against other applicants. He did, however, have access to the scores of the teachers who were shortlisted for interviews for positions in his school, and, he wondered, "What made a 65 on that list better than a 50 [ranking]?" He and his principal ultimately hired three people who had lower scores than the other applicants, which left Brian unsure about how this "piece" (the ranking system) was helping to identify the best teachers and leaders.

Brian was a beginning AP being inducted into MCSD, and his principal, he explained, was designated as his mentor. However, Brian felt that he had not

yet received enough feedback from her about his performance after seven months in the AP role. He described the extent of his administrative training as a matter of "get[ting] in the building and get[ting] to work, more than anything." Brian expressed his concern as being "not really all that in need of knowing if he was doing the right job, [but] very much wanting to know if he was doing the wrong job." Lack of feedback, for Brian, inhibited his creativity and confidence. In spite of this impediment, his principal served as a role model who exemplified to Brian "amazing expertise" as a leader. He described her leadership style as flexible in its responsiveness to a variety of situations. Her approach changed according to "what's coming at her, because she [could] take a hard-line disciplinary leadership style," or she could jump into the role of an educational leader, data cruncher, or managerial leader, as required. Brian's image of himself as a leader was not as broad.

New understandings of leadership. Brian perceived himself as primarily an instructional leader whose approach to teacher education was to find professional literature and facilitate pedagogical discussions during staff meetings based on the staff's professional growth plans. Brian also facilitated collaborative discussions with teachers on practice by releasing them from their classes. He measured his success as this type of leader based on the teachers' requests for more professional readings and the extent to which their conversations on practice extended beyond staff meetings. He stated implicitly that he was more interested in the "educational piece" of leadership than in being a transformational leader. From his coursework at university Brian understood transformational leadership

as the ability of an exceptionally strong leader "to take a school to new places and not just into new realms of education that are going on out there." He viewed transformational leadership as an "interesting" idea but described it as a little scary, not educationally sound, and "pretty unexplored." According to Brian, these types of leaders often go away after a time, creating a "never-lasting peace" for those who are left to make sense of their direction. As a result of this understanding, Brian stated that he felt more comfortable leading with research practices that are very practical and easy to understand and that are clearly connected to instruction, such as recent work on assessment, brain-based learning, and backward design planning.

When I asked Brian to describe a metaphor that more clearly illustrated his style of leadership, he drew on the metaphor of getting on the right bus:

> Well, I know I kind of went into [administration] thinking about being the bus driver. Okay, well, now I'm going to drive the bus, and everybody on the bus is going to kind of follow along. It's nothing like that. I had that idea years ago and then, getting here [at school], you're in the back of the bus with the rest of them and wondering, Who's driving? Sometimes the bus is going where it's going! We have to figure out how to make sure it doesn't go off the road!

Brian observed that this shift from being the bus driver (the solo leader) to being another passenger emphasized his newfound perception that sharing leadership with teachers and his principal was a more accurate reflection of what he was actually doing. He explained that he came to recognize that he did not have all of the answers as a leader and that it was important to develop collaborative relationships with the other "passengers" because he saw that they were "all in this together."

New and challenging situations. During this period of induction into the AP role, Brian faced challenging situations that involved his own classroom teaching and his relationships with staff and students. He believes that APs ought to teach in a classroom to gain or to maintain both the classroom teacher's point of view and that of the student with regard to "what's going on" in the school. However, in spite of his intention to positively impact students' education, he saw his own teaching suffer as a result of absences that frequently called him away from the two classes that he taught:

> I have one class that's been just fabulous and one that's just awful . . . because I've had so many meetings on those particular days. I've been [in the school] for seven months, and classroom rules are still an issue. If I was a regular classroom teacher, that class would not be challenging the rules. When I walk in there sometimes, I think, What's going on? I think, I've forgotten how to teach! The kids' attitude is [that], Every once in a while you show up, and you try to teach us, and we're not going to do anything. And it drives me crazy too. I've always been considered to be a good teacher, and now this is my nightmare: bad teaching.

Becoming an AP in this new environment also impacted Brian's relationships with students on a broader scope. He described these student relationships in his new school setting as quite different from his relationships as a classroom teacher because, in his position as an administrator, "nine out of ten times" his conversations with students in his office were not of a positive nature. Brian's relationships with teachers also took on a different slant; although teachers attempted to build collegial rapport, he perceived that they treated him differently from the other classroom teachers. Soon after his arrival at the school, they were quick to describe to him the details of their programs, practices, and any major concerns that were pressing to them. Brian believes that they expected

him to comply with their current practices, but it took him a while "to put a spin" on these practices or procedures, and he eventually developed his own approach to an issue. One such example was the challenges with regard to the soundness of existing school-discipline practices. Brian felt compelled to try to change one of them because of its perceived unfairness:

> We have a policy here, for instance, in the school, and I was dealing with it today, where if a substitute teacher sends a kid out for misbehaviour, they're suspended for the rest of the day. They stay down here, and they get all of their material to work. I believe that the only way for a kid to get an education is to stay in class. That rule supports the substitute teachers, yes, but at the same time, it jeopardizes the educational setting of the students for the day.

Although teaching staff and substitute teachers have greatly favoured this schoolwide policy on discipline for over five years, Brian began to question the practice early in the school year. His strategy was to discuss the nature of each student's offence with the particular teacher and how the decision to remove the student affected learning. His goal to shift the policy to what he felt were more "student-centered" ways met with both teachers' approval of the change and some resistance to an alternative structure. Brian observed that some teachers "push" to have it their way, and "sometimes you [as the administrator] have to give a little bit." He felt confident that his attempts to negotiate his position with teachers would eventually meet with more success.

In this chapter I reported aspects of Brian's school district related to its training of new educational leaders and how the district structures the experience of its beginning administrators. I also presented the case of Brian, a first-year AP

with MCSD: his background, how he prepared for the administrative role, and his interpretation of his induction into the role.

Chapter five continues the account and interpretation of data from the perspectives of TCSD and two of its new APs.

CHAPTER FIVE:

BECOMING AN ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL IN TRINITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

School District and Perspective on Becoming an Assistant Principal

TCSD is the second school district in the study. TCSD is an urban Catholic school district in a medium-sized city in a Western Canadian province that at the time of this research served over 35,000 students in 80 schools and was governed by seven elected trustees whose mandate was to emphasize strategic leadership and positive relationships with the district's interest groups.[3] The district was also led by a superintendent and six assistant superintendents of departments that included Leadership, Learning, Technology, Facilities, Human Resources, and Religious Services, as well as 25 consultants who supported religious instruction, curriculum, technology, and special education.

TCSD's mission and vision is to provide a Catholic education that inspires and prepares students to live fully and answer the call to a faith-filled life of service. The beliefs of the district include a call for the transformation of the world through Catholic education; encouragement of staff members and students to value the goodness, dignity, and worth of each person; and the teaching that

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[3] I accessed the documents entitled "Characteristics of the Successful Catholic School Administrator," "District Formation and Training Program Information Guide for Prospective School Administrators," "Prioritized Guiding Principles for Administrative Placements in Trinity Catholic Schools," "Performance Appraisal of a School Administrator in Trinity Catholic Schools," "Trinity Catholic Schools Administrator Profile," "Our Mission and Vision," and "Annual Education Results Report for 2007-08" online from the school district that I call Trinity Catholic School District (2008). For the purposes of confidentiality, I refer to this school district by this pseudonym throughout this document.

Jesus Christ is the model and teacher for all. On its Web site TCSD maintains that parents send their children to schools in their district because they believe that it is important for children to strengthen their faith overall and to learn the values and morals necessary for a full and productive life for themselves and the wider community.

In chapter four I explained that school districts are obligated to account for the districtwide performance of their schools to the Ministry of Education through a "Three-Year Education Plan" and the AERR. In its 2007-2008 AERR, TCSD identified three areas of priority: (a) the preservation of Catholic education, (b) continued support and encouragement for student learning and achievement, and (c) advocacy for district infrastructure, transportation funding, and funding for special education. The district highlighted the accomplishments and future plans of every department, and I will draw attention primarily to the work of the Department of Leadership Services.

In the annual report the Department of Leadership Services emphasized the importance of succession planning for the district through the identification, training, and development of aspiring and current leaders. TCSD's policy is to ensure an adequate number of candidates who can be called upon to fill vacant school-based and district-level administrative positions. The district offered six programs to develop Catholic educational leaders that included a principal academy, principal and new principal training, AP sessions and new AP training, and leadership formation and training for teachers and consultants. The principal academy program focused professional development on the role of the principal

to ensure that principals had the skills and tools they needed to be effective leaders. Professional development sessions have typically taken on a reflective nature because they provide information to principals and create opportunities for process work. In monthly sessions new principals in TCSD focus on the key areas of religious, instructional, and managerial leadership. New principals are mentored by an experienced principal and have opportunities for them to meet that include a school visit component.

Although leadership is the unofficial purview of all district departments, the district's Department of Leadership Services has the mandate to work with administrators in two distinct but related ways, one of which is to develop leadership programs and arrange mentorship and professional development activities for the district's school-based administrators. A second way involves more direct administrative support for the day-to-day operation of the schools and the district. Members of Leadership Services meet weekly to discuss issues that arise from schools that are often related to leadership and are at times driven by a principal's personal leadership style. Leadership Services has worked hand-in-hand with the district's school-based administrators to determine programming for leadership formation and training as well as other district leadership programs.

Leadership Training in the District

TCSD's leadership formation and training program could be completed as a graduate-level course. The program challenged its teacher and consultant participants to critically analyze their current leadership status. Teachers and consultants in the district with a continuous contract who were considering a

career in school-based administration were invited to apply to TCSD's leadership formation and training program, which was offered every year. The district selected approximately 30 teachers who met eight times throughout the school year and were mentored by five principals from the elementary and secondary levels. The course curriculum for TCSD's leadership formation and training focused on "the essence of Catholic educational leadership within the constructs of a school-based professional learning community." Senior administrators in Leadership Services determined the curriculum of the specific programs based on their understanding of the needs of the teacher leaders in their schools and by timely administrative issues. Teachers and consultants were exposed to topics such as school culture, spiritual leadership, and human resources; then, in a culminating project (a term paper), they were expected to reflect on their own leadership style and goals as Catholic educational leaders. This leadership and formation program was intended to honour the fact that some people were very good teacher leaders and acknowledged that not all of them should pursue administration. Exposing teachers to some of the literature on leadership, however, combined with opportunities to discuss educational practice, helped to lay the groundwork for aspiring leaders.

