University of Alberta

Principal Identity and Educational Change

by

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Dedication

To

Alexander and Victoria

And in memory of

Baba Karolina Stashko and Papa Leroy Wright

Abstract

Despite growing consensus that educational reform has changed the nature of school leadership, the contemporary literature provides limited insight into how educational change impacts the identity of those who are centrally involved. Although the principal is deemed to be a critical lynch-pin in school improvement, relatively few studies seek the informative voices of principals to understand the identities assumed as principals engage in change processes, and how principals address consonance and dissonance between their identities and internal and external demands.

In this study, interpretive approaches were used to explore the relationship between principal identity and educational change. I used purposeful sampling to select six principals within central Alberta. Multiple individual interviews were conducted with each principal. Additionally, I recorded notes in my researcher's journal which also served as a record of my thinking as the study unfolded and as an additional data source. Data analysis involved identifying patterns and themes pertinent to the research questions.

Micropolitical analysis suggested that the nature and degree of change was influenced by the four identities principals assumed as they engaged in educational change: (a) organizational architect (visionary and analyst sub-identities), (b) mediator (disseminator, meaning maker, and problem solver sub-identities), (c) awakener (teacher and learner sub-identities), and (d) protector (caregiver and advocate sub-identities). A degree of overlap and reciprocity, as well as competition, between identities and sub-identities existed. Principals' assumed identities were derived from access to sources of organizational power.

Principals constructed their own understandings and responses to change by assimilating, accommodating (including symbolic accommodation and compromise), or resisting (through evidence-based argument, avoidance, and opposition) new ideas or approaches. Although principals often felt at odds with the prevailing discourses of educational change, they both consciously and inadvertently reinforced dominant ideologies. Expectations for legitimacy and cohesion preoccupied principals' thinking and influenced identity salience.

Principals' identities and responses impacted the potential for change. My key recommendation is that principals need to consider how their identities, positional power, and responses to change shape the nature and extent of educational change. I conclude with further questions and directions for practice, policy, and research.

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Chapter One – The Nature of the Study

For more than two decades, educational change has been a topic of debate amongst policy-makers, practitioners, and scholars alike (Levin, 2005; Seashore-Louis, Toole, & Hargreaves, 1999). With an emerging body of educational literature that documents the failure, and in very few cases modest gains, of recent reforms to achieve sustainable change and improved student learning (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006), increased attention is placed on the principal who is often deemed as a critical lynch-pin in fostering and sustaining educational change (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

As principals assume their role as defined by policy and legislation, they find themselves leading change. Research on the realities of school improvement and educational change sheds light on ambiguities and contradictions between various expectations and the demands of leadership practice intent on improving teaching and learning (Grimmett, Dagenais, D'Amico, Jacquet, & Ilieva, 2008; Hatcher, 2005). Given the demands of recent policy developments, along with the recent academic critique of school leadership, there appears to be a fundamental restructuring and rethinking of the role, identities, and processes of school leadership (Copland, 2003; Wright, 2007). Understanding of how school principals make sense of their multi-dimensional role is vague as the role and responsibilities of the principal are often conflated with the framework of a principal's identity.

What does it mean to be a principal engaged in educational change? How might the principal's identity shape school improvement? When a principal's values collide with internal and external demands, how is such tension negotiated? Although the role of school principals across jurisdictions is typically described with similar job description indicators, actual leadership practice stems from the meanings that a

principal has for his or her life, school, and community. For educational researchers, vague understanding of these meanings and how these meanings relate to improving schools and sustaining change should be problematic.

Purpose of the Study

Claims in the contemporary educational literature (Barth, 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Lortie, 2009) suggest individual principals have a profound influence – directly and indirectly – on professionalizing teaching, enhancing student learning, and potentially improving schools. However, relatively few studies seek the informative voices of principals regarding their understandings of their evolving professional identities in relation to educational change. Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) research of teacher identity sheds light on the need for additional research related to principal identity:

> We wonder at this gap. Why is it that the teacher stories are so rich in terms of issues of identity and the administrator stories so silent on this matter? Is it because the only stories they can live are those of hierarchy and of various degrees of conformity and resistance to the conduit?...If the conduit is so pervasive as to fix administrator identities, how might we imagine a system that creates possibilities for alternatives and, therefore, possibilities for the formation of different identities? (p. 175)

This interpretive research aimed to foster theoretical and practical understanding of how principals make sense of their multi-dimensional role within dynamic and ever-changing school contexts. Hence, this interview-based study explored Alberta principals' perceptions of (a) the identities that principals assume as they engage in educational change; and (b) how principals address consonance and dissonance between their identities and internal and external demands. With a thorough analysis of the relationship between principal identity and educational change, this study offers a foundation for future research studies and policy

development, particularly as Alberta and other Canadian provinces actively work towards the development of provincial certification standards for principals (Wallace, Foster, & da Costa, 2007). Also, this study is timely and significant for informing policy and practice related to the principalship, school leadership, and educational change in Alberta and beyond.

The Researcher

Working within Alberta, the list of educational changes deemed important and designed to improve schooling – including learning, teaching and leading – seem endless and complex (e.g., school-based decision-making, alternative programming, standardized testing, and professional learning communities). As an elementary school principal, I was held accountable for the implementation and sustainability of these educational changes within our school. Inherent in leading educational change and negotiating multiple reforms were other individuals, groups, practices, and policies that informed my identity as a new principal.

During my three-year principalship, I lived the challenge of balancing leadership responsibilities with the management role of the principalship. I became more aware of the constant interplay, both intentional and serendipitous, between my identity and educational change. This realization created a prison of awareness whereby I came to question “who I was” and “who I should be” as a principal (Wright, 2009; 2008). As I reflected, I felt vulnerable as I exposed discrepancies between what I believed and espoused about leadership and how I actually engaged in the leadership practices of initiating, implementing, and sustaining change. As I began to question the relationship between my evolving principal identity and educational change, I wondered how other principals addressed dissonance between

their values and competing demands. These questions prompted my desire to enroll in graduate studies – to create a space to reflect on my evolving identity as a principal and to learn from other principals who were also trying to make sense of their multi-dimensional role.

Background and Context

The Emergence of Educational Reform as a Context for School Leadership

Education reform has been a dominant topic of debate in policy arenas over the past three decades. Trans-national studies (in England, New Zealand, the United States, Australia, and Canada) identify similarities in reform, including "the devolution of financial and managerial control to more local levels, promotion of parental choice, increasing diversity of provision, and a change in the role of governments" (Taylor, 2001, p. 8). Such similarities are not surprising considering that these countries often present with commonality in regard to political ideology and general social values (Kennedy, 1995; Levin, 2005).

In the early 1980s, the need to be economically independent and to compete in a global economy provoked reform as a means to transforming education (Apple, 1993; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Ball 1994). Other emerging trends related to the demise of the traditional family structure, a decline in manufacturing sectors, the emergence of new technologies, and high levels of inflation and mounting public debt encouraged the emergence of the *New Right* who asserted that public schools were in a state of crisis (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Freedman, 1995).

The New Right argued that schools were key contributors to social and economic issues. Uncertainty, inefficiency, excessive bureaucracy, and mediocrity contributed to this crisis in education (Taylor, 2001). The New Right was

characterized by two dominant ideologies – neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism. Social traditionalism, as manifested in a strong work ethic and the values of law, order, and morality (preservation of family and church), was promoted by neo-conservatists. Whereas, those representing the neo-liberal position of the New Right promoted competition and individualism through the release of economic and market forces (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Freedman, 1995).

In the mid-1980s, as a response to the growing criticism of public schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Freedman, 1995), a shift in policy rationale focused on reconceptualizing education through the decentralization of financial control, centralization of accountability, and increased parental choice (Taylor, 2001; Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998). Levin (2005) specifically identified commonalities among reforms and areas of policy that dominated Canadian reform, including "changes focused on governance structures, financing mechanisms, testing of students, curriculum requirements, and the status of teachers" (p. 65). The changing educational policy rationale that occurred on the international front (i.e., in England, United States, New Zealand, and Australia) impacted Canada's and particularly Alberta's reform efforts in the early 1990s.

School reform as the means to revive failing pubic schools came under attack by many. Unwilling to blame schools for larger social issues, Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) and Barlow and Robertson (1994) argued that the crisis in public education was a myth created by those interested in preserving their white, middle-class positions. However, public release of test scores and other data created additional widespread concern about school failure (Levin, 2000). Canadians appeared to unquestioningly accept criticisms of public education, teaching, and school leadership (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991; Lewington & Orpwood, 1993).

Thus, for the past two decades, many countries' government policies have centered on educational reform as the means to maximizing economic and social success in a global market (Levin, 2005). Many reforms (e.g., curriculum design, standardized testing, financial governance, pre-service teacher education, professional development, and principal preparation and licensure) are constructed with the intent to improve schools and student learning (Lortie, 2009; Taylor, 2001). Underscoring many reforms is the importance of the principals' leadership in initiating, implementing, and sustaining educational change (Alberta Commission on Learning, 2003; Barth, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Lortie, 2009).

The Principalship within the Alberta Context

Within Alberta, the legal framework of the School Act (Province of Alberta, 2007) defines the principal as the formally-designated educational leader at the school level. Section 20 of the School Act broadly outlines the mandatory requirements of the principal's role:

> The principal of a school must:
> (a) provide instructional leadership in the school;
> (b) ensure that the instruction provided by the teachers employed in the school is consistent with the courses of study and education programs prescribed, approved or authorized pursuant to this Act;
> (c) evaluate or provide for the evaluation of programs offered in the school;
> (d) ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister;
> (e) direct the management of the school;
> (f) maintain order and discipline in the school and on the school grounds and during activities sponsored or approved by the board;
> (g) promote co-operation between the school and the community that it serves;
> (h) supervise the evaluation and advancement of students;
> (i) evaluate the teachers employed in the school;
> (j) subject to any applicable collective agreement and the principal's contract of employment, carry out those duties that are assigned to the principal by the board in accordance with the regulations and the requirements of the school council and the board. (Section 20)

Alberta, like many other provinces and states, has experienced a number of social changes, legislative mandates, and educational reforms that have rendered school leadership increasingly dynamic and complex. Over the past 15 years, a number of large-scale initiatives have significantly impacted the principalship (Alberta Commission on Learning, 2003).

Central to Alberta's reforms in the early to mid to late 1990s was a move to increase responsibility and accountability for enhanced efficiency and excellence within the school system (Levin, 2000; Taylor, 2001). Many of these policies impacted the work of Alberta principals, including: (a) the requirement to prepare Annual Education Plans based on prior achievement results and report on success in achieving targets and meeting satisfaction rates (of parents, teachers and students); (b) the introduction of school councils to increase parental decision making; (c) the wide-spread adoption of school-based decision making in which operational and instructional decisions are devolved to the school level; and (d) the opening of boundaries which encourages schools to provide specialized programs and compete for students.

In 1999, the emphasis on accountability and excellence further underpinned the Government of Alberta's consultation with key stakeholders to determine the best strategy to improve student achievement and performance. The result of the consultation process was the creation of the framework for the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) (Alberta Learning, 1999). AISI was described as a "bold approach to supporting the improvement of student learning by encouraging teachers, parents and the community to work collaboratively to introduce innovative and creative initiatives" (Alberta Learning, 1999, p. 4). Within the AISI context, school principals' understandings of educational change have been influenced by authors

such as Barth (1990 & 2001), Danielson (2002), Eaker, DuFour and DuFour (2002), Fullan (2007 & 2001), Kotter, (1996), Lambert (1998), Marzano (2003), Sergiovanni (1994, 1996), Schmoker (1999), and Hargreaves, Crocker, Davis, McEwen, Sahlberg, Shirley, and Sumara (2009). Today, AISI continues to be the hallmark of Alberta's relentless focus on large-scale improvement and sustainable educational innovation.

Whereas AISI Cycle 1 (2000-2003) established accountability measures and criteria to determine the degree an initiative was working and set the stage for continuous improvement, schools focused on data collection and in-depth analysis of promising practices to inform decision making during AISI Cycle 2 (2003-2006) (Foster, Wright, & McRae, 2008). Building on the first two cycles, AISI Cycle 3 (2006-2009) was characterized by teacher collaboration and inquiry, as well as continued emphasis on instructional innovation, and knowledge sharing and dissemination (Alberta Education, 2008). Within Cycle 3, Foster et al. (2008) noted that a range of emerging leadership roles and approaches were developed to initiate and sustain school improvement. In addition to formally-designated leadership (i.e., school principals), great value was placed on the leadership generated through collaborative relationships amongst teachers, AISI coordinators, AISI leadership teams, parents, students, and the broader community (Foster et al., 2008). With a new focus on "student engagement," "shared leadership," "the complexity of innovation and change processes," and "networks for knowledge dissemination and the exchange or creation of information, ideas, and resources" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 4), AISI Cycle 4 policy (2009-2012) will likely have other consequences for principal leadership.

In addition to the aforementioned policies, the principalship has also been impacted by social changes related to: (a) school safety (e.g., gangs and bullying); (b) health and well-being of school members (e.g., spread of H1N1[1] virus and teacher burnout); (c) student demographics (e.g., increased student diversity); (d) equity and accessibility (e.g., issues related to race, gender, and sexuality); and (e) information explosion and knowledge mobilization (e.g., new technologies and social networking) (Gibb & Koop, 2000; Lortie, 2009). Within an environment characterized by continuous change, the work of school principals is complexified. Thus, "the role of the principal is becoming increasingly challenging and deserves a special focus within the education system, particularly in preparing principals and providing ongoing support and professional development" (Alberta's Commission on Learning, 2003, p. 14).

Licensing and Preparing School Principals

For more than three decades, the role of the principal as an educational manager has been well-documented (Adams & Copland, 2007; Lortie, 2009; Wolcott, 1973). While principals are still responsible and held accountable for staffing, budgeting, facilities maintenance, scheduling, discipline, and implementing central office or state-level policy directives, the educational literature points to many new demands on school principals (Beatty, 2000; Goldring & Greenfield, 2002; Lugg, Bulkley, Firestone, & Garner, 2002; Lortie, 2009).

[1] In 2009-2010, school authorities and principals engaged in extensive pandemic preparedness planning in response to a worldwide outbreak of the H1N1 virus (technically called Influenza A, H1N1 is commonly referred to as the human swine influenza).

School reform has been a topic of debate amongst policy-makers in industrialized nations with proponents arguing for inescapable “educational adequacy” (Adams & Copland, 2007, p. 154) – that is, providing quality educational opportunities that meet the needs of *all* children is deemed crucial to societal advancement (Levin, 2005). The inescapability of “educational adequacy” is increasingly reflected in numerous performance standards and accountability reforms (e.g., America’s “No Child Left Behind” legislation, Alberta’s Commission on Learning report, and the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement policy). International, national, and local school reform and improvement efforts require principals and other school members to be persistent in efforts to bridge “the chasm between student performance levels and accountability expectations” (Adams & Copland, 2007, p. 154). New practices and approaches, such as the distribution of leadership through the establishment of professional learning communities, are more prominent in policies designed to meet the magnitude of these performance-oriented educational reforms (Elmore, 2000).

Arguably, local, national and international school reform and improvement efforts to date have not resulted in large-scale, sustainable change – in fact, without the principals’ leadership, student progress may be haphazard, slow, or at times even nonexistent (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008; Lortie, 2009). The crucial importance of the school leader, and more specifically leadership preparation in education reform and school improvement, has been emphasized by Fullan (2007), Elmore (2006), Lortie (2009), and Murphy (2006) as a means to fostering and sustaining educational change. Subsequently, within the United States and Canada, the licensing and preparation of principals has become a broadly applied policy tool to influence the dispositions, knowledge, and skills of new and practicing school principals (Adams & Copland, 2007; Wallace et al., 2007).

Other than the principal being certified as a teacher within the province of Alberta, Alberta legislation currently does not specify other employment qualifications for school principals (Wallace et al., 2007). However, in 2006, Alberta Education began to develop the *Principal Quality Practice* Guideline[2] (PQPG) as a response to Alberta's Commission on Learning (2003) recommendation that the province develop a quality practice standard to prepare, recruit and assess the performance of school principals. The PQPG highlighted successful school principal leadership in the following dimensions: supporting effective relationships; providing visionary leadership; leading a learning community; providing instructional leadership; developing and facilitating leadership in others; managing effectively; and understanding and responding to the larger societal context (Alberta Education, 2009).

If licensing requirements or preparation programming intends to protect public interests and develop school leadership, consideration needs to be given to the identities of principals as they lead within a dynamic and complex reform context which is much different from the era depicted in Wolcott's (1973) seminal work, *"The Man in the Principal's Office."* However, Wallace and her colleagues (2007) alleged that current theory and practice-based educational leadership preparation programs often prepare school principals, at best, for "'What is' – i.e., serving the instrumental needs of programs and practices that already exist" (p. 202). Wallace et al. (2007) further asserted:

> Principal preparation programs too often rely on propositional knowledge that leads to the somewhat naïve belief that there is "one best way" for school leaders to do their work in a complex, multi-valent society. In addition,

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[2] Although the move toward principal certification is fraught with dissenting views and associated rhetoric, the purpose of this study is not to enter into the debate. Rather, here, I acknowledge that principal certification will likely exist legally within the province of Alberta.

> programs often define leadership in strictly instrumental ways with little, if any, attention paid to the moral imperatives of complex and even conflicting educational goals in a democratic society (see also, Starratt, 1991, and Labaree, 1997). (p. 202)

In other words, Wallace et al. (2007) surmised that narrowing the focus of principal preparation programs to managerial competency "will not effectively serve the broader human interests of our students, or the society for which we are preparing them" (p. 202). Moreover, Seashore-Louis et al. (1999) also argued that issues of personal identity are central to how school principals find or give meaning to their lives by reaffirming their own moral purpose and seeking educational idealism. If educational change is contingent on building a vision of what "might be" or "should be," policy related to principal preparation should consider how principals' identities potentially impact school vision and goals for educational change.

Research Questions

In addition to my lived experiences as an Alberta school principal, the questions guiding this study evolved from my Doctoral coursework, ongoing professional reading, and the research I conducted during my Master's program (Wright, 2008). As my Master's study drew to a close, I contemplated how the Alberta principals in my study were often unable or unwilling to reflect on their identities as defined and shaped by educational change. As I explored implications for the practice and study of educational leadership, I found limited research that explored the potential reciprocity between educational change and the identities of school principals. Thus, my study addressed the following overarching research question: *What is the relationship between principal identity and educational change?*

To specifically address the aforementioned research question, I sought the informative voices and perspectives of six Alberta principals by posing the following sub-questions:

1. *What are the identities that principals assume as they engage in educational change?*
2. *How do principals address consonance and dissonance between their identities and internal and external demands?*

I came to these complex, situated questions as a means to explore how principals make sense of their multi-dimensional roles within dynamic and ever-changing school contexts.

Definitions

The following definitions apply within the context of this study:

Educational Change: In this study, educational change is an inclusive concept that considers both formalized, large-scale reform efforts or restructuring, as well as smaller, more "bottom up" adjustments or changes that are intent on making improvements within local school contexts.

Identity: After contemplating differing theories of identity as well as the study participants' understandings of identity, I now view identity as understanding of one's self – including one's values and beliefs, as well as internalized perceptions, meanings, and expectations that are associated with the roles we take up. Hence, identity is a response to the question, "Who am I?" Our identities and the meanings we give to our roles shift over time and vary depending on contextual factors and interpersonal commitments.

Micropolitics: Joseph Blase's (1991) expansive definition of micropolitics was used in this study:

> Micropolitics refer to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. In large part political action results from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to influence and/or protect. Although such actions are consciously motivated, any action, consciously motivated, may have "political significance" in a given situation. Both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics. Moreover, macro- and micropolitical factors frequently interact. (p. 11)

Politics: This study employs Mumby's (2001) definition of politics:

> The articulation of various individual and group interests through the everyday enactment of communicative processes that produce, reproduce, resist and transform collective (intersubjective) structures of meaning. Politics is power enacted and resisted. (p. 587)

Reflection: This study uses Schön's (1987) conceptualization of the practitioner as practicing reflection "in" and "on" action, individually or collectively, to facilitate decision-making and learning. Reflection becomes a form of thinking, problem-posing and solving and theory building that appreciates each problematic or unique situation through different perspectives.

Reflexivity: Within educational research, instrumental forms of reflection are often differentiated from social reconstructionist forms of reflexion (Fendler, 2003). Individual and collective reflexivity disrupts habituated patterns of thinking and interrogates beliefs and practices particularly around internalized structures and preoccupations that are based on one's position of power and privilege (Bourdieu, 1974; Foster, 1986). For the purpose of my study, I felt that Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) depiction of reflexivity – as a sub-set of reflection in which one

considers, analyzes and evaluates one's own role, preoccupations, assumptions, tacit ideas, values, and beliefs – was most aligned with my own notion of reflexivity. That is, reflexivity involves being vulnerable to exposing, challenging and disrupting one's own thinking and practice by openly questioning the extent by which one's decisions and actions are value-laden.

Role: Regularities and patterns of social interactive behaviour are explained by and accounted for by roles (Merton, 1968 &1957). As individuals, we typically assume a number of roles in our home and work lives. Each role entails specific rights, pre-determined duties, and norms (or rules) that guide or prescribe our behaviour.

School Improvement: Within this study, school improvement is viewed as the enhancement of student learning through an emphasis on instructional practices, cultural conditions, and structures that support teaching and learning (Alberta Education, 2008; Hopkins, 2001).

Educational Significance and Contribution of the Research

The theoretical significance and the contribution of this study can be understood in terms of a call for new perspectives on leadership for educational change. *Being a principal* has yet to be examined in light of shifting and multi-faceted identities. In fact, Seashore-Louis et al. (1999) argued that "incorporating a personal identity theme into studies of school improvement would be valuable….One aspect of this integration is to examine the way in which organizations have the power to help form or deform us" (p. 265).