Application process for aspiring assistant principals. To become an AP with TCSD, teachers and consultants were required to complete a very lengthy and intense application form, which invited the written support of eight colleagues and a principal, as well as a letter from a parish priest confirming the staff member's commitment to the Catholic Church. Applicants were encouraged to

consider TCSD's publication "Characteristics of the Successful School Administrator," which briefly described the attributes of an instructional, religious, and managerial leader, as well as the desired personal qualities and skills of a school leader (see Appendix D for a synopsis of this district publication). Although applicants who did not reach the interview stage might have something to offer the school district, it might not be developed enough for them to proceed as viable candidates. The teachers and consultants who reach the interview stage are interviewed early in the new year by a panel of eight educators, comprised of district staff from Leadership Services, Human Resources, and Learning Services, as well as administrators and classroom teachers. In the interviews for school-based administrative positions, the interview panel generally acquired a strong sense overall of the applicants' potential, in spite of the tension of the actual interview. Teachers and consultants who were selected for an administrative-based position were then either assigned to a school or placed in a pool of candidates until a position arose.

Support for new and experienced assistant principals. The role of the AP served as the basis for the new AP training program and focused on training participants in their roles and discussing best practices. New APs were exposed to current literature and mentorship with experienced APs. The district's curriculum for professional development for first-year APs was driven by questions that the new APs themselves generated or by current research, timely issues, and, at times, the needs of the district. Some of the professional development topics for first-year APs were coding and assessing students for placement in district programs

and the issues or district and provincial policies that had changed during the previous year. At times there was overlap with the professional development offered by TCSD's collective group of APs.

The district's AP sessions that develop Catholic educational leaders were geared towards broadening the skills of APs to ensure that they were adequately prepared for the role of principal. This group met for four afternoons throughout the year. Originally, their mandate focused on wellness and the establishment of a basis of mutual AP support, but in the previous two years the agenda had become more closely linked to the professional development organized through Leadership Services; at times these sessions reflected many of the same themes that had been developed for principals, especially religious leadership, which was linked to all professional development for principals and senior administrators in the district. There were challenges to providing professional development that was relevant to all APs, many of whom were at different stages in terms of their needs as administrators. Other challenges were the wide variations in the number of years of teaching experience and the number of years that APs had been in their role. As well, the unique context of each school (size, location) and the level of instruction that each school offered—either elementary or secondary—had to be taken into consideration. Generally, though, an afternoon session for the larger group of APs consisted of a religious component and brief professional development sessions on instructional and managerial leadership.

In addition, TCSD's principal training program offered training to experienced APs who intended to apply for a principalship in the future; this

program could also be completed as a graduate-level course. The participants engaged in reflection, professional dialogue, and training on the district's software applications.

The role of Trinity Catholic School District's evaluation documents. Like MCSD, TCSD drew on the key functions, competencies, and skills of administrators as outlined in their performance appraisal documents to shape its leadership and formation programs. These documents also influenced the professional development for APs and other school administrators. The "Performance Appraisal of a School Administrator" identified four leadership components that described administrators' performance in terms of work quality and their understanding of the goals and objectives of the district. TCSD expected principals and APs to meet expectations as religious/moral/ethical leaders and educational and instructional leaders and to be effective managerial leaders (see Appendix E for a synopsis of this document). APs were evaluated for continuous designation in the second year of their position of school-based administrator. The principal of the school conducted the evaluation, and, in the event that the principal required support in the evaluation process, the Department of Leadership Services provided professional development sessions for them.

Developing an administrative team. In TCSD the process to match new or any APs with schools' principals was based primarily upon the guiding principles articulated in a district document on administrative placements. These principles were prioritized based on various district needs. A team of senior administrators made the administrative placements after considering the needs of the students at

the schools, the needs of the staff, the district's needs related to succession planning and building leadership capacity, and finally, the expressed requests of the administrators who were seeking new personal growth opportunities. In addition, Leadership Services extensively used information that the administrators themselves provided through a second district document, the "Administrator Profile." This profile comprised personal and professional information such as address, desired location, current and previous placements, and goals.

The district attempted to match administrators' unique skill sets. For example, when someone from a secondary level was moving into an elementary school as an AP, an administrative partner with a strong literacy focus might have been selected as a match, or perhaps someone with a deeper knowledge of elementary-related curriculum. In situations in which the administrative team experienced difficulties, senior administrators were committed to helping to guide the administrators through their conflict. Although TCSD assumed that two adults who worked together in a school would to do so successfully, the criteria that the district used to make administrative placements did not always account for compatibility with the existing administrator. The district's senior administrators worked primarily with principals to ensure a smooth and successful school operation, and they also assumed that, in turn, the principals were working to that same end with their APs to build on the APs' skills and elevate their leadership competencies. The district maintained a vested interest in making the administration experience successful for the whole school community.

Leadership course curriculum. When a first-year AP was assigned to a school, the school district's leaders assumed that principals would provide mentorship and a curriculum for the AP to follow. According to one district leader, some principals did not mentor their APs effectively because they were simply too busy or inexperienced themselves. When new APs arrived at the beginning of a school year, they were usually assigned a variety of tasks that typically assisted the principal in completing whatever work needed to be done for the school at that moment. Some new APs received very little direction from their principals in terms of role clarity and how to perform the tasks associated with the role. To partially fill this gap in support for new APs in their role, TCSD offered a course for first-year APs that at that time had been in operation for over five years. During the 2007 school year, as part of the "New AP" course curriculum, senior district staff made presentations to a group of 15 beginning APs on topics such as district policies and structures, administrative technology, special-needs coding, teacher supervision and evaluation, and legal responsibilities; and they also assigned selected readings. New APs had opportunities to be mentored more directly in these meetings by experienced APs in the district.

District Structuring of the Experience of a New Assistant Principal

In TCSD many factors structured the experience of a new AP, but the principal had the largest role. However, one district leader felt that principals sometimes did not perform very well in the role, possibly as a result of their limited time, inexperience, or even a particular leadership approach. This district

leader compared an administrative team to an "arranged marriage," which sometimes works and sometimes does not. As well, the team had to work hard to ensure that their personalities did not get in the way of their work and their relationships with the school community. The district maintained that the principal was essentially the "boss" of the school, and it was therefore up to the AP to make the relationship between the two of them work when there was a problem.

Although the district's ideal leadership structure was a leadership team, some administrators did not share a common understanding of *team* and how the AP and principal in the school team actually applied the concept. Some principals were more comfortable than others with sharing some or all of the decision making with their administrative colleagues and teacher leaders. The issue at hand was that, ultimately, the responsibility for all aspects of the school still fell to the principal, who would therefore at times act more unilaterally. The district fully supported the team approach, but the team was ultimately not responsible for fulfilling the school's mandate, and until this particular reality changed, collaborative practices would be uneven from school to school.

The staff in Leadership Services continued to accumulate current literature on APs that assisted them in structuring the experience of beginning APs, but they pointed out that very little research was available. As in other districts, the AP position was in essence a training role for the principalship; and, in spite of the paucity of research on APs, TCSD did not consider the status and role of the AP less important than either the principal or the teacher role.

School District Conceptions of Leadership

In the AERR for 2007-2008, TCSD's superintendent called for its leaders to renew their emphasis on social justice and to work towards more effective cooperation among all school sites and departments. In an interview a district leader articulated a vision of leadership for TCSD as one in which administrators lead with personal integrity, ethics, and some creativity and are willing to take risks to move ahead. In support of these conceptions of leadership, the district planned monthly meetings for principals with a focus on personal integrity and ethics and through presentations and discussions on Catholic educational leadership and social justice. The main challenge to a vision of leadership, according to the district leader, was to move all aspects of leadership (instructional and managerial) to a moral and ethical path.

The district leader identified a second vision of leadership: that all leaders become instructional leaders, no matter the school size, and that principals be more hands-on in terms of knowing what was happening in their schools "in the best interest of teaching and learning in the classroom." This involvement of the principal presented more of a challenge at the secondary level and much less of a problem in elementary, because of the many operational tasks that took precedence in junior and senior high schools. As well, secondary schools relied more on department heads as instructional leaders because of their unique expertise in curriculum areas. Nevertheless, the district perspective was that a TCSD secondary principal should know whether the content was being delivered appropriately and meeting students' needs. During the 2007-2008 school year,

school districts in the province explored a newly formulated document published by the government on what constitutes quality practice for principals. This document prompted much discussion in TCSD at principal meetings throughout the year as administrators attempted to name some of the actions that contributed to effective leadership within their schools.

I asked a TCSD district leader to create a metaphor that described a leadership style analogous to practice at the district level. The resultant image was that of a parent "who is trying to give people their wings." Like a parent, this leader believes that it is important to lay down the ground rules for administrators (or children), but to build in some flexibility when the rules need to be bent:

> When you feel like [the children] are ready to take the car on a trip to Vancouver, [you say], "Good-bye. I won't worry about you at all." If they're only going to travel 150 kilometres and it's the first time they're taking the car, I'm going to say, "Check in with me; phone me." It's a little bit more controlling.

This leader indicated that, although it is desirable for all administrators to have the skills they need to be successful, the issue was more complex. The district has so many beginning APs at that point that there was a perceived need to more regularly revisit the rules than bend them because either most administrators "can't remember [them] any more, or [they] weren't taught them."

On Becoming a New Assistant Principal: The Case of Roger

Background and Context

Roger became an AP in 2007 at Padre Pio Junior High School, which is part of TCSD in Western Canada. Padre Pio Junior High served a population of over 300 students in Grades 7 to 9, with 25 teachers and 7 support staff.

School had always been a comfortable place for Roger. As a student in senior high school he already aspired to pursuing his passion for learning by becoming a teacher. Four years after he received his Bachelor of Education degree with a major in French and a minor in mathematics, he began a master's degree program, also in education, and completed it in 1995. All administrators in TCSD must eventually attain a master's degree to receive a continuous designation. Roger explained that he did not have a career in administration in mind at that time, but that he simply perceived himself as a lifelong learner. At the time of his interview he was in the process of studying for a Graduate Diploma in Religious Education because he wanted the knowledge that the diploma program offered.

Preparation for the Administrative Role

During his 15 years in a classroom Roger honed his teaching skills and took on various school leadership roles, such as coordinating religious celebrations and setting the direction for the teaching staff's professional development. Roger's preparation for an administrative role with the TCSD began to more formally take shape at Padre Pio Junior High School in 2002 when he served as his administrators' replacement, or what he called their "hitter," in their absence. This experience gave Roger a new perspective on administrative tasks and responsibilities and prompted his application for a leadership position within his district. He recalled feeling "really flattered" by collegial support at school, but he was not successful in becoming an AP that first time. Roger was also disappointed with the feedback that he received in a debriefing session. The

district representative from the interview committee did not explain what he could improve upon, and he resumed his efforts as a teacher.