Whereas there have been numerous calls for principals to become more effective change agents, there is limited empirical research and theoretical discussion

that entails in-depth examination of how educational change affects those school members centrally involved (Seashore-Louis et al., 1999). Although there is growing recognition that educational reform defines individual teachers' identities and violates teachers' agency in the construction of their own identities, few studies have examined "principal identity" and the degree of agency that principals may have in assuming and negotiating other identities within their schools and jurisdictions (Poole, 2008; Seashore-Louis et al., 1999). This study is significant as it considers the phenomenon of educational change through the subjective meanings that principals attribute to their leadership actions. Moreover, this study is original in that it goes beyond mere analysis of how external policies and practices position principals to also consider the reciprocal impact of identity in principals' responses to change as "even in schools with strong normative cultures, educators maintain a self-identity that gives texture and honesty to their particular practice" (Seashore-Louis et al., 1999, p. 265).

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of teacher identity to successful educational reform (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Day, 2002; Hargreaves 2007, 2004; Warin, Maddock, Pell, & Hargreaves, 2006) and how the principal is instrumental in shaping teachers' identities and impacting the degree to which teachers identify with new organizational goals (Anderson, 1990; Hatcher, 2005; Poole, 2008). As suggested by Collinson (2006), the "identities of followers and leaders are frequently a condition and consequence of one another" (p. 187). Arguably, to explore how principals' leadership shapes followers' identities, a better understanding of how principals' assumed identities interact with and influence others is required. Hence, this study considers micropolitics in the principalship that are largely understudied by educational scholars (Anderson, 1990; Ball, 1987).

Heeding Beatty's (2000) call for strategies to assist practicing school principals with coping with identity concerns, this study is timely and significant. With a thorough analysis of the relationship between principal identity and educational change, I anticipate that this study will be informative to practitioners, policy makers and educational scholars concerned with the principalship, educational change, and school improvement within and across local, national and global contexts. As Alberta and other Canadian provinces actively work towards the development of certification standards for principals (Wallace et al., 2007), this study explores the possibilities and tensions that principals' identities may pose for educational change and thus has the potential to yield implications for the design of principal preparation as well as ongoing professional development for principals. In unearthing the identities that principals assume as they engage in educational change and how principals address consonance and dissonance between their identities and internal and external demands, this study aims to foster social consciousness and prompt lively and hopeful debate focused on how school principals may facilitate change that improves educational opportunities for all students.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized and presented in eight chapters. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature that is organized around three key strands: "The Principalship," "Identity," and "Educational Change." Next, Chapter Three includes a rationale for the methodology and theoretical basis of the study, along with information on participant selection, the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, and constraints (limitations and delimitations). Collection, analysis, and trustworthiness of the data are also addressed. In an effort to enable the reader to better understand my values as

a researcher and school principal, Chapter Four describes my background and select experiences to illustrate how I made sense of my own multi-dimensional role as a principal; by contrast, Chapter Five illuminates some of the key values held by, as well as background and contextual information about, the six principal participants in this study and their unique school settings. Chapter Six presents the findings and interpretations related to the identities principals assumed as they engaged in educational change. How principals negotiated consonance and dissonance between their values and internal and external demands is elaborated in Chapter Seven. Finally, Chapter Eight includes an overview of the study, a synthesis of findings, implications and compelling questions, and concludes with my final reflections.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

Initially, I began this literature review wanting to enhance my leadership practice and own understanding of my identity as a principal, and as an emerging scholar hoping to build on my Master's research on the principalship (Wright, 2008). In additional to professional reading, my doctoral coursework and attendance at numerous academic conferences has afforded me more nuanced understandings from "others' analytical schemes" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 169). Here, the background and theoretical basis for this research, which explores what it means to be a principal within complex, ever-changing contexts, is organized and presented in three strands: "The Principalship," "Identity," and "Educational Change." The chapter closes with an overview of the connections among these bodies of literature.

The Principalship

The Changing Role of the School Principal

School principals are charged with and held accountable for the day-to-day workings of the schools that they are appointed to. Studying the principalship has been advantageous because the individuals that assume the role of principal are uniquely positioned as a focal point within a school's dynamic and ever-changing life.

Within the educational administration literature, the school principalship has been traditionally studied through role theory. The emergence of role theory in the 1930s was based on structural-functionalist perspectives that separated the person from the social position or function that the person occupied. Patterned sets of routine actions were assigned to different positions to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of society. Connell (1983) explained that the emergence of role theory

was a cultural response to economic turmoil and was deemed essential to social survival. By the 1960s, structural-functionalist perspectives began to wane after being criticized for providing a highly confined and inflexible view of interactions and for failing to acknowledge that interactions are highly individual and ever-changing due to unique situations and contexts (Connell, 1983). Role theory – emphasizing pre-determined roles, highly-defined functions, and predictable positions – primarily found its way into the field of educational administration in the 1950s (Heck & Hallinger, 1999; Ryan, 2007).

Interest in the principalship was heightened in the 1970s and 1980s as scholars purported that principals have important effects on the quality of their schools (Barth, 2001; Levine, 2009; Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Researchers pointed to the importance of the principal's leadership in developing school culture and climate (Barth, 1986; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Hargreaves, Crocker, Davis, McEwen, Sahlberg, Shirley, & Sumara, 2009; Spillane, 2006), impacting teacher and parental attitudes (Barth, 1986; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Lambert, 2002), and fostering participation of stakeholders in decision-making (Lambert, 2002). Principals were also viewed as influencing the classroom practices of teachers, and therefore, improving opportunities for student learning (Barth, 1986; Blase & Blase, 2002a; Foster et al., 2008; Hallinger, 2003; Hargreaves et al., 2009; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992).

Scholars, such as Beck and Murphy (1993), noted the evolution of the role of the school principal. From their in-depth study of the educational administration literature, they identified the dominant metaphorical themes of each decade that described principals' primary roles, including: values broker in the 1920s, scientific manager in the 1930s, democratic leader in the 1940s, theory-guided administrator in

the 1950s, bureaucratic executive in the 1960s, humanistic facilitator in the 1970s, and instructional leader in the 1980s. In examining the work of several scholars (Blase & Blase, 1999; Barth 2001; Fullan, 2007 & 2001; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Senge, 1990), the metaphors that best characterize the role of the principal since the 1990s are that of instructional leader or catalyst for change. Such research has deepened understanding of how schools are led and operated. Moreover, studies of the principalship provided a theoretical and empirical base for considering how schools might be improved.

Talk in education circles often center on change and the swinging educational pendulum. While some changes may be viewed as minor or seen as passing trends (e.g., use of particular resources or pedagogical approaches), a number of ideologically-driven interventions and reforms (e.g., inclusion of special needs students and high-stakes testing) have resulted in increasingly complex dynamics that inevitably create recurring dilemmas for school principals. Goldring and Greenfield (2002) argued that these dilemmas are "contradictory stances" (p. 12) stemming from enduring value conflicts and occurring within a context of ambiguity and contradiction. These dilemmas include (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002): (a) the "concurrent expectation to *lead the school* toward the improvement of instruction and to *manage the school* so that there is enough stability and certainty for the organization to function efficiently" (p. 12); (b) "the necessity to manage and develop *internal* operations while concurrently monitoring the environment and anticipating and responding to *external* agencies" (p. 13); and (c) "the need to balance participatory leadership with the simultaneous imperative to assume the responsibility to make and implement difficult decisions that may not be endorsed by the collective" (p. 14).

Other scholars (Lugg, Bulkey, Firestone, & Garner, 2002) described how principals continuously navigate complex, interrelated terrains that are largely influenced by the dynamics between the economy, state-level policy, and accountability measures. Leithwood and Prestine (2002) described how principals negotiate marketized, decentralized, managerial, and professional approaches to accountability that are "rooted in different and sometimes incompatible sets of assumptions about what is wrong with schools, what they ought to be like, and how to bring about change" (p. 43). Although each approach to accountability is based on different assumptions regarding the purpose and means of reform, Leithwood and Prestine (2002) argued that each approach "assumes that the work of school leaders [i.e., principal] is fundamental to their success" (p. 61).

Subsequently, today's principals face increased pressure to implement educational innovations and to sustain educational change (Foster et al., 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Each trend, intervention, or reform encountered presents specific challenges to the traditional organization of schools and potentially affects the role and tasks of the principal (Lortie, 2009). Furthermore, shared governance or distributed models of leadership that have recently been promoted to foster collaboration among school members have also resulted in significant role changes and leadership challenges for principals (Hatcher, 2005; Spillane, 2006; Timperley, 2005; Wright, 2007). For principals, leadership continues to be challenging due to the complexity and uncertainty that accompanies the forces of change.

School Leadership Approaches

For many of us, the names of specific leaders such as Gandhi, King, Kennedy, Mandela, Fox and others often conjure up romanticized, courageous, and

emotional images. According to Yukl (2002), even usage of the term *leadership* evokes images of powerful, charismatic, and dynamic individuals who have led victorious battles, built influential nations or companies, or carried out large-scale humanitarian efforts. Leaders are commonly believed to make a difference in others' lives and the world. Moreover, the successes or failures of an organization have often been attributed to the quality of leadership (Bass, 1990). These foregoing views also hold true for educational organizations.

Most contemporary educational literature, although attempting to define the concept of leadership, acknowledges the fact that there is no commonly agreed-upon definition for leadership (Bass, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985). However, Yukl (2002) argued that most definitions emphasize leadership as a process whereby influence is exerted by one person (or group) over other people (or groups) in an effort to structure and facilitate activities and relationships within an organization. Definitions differ in regard to "who exerts influence, how influence is exerted, the purpose for the exercise of influence, and its outcomes" and whether leadership should be viewed as a specialized role or as a shared influence process (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 46). Definitional diversity results in "a proliferation of competing theories" (Wallace et al., 2007, p. 185) that impacts how principals make sense of their role and identities as they lead educational change efforts.

One theory of leadership has not dominated the study or practice of school administration and leadership for any period of time (Bass, 1990). However, Leithwood and Duke (1999) identified six major categories of leadership that dominate contemporary research about school leadership: instructional, transformational, moral, participatory (e.g., distributed and democratic), managerial/strategic, and contingency/style approaches. Despite being presented as

separate approaches to leadership, the approaches are in no way mutually exclusive nor pure; however, each leadership approach is distinct with regard to foci, key assumptions, and nature or locus of leadership power. Regardless of the approach, Leithwood and Duke (1999) stated that it is *intentionality* that distinguishes leadership from other relationships or interactions. It is apparent that these differing conceptual theories of leadership both intersect, and at times, compete with each other. Principals enact different approaches, or combinations of approaches, when confronting educational change and different leadership challenges.

School leadership, therefore, is a social influence process whereby principals influence interpretation of internal and external demands, choice of goals, organization of structures and activities, and power relations (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Yukl, 2002). Although the emphasis on prescriptive managerial approaches has waned slightly since the early 1990s, Goldring and Greenfield (2002) argued that educational reform tends to perpetuate the image of the school as a rational-technical system focused on quality, results, and excellence. An accumulating body of scholarship has elucidated how heroic, charismatic, technical and single-minded models of leadership still prevail and are operationalized in many school jurisdictions (Grace, 1995; Thrupp & Wilmott, 2003) despite recent research that reconsiders the relationships and practices of leaders and followers as being mutually constituting and co-produced through dialectic interactions (Collinson, 2005b; Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2004; Leithwood, 1994).

In general, school leadership, and more specifically the principalship, is viewed as being largely responsible for school performance (e.g., Alberta's Commission on Learning, 2003; Alberta Teachers' Association, 2006, 2004a, 2004b; Barth, 2001; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Goldring & Greenfield, 2002; Wallace et al.,

2007; Wright, da Costa, & Peters, 2007). Consequently, many principals face intense scrutiny from parents, senior administrators, community agencies and other stakeholders (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Beatty, 2000). Many of these stakeholders contend that today's school leaders are not responding adequately to standards-based accountability, implementing and sustaining instructional improvements, integrating new technologies, and providing services to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations (Beatty, 2000; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Taylor, 2001). Hence, many principals express diminishing levels of quality and satisfaction with their professional lives as policymakers and the public-at-large appear to blame principals for alleged leadership inadequacy (Adams & Copland, 2007; Beatty, 2000; Blackmore, 2004; Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005). Moreover, this erosion of confidence in the current state of school leadership has resulted in additional government interventions or reform policies that focus on increasing student achievement (e.g., high-stakes testing, parental choice, and alternative programming) and enhancing school leadership (e.g., accountability reporting, use of distributed forms of leadership, and principal certification processes) (Levin, 2005 & 2000; Taylor, 2001).

Micropolitical Perspectives on Principal Leadership

The educational leadership literature focusing on a "belief in the power of one" (Gronn, 2000, p. 319) perpetuates a kind of theoretical and pragmatic individualism which exaggerates agency to heroic proportions (Yukl, 1999). In fact, many leadership studies tend to view power in simplistic terms – giving limited attention to deeper structural concerns.

The notion of micropolitics occurring at any level of an organization or in society as a whole has been explored by critical theorists in education (Apple, 1993, 1982; Blackmore, 2002; Britzman, 2003; Freire, 1985; Giroux, 1983; Hatcher, 2005), organizational theorists within education (Anderson, 1990; Ball, 1997, 1994, 1987; Ball & Maroy, 2009; Blase & Anderson, 1985; Hoy & Miskel, 1996), as well as by organizational scholars outside of education (Bolman & Deal, 2002, 1997; Collinson, 2006; Morgan, 1986; Mumby, 2001; Schein, 1977). In the 1990s, increased attention on the consequences of political decision-making at jurisdictional, provincial, national and international levels resulted in increasing numbers of policy-orientated studies centering on factors that influence internal structures and processes at the local school level (Anderson, 1990; Ball, 1987; Ball & Maroy, 2009; Blase & Blase, 2002a; Blase & Anderson, 1995; Boyd, 1991; Ryan, 2007).

Grounded in many studies related to the political nature of education are the concepts of power, control, influence, struggle/conflict, cooperation, collaboration, strategies, alliances/ negotiation, values/opinions/ethics, and ideologies (Ball, 1987; Blase & Blase, 2002a; Mumby, 2001; Wirt & Kirst, 1992). Much of this research aligns with Joseph Blase's (1991) expansive definition of micropolitics:

> Micropolitics refer to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. In large part political action results from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to influence and/or protect. Although such actions are consciously motivated, any action, consciously motivated, may have "political significance" in a given situation. Both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics. Moreover, macro- and micropolitical factors frequently interact. (p. 11)

Hence, organizational politics and power are important dimensions of organizational processes and structures that account for given leadership approaches and outcomes. Formal and informal political processes, along with a school's political culture,

dramatically influence school improvement and educational change (Ball & Maroy, 2009; Blase & Blase, 2002; Hatcher, 2005).

According to Ball (1987), issues related to morale, bureaucracy, communication blockage, corruption, bribery, and favoritism are embedded in schools. Thus, principals continuously negotiate micropolitics related to power, goal diversity, ideological disputation, interests, conflict, and political control (Ball, 1987). In fact, critical organization scholar, Mumby (2001), argued that organizations such as schools, “are intersubjective structures of meaning that are produced, reproduced, and transformed through the ongoing communicative activities of its members…this process is fundamentally mediated by power” (p. 585).

Mumby (2001) described how “communication, power and organizations are interdependent and coconstructed phenomenon” (p. 585) that create possibilities for organizing and exercising power and for political activity. Since principals create intersubjective meaning through a variety of verbal and non-verbal practices (e.g., through routine, dress, stories, written correspondence, metaphor and space), Mumby’s exploration of power and politics yields insight into how principals may sustain hegemonic practices that result in institutional inertia over the promotion of small-scale change or radical reform.

Organizational communication is the “process of creating collective, coordinated structures of meaning through symbolic practices oriented toward the achievement of organizational goals” (Mumby, 2001, p. 587). As principals create coordinated meaning structures, they engage in political decision making or ideological struggle over competing interests and worldviews (Mumby, 2001). Principals wield power as they attempt to articulate and convince others of one meaning system over others (Gramsci, 1971).

Studies employing a micropolitical perspective consider principals as more than passive receptors of meaning – rather principals are viewed as managing meaning and serving as transformational agents (Anderson, 1990; Tooms et al., 2010). With legal authority, principals directly shape their schools' political cultures and processes. For example, principals access sources of organizational power that other school members lack or have limited access to (e.g., formal positional power, expansive networks and social relationships, and critical resources). Subsequently, leaders exercise control when constructing vision, influencing culture, hiring personnel, allocating resources, and managing workloads (Collinson, 2005b). Each of these aforementioned leadership responsibilities are embedded in micropolitics.

For example, Collinson (2006) described how new electronic communications are highly contested forms of authority and control. Leaders interpret content of messages and determine who to send to and copy on e-mail messages. Leaders also can monitor, record and store electronic communications. Subsequently, online and e-mail protocols raise further questions about the political nature of leaders' communication practices. Thus, "politics is power enacted and resisted" (Mumby, 2001, p, 587) as principals and other school members engage in communication processes that produce, maintain, resist or reform collective meaning structures. Both decision making and non-decision making (or action or inaction) contributes to the political landscape of a school or system. Although the absence of dissent or grievance may be viewed as consensus, Mumby (2001) argued that power is exercised even in the absence of conflict.

Ultimately, principals use political forces and practices either to maintain the status quo, or to leverage innovation in the interest of change. The extent to which newer conceptualizations of leadership (e.g., instructional and distributed leadership)

interact with organizational processes and structures are questions for further empirical study.

Instructional Leadership

With heightened focus on improving instruction and school results, emphasis is increasingly placed upon principals' work as instructional leaders (Day, Leithwood, Sammons, 2007; Leithwood, 2007; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Aitken, 2006; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Wahlstrom, 2004). Instructional supervision focuses on collaboration among educators to enhance student learning, teacher professional learning, school culture, and educational equity (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; DuFour, & Eaker, 1998; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Marzano, 2003; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Spillane & Seashore Louis, 2002). As suggested by Glickman (1985), Pajak (1989), and Smith and Andrews (1989), instructional supervision involves simultaneous integration of a number of leadership functions related to supervision of classroom instruction, teacher professional development, and curriculum and assessment development, in addition to engaging in organizational planning, facilitating change, and motivating school members. More recent scholarship on instructional leadership has focused on collaborative, democratic, developmental, and transformational leadership approaches that emphasize equality between school members and the need to promote professional reflection and learning over forced compliance (Glickman, 1992; Gordon, 1997; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Pajak, 1993; Schön, 1987; Wright, 2008). Numerous professional books related to instructional supervision within the context of professional learning communities also center on distributed forms of leadership as a means to enhancing capacity building among school members (Lambert, 1998), and improving

educational achievement, instruction, and equity (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002; Elmore, 2000; Foster et al., 2008; Schmoker, 2006).

Building on studies that examine inclusive and collaborative interactions intent on achieving justice and democracy (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Smyth, 1997; Starratt, 2000, 1991), other scholars have further explored instructional supervision through a micropolitical perspective (Ball, 1987; Blase & Blase, 2002). For example, Glanz (1995) coined the term "snoopervisor" to describe how supervision tends to be subservient to the interests of school administrators. This unfavourable image of principals as instructional supervisors, Glanz (1995) argued, is derived from a "bureaucratic legacy of fault finding" (p. 107). Hence, the political orientation of the principal, according to Joseph Blase (1988a, 1988b, 1989), potentially impacts the stance and behaviour of teachers in respect to change efforts. Other micropolitical studies elucidate how control-oriented principals who rely on direct and overt as well as indirect and subtle strategies to control teachers have a profound influence on school culture and vision and the sustainability of locally-determined changes or large-scale reform (Anderson, 1991; Ball, 1987; Blase & Anderson, 1995; Hargreaves, 1991; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

Since instructional supervision is a social construction created through social exchanges and dialogic interactions, it is, in essence, a political phenomenon (Ball, 1987; Blase & Blase, 2002; Britzman, 2003). As instructional leaders, principals continuously interact with teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders whom impact the learning and teaching environment. Subsequently, instructional supervision is a function of political dynamics that "reflects the values, interests, preferences, assumptions, and strategic approaches of powerful organizational stakeholders, individuals and groups, formal and informal, at a given time" (Blase &

Blase, 2002, p. 11). The view of instructional supervision as a political phenomenon, including both positive and negative and internal and external processes and structures, has potential to yield insight into the extent that the identity of the principal consciously/strategically and unconsciously/inadvertently achieves political interests.

Distributed Leadership

With increasing importance placed on school improvement, Lambert (2002) contended that "the days of the lonely instructional leader are over" and that "substantial participation of other educators" (p. 37) is required. Promoting multiple and distributed sources of leadership stretched over complex social and situational contexts, Spillane (2006) and others (e.g., Bennett, Harvey, Wise, & Woods, 2003; Copland, 2003; Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2004; Timperley, 2005) disputed positivistic and bureaucratic leadership theories emphasizing specialized roles, behavioral traits, and unilateral functions. Instead, these scholars presented compelling views of leadership as a shared, social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by leaders and followers "to structure activities and relationships in a group or organization" (Yukl, 2002, p. 3).

Considering recent dissatisfaction with models of instructional leadership that focus on the principal as the center of knowledge and authority, distributed leadership gained prominence "in school management discourse as a means to achieve the participation and empowerment of teachers and to create democratic schools" (Hatcher, 2005, p. 253). Disputing top-down and bureaucratic approaches to reforming schools, Spillane (2006) promoted distributed leadership "as a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation" rather than "as a

product of a leader's knowledge and skill" (p. 144). Thus, leadership is conceptualized "as an organizational entity rather than the property of a single individual" (Hallinger, 2003, p. 338). Because performance is negatively impacted when people feel alienated and powerless, the "ability to empower others" leverages "the commitments and capacities of organizational members" (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 48) through bottom-up participation of others towards the attainment of organizational goals.

Although distributed leadership is purported to be a non-hierarchical and inclusive leadership approach that fosters collaborative and ethical practice (Collinson, 2005; Starratt, 2004), principals, by virtue of authority and position, are "managers of organizational meaning" (Anderson, 1990, p. 43). In fact, ignoring how principals lead from a privileged position fails to make explicit the political nature of education and how power operates to control and protect. Analyzing distributed forms of leadership through a micropolitical lens has the potential to yield ethical issues and micro-politics inherent in change processes. For example, Hatcher (2005) raised ethical considerations around the use of distributed leadership to inadvertently or explicitly secure and coerce commitment of teachers to improvement interventions and government reforms. He also explored how principals could be barriers to the distribution of leadership by holding tightly to power and control, refraining from nurturing alternate leaders, and choosing to involve only those who support their agenda.