Administrative equivalent. Three years later in a different junior high school, Roger applied a second time for an administrative position. He had again assumed the same types of leadership roles in this new school, but he added the assignment of "administrative equivalent" when a shift of principals occurred at Spring Break of that year. An administrative equivalent role was open to teacher leaders in the school who were interested in a leadership position and might want to take on the responsibilities of an AP for a short term. Roger described this novel experience as "kind of strange" and uncomfortable because, in the role, he became privy to personal information about his colleagues and the school's students. He found that the temporary status of this role at times compromised his collegial relationships, in spite of his principal's attempts to separate staff issues from other AP responsibilities:

> You knew that when you left [this temporary role], you had to go back to being that person's working colleague, and you didn't want to have too much knowledge, . . . and sometimes you had to bracket it. You couldn't really act upon it because they may not know that you know.

District leadership training. Roger subscribed to his district's leadership and formation program during this same year. He described the program as practical in nature, with such topics as technology and inclusive education, but, in retrospect, its information was easy for APs to find when the need arose. Roger felt that during this training, he benefited most from occasions when the mentor principals facilitated table discussions. He confessed that his most vivid recollection of these sessions was one in which he became "a little bit terrified" at

the principals' stories about conflict management. This was an area of concern for Roger because he considered conflict resolution a critical skill for an educational leader, and he perceived his own lack in this area as not easily remedied by role playing and hypothetical scenarios. Hypothetical scenarios, he explained, did not accurately represent the physical and emotional discomfort that can be anticipated when someone is in your office who "you think is going to be a danger to you or a potential danger to the school." He recounted an incident during the previous year in his former school when the principal had felt it necessary to lock the doors between the workroom and her office for her own protection in the event that she felt endangered by an angry parent. He confessed that he always felt "under the gun" anticipating just such a crisis with a threatening parent and acknowledged that it might be useful for leaders to learn some procedural things to deal with these situations.

Induction Into the Role of Assistant Principal

District support for new assistant principals. In assigning Roger to a school as a new AP, his district leaders had intentionally matched his skills with those of his principal. He expressed surprise that someone in Leadership Services had considered them a good fit because he considered his administrative partner a "physical education type" of person who was involved in sports and himself as the exact opposite, more academic and bookish. However, as the year progressed Roger began to accept the decision because it seemed to him that their abilities were complementary, which resulted in a fairly stable administrative relationship.

New understandings of leadership. In the position of AP, Roger aspired to a leadership approach centered on developing respectful and trusting relationships with the teaching staff. Such a leader, he felt, made concerted efforts to be visible to staff and students and did not hold what Roger called that "positional thing" over others or curb individual autonomy. As well, he or she trusted teachers to act professionally and did not feel the need to watch or supervise staff at all times. Roger struggled, however, with the enactment of this type of relational approach to leadership because he did not want to be perceived as a "pushover," which suggested to him a relationship with teachers in which he "rescued" and "fixed" their problems as a result of his kind nature.

During his first months at Padre Pio School, Roger noticed that as an AP he had become a "go-to" person, which he considered more akin to a manager than a "real" leader. He cited as an example instances when teachers sent students to the office to be disciplined for being repeatedly unprepared for class or disruptive. Roger felt that this kind of disciplinary action—an administrator's dealing with a teacher's classroom management problems—diminished the teacher's authority. He contended that teachers are in charge of their classrooms and ought to take responsibility to "carve out their own area" and authority by preparing a plan of action to help students succeed. This is what he understood as leadership. Roger recalled his own proactive strategies as a classroom teacher and maintained that his job as the teacher was to keep the students accountable and working to a standard. Other examples that supported Roger's belief that his AP role had become more managerial were occasions when teachers required him to

"drop everything [as an administrator] in order to deal with [their] situation," which at times meant taking over their classes as they dealt with personal issues. He bemoaned their lack of anticipation of such occasions and lack of arrangements for replacement teachers because his time then became unproductive.

Roger understood leadership as the ability to "direct people, to bring them to a point where they might be able to do things on their own." The principal at Padre Pio School reinforced this type of leadership model and delegated tasks or, as Roger described it, literally "made the reality." In the school power flowed from the top down, and Roger remarked that teachers and APs expected this kind of structure. Using a metaphor to shed light on his image of an educational leader, Roger compared the role of a principal to the head chef of a restaurant as on the television reality show "Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares." He imagined that his head chef would not be "nasty" as Ramsay is, but possess the qualities of more of a "benevolent dictator," which means that he would be compassionate and firm in carrying out his vision of leadership, but that he would always be the one in charge. This image, he felt, also involved a complex "relationship-based thing," with many sous-chefs (department heads) in charge of different areas under the direction of the head chef (principal/leader). Roger believes that if the people with whom the principal works trust in his or her ability to guide, that they will "give [him or her] a lot more slack" when it is required.

Throughout his first year in the AP role, Roger participated in his district's 10 mandatory one-and-a-half-hour meetings. He explained that TCSD's

Leadership Services organized and facilitated these sessions with an agenda that the new APs had partially set themselves. The sessions included topics such as the district handbook, legal responsibilities, teacher supervision and evaluation, coding for special-needs students, and Catholic social teachings. Roger considered the sessions worthwhile but suggested that he would have benefited more from developing collegial relationships during this time, especially by sharing experiences with other new secondary-level APs. He restated his desire for more information on how to deal with conflict situations.

New and challenging situations. Roger's induction into his new role as an AP had a fairly significant impact on his confidence. He did not know any of the staff members at the school when he first arrived, and because he was inexperienced as an administrator, he felt a little daunted by the staff's frequent "peppering" with questions and expecting immediate answers to their urgent problems. He intimated that the pressure of having to make immediate decisions made him feel isolated in his office. This situation was exacerbated when his principal was absent from the building because Roger did not have anyone else in the school with whom to consult. At times, however, if the situation warranted, Roger would also telephone one of his previous principals for advice to confer with him or to confirm his choice of actions.

In his first year as an AP, Roger realized the extent of the tension of administrators' exposure to difficult situations and the implications of acting on them. Very early in his AP position, Roger learned that not all of his decisions as an administrator were acceptable to the staff, and this was a problem for him

because he came "from a family that wants to please." Consequently, he was working on an approach to helping people come to terms with their decisions. Roger described a recent problem that arose at a staff meeting regarding his principal's proposal to adopt a cumulative approach to assessment. He pointed out that a great deal of "collateral damage" had resulted from the heated discussions on this issue between the principal and the math and science teachers. The combative edge of this meeting felt distinctly un-Catholic and, consequently, very uncomfortable for him. He believes that, because his principal was being evaluated that year (his second) and because the evaluation process required interviews with staff members, the principal "capitulated" and withdrew his proposal.

Roger also faced tension as a new administrator in his role as a supervisor of teachers. On one occasion when a staff member challenged his authority, he found it difficult to confront this person. He considered this a fairly low-level incident in which a teacher had repeatedly neglected his hallway supervision duties that he or she shared with Roger every Friday morning. When other adults in the school were not doing their jobs, he approached the situation with humour and kindness and usually did not face problems from them again. Roger explained that this particular strategy had not completely worked with the offending teacher, and the issue was currently unresolved. His attempts to build a better relationship with the teacher had been unsuccessful, and he admitted that, "quite honestly," he was unsure of other procedures for dealing with problem adults.

On Becoming a New Assistant Principal: The Case of Maxine

Background and Context

In 2007 Maxine became a first-year AP at Assumption Junior High School, which is part of TCSD. Approximately 150 students attended Assumption School in Grades 7 to 9 that year, and the school had 11 teachers and 4 support staff. The school is located in a mid-socioeconomic area in a suburban neighbourhood.

Maxine gravitated towards the teaching profession as a result of her experiences as a playground instructor over several years when she was a teenager. In this role she developed skills to successfully organize and to engage children in a variety of recreational activities. Because Maxine's family highly values postsecondary education, she studied for a Bachelor of Education degree as an elementary specialist and graduated in 1983. For 15 years she taught elementary-aged children in TCSD until her secondment as a project coordinator in 2000 to a provincial body whose focus was health and physical education. In 1983, during her secondment, she earned a master's degree in elementary education at a provincial university; her thesis was on teaching and motivating elementary-aged girls to be physically active. Maxine then taught physical education in a large junior high school, again within TCSD, for three years before she became an AP.

Preparation for the Administrative Role

Maxine believes that her preparation for the AP role began when she became a teacher because she sought opportunities to engage in leadership roles

within the school. She further honed her planning and organizational skills as a coach of sports teams and an organizer of special events for students and staff. As well, Maxine participated on a variety of different provincial and local committees and had diverse roles and responsibilities. She perceived rapport and relationship as key to teaching and leading.

Maxine's three-year secondment by a provincial body to coordinate curriculum and a variety of projects for teachers prepared her for the role of administrator. In this position she designed and implemented workshops on student physical involvement for K-12 teachers in collaboration with school districts and groups of teachers. She also acquired more traditional administrative skills:

> I had staff; I had a secretary; I had newsletters to write. I was accountable for a budget, so I had to manage the program. I traveled. I collaborated with a number of different associations, so I had my hand in lots of different things that were going on. I had to plan massive events; I had to plan little events.

In 2004 Maxine participated in her district's leadership formation and training program. She considered this professional development a step forward towards leadership. These sessions, she pointed out, touched the surface of what the AP role involves and enhanced her understanding of leadership within a Catholic context.

Induction Into the Role of Assistant Principal

District support for new assistant principals. Like Roger, Maxine attended all of TCSD's mandatory one-and-a-half-hour sessions for first-year APs. Although she appreciated the pertinence of much of the information that the

district presented to beginning APs, she was disappointed when these same presentations were repeated throughout the year at the larger district sessions for APs. Maxine found that hearing the same information again became a source of added stress considering the increased demands on her time at school. She suggested that a better approach to AP preparation might have included a concerted focus on the area of principals' mentorship of APs. Although she felt that she had a strong partnership with her principal, Maxine remarked that they often lacked opportunities to sit down and "really talk." She thought that it would greatly increase APs' contextual understanding if their mentor principals attended the district sessions to discuss the various topics.