As further suggested by Gronn (2000), management of organizational meaning is distributed among the principal and other chosen organizational members. When leadership is intentionally distributed and limited, principals create conditions for unchosen teachers to surreptitiously lead, or for followers to influence leadership

through subtle insubordination (Burns, 1978; Hatcher, 2005). Within such situations, power is still held by the principal but there is also a shift to collective and structural power (Mumby, 2002). Moreover, insufficient attention has been paid to closed forms of distributed leadership may potentially limit collective and democratic management of schools through exclusion of certain individuals or groups from full participation (Hatcher, 2005; Wright, 2007).

Summary

Although role theory continues to influence scholars' study of how principals construct school life, the conception of a fixed position or regimented role no longer aligns with newer understandings of the complex work of school principals within dynamic and changing school contexts (Heck & Hallinger, 1999; Ryan, 2007; Seashore-Louis et al., 1999). Implementation of a plethora of educational reforms requires greater resiliency and adaptability within the principalship (Armstrong, 2004; Spillane, 2006). Specifically, Armstrong (2004) argued that new conceptualizations of leadership, such as instructional or distributed forms of leadership, view:

> The principal's personal and role identity constantly becoming, never complete, never being. The ongoing role of the principal is never a product, but is always process…the principal seeks constantly to maintain some semblance of personal and professional balance in the face of increasing input and demands from the environment. (p. 15)

As principals assume new and multiple leadership approaches, they report experiencing "feelings of loss of control, uncertainty, fear of failure, self-doubts about competence and ability to succeed, impatience, frustration, and loss of identity" (Blase & Blase, 1999, p. 81).

The contemporary educational literature provides limited insight into what extent leadership intentionality is influenced by principal identity. A micropolitical perspective was considered as a means to explore:

> The fundamentals of human behaviour and purpose. Micropolitics is about power and how people use it to influence others and to protect themselves. It is about conflict and how people compete with each other to get what they want. It is about cooperation and how people build support among themselves to achieve their ends. It is about what people in all social settings think about and have strong feelings about, but what is so often unspoken and not easily observed. The micropolitical perspective presents practicing administrators and scholars alike with fresh and provocative ways to think about human behaviour in schools. (Blase, 1999, pp. 1-2)

Micropolitical issues of leadership and school life are largely understudied as these issues are hidden in "'an organizational underworld'; which is difficult to gain access to" (Ball, 1987, p. xi). Research centering on the politics of school leadership may elucidate new understandings of the principalship, with both theoretical and practical significance for school improvement.

Identity

Identity as a Research Construct

My review of the literature within and between schools of scholars has elucidated great definitional diversity in regard to the question of "What is identity?" Psychologists and sociologists generally seem to recognize three distinct usages of the term identity, including: (a) identity as reference to the culture shared among people (hooks, 1991; Lather, 1991); (b) identity as a reference to membership status or common cultural experiences that connects group participants (e.g., "Edmonton Oilers fan" or "teacher in Parkland jurisdiction") (Tajfel, 1982; Tooms et al., 2010); and (c) identity as a reference to parts of self that are derived from the meanings attached to the roles that people play within society (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Hoover

and Klintbjer Ericksen (2004) identified three scholarly frameworks related to the study of identity: (a) *constructionist* views "where identity is seen as an artifact of power, or, more broadly, as the work of social forces…to serve the purposes of dominant interests;" (b) *essentialist* views "for whom identity is fixed by gender, race, and sometimes class. Each person is tied to their [sic] social and/or genetic origins;" and (c) *individualist* views "in which identity is seen as self-created, chosen, or as a matter of 'affinity'" (p. 2).

Upon contemplation of these rival theories of identity, problematic aspects appear to emerge. For example, constructionist views do not account for "troubling cases of those whose identities are palpably formed in opposition to social forces" (Hoover & Klintbjer Ericksen, 2004, p. 2). Consequently, constructionist theories fail to consider how identity is also resistant to power and social construction, thus, failing to acknowledge possibilities of personal agency.

For individuals who seek collaboration and dialogue as a means to improving themselves and the world, essentialist theories of identity are also problematic. When gender, class origins, religion, and race are seen as immutable, there seems to be little or no consideration of other social contextual aspects of principals' work and lives.

Also troubling are individualist theories of identity that appear to consider personal agency as individuals choose who they are and who they will be. Yet, as Hoover and Klintbjer Ericksen (2004) pointed out, "there is much observable shaping going on. That, after all, is the intentional project of education, democratic deliberation, and governance" (p. 3). Individualist theories focus on the individual at the expense of considering defining, shared social experiences (e.g., socialization into a normative identity through policy or professional development).

Rather than debating the merits or limitations of the varying research traditions, Stryker and Burke (2000) looked at how these traditions complement each other to consider why individuals choose a particular behaviour in a given situation. Identity theory, as employed by Stryker and Burke (2002), considered how "the relation of social structures to identities influences the process of self-verification, while the process of self-verification creates and sustains social structures" (p. 284). Stryker and Burke (2000) asserted that people assume many identities within distinct networks of relationships. Within these networks of relationships, people occupy positions and play roles. Role is, therefore, external and linked to social positions within a social structure; whereas identity is internal and consists of internalized perceptions, meanings, and expectations that are associated with the role.

Identity, according to Stryker and Burke (2000), is internalized role expectations and "cognitive schemas – internally stored information and meanings serving as frameworks for interpreting experience. As such, they are cognitive bases for defining situations, and they increase sensitivity and receptivity to certain cues for behaviour" (p. 286). Behavioral choices, thus, align with expectations attached to an identity. Stryker and Burke (2002) argued that the higher the salience of a given identity relative to others, the increased probability that behavioral choices will align with expectations for that identity. One's identity is:

> Organized in a salience hierarchy reflecting the importance of hierarchy as an organizational principle in society….Identity salience is defined as the probability that an identity will be invoked across a variety of situations, or alternatively across persons in a given situation. (Stryker & Burke, 2002, p. 286)

Each role or a compilation of roles is embedded within groups or networks that provide a context for the associated role expectations and identity meanings. Stryker and Burke (2000) pointed out that people live and work in "relatively small,

specialized networks of social relationships" (p. 286). Within these networks, people are connected:

> Commitment refers to the degree to which persons' relationships to others in their networks depend on possessing a particular identity and role; commitment is measureable by the costs of losing meaningful relations to others, should the identity be forgone. (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286)

Through relations with others, a person verifies his or her identity depending on the identity of others, how others respond to an identity claim, and whether or not behaviour aligns with viable self meanings (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Hence, the salience of identity reflects a commitment to the role relationships requiring that identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000) – suggesting that there may be a degree of stability in identities and their prominence across time and situations. As suggested by Stryker and Burke (2000), external social structures (e.g., positional roles and networks) influence the process of self-verification or understanding of who one is and how to behave in a given context. Although these claims suggest that individuals seek a coherent identity over time and place (Erickson, 1968; Stryker & Burke, 2000), other scholars argued that identity is typically in a state of flux (Britzman, 2003; Gamson, 2005; Thomson, 2004).

People tend to have multiple role relationships with many groups for which they hold a number of identities. These identities may reinforce or at times compete with each other. Stryker and Burke (2000) employed identity theory to look at the ways in which "people are tied into social structure and the consequences of these ties for their identities" (p. 287). In accepting "behaviour as a function of the relationship between what a person perceives in the situation and the self-meanings held by the individual" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 288), the agency of the individual is paramount. Goal-oriented behaviour exists as an individual aims to match the

meanings perceived within the given situation with those meanings held in the standard. When competition or discrepancy occurs between perceived self-meanings and identity standards (i.e., internal and external expectations), an individual may experience negative emotions such as anger and frustration that result in reduced commitment to that identity within a specific context (Stryker & Burke, 2000). If individuals have little commitment to given relationships or networks, and if they have a low level of identity salience, it is likely that self-meanings will be less motivating and there will be inconsequential impact on behaviour (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 290). Hence, identity salience changes over time as a result of internal self-verification processes (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

As suggested by Stryker and Burke (2000), the structural sources of identity, the relations among identities, and internal (i.e., cognitive) identity processes converge at behaviour that expresses identities within interactions with others. However, little research has been conducted to examine how social structures also depend on self-verification processes and the functioning of identities. For example, when several individuals within a given context mutually verify the identities held, their commitment increases and they are more likely to self-identify as a group or new social structure (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Or alternatively, when several individuals within a given context find the verification of their identities to be problematic, they may break their ties with others and dissolve the existing structure. In this light, organizational membership crucially shapes and is shaped by identity processes (Collinson, 2006).

Much of the research conducted about identity has been predicated on the assumption that people satisfy their needs for self-esteem and self-continuity by composing self-narratives that are relatively coherent (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

However, such research fails to attend to the practical difficulties social actors experience in evoking their identities as they negotiate educational change. Much of what is known about principal identity, to date, has evolved from the literature on teacher identity.

Perspectives on Teacher Identity

Teacher Identity

Over the past two decades, the topic of *identity* has received greater attention in educational scholarship than ever before. In a large part, the study of teacher identity gained prominence through the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1999), who suggested that teachers' knowledge and identities were composed and continually shift as they live their lives within unique contexts:

> The identities we have, the stories we live by, tend to show different facets depending on the situations in which we find ourselves. This is no less true for teachers in their professional knowledge landscapes. Different facets, different identities, can show up, be reshaped and take on a new life in different landscape settings. But… identities both have origins and change. (pp. 94-95)

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) described "stories to live by" as narrative expressions of "who we are" rather than merely "what we know" in the world. Recognizing that stories "take shape as life unfolds" (p. 95), Connelly and Clandinin argued that when new experiences take us into different spaces and places, our "stories to live by" are braided with new stories of the experiences we encounter thereafter. Subsequently, the shaping of a teachers' professional identity is influenced by the interconnectedness existing among knowledge, context and identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).

In 1991, Lave and Wenger theorized that learning and identity formation takes place through participation in communities of practice – in workplaces as living

social communities. For Lave and Wenger (1991), identity formation is viewed as "aspects of increasing participation in communities of practice [which] concerns the whole person acting in the world" (p. 49). Although powerful individuals or institutions may shape identity formation, Lave (1996) emphasized the "crafting of identities" (p. 156) and the interconnectedness of identity and action:

> Crafting identities is a social process, and becoming more knowledgeably skilled is an aspect of participation in social practice. By such reasoning, who you are becoming shapes crucially and fundamentally what you "know." "What you know" may be better thought of as doing rather than having something – "knowing" rather than acquiring or accumulating knowledge or information. "Knowing" is a relation among communities of practice, participation in practice, and the generation of identities as part of becoming part of ongoing practice and of individuals' varying patterns of participation. (p. 157)

When viewing identity formation through the lens of community of practice, collaboration and dialogic interactions become crucial to negotiating an understanding of "who I am."