New understandings of leadership. When she assumed the role, Maxine viewed educational leadership as shaped within the social context of her relationship to the world, her immediate community, and her family. New APs also extrapolate the qualities of leadership, she added, from the direct and vicarious experiences of teachers and government leaders, with the ultimate aim of "becoming better people." With regard to creating a metaphor for her work with her staff, Maxine's first response was to compare the administrative leader to the coach of an Olympics team. She compared some of her teaching staff to athletes who are "out there trying" and working hard, facing all sorts of challenges. She commented that, as a coach, she tries to build on teachers' strengths by gradually addressing their weakness—for example, in their understanding of curriculum—and attending to their relationships with students

and even among themselves. Maxine saw herself as taking on an encourager or builder role with her staff:

> It's almost like [being] a construction worker. You're building a frame, and you're trying to put all the good stuff forward and being as honest as you can, as helpful as you can, to problem-solve. Coach just seemed to be a good fit.

Good leaders overall, Maxine summarized, are those who embody sincerity and honesty in their relationships with the community, are very child centered, and invest time and energy in problem-solving. For her, a strong leader is exemplified in the qualities of her principal. Foremost, he values relationships and overtly cares for students in the way that he listens to them and treats them with dignity and fairness. She regarded him as a "fine role model" who exemplifies a Christ-centered focus on student discipline. Maxine reported that this approach has guided her in bringing out something positive in every interaction with students, no matter the reason that they were in the office, and that it has led to positive individual growth for them.

New and challenging situations. Maxine felt that her role as an AP began as a trial by fire. She had "jumped into something for the very first time" and then needed the confidence to "just wade through it":

> We had a student die. How do you deal with that in your school? Your first situation with kids with drugs, your first situation with physical fighting, trying to understand your boundaries within your context and getting to know kids, staff, expectations of your colleagues, expectations of the principal—your partner. Dealing with weak and disempowered staff members: I have been in uncomfortable staff situations where I have been faced with helping to resolve conflict between parents, students, and staff where I haven't been involved in the context of the situation. . . . Having to adopt different protocols and different traditions already honoured in the school that irritated my own belief system. I challenged the action plan

> system the first day that I saw it; I shared that I was uncomfortable with it, but I was asked to give it a try and go through with it anyway.

At times Maxine felt that the staff misunderstood her decisions on how to best handle a situation with a student, especially when the staff's expectations were different from her own. She explained that because administrators have the opportunity to spend time with students to understand the situation, they have a more global view of their circumstances; for example, parents who have separated, drug rehabilitation, and academic struggles. Maxine pointed out that many students were attending school with more "on their plate" than the teachers realized and that she liked to have that "extra bit of power and control to make a decision that would affect a student" in what she knew "to be a good way."

Maxine spent much of her time guiding teachers who became frustrated with inattentive students. She commented on the advice of a presenter at a recent workshop on troubled youth who advised that it is more important for teachers to connect with their children before they begin to direct their thinking. In other words, "If [teachers] don't have [students'] hearts, [they] don't have their minds"; therefore, it is "that much harder for students to learn." She also recognized that she has to carefully select the issues that she chooses to address because she appreciates that change in school culture is often a slow process.

Maxine acknowledged that she assumed the AP role knowing that it would be multifaceted, but she did not expect the great extent to which she would be "stretched." She faced many highs and lows in dealing with circumstances associated with the AP role. Although she had improved her skills over the past several months in nearly all aspects of school-community leadership, the impact

of becoming an AP had frequently “compromised” Maxine’s sleep and her level of energy. Her constant thinking took up “more headspace,” and she acknowledged the possibility of burnout from her continuous self-reflection., Maxine described herself as being on “show” most of the time when she was a teacher, but she was also physically more active and involved with the students. She was concerned that in her current role as an AP she was in danger of mental exhaustion.

In chapter five I described TCSD’s leadership training programs and the ways in which this district structured the experience of their first-year APs. The cases of Roger and Maxine, two beginning APs, presented their backgrounds, their preparation for their respective administrative roles, and their interpretation of their induction into the role.

Chapter six includes an analysis of the three AP participants’ enactment of TCSD’s and MCSD’s discursive practices.

CHAPTER SIX:

NEGOTIATING AUTHORITATIVE AND INTERNALLY PERSUASIVE DISCOURSES OF LEADERSHIP IN BECOMING AN ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Revisiting the Research Question

This case study focused on new APs' experiences in becoming educational leaders. How do these educators from diverse experiential backgrounds negotiate personally persuasive and authoritative discourses in fashioning their identities to become APs in two Catholic school districts? I draw upon Deborah Britzman's (2003) question of identity formation in learning to teach. She cited Willard Waller's (1961) question about what teaching does to a teacher. My question is, What does *leading* do to a leader? What is it like to become an AP? The three beginning APs in my study encounter many conflicts between specific authoritative discourses and their internally persuasive discourses as they negotiate their identities as educational leaders.

In chapters four and five I interpreted the narratives of these participants who are trying to balance others' expectations of what they should do as leaders with their own beliefs. They conveyed these beliefs in their accounts of their preparation for the administrative role, their experiences with leadership, and the types of conflicts that they encountered as new APs. The expectations of who new APs should be as leaders are the authoritative discourses that circulate in school districts, school communities, and the mainstream literature on leadership.

I begin this chapter by reviewing the negotiation between authoritative and personally persuasive discourses and the process of negotiation that is part of our ideological becoming (Bakhtin, 1981). Then I focus on the tension that the participants faced in their negotiation of three central areas: conflicting discourses of leadership, the dissonance between the challenges between and affirmations of their deeply held values and the traditional institutional demands of administration, and, finally, the conflict between role expectations and autonomous decision making. In chapter seven I will discuss my conclusions and the implications of the tension that the new APs in the study faced.

Negotiating Personally Persuasive and Authoritative Discourses of Leadership

Becoming an AP disturbs the familiar identities of teachers who enter educational administration. The acquisition of leadership skills and exposure to a variety of experiences push new APs to a deeper awareness of the general concept of leading. However, beginning APs also assume the administrative role with their own understandings and expectations of what it means to be a leader. Their personally persuasive discourses can be at variance with the authoritative discourses of leadership that circulate within the school community.

The findings of this research study focus on the challenges and conflicts between specific authoritative discourses and my participants' personally persuasive discourses as they negotiate their identities as APs. For the new APs in the study, these challenges and conflicts primarily involved negotiating three major areas: the conflicting discourses of leadership that they encounter, the

challenges to and affirmations of deeply held values and the traditional institutional demands of administration, and compliance with existing authorities and the exercising of autonomous power and authority. The experiences of these three first-year APs inevitably overlap as their narratives weave through these themes; however, each theme offers a unique perspective of the discourses that they negotiate to fashion AP identities.

Conflicting Understandings of Leadership Within School Districts

Various authoritative discourses of leadership circulate in training programs for aspiring leaders (e.g., top-down management and collaborative leadership in TCSD and the neoliberal business practices in MCSD). These authoritative discourses conflict not only with one another, but also with some of the internally persuasive discourses of aspiring leaders in a Catholic school system. One implication of these conflicting understandings of leadership for those who become new leaders centers on the expectations of the school community with regard to the role of the educational leader that predate the APs' arrival. They also have implications for the development of their identity as leaders in a system that emphasizes preparation for the leadership role over acknowledgement of the impact on the self.

The participants perceive leadership in terms of the authoritative discourses as multidimensional and, to some extent, confusing and contradictory. The province's Ministry of Education, for example, identified seven dimensions of good leaders, including the ability to build relationships, be visionary, develop leadership in others, and manage school operations and resources. MCSD bases

its evaluation of administrators on similar traits, but organizes them into three major areas of leadership: cultural, instructional, and managerial/organizational. TCSD categorizes its evaluation criteria in the same way, but with slightly different wording: It uses the word *religious* rather than *cultural*. These dimensions and evaluation criteria from the two school boards describe leadership behaviours, but they do not explain understandings of leadership in terms of the hierarchical power structures that exist in schools or the influence of neoliberal discourses that shape policies of governments or how these elements interact with authoritative discourses of Catholic education. The next section discusses the experience of the participants and their negotiation of these authoritative discourses.

Understandings of Hierarchical Power Structures

TCSD, the school district of first-year APs Maxine and Roger, is rooted in a traditional authoritative discourse of autonomous leadership that structures educational leaders as self-sufficient, independent, and personally autonomous. This approach to leadership develops the principal into a leader who is solely accountable for the operation of the school with respect to the school budget, staffing, and student programming. However, in the past 20 years the TCSD's principal role has been shifting to encompass building a school culture that encourages and emphasizes teamwork and staff participation and developing the leadership capacity of students, staff, and parents. The leadership training program calls attention to concepts of teacher leadership that encourage a shared power construct. The principal, caught in transition, is simultaneously positioned

as the head of a hierarchical structure and as the one who is primarily responsible for fostering effective relationships within the school. It is no surprise that the existing tension between autonomous discourses of leadership and leadership discourses that are founded on relationship account for much of the confusion over how a leader should act.

In their article "Re/thinking Practices of Power: The Discursive Framing of Leadership," Allan et al. (2006) identified four dominant discursive practices of leadership that circulate to form educational leaders, two of which are discourses of autonomy and discourses of relatedness. They described these latter dominant discourses as "alternatives" (p. 55) to each other and "competing" (p. 56), but, together, they reflect a broader view of leadership that represents a wide spectrum of control for the leader, ranging from having considerable power over others to sharing considerable power with others. However, new APs in the field do not easily negotiate the spread. Roger, for example, interpreted his AP role as primarily hierarchical, but also noted that it involves some level of relationship with staff that depends on the leader's personality. He understood a school leader's power as generally flowing from the top down and believes that teachers and APs expect this kind of structure. His choice of metaphor—the leader as the head chef of a restaurant—reflects this approach because the relationship with others in the kitchen is clearly hierarchical.

For Roger, however, the ideal leader is also a "benevolent dictator" whose actions are autonomous and principled, yet whose authority is infused with a sense of generosity and adherence to *Catholic* principles (unlike the head chef

Ramsay) with regard to his or her relationships with others. Roger understood the principal's autonomy as the right to delegate tasks and to literally "make the reality" in the school. English (1994) would agree that concepts of the leader as autonomous, with traits and skills that make him or her uniquely qualified and in control, and as one who makes principled decisions on behalf of an organization or group, continue to "inform current attitudes" (p. 137) in education today. Leadership, however, constructed in this way as independent and separate from followership misleads the actual role of followers within the leader-follower relationship. For Roger, the role of followers requires some level of consultation with them as part of a collaborative or shared leadership model in the school. The relational leader, therefore, according to Roger, is one who exhibits sensitivity to others by taking into consideration the needs of those in the school in making decisions, but who is ultimately an autonomous decision maker. In dealing with difficult staff members, Maxine would agree with Roger's assessment that benevolence is important; her relationship with her principal, however, seems to have been less hierarchical and a much more collaborative leadership experience between the two administrators.

It may have seemed to Roger that decisions are made in a hierarchical and autonomous manner because of TCSD's practice with regard to the role of the principal (i.e., the principal as primarily responsible for the operation of the school). However, Roger was also beginning to recognize that decision making can be a messy and uncomfortable process that requires negotiation and conciliation with all staff. He was discovering that administrators cannot be

effective leaders if they operate autonomously in spite of the bureaucratic structure of the role. Although he acknowledged that it is important for the administrator to develop solid working relationships with staff and students to engender their cooperation and enable a healthy, functioning school, it was yet unclear to him how this was to happen. In TCSD's leadership programs, both APs had read literature on building collaborative school cultures, with a heavy emphasis on teacher leadership models. A relational approach to leadership interrupts the hierarchical organization with the principal's position at the top as the solo leader. It requires the principal's commitment to develop teachers and welcome their expertise as participants in decision making through structures such as school-based professional learning communities (Lambert, 2003). It also requires learning skills to give the staff the necessary tools to work effectively as a team and enable to principal to let go with respect to holding power. Turning this theory into practice is aggravated by the slow change to the existing structures, which creates ambiguity and confusion, particularly for those new to the job.

The relationship between autonomous and relational discourses became problematic for Roger especially when his principal was absent from the school and Roger was expected to attend to emergent issues. He was not at all confident that he would know what to do on these occasions because he did not perceive himself as the "real" leader, and he rued his lack of strategies to deal with conflict situations. This tension may have rendered his identity as an educational leader more vulnerable and contributed to his feeling, at times, more anxious and less

effective as an administrator. His uncertainty also generated a sense of isolation in the role, which was exacerbated by his initial hesitation to establish relationships with the staff. Although he admires educational leaders who trust teachers to act professionally and give staff the autonomy they need to perform their work, as a new administrator himself, he found that the complexity of establishing these kinds of relationships is not at all easy to work through.

Influence of Neoliberal Policies

Roger's understandings of leadership as a new AP generally centered on issues of power and control, whereas when Brian assumed an administrative role, he understood leadership as collaborative and instructional. However, Brian's district, MCSD, adhered to leadership practices that were influenced by neoliberal discourses in its attempt to maximize resources in a school system that was stretched to capacity. To become a "good" educational leader in MCSD, Brian outwardly (and sincerely) consented to this authoritative discourse, but his internally persuasive voice was not so certain.

Brian's district introduced several leadership practices that were tied to a research-based management consulting firm and incorporated these marketplace discourses into the very foundation of the district. Britzman (2003) pointed out that such discourses become powerful when they are "institutionally sanctioned" (p. 39). MCSD's business relationship with the Gallup Organization, which I described in chapter four, was justified in two of the district goals identified in its AERR for 2007-2008. The goals supported the implementation of Gallup resources to "build engaged schools" (Gallup Inc., 2009d, p. 1) and validated the

staff-selection process by using Gallup's online tools. MCSD's attempt to ascertain the most salient traits of its administrators to guarantee a better administrative team fit reflects a science-like approach to control the very human dynamic of compatibility. Additionally, the practice of determining exact leadership traits and a correct administrative match is anchored in a discourse that judges quality and establishes the worth of individuals. Both of these factors reflect a shift in authoritative discourses that push educational decisions more towards the adoption of private business practices for economic purposes (Wallace, 2004).

Brian became a new AP in a school district in which he was also a new employee with no previous experiences or relationships with its members. He had not been part of the complex process that had generated his district's decision to hire the Gallup Organization as part of its school reform. Accordingly, he was not in a position to voice his concerns or to be critical of an unfamiliar structure that was operating to shape his identity as an educational leader in MCSD. In his new role he was more inclined to assimilate his district's leadership practices that were rooted in authoritative discourses of the market, but in the process his compliance generated an internal conflict over some of its structures. For example, Brian found that Gallup tools, such as online testing that ranks the profile of prospective employees, may not serve its purpose of identifying the right person for the job.

In spite of Gallup's promise of an exact process in hiring the right teachers, Brian questioned the use of the ranking system as the only variable in assessing a teacher's potential as an effective staff member. The measure of

strengths that MCSD used to guide leader selection and placement was also not particularly useful in Brian's work as an AP. In spite of the district's selection of Brian as the "right" match for his principal, he still found himself caught up in uncertainty and unpredictability in his new role. Knowing his strengths and being appropriately matched with another administrator did not mitigate the conflicts that were part of Brian's first year as an AP. They did not resolve the problem of needing more mentorship and feedback, nor did they ease the hard work of developing relationships with staff and students. Brian had invested a great deal of time before and after he became an AP in constructing himself as an "educational" leader, but, ironically, through Gallup, his district has pegged him as a "learner," which was a match with his principal's talent as a "developer."

Previously, as a teacher and a student studying for a master's degree, Brian had heavily focused on organizing professional development activities for others in his district. He strove to develop staff during his first months as an AP, to the extent that he personally released teachers from class to allow them to collaborate. At some point it will likely become problematic for Brian to ascertain how he might move beyond this particular label as a "learner" and possibly beyond the confines of the Gallup program to become a developer and sanctioned instructional leader himself. One of the ambiguities of the leadership scale that the Gallup program uses is the permanence of the categories that define leadership strengths. Although there is merit in exploring correlations between an educator's strengths and the impact on his or her self-understanding and performance as an educational leader, there is a danger in using these data primarily to inform how

leadership roles should function in schools. If these categories do not change over time, I wonder to what extent these strengths will ultimately define a person's performance and identity as an administrator with MCSD. This opens up questions about new APs' values and beliefs that come into conflict within institutional settings and how they then negotiate these ethics.

Values and Traditional Institutional Demands of Administration

The first-year as an AP requires a negotiation among personally persuasive discourses of community and collegial relationships and institutional expectations of leadership, as was largely the case with all three participants, Maxine, Roger, and Brian. These three new APs experienced challenges to and affirmations of their deeply held values as they came up against the traditional institutional demands of administration. An implication for educational leaders who question or repress their values because of institutional demands that appear to be more pressing and immediate is the move towards compromising an ethic of care for others. Being challenged by institutional expectations may also engender a reluctance to speak out or to critique existing structures when leaders encounter injustices or compromising situations.

Becoming an AP in an environment that embraced neoliberal practices, as I mentioned in the previous section, potentially challenge Brian's understanding of leading. He felt more comfortable as the type of educational leader who ably facilitates instructional practices that directly impact teaching in the classroom, and he expressed a mistrust of the kind of leader whom he called "transformational." His understanding of transformational leaders is of those who

take districts into "new realms of education that are going on out there" and leave a "never-lasting peace" in their wake. Brian's district had already moved into that realm, and it is possible that his choice of words subconsciously reflected his concern that the district had adopted practices that, in the future, might be problematic for himself and his colleagues. In fact, when they were interviewed, the district personnel at MCSD were consistently focused on the implementation of their initiative to build engaged schools. They generally connected their discussion of Catholic values and beliefs back to the long-term plans for districtwide improvement. A district leader frequently described the authoritative discourses of Catholic leadership that influence the district as highly compatible with the Gallup approach because the organization and the institution each stress a focus on developing talents; in the latter's case, talents are considered "God-given." It is more likely, however, that the benefits of using Gallup's services and resources are closely related to efficiency and increased performance and that a connection with nobler purposes is merely convenient. The effects of the relationship between the Gallup Organization and MCSD's Catholic values would certainly be interesting to revisit in the future.

Maxine and Roger's school district, TCSD, like MCSD and other school boards in the province over the past 20 years, had also been forced to make difficult economic decisions in response to government restructuring movements in education (Levin, 2001) and subsequent budgetary constraints (Taylor, 2001; Young, 2002). Education, in general, has become more market-like to counter government-fuelled perceptions of schools as failing to produce students who are

prepared for the workforce (Levin, 2001; Taylor, 2001). This perception has shifted values that favour the public good to values that are more rooted in the marketplace. Consequently, school districts have leaned towards more performance-based discourses that normalize the performances of individuals or organizations as measures of productivity or displays of quality, and then calculate and commodify these measures. For example, the discourses taken up by TCSD had their genesis in the Ministry of Education's demands for increased performance that were authorized by the province's 2003 Commission on Learning (Alberta Education, 2003). The Commission's vision affirmed education as the most "important investment a society can make" and underlined the importance of judging the success of schools and the education system by "how well every child learns" (p. 4). To this end, it prescribed the use of performance measures to monitor its execution. A school's operational tasks that now included significant accountability measures were downloaded from district offices such as those in TCSD to local schools and school principals. Administrators were compelled to focus more on productivity, operating costs, and budgets at the expense of the transmission of culture and identity development. TCSD appeared to be very much aware of the subsequent erosion of Catholic culture and discourses and took up professional development activities in attempts to resist and slow down this incursion of a performance focus.

Maxine's school was small in size and had a high number of special-needs students, an overtaxed staff, and limited economic resources. In her first months as an AP, Maxine coped with a large number of difficult situations that tested her

resolve to be compassionate and fair. These included the death of a student; problems with drugs, violence, and fighting; a weak and disempowered staff; and a discipline policy that she described as "irritating [her] own beliefs" because of its unfairness to students. Maxine also contended with difficult staff situations that involved teachers' conflicts with parents. Encountering the overwhelming complexity of the educational administrator's world, Maxine realized the limitations of her ability to exercise personal control. The extensive demands of the school hampered her desire to take a compassionate approach to the problems she encountered. However, she found support from her principal, who shared her values and who was equally dedicated to taking the time needed to address the school's issues.

The leadership practices of both Maxine and her principal were rooted in Gospel values, but they felt constrained by limited resources as they operated in a school environment that came with an abundance of needs and tight fiscal constraints. For Maxine, to be a "good" AP in these surroundings included a desire and willingness to commit as much time as was necessary to completing all tasks in a timely way to be an effective administrator. She claimed that the payoff for the energy that she put into this position was her increased ability to advocate for students with the extra bit of power and authority that came with the administrative role. However, the effort required to solve problems that predated her arrival at the school, problems that could not easily be solved, along with the effort needed to maintain a high degree of commitment to students, came with a cost to the self. Maxine acknowledged that she constantly thought about her job

when she was away from the school and at times lost sleep over the many decisions that she had to make. Her personal philosophy of well-being was more difficult to maintain within an environment of the conflicting authoritative discourses of Catholic leadership and performativity.