Lave and Wenger (1991) further theorized how identity is formed through dialogical processes – that is, an experience and its social interpretation inform each other. To Wenger (1998), identity is lived, negotiated and social in nature, whereby "identity is a becoming; the work of identity is ongoing and pervasive" (p. 163). Individuals interpret the meaning of an experience in participation with others within their local context or environment. Identity is therefore lived, negotiated and constructed through a process of social interaction in the context of our lived experience. How teachers construct knowledge about the profession and how they interpret their identity are "negotiated in the course of doing the job and interacting with others. It is shaped by belonging to a community but with a unique identity. It depends on engaging practice, but with a unique experience" (Wenger, 1998, p. 146).

In her critical study of how one learns to teach, Britzman (2003) described identity as an unstable, contradictory, and unfinalized relation of self that is continuously shaped through forms of knowledge produced at certain times under particular conditions. Britzman (2003) argued that identity in teaching is shaped by tensions in the relationships between theory and practice, knowledge and experience, thought and action, technical and existential, and objective and subjective. Britzman (2003) theorized these relationships are not neat dichotomies; rather, she argued, these tensions are dialogical, meaning "they are shaped as they shape each other in the process of coming to know" (p. 26) through social interaction. Engaging in the dialogical relationship of these tensions fashions the way teachers come to understand their identities and practice (Britzman, 2003; Bullough, 2005; Pinnegar, 2005).

Increased scholarly attention has also focused on how institutional contexts and policy influences teacher identity formation. Wells (2007) argued that identities are formed by:

> Participating in the practices and the discourses of many institutions and communities, appropriating their norms and values and, at the same time, transforming them in the light of those that we have appropriated from other communities. (p. 100)

Thus, identity construction may be viewed "as ongoing and as occurring preeminently in the situated actions and discourses in which we engage with particular others; these events mediate the mutually constitutive relationship between individual and society" (Wells, 2007, p. 100). Castanheira, Green, Dixon and Yeagerb (2007) also explored how "developing discourses, practices and ways of structuring interactional spaces … created *identity potentials* for both the collective and individuals-within-the-collective" (p. 172). With a focus on how identity is "(re)formulated in a group; for, with and by whom; when and where; in what ways;

for what purposes; under what conditions and with what outcomes or consequence in particular events or chain of events" (Castanheira et al., 2007, p. 173), a number of theorists have engaged in post-structural or critical discourse analysis to explore identity issues related to power imbalances (Britzman, 2003; Blackmore, 1996; Carpentier, 2005; Collinson, 2006; Tooms et al., 2010).

Common to the conceptualizations of identity within the aforementioned studies, is an emphasis placed on the construction of identity within situated actions that are socially mediated. Emphasis is placed on agency; that is, individuals engage in identity negotiations whereby they claim, assign, and resist identities in relation to others. Facing rapid change, teachers and principals alike are confronted with new images of their professional identities which "may be overlapping and mutually reinforcing, others can be in tension and even incompatible" (Collinson, 2006, p. 183). "Who I am" and "how I behave" changes in response to different people, situations, and contexts. Subsequently, identity is sense-making – integrating and organizing disparate social, situational, historical and biographical experiences and constructions of self that help govern choices and decision making within practice (Warin et al., 2006).

Aligning Teachers' and Organizational Identities

New policy directions, often including heavy-handed accountability frameworks (Connell, 2006; McLaren, 2005), have been criticized as managing the identities of teachers to align with new organizational identities (Anderson, 1990; Hatcher, 2005; Poole, 2008). Day (2002) argued that reform cultures that pressure educators to subscribe to accountability measures need to be studied further because of the impact on identity which is "arguably central to sustaining motivation,

efficacy, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness" (p. 677). Several studies identified how teachers experience a "loss of self" and strong emotions as they engage in reform activities that impact their professional self-understanding (Hargreaves, 2004, 1998; Jeffrey & Woods, 1996; Lasky, 2005; McCormick, Ayres, & Beechey, 2006; Reio, 2005; van Veen, Sleegers, & van de Ven, 2005; Zembylas, 2003).

As suggested by Collinson (2006), the "identities of followers and leaders are frequently a condition and consequence of one another" (p. 187). Despite this awareness, most studies of school leadership center on the positional power that affords principals the opportunity to mediate meaning and shape the identity of teachers and other school members to achieve identification with new organizational goals (Anderson, 1990; Blase & Blase, 2002a; Collinson, 2006; Hatcher, 2005). However, such identity management potentially delimits "the boundaries of their agency for themselves [i.e., principals] through exercising self-discipline because they believe in achieving official goals" (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005, p. 72). Although there is growing recognition that educational reform impacts and potentially violates teachers' agency in the construction of their own identities (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005; Poole, 2008), few studies examine how principals makes sense of their identities within the current educational context.

Perspectives on School Principal Identity

Principal Identity

In the late 1980s, the concept of identity emerged as a framework to understand how educators see and present themselves to others (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Heck & Hallinger, 1999; Ryan, 2007). Although research provides

rich descriptions of the relational and socially-negotiated process of identity formation for teachers who navigate diverse and changing contexts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Lasky, 2005); little is known about principal identity.

In their book, *Shaping a Professional Identity*, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) suggested that school administrators likely have strong teacher identities; however, they acknowledged the need to consider how administrators are positioned differently on the professional landscape. Admitting that their previous work centred on teacher identity and stories, Connelly and Clandinin suggested that there is a scarcity of research that attends to administrators' identities and stories. In fact, they noted that school administrators are often portrayed as the "ghosts" or the "they" commonly found in the research about teacher identity (p. 172). Wanting to know more about the identities of the administrators that were prominent in their teacher identity research, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) gathered and analyzed several administrators' stories and found "each administrator expressing stories of opposition to the institutional narratives, opposition to the very same kind of directives from above that figure so prominently in each of the teacher stories" (p. 172). Principals struggled with the pervasiveness of the hierarchy of authority that drives communication and educational change. This struggle, as depicted by Connelly and Clandinin (1999), involved principals taking up identities that conformed to external expectations, or on the other hand rebelled against institutional mandates.

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) revealed how identity formation is particularly challenging for school leaders:

> Administrators experience dilemmas as they are positioned…even acting simultaneously, between those above them in the conduit – superintendents, trustees – and those who live on the school landscapes with them but who are often described as being below them – teachers and students…Administrators feel that there is a massive hierarchy above them and that their positions are

> still those of doing or not doing what is prescribed for them. In this, their dilemmas are no different from those of teachers. (p. 173)

Although school principals needed to have a strong sense of their values to be successful, questioning or resisting the prevailing hierarchy and institutional mandates was likely to cost opportunities for career promotion (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Tooms et al., 2010).

Using a post-structuralist lens, Tooms and her colleagues (2010) further argued that hiring practices based on a degree of perceived "fit" between a principal's identity and the culture of a school community perpetuate hegemony and the social construction of what a school leader is – thus, limiting opportunities for self-understanding and transformational change. For example, when a principal is deemed a good "fit" for a school, there is a judgment of goodness or suitability on behalf of those who have hired him or her. Accordingly, the appointment of the principal is typically based on constructed values of leadership that are rarely based on skill set and are more likely to reflect desirable characteristics based on gender, ethnicity, age, political stance, and so forth (Tooms et al., 2010). Hence, school principals are constantly deciphering others' spoken and unspoken expectations for fit and reconfigure their identities and adjust their behaviour to gain and maintain the social capital necessary to serve in the principalship (Tooms et al., 2010; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Joseph Blase, 2005; Tooms; 2007). Thus, principals often compromise their identities in an effort to fit rather than reform existing school structures (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Tooms; 2007).

Other empirical studies illustrate how hegemony affects a principal's identity and sense of "fit" (Tooms et al., 2010). For example, Blackmore (2002, pp. 56-62) explained how women administrators operated under several gendered scripts such as

a “superwoman,” “social male,” or “being strong” script. Tooms et al. (2010) described how a high school principal was unwilling to disclose her sexual orientation because she would “lose [her] job” (p. 110). Inevitably, to protect their personal and professional identities, principals engaged in self-surveillance. Hegemonic practices allowed those who subscribe and internalize organizational values to thrive, while shutting out those who challenged dominant thinking or power structures out (Gramsci, 1971; Tooms et al., 2010, p. 111).

Identity, as a framework to understand leadership practice, shows promise as a means to explore how principal identification shapes the process by which other school members also construct meaning around educational change (Anderson, 1990). Ryan (2007) explored the identities that principals take up as they engage in dialogue within diverse school contexts. He examined how a mediator identity shaped the way school principals fostered inclusivity. In particular, Ryan (2007) argued that the current reform context positions principals to become mediators who:

> Ensure that the everyday experiences of the members of the school community are consistent with common beliefs about what schools should be doing. Administrators cannot have their students, parents, and teachers thinking that their schools do not emulate these ideologies. So they must mediate…intervening in conflict at the point of open contention and in managing meaning. It also involves resolving contradictions in one’s own thinking. (pp. 349-350)

Assuming a mediatory identity is only one of the variable ways that leaders communicate (Collinson, 2006 & 2005; Hall, 1997; Ryan, 2007). Hence, principals “take on different and sometimes contradictory identities in different social contexts” (Ryan, 2007, p. 348). As principals inevitably assumed different identities, their past experiences and identities, as well as their current understandings, values, and experiences commingled with the newly-crafted, in-progress identities (Ryan, 2007).

These identities were derived from both narratives of compliance with or resistance of organizational scripts.

Becoming a Principal

Recent scholarship has also explored the transformative process of *becoming* a school principal (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Cowie & Crawford, 2008). Within this emerging body of research, attention is given to the role-identity transformation of teachers as they are socialized in a new community of practice. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) presented the struggles that female, minority, novice and veteran teachers have in "letting go of their teacher self-perceptions and adopting an administrator identity. Even students who assumed quasi-administrative positions or focused intently on their career building reported surprise, even confusion, over this duality of identity reference" (p. 495). Role-identity transformation was also challenging because of changing conceptualizations about school leadership (Armstrong, 2004; Barth, 2001).

Accounts of role conflict and discontinuity appeared more prevalent for women administrators who were in the first five years of the principalship and had long tenure as teachers who particularly valued the intrinsic rewards of teaching (Lortie, 1975; Loder & Spillane, 2005). For the administrators in Loder and Spillane's (2005) study, role conflict:

> Emerged from the participants' movement from the relatively private and intimate domain of the classroom where they focused on instruction and students, to the public domain of the school and community where they shifted their focus to managerial and political responsibilities. (p. 263)

To resolve such tension, principals employed a cognitive strategy whereby they worked to retain their teaching identities.

Consequently, Loder and Spillane (2005) urged other scholars to consider how leadership preparation programs could assist aspiring principals in coping with role conflict and discontinuity, and how alternative frameworks for conceptualizing school leadership may help principals address identity issues. However, Collinson (2006) cautioned that "leadership development programs can perpetuate leaders' self-preoccupations through their emphasis on 'self-development,' 'self-awareness,' and 'self-improvement'" (p. 187). Thus, principals need to be cautious that their own identity pre-occupations do not "restrict their understanding of followers and ultimately constrain effective practice" (Collinson, 2006, p. 186).

Additionally, identification and socialization processes are crucial contexts for the exercise of power (Mumby, 2001). Power is exercised when individuals internalize and identify with dominant ideologies or goals. As power is socially constructed, further exploration of preparation programming or ongoing career development is needed to foster greater understanding of how power functions in schools and how this influences principals' identities. Although the challenge of understanding identity might begin with leadership preparation, the quest to make sense of "who I am as a principal" is an ongoing, career-long struggle.