Maxine's efforts to encourage wellness in her staff took precedence over her own need for balance. In the process of negotiating her identity as an AP, Maxine strongly affirmed her district's authoritative discourses of Catholic leadership, but she set aside the warning of her inner voice to be more critical of what this job was demanding of her. Her internally persuasive discourse was not open to challenging the tremendous tasks that she had embraced. In other words, this intense effort was integral to her understanding of what a good leader does in spite of its potential to be detrimental to her own well-being. Both authoritative discourses form leaders from whom much is demanded. Catholic discourses develop leaders who are encouraged to provide a high level of care and service to others (Groome, 1998), and a leader shaped by performance discourses demands that the organization be responsive to the prescribed accountability measures.

The authoritative discourses on Catholicity that form Catholic educators such as Maxine and Roger predominantly derive from changes to Catholicism that originated in the 1960s as a result of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). Groome (1998), in *Educating for Life*, drew on Vatican II documents to emphasize to Catholic educators the shift from a more conservative and institutional "expression" of Catholicism to an understanding of small-c "*catholic* Christian" (p. 413). The word catholic means "universal," and Catholic teachings,

according to Groome, are characterized by inclusiveness and openness to learning from other traditions, as well as "abiding love for all people with commitment to their welfare, rights, and justice" (p. 413). Discourses on Catholicity explicitly name Gospel values and Catholic principles as appropriate school attitudes and behaviours and engender qualities such as honesty, generosity, compassion, justice, and conciliation.

As a beginning AP in TCSD, Roger struggled with his understandings of his new role as an administrator in relation to Catholic education and its impact (or lack thereof) on administrative decisions. Roger believes that teachers' support for the discipline he meted out to students depended upon his relationship with the adults in the school and their perceptions of him as a leader. In certain contexts he garnered support for his disciplinary actions; however, Roger believes that on other occasions staff measured his decisions based upon his enactment of "Catholic principles, values, [and] protocols of the school." He hoped that the teachers did not consider him "excessive" or harsh in the way that he disciplined students or dealt with staff. Roger's identity as a *Catholic* AP was strongly associated with the Catholic values he employed to measure behaviour, his own as well as the behaviours of other members on staff. This strong association with Catholic values seemed to trouble Roger the most as he recounted instances of conflict in which people's actions did not follow an expected pattern of conciliation.

Conciliation was a particularly persuasive discourse of Catholic education for Roger. As an AP, he felt the tension of trying to live out Catholic values in

attempting to resolve contentious issues. For him, this now became much more complex than simply speaking for himself as a teacher. For example, at a staff meeting, when administrative decisions could "not make everybody happy" even after the staff's ideas were taken into account, arriving at a consensus was difficult. He felt uncomfortable about the seeming absence of Catholic values, and his use of the phrase "collateral damage" points to the extent of unintentional emotional injury to both the teacher group and the two administrators. No longer able to associate himself with the former group, Roger is now talking through his transition from teacher to his new and difficult role as an administrative leader. He is struggling with his identity as an AP, with his desire to be what he perceives is a good Catholic (being fair and respectful, which was seemingly easier as a teacher) and having to make tough decisions or to take tough stances relating to pedagogical and behavioural issues. Throughout these first months in the role, Roger has been rethinking what it means to be a Catholic educator. Conceivably, the occasion of our conversations that were part of the participant interviews may also be a contributing factor to the shift in Roger's understanding of the impact of having become an AP.

Compliance and Autonomous Decision Making

Becoming a new AP demands both the AP's compliance with existing authoritative discourses of leadership responsibilities, district policies, and practices and the expectation that educational leaders will exercise autonomous power and authority. The new APs in this study held general conceptions of what it is to be a good and valuable educational administrator, and they assumed the

role prepared to act. Their encounter with the school community's expectations, which are representative of the circulating authoritative discourses, prompted a response in the process of developing their identities as leaders; they could accept the status quo, resist it, or negotiate a new understanding of what it means to lead.

Educational leaders' compliance is intricately tied with the various authoritative discourses of leadership that structure school districts and are manifest in mandates from the province's Ministry of Education. As I mentioned in chapters four and five, the two Catholic school districts in the study are accountable to the ministry yearly for multiple measures that they report in three-year education plans and annual reports. The school principals in these districts have to provide pieces of these data to their superintendents (i.e., goals of the school aligned with the goals of the school district and province, parent/teacher/ student surveys, school growth plans, budget information, and assessment of outcomes from programs of study) as they oversee the daily operation of their schools. School principals and APs must also support the initiatives that their districts believe will continually improve these measures. The district-level focus for professional development in both MCSD and TCSD is on the role of the principal; for the former, on establishing clear links with the Gallup Organization to build more effective schools; and for the latter, on developing Catholic educational leaders.

New APs Brian, Roger, and Maxine expressed appreciation for the support from their respective districts as they were introduced to the desirable leadership practices that each district considered important. They mentioned leadership

meetings, access to professional resources, and principal mentorship as means of becoming part of the overall fabric of educational administration. However, as our conversations progressed, they began to measure their needs and experiences against what their respective districts were promising. Brian wondered about the actual correlation between the Gallup measures and how teachers were being ranked for interviews, as well as how being matched with a principal, based on an assessment of their individual strengths, might mitigate the uncertainty he felt in the role. Roger and Maxine identified mentorship from their principals and the general nature of the topics at professional development sessions as obstacles to their ability to fully develop into the "good" Catholic leaders to which they aspired.

But this level of compliance with their district's conceptualization of leadership was not the most pressing to the three first-year leaders. More immediate were the challenges and conflicts that arose as a result of the expectations of the school community within their first months as they interacted with staff and students. In their new roles as APs, Brian, Roger, and Maxine were expected to fit into the existing structures of their respective schools, but they also anticipated exercising some measure of autonomous power and authority as educational leaders as they began to develop their AP identities.

In his first months as an AP with MCSD, Brian encountered dilemmas between the preexisting traditions associated with past APs in the school and his desire to develop his own style and his aspiration to make a difference in his school community. This struggle became more evident when the staff met his

understanding of the AP role with some resistance. Some teachers who were friendly with Brian when he arrived at the school solicited his support for the school's existing structures, programs, and rules. However, he began to exert a measure of control over certain student discipline practices, which he described as not very student centered, and to advocate for contrary students to stay in class all day rather than being removed by teachers for what he considered minor misdemeanours. In the process of persuading teachers to consider an alternative approach to this type of classroom discipline, Brian found that challenging the current values and practices involved a significant degree of persuasion and negotiation in response to their resistance. Some teachers found him too lenient, and he considered them too harsh. He recognized a need to proceed with more sensitivity and collaboration to effect a change that he perceived as necessary. In his attempt to establish his own meaning of authority in the role of AP that resisted the norms of the school, his internally persuasive voice admitted "a variety of contradictory social discourses" (Britzman, 2003, p. 42). These social discourses reflected the tension between what the community expected and the type of power and authority that Brian thought appropriate but that did not adhere to current practices in the school.

As an educational leader, Roger seemed to be more comfortable meeting the requirements of existing authoritative discourses of leadership responsibilities, but struggled with positive ways to exercise autonomous power and authority. The expectations that Roger's principal had laid out—for example, in assigning him tasks that he did not want to do—underpin the assumption that Roger would fit

into a specific role and that, in due time, he would gain a level of competency with those defined tasks. Roger seemed to take on these assigned tasks with a degree of ease, and although he struggled to understand the nuances of this role, he believed that his technical skills would improve over time. He resisted, however, other aspects of the role, one of which was the expectation of teachers and students that he would sort out their problems.

For Roger, having the identity of an educational leader did not include covering teachers' classrooms because of their personal problems or their difficulties in managing their classroom discipline, nor did he anticipate the need to frequently help students deal with friendship-related issues. His admission that he was "forced to drop his administrative work" during those times illustrates the extent to which he perceived his various tasks as an AP as inappropriate or unbefitting the role. Roger's negotiation of the leadership practices that did not match his own understanding of what constitutes good leadership practice was complicated by many factors, including his own deep investments and the role expectations of those in the school. As an AP he had to decide whether it was easier to remain part of the existing restrictions, rules, and traditions and conform to the "mandates of inherited contexts" (Britzman, 2003, p. 40) or to be critical of the internal structures. Roger was inclined to privately express his concerns (i.e., to me as the interviewer) with the school's existing internal structures such as the frequent covering of teachers' classes at their request and the draining task of arbitrating between squabbling students, but, outwardly, he performed what was asked of him. This negotiation between his personally persuasive discourses that

allowed him to consent to being cooperative and conciliatory within the school environment and the authoritative discourses that operated to shape leaders underscores the kind of tension that a new AP might typically encounter.

In this chapter I discussed how Brian, Roger, and Maxine, three new APs in two Catholic school districts, negotiated personally persuasive discourses and authoritative discourses of leadership to shape their identities as educational leaders. I examined the APs' negotiation of conflicting understandings of leadership first and then analyzed how they negotiated their deeply held values with the traditional institutional demands of administration. Finally, I discussed their compliance with existing authoritative discourses of leadership policies and practices alongside the expectation that these first-year APs would also exercise autonomous power and authority. The negotiation process in the ideological becoming of an AP is demonstrated as ongoing, dynamic, and typically private.

In chapter seven I present my conclusions based on the analysis in chapter six and suggest the implications of the study.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Brian, Roger, and Maxine are first-year APs in two Catholic school districts who, like other APs new to the role, negotiated personally persuasive and authoritative discourses to fashion identities as educational leaders. In chapter six I analyzed the ways in which these participants consented to or resisted three particular authoritative discourses during their first months as APs that included encounters with contradictory understandings of leadership, challenges to deeply held values, and struggles between their compliance with existing authoritative discourses of leadership and the expectation that new APs will act with autonomy. In this chapter I present my conclusions about the conflicting discourses that circulate within the two districts and their schools. I underscore the importance of acknowledging that novice educational leaders, like teachers, negotiate their identities and do not simply fit into existing roles. Finally, I discuss the implications of the study for school districts and for new APs.

Conflicting Authoritative Discourses That Circulate Within Districts and Their Schools

Identifying the specific authoritative discourses that shape the leadership practices of new APs is a task that practitioners in the field rarely contemplate. However, Britzman's (2003) assertion that authoritative discourses indeed operate to shape teachers' identities prompted my shift from thinking about leadership first as simply a concept to learn about, and second as a finite number of leadership skills to be acquired to be effective in the role of educational

administrator. I began to look more critically at the authoritative discourses that shape how leaders understand their work and influence what they do. Although authoritative discourses do not noticeably play a role in what we learn about leadership within our school district, they "enter our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 343) to shape the very fabric of our thoughts and actions and form our identities as educational administrators. The authoritative discourses of leadership that I discuss in the study became apparent in my analysis of the participants' language and actions in their interviews, the documents from their respective school districts, the texts from the province's Ministry of Education, and the literature on educational leadership. The three particular authoritative discourses of leadership that I emphasize in the study—the discourses of Catholic education, the discursive practices of autonomous and relational leadership, and neoliberal discourses—are, of course, not the only authoritative discourses that influence the identity formation of educational leaders in the two Catholic school districts. Some of the other authoritative discourses that drew my attention, but that I did not further pursue because they did not seem to emerge as prominently in the research data, include those that shape gender differences in leadership and discourses of the born leader. These and other authoritative discourses form a part of the greater whole of the discourses in our culture that shape particular worldviews and dispositions that dominate our thinking.

Any given social context involves many and varied types of authoritative discourses, some of which may be at variance with the others. Bakhtin (1981)

pointed out that authoritative discourses may organize around themselves great masses of other types of discourses, but they do not merge. They remain "sharply demarcated" (p. 343) and subsequently set conditions for discursive practices that may be inconsistent with each other and perhaps even contradictory.

Hierarchical Versus Collegial Models of Leadership in Schools and Districts

The authoritative discourses of autonomous and relational leadership, which are, respectively, hierarchical and collegial, exist in a spectrum of perspectives that are dichotomous at either end in terms of how power is enacted. These discourses form part of the conflicting expectations of the role of leader in TCSD that operate to shape the work lives and the identities of two of its new leaders. In a discretionary process that is not consistent across schools, TCSD's principals are authorized to act with autonomy but are also expected to share leadership decisions with their school communities, as the current literature on educational administration recommended (Hatcher, 2005; Lambert, 1998, 2002, 2003; Murphy, 2005; Wasley, 1992). A neophyte might be confused by this range of leadership behaviours that the district itself does not easily clarify. Roger articulated his uncertainty about the ways in which leadership is enacted in his school with regard to decisions—for example, at a staff meeting between his principal and the teachers—but he also emphasized his own efforts to personally identify what he felt was most appropriate in building and maintaining a professional relationship with the staff members. In a situation that is largely ambiguous and alienating, new APs are likely to struggle with their understanding of what constitutes a "good" leader as their own identities as leaders are formed.

Such a struggle is more likely to leave them with a weakened stance as they negotiate the expectations of the role. The tension inherent in other authoritative discourses, such as those shaped by neoliberalism and Catholicity, also impact how identities are negotiated.

Neoliberal Versus Catholic Models of Leadership in Schools and Districts

In both TCSD and MCSD, neoliberal policies shape the authoritative discourses of leadership that potentially compromise the values espoused in models of Catholic educational leadership, such as caringness, value for all children equally, and social transformation (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000). Government policies, influenced by neoliberalism, reduce and tighten education budgets and demand performance measures from school districts that then make it increasingly difficult to maintain purposes of education that are not largely economic (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000; Levin, 2001; Wallace, 2004). TCSD has acknowledged the tension between these discourses by focusing a portion of its professional development for leaders on personal integrity and ethical decision making to counter leadership that emphasizes managerial and market accountability. A beginning leader such as Maxine, who has accepted a social-justice mandate to serve an impoverished community well and equally attempts to effectively fulfill the operational demands of the role, does so at a cost to the self. To some extent she has ignored the discrepancies between discourses and consents to both to fashion her identity as a "good" leader, but the time that it takes to fulfill these competing models of leadership is literally exhausting and increasingly impossible.

MCSD's approach to these disparate authoritative discourses was to attempt to integrate neoliberal practices and Catholic understandings of leadership to maximize its limited resources to hire and train staff for the district. Its goal was to establish a strong connection between the purposes of Catholic education—for example, to identify the staff's God-given talents as part of the Catholic ministry—with the strategies that Gallup offered to improve productivity and overall efficiency. Although new AP Brian has outwardly consented to this approach, his description of its implementation during our interview underscored his uncertainty about the conflict between the theory behind Gallup's business practices and his district's chosen direction, and his own understanding of leadership practice. For Brian, the negotiation of his AP identity as a leader may become more complicated as he better articulates his own values and beliefs. Given the fluid nature of identity, he and other APs will continue to construct their identities as leaders as their contexts change. The negotiation between personally persuasive and authoritative discourses of leadership to fashion APs' identities largely depends upon the existing leadership practices in the environment and the background experiences that APs bring to the role.

Questions of Identity in Leadership Development

The role that a new AP takes on cannot be understood only in the context of its tasks and responsibilities within the organizational structure of school; understanding what it is like to become an AP also requires some acknowledgement that one's identity as an AP is simultaneously being constructed. However, my study shows that a focus on identity formation is

largely problematic because it involves an internal process that is not easily discernible to an outside observer. The internally persuasive discourses of an AP affirm, reinforce, negotiate, and resist the authoritative discourses that shape the leadership role in an ongoing process that is essentially implicit and characteristically private. Furthermore, authoritative discourses themselves operate in unseen ways and demand that we "acknowledge [them and] make them our own" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 343) as we engage in the cultural and social behaviours inherent in our society.

To further understand what it is like to become an AP beyond the organizational structure of the role, it is important to reflect on why addressing the identity formation of new APs was problematic in the two school communities in the study. Questions of AP identity did not seem central to the running of the school because new APs were more likely expected to fit within the existing expectations of leadership and not to disrupt the existing flow. The principal and the needs of the school community that predate the AP's arrival largely determine the role itself. As Roger observed, his district did not consider his fit with the school as a whole but was more concerned that his skills would complement those of his principal. His placement puzzled him for several months. The development of AP identity might not readily come into question because school districts can expect that the educational leader role will be filled by an aspiring educator who is able to follow district policies and school rules and is willing to conform more or less to the status quo. This statement is not intended to diminish the work of an AP, but to provoke discussion on the extent to which a new AP puts aside aspects

of the self in order to fit the role. In my own case as an AP new to a school, my principal informed me early on that the responsibility to be the swim coach fell to me, as it did to my predecessor. The fact that I do not know how to swim was not persuasive enough to change the assignment of this inherited task; it was then incumbent upon me to figure out how to solve my problem, which required a quantity of energy and some angst that I might not succeed in this endeavour. I have been the swim coach now for over a year.

Although new APs are actively negotiating discourses of leadership as they take on the challenges of the role, this negotiation is seldom recognized within the school districts. The lack of focus on AP identity in the research and the daily work of school should be of concern, however, to educators. In a school, identity formation is something that happens to the developing student and is not expected of the growing adult. Bracher (2006) argued that teachers should take responsibility for the ways in which their own "identity needs drive and direct their teaching" because of their potential to "threaten the identities of many students" (p. xiv) rather than support them. Similarly, school leaders should also be encouraged to examine and analyze the forms of identity support that they seek through their current leadership practices. Even before he became an AP, Brian was very conscious of his identity being constructed as an instructional leader (i.e., when he engaged in many individual projects when he completed his master's degree). He assumed that the teachers in his school would recognize the support that he sought as the identity of an AP with particular beliefs about teaching and learning. This recognition did not extend to his district's view of

him, as I have previously discussed, and his initial response was to consent; however, he seemed to develop some resistance once he began to articulate his understandings. Addressing questions of identity would compel the school community to invest energy and effort in recognizing the individual interests and strengths of its leaders and to actively maintain and support AP identity.

By acknowledging, developing, and strengthening identity, an organization's employees improve their relationships with each other and make the environment a better place to work and learn (Bracher, 2006). A greater focus on relationship is rooted in an ethic of care for the well-being of others (Starratt, 1991). The difficulties of investing energy in developing relationships with and between APs exist on multiple levels. Time especially is a factor during days that are overwhelmed with teaching, considerable tasks, and numerous student concerns, as Maxine and her principal found when they tried to find time to foster a mentoring relationship. On a district level, funding for release time for the many APs who teach during the day can also be an inhibiting factor. Effective professional development for neophytes, however, might be as straightforward as inviting conversation at the end of the day on topics that will ease the transition into the role. During the interview process with the participants whilst I was gathering data for the study, it was apparent to me that some movement in understanding the self in relation to the role was beginning to occur. As these APs articulated their understandings of leadership, for example, through metaphor or by reflecting on examples of good leadership, they began to voice some of the conflicts or contradictions that they had encountered in their schools. The

researcher-participant relationship itself that developed during this research seemed to have become a forum for authentic dialogue that centered and placed value on the other's experience. Although it can be assumed that school district leaders and principals sincerely care for those who work in their schools, they should be cautioned not to lose sight of these human factors.

Implications of the Study

Implications for School Districts

The implications of the study largely focus on the need to attend to the identity formation of the AP. For school districts this might imply how they conceptualize leadership for the purpose of training new leaders and how attending to subjectivity might enable a greater focus on the leader's quality of life. The way that a school district organizes its professional development for prospective administrative leaders reflects what it values and envisions for the leadership corps of the district. Leadership training programs essentially reinforce the authoritative discourses that are played out in the school district, and the emphasis lies more in the preparation for the leadership *role* than in acknowledgement of the impact on the *self*. This was the case with both TCSD and MCSD, because their leadership training focuses on the role of the principal and the mainstream literature on leadership that has emphasized role and effectiveness in the role, at times from a business perspective. To shift thinking towards caring for the development of identities within the organization, school districts should invite a broader, more critical perspective of leadership that interrupts and redefines the authoritative discourses that shape perceptions of the

AP role. New APs should have opportunities to acknowledge and articulate the conflicts and contradictions that they encounter with regard to their understandings and misunderstandings of leadership. Without a safe forum for discussion, the negotiation of identities is very difficult for beginning APs as they attempt to figure out their new role, especially in situations that demonstrate a reluctance to speak out or critique existing structures when injustices or compromising situations are encountered. My interviews with the neophyte APs were important conversations because they revealed, and gave the participants an opportunity to give voice to, a growing insight into their own agency as leaders.

School districts should be convinced of the importance of investing energy and effort in recognizing the individual interests and strengths of their leaders by focusing on relationships that are rooted in an ethic of care for the well-being of others. In a system in which educational leaders question and/or repress their values because the institutional demands of school appear as more pressing and immediate, an ethic of care is easily compromised. Mentorship, for example, should not be sacrificed because of time constraints; it should be valued for the guidance and connectedness that it can offer new educational leaders to actively maintain and support a healthier quality of life. With this kind of enhancement, the negotiation of diverse discourses of leadership would perhaps strengthen APs' identity and reduce the ambiguity of the role.