Making Sense of the Principalship

Educational policy changes since the 1980s, shaped by broader economic goals, have shaken conceptions about the purposes of education and have disrupted the lives of educators to the point of creating identity issues for many of them (Blackmore, 2004; McDonnell, 2009; Poole, 2008; Tooms et al., 2010). In the current policy environment, principals draw upon complex skill sets to negotiate multiple realities imposed by incompatible or competing expectations. A number of studies

have used a cognitive framework to characterize and analyze school principals' sense-making as they enact accountability policy or implement change (e.g., Copland, 2003; Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita, & Zoltners, 2002a; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer; 2002b). These studies suggest that the principals' identities, values, experiences, and interactions within their respective school contexts influence principals' understandings of policy intent on school improvement.

Just as Connelly and Clandinin (1999) described administrators as being between those above and below them in the conduit, Spillane et al. (2002a) also found sense-making problematic for principals positioned as "middlemen" between teachers and central office. Principals had to develop understanding of what a policy directive was asking and then consider, from their own perspective, if it was helpful or workable in their local context (Spillane et al., 2002b). Just as the local context influenced principals' sense-making, Spillane et al. (2002a) argued that differences in individual principal's identities account for varied policy responses.

As principals negotiate multiple roles, sense-making becomes increasingly problematic. For example, Bradbury and Gunter (2006) explored the intersecting roles of principal and parent and argued that formal preparation for the headship does not engage the persona of aspiring head-teachers outside of the organizational context. Little consideration was been given to how personal identities and values interact with and influence the professional identities principals assumed within school contexts.

A principal's identity is often intertwined with his or her role and responsibilities (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Tooms and colleagues (2010) argued:

> It is this blurring that affects how leadership is defined and evaluated in ways beyond formal assessment. We do not think about the context in which we understand another's identity with much depth…This is because we associate

> role so closely with context that we run the risk of assuming the performance a person exudes in one area is the same in all others. In most cases, it is not. (p. 109)

For example, Tooms et al., explained how principals are expected to "fit" with expectations regarding the role of a school principal. When seen leaving the school without a briefcase every Friday to have a drink at the local pub, a "hard working, conservative Christian" principal may shatter others' judgments of his or her abilities as a leader because the behaviour fails to align with constructs of what is deemed as acceptable. In another case, a principal who sees him or herself as a learner may work alongside teachers to plan for and assess student learning – potentially contradicting expectations for the principal to be an instructional expert. Hence, principals experience dissonance when role expectations conflict with the identities they hold.

With recognition of the proliferation of educational reforms resulting in new and differing identities for school principals, there is an emerging body of literature that considers emotional sense-making inherent in the principalship (Beatty, 2000; Blackmore, 2004; Hargreaves, 2004 & 2001; Poole, 2008; Thomson, 2004). This research draws heavily on current understandings related to the emotive impact of educational reform on teachers' identities (Hargreaves, 2004 & 2001; McCormick et al., 2006; Reio, 2005; van Veen et al., 2005; Zembylas, 2003).

Hargreaves' (2004) and Beatty's (2000a, 2000b) social and organizational analysis of emotion was ground-breaking in that they went beyond the prevalent views of emotions through individualist and psychological lenses to also consider cultural dimensions of emotions. Hargreaves (2000) suggested that "organizations and workplaces are prime sites in which adults experience and learn to express their emotions in particular ways" (p. 815). Beatty (2000) specifically examined principals' feelings of disempowerment that contribute to a "threatened self" (p. 355). As principals

reconceptualize their identities, Beatty (2000) argued, they require emotional support or fewer principals will remain in their current positions and there will be smaller numbers of potential candidates interested in the principalship as the "emotional price that school leaders have to pay" (p. 355) is far too great. In a similar vein, Thomson (2004) described how policy directives committed to heroic leadership conflated her identity as principal through a number of accountability regimes, marketing requirements, and an intensification of workload. With principal identity increasingly focused on managerial tasks, Thomson (2004) argued that the identity of school leaders is:

> Steered away from professional ways of being and doing. This is perhaps the source of the reported principal anger and frustration about the shift to managerialism. This is not just a cerebral disagreement and it is more than an emotional response. The change goes to the core of who the principal actually *is*, their identity, that is, their self narrative. It is hard to maintain a view of oneself as a teacher if one spends most of the time engaged in managerial tasks. (p. 52)

Thus, research minimizing or ignoring the emotional significance of leadership work fails to acknowledge the complexities of being a principal and how identity may serve as a site for self-esteem, satisfaction and fulfillment, as well as a source of vulnerability, anxiety and complacency (Beatty, 2000; Day, 2002; Hargreaves, 2000; Thomson, 2004).

Sense-making is not merely "the product of mutually shared assumptions and interpretive procedures, but rather is shaped by the political context in which it occurs" (Mumby, 2001, p. 595). Hence, principals engage in sense-making practices and self-create meanings as they engage in the day-to-day work entailed in organizational life (e.g., attending meetings, telling stories, watching others, and engaging in conversation). Control over meaning and identity is particularly salient during a crisis which challenges taken-for-granted assumptions or dominant interpretations (Mumby, 2001). Thus, research suggesting sense-making exists within

"a dialectical relationship with organizational relations of power" (Mumby, 2001, p. 595) has applicability to the socially-constructed nature of identity. Schools, as sites of political decision making and practice, play a pivotal role in the development of principal's identities. Moreover, power exists in principals' interactions with and enactment of varying communication practices. Few studies have explored the constitutive relationship between communication with educational change efforts and principal identity.

Considering School Principals' Agency

Given the nature of educational change, Ryan (2007) argued the limitations of role theory as a framework for understanding the identity of school principals:

> [Role theory provides] an overdetermined view of human interaction and stems the possibilities for acknowledging unfair practices that are associated with the status quo and doing something about them. Its conservative and overdetermined nature directs our attention toward consensus and away from troubling issues such as deviance and resistance, limiting the ways in which we can recognize oppressive practices and actually do something to change them. (p. 348)

Studying the principalship through the concept of identity considers the agency of the principal and acknowledges that "people can resist or change dominant scripts…With the capacity to shape scripts, they can identify oppressive and exclusive scripts and social conditions and so change the conditions associated with those circumstances" (Ryan, 2007, p. 349). Moreover, Grimmett and his colleagues (2008) investigated the relationship between policy changes and the working conditions of teachers and school leaders and revealed that educators are "apparently neither captive to policy initiatives, nor are they ever free of their effects; rather, in reconstructing their professional identity, they live in between the two, in the space between constraining policy forces and self-induced pressure to be satisfied and renewed" (p. 104).

In 2009, Ball and Maroy further considered how principals mediate internal and external pressures. They argued that coherence between internal and external conditions is not a natural phenomenon – rather, principals actively participate in political mediation processes. Ball and Maroy (2009) explained how "'[r]eactions' to these changes are a matter of agency. Moreover, this agency may be more or less conflictual or consensual" (p. 106). To develop compatibility with external demands, principals assume a mediator identity as they read changes and interpret messages (Ball & Maroy, 2009). Principals either buffer the school from changes perceived as threats or to use change as a resource to reinforce the school's vision (Ball & Maroy, 2009). Moreover, principals proactively engage with policy intermediaries and external partners to create resources of resistance by building relationships, networks and strategic alliances (Ball & Maroy, 2009; Zoller & Fairhurst, 2007). Thus, principals have a great deal of agency in assuming identities that allow them to construct, maintain, or alter their school's position.

Summary

Identity is more than the meaning attached to roles. Identity is both self- and co-constructed to achieve a sense of worth, coherence, and belonging (Lumby & Fenwick, 2009). Based on my reading of the literature, I view identity as addressing the question, "Who am I?" In addition to reflecting the values we cherish, "who I am" is:

> Both a state of being and becoming…Identity provides ones with a sense of well-being a sense of being at home in one's body, a sense of direction to one's life, and a sense of mattering to those who count. Identity is what makes one move with direction; identity is what gives one reason to be. (Kroger, 2004, pp. 62-63)

When we are functioning well, we take our identities for granted; when we are struggling, or when we face opposition, contradiction, uncertainty or change, identity appears to be a complex achievement (Erikson, 1959). Understanding who one is as a principal becomes increasingly challenging within dynamic and ever-changing contexts.

Educational Change

Studying Educational Change

Over the past 30 years, a relatively large research base on educational change has been accumulated. Early research between the 1930s and 1960s focused on the diffusion of educational innovations and highlighted: (a) that the time between the introduction and spread of an idea throughout the entire educational system make take decades; (b) how different school members and external interest groups impact the adoption process; (c) how schools vary in their willingness and capability to adopt new practices; and (d) that innovation diffusion is not a matter of individual decision making, rather, diffusion is typically an organizational change process (Firestone & Corbett, 1988).

The study of change rapidly expanded in the 1960s. Goal-directed strategies that underscored organizational health and improved school functioning were emphasized (Miles, 1965). In the 1970s, empirical studies emphasized organizational intervention strategies, including: (a) dissemination of educational research; (b) interactions with and the impact of external agents at various stages of the change process; and (c) identification of individual and organizational characteristics that supported temporary problem solving systems (Seashore-Louis et al., 1999). With recognition that schools vary in the adoption of new practices, researchers

concentrated on factors that impacted change in schools. Scholars (Deal, Meyer, & Scott, 1975; Daft & Becker, 1979; Rosenblum & Louis, 1981) considered: (a) structural features of organizations (e.g., size and complexity); (b) organizational climate and morale; and (c) school demographics (e.g., student socio-economic status and teacher experience).

A sense of disillusionment existed as the 1970s drew to a close – large-scale improvement efforts engineered around the change models developed in the 1960s had seen limited success (Seashore-Louis et al., 1999). Organizational theories were then developed by Weick (1976) and March and Olsen (1976) to highlight the way events and structures limited educational change and innovation. Wolcott (1973) insisted that educational change depended on leadership – asserting that principals alone cannot make change happen; however, principals on their own have the ability to stop change from occurring and being sustained.

> School principals serve their institutions and their society as monitors for continuity…. [Principals] have the considerable weight of authority and tradition on their side and an obvious personal commitment to keeping the system – including their own places in it – substantially intact. Insulated as they are within the layers of the educational hierarchy, with educators "above" them in the central office and educators "below" them in the classroom, they occupy an ideal position for acting as formal bearers of organizations and societal tradition….Since their positions require them simultaneously to present the appearance of change and to provide the stabilizing effects of continuity, their response has been to become agents of the rhetoric of change rather than agents to change itself. (pp. 321-322)

Research in the 1980s centered around two themes related to organizational change. First, attention was given to exploring why change occurred in some school contexts and not in others (Seashore-Louis et al., 1999). Recognizing that change or reform in education was typically imposed from the outside (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), neoinstitutional theorists began to focus on interorganizational interactions and the formal structure of organizations to consider the phenomenon of institutional inertia

(DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Neoinstitutional theory also illuminated how schools and other institutions concentrate on persistence and continued order because legitimacy is tied to stability (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Thus, a new interest in learning about the strategies of change and how to better manage change developed (Seashore-Louis et al., 1999); however, these theories paid minimal attention to who led these change efforts and how.