Implications for New Assistant Principals

The implications of the study for first-year APs center foremost on their understanding that the role is not the same as their identity as leaders. It is most

important that new APs recognize the necessity of negotiating the educational leader role. The principal and the needs of the school community that predate the AP's arrival and embody the circulating authoritative discourses largely determine the role of the AP; a new AP is more likely expected to fit within the existing expectations of leadership and not to disrupt the existing flow. The identity of the AP, however, is more complex and largely determined by the negotiation of these expectations in relation to the needs of the person who assumes the role. Thus, his or her response to the role is significant in the process of developing an identity as a leader.

In terms of their own self-understanding, the conceptions of the neophyte APs in the study of what it is to be a good and valuable educational administrator were based on their distinctive histories in addition to the influence of the authoritative discourses of leadership that existed within their school districts. Upon assuming the leadership role, however, they were forced to consent to or resist the status quo within their school communities as they negotiated between their personally persuasive discourses and the authoritative discourses of leadership that have now become more relevant. Beginning APs such as Maxine uncritically accepted the way that things are in the school and district and integrated new understandings of what it means to lead, despite the incredible cost to her time and energy. Brian initially accepted the preexisting expectations in his school and district and suppressed aspects of the self; his growing awareness of resistance to the status quo of neoliberal influences became apparent in discussions of what leadership means to him and of the impact of becoming a

leader in MCSD. Roger also initially consented to his school's and district's expectations, but his resistance intensified as he described the lack of district support for the role and the discrepancies in how leadership was being played out in his school. This kind of resistance can lead to the activation of various defence mechanisms. Bracher (2006) emphasized the importance of learning more about how a person's "identity needs motivate and direct [his or her] actions" (p. xiii) and how an underdeveloped and insecure identity interferes with learning. Attending to the identity of the AP would enhance the leadership role, which entails understanding the authoritative discourses of leadership that shape these roles. In a large institution such as a school district, it is difficult to increase the awareness that AP identities are in fact being developed, but this case study has attempted to reveal part of that world.

In this chapter I emphasized that new APs unavoidably negotiate their identities and do not simply fit into an existing role. To this end, I presented my conclusions regarding the conflicting authoritative discourses that circulate within two Catholic districts and their schools to shape AP identity. I discussed questions of identity in leadership development; specifically, what it is like to become an AP beyond the organizational structure of the role. I presented the implications of the study for school districts that underscore the need to better attend to the development of AP identity, with implications for leadership training programs and a better quality of life for APs. Finally, I suggest that new APs themselves address the differences between role and identity and direct their attention to the importance of developing and strengthening their identities as educational leaders.

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APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

1. Background information: gender, education, establish context.

2. Tell me how you became a teacher.

3. Tell me how becoming an assistant principal has impacted your life?

   (Purpose: to draw out examples of how new assistant principals reconcile newfound authority and deal with buy-in, conflict, compromise – to "get at" events, how identity is negotiated)

4. Describe circumstances, events that prepared you for this role.

   (Purpose: to draw out stories of formal and informal preparation for this role)

5. Describe an occasion that illustrates your particular leadership style. What is a metaphor for your leadership style?

6. Tell me about a time when you've experienced leadership at its best/worst in others.

   (Purpose: to draw out notions of educational leadership, Catholic educational leadership, a metaphor for leadership)

7. Describe images of leadership that are represented by people you know.

   (Purpose: to draw out images of leadership as per Allan, Gordon, and Iverson, 2006)

8. Describe ways that your knowledge of teaching has impacted the way that you are a leader/administrator.

   (Purpose: to draw out understandings of the relationship between teaching and leading)

9. What is it about the job that makes you feel uncomfortable?

   (Purpose: to draw out conflicts between policy/practice, difficult decisions, beliefs challenged)

10. What is the best part of your role?

APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT PERSONNEL:

LEADERSHIP

1. Describe your involvement in leadership at the district level.

   (Purpose: to provide background, get acquainted, establish context)

2. Describe your vision for leadership in this district.

   (Purpose: to gather information and anecdotes from his many experiences as overseer of the district's leadership-related practices)

3. Describe typical situations that a new assistant principal faces when taking on that role.

   (Purpose: to draw out examples of how new assistant principals reconcile newfound authority and deal with buy-in, conflict, compromise—to "get at" events, how identity is negotiated)

4. Describe how the course curriculum for a leadership formation and training program is determined.

   (Purpose: to draw out information about the formal preparation for this role)

5. Describe your own leadership style. What is a metaphor for your leadership?

6. Describe ways that your knowledge of teaching has impacted the way that you are a leader/administrator.

   (Purpose: to draw out understandings of the relationship between teaching and leading)

APPENDIX C:

SYNOPSIS OF MISSION CATHOLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

(2002), *ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL FOR SCHOOL*

ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION

Mission Catholic School District (MCSD) provides all schools with a district document entitled "The Role of the Principal for School Administrator Evaluation" (Mission Catholic School District, 2002). This document acts as the basis for school site administrator evaluation in order to provide consistency, focus, and assistance to district personnel to ensure a quality evaluation. In this document, the district organizes the role of the principal around cultural, instructional, and managerial/organizational leadership perspectives, as well as it outlines the desirable personal and professional attributes of an accomplished school administrator, and his or her skill with interpersonal relationships.

In MCSD, the principal as a strong cultural leader promotes the mission, values, beliefs, and goals of the district, creates a faith-based school community, and promotes the success of all students and staff within a shared vision of learning. An effective instructional leader maximizes student learning, attends to the supervision and evaluation of staff, promotes life-long learning for him- or herself and staff, and provides leadership in curriculum delivery based on current research regarding effective instruction and evaluation practices. A leader who manages and organizes the school successfully ensures that his or her practices maximize efficiency and effectiveness of the scope of the school operation, in order to provide for a safe, secure, and caring learning environment.

The personal and professional attributes of a school administrator that are considered most desirable by MCSD are to act in an ethical and moral manner in keeping with the Catholic faith, to demonstrate continuous learning and participation in ongoing professional development and growth, and to engage in effective decision-making processes and behaviours. The interpersonal relationships that a principal takes on should involve the effective development of positive relations with all stakeholders, including other administrators, in an appropriate and meaningful way.

Each of these descriptors is supported by more specific behaviours that exemplify the particular practice.

APPENDIX D:

SYNOPSIS OF TRINITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT (1995), *CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR*

Trinity Catholic School District (TCSD)'s publication, "Characteristics of the Successful School Administrator" (Trinity Catholic School District, 1995) is a compilation of characteristics that best exemplify a successful school administrator in TCSD. These characteristics were identified by over 70 staff respondents, who provide a sense of what leadership looks like as instructional, religious, and managerial in nature, as well as what constitutes the desired personal qualities and skills of a school leader.

An instructional leader knows the curriculum and ensures that the programs of study are carried out. He or she monitors classroom teaching and provides feedback to teachers on their teaching practices, encouraging different teaching styles and inclusive practices. This type of leader has student achievement as their main concern. Religious leadership is demonstrated through the enactment of Catholic values and by providing for religious activities in the school. A religious leader has a sincere and deep faith in children and is a strong advocate for Catholic education. He or she works effectively with others to secure their cooperation and uses effective group process skills. The utilization of a democratic-participatory style of leadership is also a characteristic of religious leadership. A school administrator as an effective manager organizes day-to-day operations and delegates tasks appropriately, as well as manages financial and physical resources.

The personal qualities of a successful TCSD administrator include being ethical, honest, adaptable, committed to practicing the Catholic faith, and demonstrating integrity. Other qualities are maintaining a positive attitude, having courage, possessing high energy and high tolerance to stress. A school leader must also have skills in human relations, planning, oral and written communication, organization, and problem solving. As well, he or she should articulate a clear and informed vision that focuses on students and their needs, and focuses on what the school should become.

APPENDIX E:

SYNOPSIS OF TRINITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

(2007), *PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL OF A SCHOOL*

ADMINISTRATOR IN TRINITY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The evaluation form used by the Trinity Catholic School District (TCSD) provides a record of an administrator's performance in terms of work quality and of his or her understanding of the goals and objectives of the district. In completing a performance appraisal, an evaluator must take into consideration the nature of the school and the community the school serves, as well as the description of the administrator's assignment.

The competencies that a TCSD administrator must demonstrate are organized into four categories: religious/moral/ethical leadership; educational leadership; instructional leadership; and managerial leadership. As a religious, moral, and ethical leader, an administrator establishes and maintains a climate within the school that fosters growth as a Catholic educational community. Such a leader acts with moral and ethical integrity by demonstrating courage and exercising good judgment. As an educational leader, he or she collaborates with the school community to create and to sustain a vision for continuous school improvement. This is enacted by leading a professional learning community and by encouraging and emphasizing team work and staff participation. To demonstrate instructional leadership, an administrator applies systemic procedures for improving the skills and practices of personnel in order to ensure that all students have access to quality teaching and opportunities for success. Some of the competencies of an effective instructional leader include supervising teachers to ensure that the outcomes of the prescribed programs of study are being taught and monitoring the effective use of class time. A managerial leader successfully manages school operations and resources to sustain a safe and caring Catholic learning environment. Administrators must demonstrate competence in developing a budget document that reflects the goals and objectives of the school and ensure that fiscal priorities are implemented with input from staff.

APPENDIX F:

MY PHILOSOPHY OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

To give the reader an example of a "philosophy of Catholic education," I have included the one I wrote as part of my application to St. Colette Catholic School District for a school-based administrator position. I cannot say whether this particular philosophical statement was typical of other applicants, but it was how I interpreted the request.

A Catholic school must be committed to the development of the whole person, and committed to the cultivation of human values that serve all people. Such a learning environment reflects the identity and character of the Catholic church. The expression of the uniqueness of the Catholic experience is embodied in a school's community, through its constant welcome, humanness, and encounters with God, its many faith traditions with a growing collective wisdom, its awareness of and actions for social justice, and its rootedness in the Holy Trinity.

In my day-to-day educational practices, my pedagogical approach reflects an ongoing dialogue primarily with students and colleagues, but also with others whose lives intersect with that of the school (e.g. parents, other school staff, district staff). I believe that it is important to ensure that individual stories are told and remembered, to continually restore and maintain balance, and to lessen the distractions and hurriedness of everyday life, in order to nurture the sustained attention essential to listening and learning. Finally, it is in pausing every so often to ask or thank God for blessings that we are reminded of our frailties and renew our aspiration to live the life that God intended.