The "effective schools movement" was the second research theme prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s. Researchers studied schools that produced better than anticipated achievement results given the characteristics of students enrolled and sought possible relationships between school factors and student achievement. Many lists of effectiveness factors and organizational features of important school-wide interventions for improving results (e.g., setting clear instructional goals, fostering parental involvement, and ensuring strong leadership) were generated (Creemers, 1994; Scheerens, 1992; Stringfield, 1995). These studies suggested that effective schools were characterized by "an 'ethos' or 'culture' toward learning" (Rowe, 2007, p. 769). Understanding the role of the principal received some scholarly interest once strong leadership was associated with having a direct and indirect impact on school culture.

Although identifying factors that potentially influenced a school's ability to improve achievement results, this research provided schools with limited insight into the *process* of being effective. Models of school effectiveness were criticized by constructivist and critical theorists who argued that there was an over-reliance on quantitative methodologies (Hargreaves, 1980); therefore, the identification of specific aspects of school culture and instructional practices failed to demonstrate concern beyond standardized test results (Seashore-Louis et al., 1999). Despite such

critique, school effectiveness research has influenced the policy direction of governments concerned with improving education in response to international comparisons and economic competition. Although reaching its peak in the late 1980s, the effective schools research, along with learning gleaned from the academic study of school improvement, still continue to influence educational policy and practice related to the principalship.

From the 1960s until the present, the study of school improvement evolved from more quantitative "top down" and external approaches to improving schools to greater emphasis on grassroots or "bottom up" change approaches that underscore teacher ownership and practitioner-generated knowledge (Reynolds, 2001; Reynolds, Hopkins & Stoll, 1993). School improvement research aimed to enhance student learning by focusing on teaching and learning processes as well as the conditions that support those processes (Hopkins, 1998, 2001; Reynolds, 2007). Emphasis was placed on the processes through which schools improve students' learning and performance (e.g., offering high quality professional development and allowing time for teachers to experiment with practices) (Hopkins, 2001). Fullan (2001) and Sergiovanni (1996) argued that progress toward the achievement of shared goals was accelerated when school improvement initiatives attended to the values of all stakeholders. The responsibility to engage others through shared or distributed forms of leadership was thus seen as essential to school improvement (Elmore, 2000; Lambert, 2007; Spillane, 2006). Although school improvement research promoted building and broadening leadership capacity, the leadership of the principal continued to be highlighted as critical to educational change (Barth, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Thomson & Sanders, 2009).

Sustainable Leadership

More recently, how educational change is integrated and sustained system wide has gained prominence in the literature (Foster et al., 2009; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Lambert, 2007; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Sharratt & Fullan, 2009) and among practitioners and policy makers (Hargreaves et al., 2009). Sustainable leadership is described as an inherently moral practice that "preserves and develops deep learning for all that spreads and lasts, in ways that do no harm to and indeed create positive benefit for others around us, now and in the future" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 17). Accordingly, Fullan (2005) argued that sustainability is "the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose" (p. ix). Sustainable change is often described by policy makers (e.g., Alberta Education, 2008) as *integration*, whereby school members are "incorporating new practices, strategies, learning, and key findings into their [teachers'] instructional repertoires. Ideally there will be transferability of educational practice and student learning to other classrooms/situations and school staff" (p. 1).

Mandates for sustainable improvement create new and unique leadership challenges for school principals. In their recent study of leadership and sustainability within AISI, Foster and colleagues (2008) found that "principal leadership is critical in establishing the vision for the AISI project, promoting broad participation, and championing the project over the three year cycle" (p. 14). However, Foster and colleagues suggested the successful AISI projects broadened the role and sources of leadership beyond the principalship. Other scholars, such as Lambert (2007), had previous asserted that "when learning is continuous and participation in that learning is broad-based and skillful, we find the potential and the reality of sustainable, lasting school improvement" (p. 322). Hence, the distribution of leadership among formal

and informal school leaders is increasingly viewed as contributing to the capacity building necessary for sustainable change (Foster et al., 2008).

Sustainable leadership may be particularly problematic for principals who work in policy contexts mandating project-driven approaches (i.e., precise beginning and end points) to school improvement (Sahlberg, 2009). Principals still need to provide sustained support even when project funding ceases and external resources are depleted. Thus, leadership becomes increasingly important as “the nature of change in schools is linear… [yet] school improvement processes are characterized by complexity, not linearity” (Sahlberg, 2009, p. 78).

In 2009, a multiple perspective review of AISI was undertaken by Hargreaves and his colleagues. The review stressed the need to (a) empower school members through participatory and inclusive practices, (b) recognize the complexity of creating new knowledge and practices, (c) increase communications and broaden leadership networks, (d) link schools to other schools and jurisdictions, (e) apply research findings to determine the nature of innovations (Hargreaves et al., 2009). Although Hargreaves et al (2009) briefly mentioned that “leadership is no longer confined to the principal’s or superintendent’s office, but is increasingly being spread throughout the professional community” (p. 100), they later proclaimed that “there is rarely lasting change without leadership” (p. 120) and that “the success in AISI projects seems to depend strongly on the effectiveness of principal and superintendent level leadership” (p. 100). Despite these claims, most of the review explored teacher leadership as the primary means to initiating, implementing and sustaining educational innovation. Although equivocating the need to develop “a more explicit theory of leadership development and capacity enhancement” (p. 60), the review gave only passing recognition of the principal as a source of leadership despite their own

and other scholarly claims that principals may have both a direct and indirect role in improving student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Lortie, 2009).

Thus, Lortie's (1975) description of "endemic uncertainty" that existed in schools still holds especially true today – principals who entered education with idealist identities and goals are now discouraged, and in many cases, leaving the profession as "the structure of education offers few ways to assess one's contribution to society" (Seashore-Louis et al., 1999, p. 266). A view also supported by Beatty (2002a). In fact, the perception that principals' identities are limited or compromised by educational change is perceived as impacting the degree to which teachers are willing to leave the classroom to pursue formal leadership positions (Howley et al., 2005). During times of uncharted change and political turbulence, Hargreaves (2004) asserted that efforts to develop and sustain educational change will be thwarted unless the emotions of leading are acknowledged, honored, and actively cultivated in the workplace.

Summary

Although there is growing consensus among scholars who assert that educational reform and school improvement has changed the nature of school leadership by altering the knowledge, skills and attitudinal dispositions required by school principals (Adams & Copland, 2007; Armstrong, 2004; Elmore, 2000; Murphy & Louis, 1999), the contemporary literature only provides limited insight into the relationship between a principal's identity and educational change. In their comprehensive review and analysis of school improvement, Seashore-Louis et al (1999) argued that there is a need to study complex elements of a system, such as

change, in ways that are more fully human. Hence, this study aims to “to bring the individual back into the picture” by exploring: “How does educational change affect and build on the personal identity and emotions of those who are centrally involved?” (Seashore-Louis et al., 1999, p. 269).

Overview of the Connections among the Bodies of Literature

With increased accountability on providing leadership for the implementation and sustainability of educational change, the elusive search for “Who I am?” and “What is my purpose?” continues to be on the minds of school principals (Britzman, 2003; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Poole, 2008). The theoretical basis for this study which explored the relationship between principal identity and educational change was derived from my exploration and synthesis of the literature related to “The Principalship,” “Identity,” and “Educational Change.”

The recent interest in principal certification and preparation (Adams & Copland, 2007; Foster et al., 2007), expectations for distributed and participatory leadership approaches (Hatcher, 2005; Spillane, 2004), and demands for continuous school improvement (Levin, 2000; Lortie, 2009; Taylor, 2001), appeared to necessitate richer understanding of the meanings principals attach to their multi-dimensional role. Although the literature discusses how change is fraught with ideological struggles and competing interests and worldviews (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002; Lortie, 2009; Lugg et al., 2002; Mumby, 2001), little empirical research explores how principals negotiate consonance and dissonance between their identities and internal and external demands.

As I explored the body of literature related to teacher identity and an emerging corpus of scholarly work around principal identity and emotions, I explored identity as a social construction that was susceptible to change and incoherence

(Britzman, 2003; Gamson, 2005; Thomson, 2004). Whereas a principal's role is external and linked to social positions within an organizational structure, a principal's identity is internal and consists of internalized perceptions, meanings, values, and expectations that are associated with the role (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Identities are formed and continually shift as principals engage in dialogic interactions within numerous communities of practice (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Though poplar and much referenced in the field of social-psychology, Stryker and Burke's (2000) theory of identity salience had rarely been explored empirically within studies related to educational administration and leadership. I was intrigued as to the capacity of this theory to explore how principals make meaning of their leadership experiences, and how meaning-making could maintain institutional inertia or provoke change within schools and the greater system. Stryker and Burke's (2000) work related to identity salience appeared to fit well with my experiences in the principalship in addition to enhancing the intellectual journey on which I had embarked on.

Because principals tend to have multiple role relationships with many groups for which they hold a number of identities, these identities may reinforce or at times compete with each other. Thus, the salience of one identity relative to others is always in a state of flux. The more salient a given identity is within a given situation, the increased probability that the principal's behavioral choices will align with expectations for that identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The agency of the principal also becomes increasingly paramount as principals engage in goal-oriented behaviour to match the meanings perceived within the given situation with those meanings held others within and beyond the school (Stryker & Burke, 2000). When competition or

discrepancy occurs between perceived self-meanings and identity standards (i.e., internal and external expectations), principals are likely to experience dissonance (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Tooms et al., 2010). If principals have little commitment to given relationships or networks, and if they have a low level of identity salience, it is likely that self-meanings will be less motivating and the given identity will have inconsequential impact on behaviour (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 290). Hence, identity prominence or salience changes over time as a result of internal self-verification processes (Stryker & Burke, 2000). In coming to understand that principals do not have a singular identity, it is likely that principals experience inconsistency, incoherence, and dissonance among multiple aspects of identity.

As suggested by Stryker and Burke (2000), there is also a reciprocal relationship between identity and social structure. Just as the identity and accompanying values of the principal inevitably shape and impact the change process, the organizational context and existing social structures influence principal identity. With increased scrutiny of and accountability for leadership, principals' behavioral choices tend to align with expectations attached to an identity. Whereas role-bound theories of leadership fail to consider the agency of the principal, Stryker and Burke's (2000) identity theory helps bring order to leadership behaviour and intentionality.

In addition to exaggerating the agency of the principal, I also found that the many role-bound theories of leadership that highlighted the "power of one" (Gronn, 2000, p. 319) were static and gave limited attention to the micropolitics of change (Anderson, 1990). Because tension and conflict among individuals and groups can slow or prevent reform, Anderson's (1990) call to consider the micropolitics inherent in leadership appealed to me as another lens to reflect on how principals' identities

influence their own and others' experiences and interactions as change unfolds. Armed with positional power, school principals continuously make decisions about who gets what, when, and how throughout the change process. Thus, leadership entails "a process of dynamic exchange and interchange of values, although the nature of the exchange and the range of values can vary widely" (Zoller & Fairhurst, 2007, p. 1339). Conceptualizing leadership as political work further allowed me to decouple leadership from managerial views of the principalship. Thus, exploration of the principalship through the concept of identity afforded a more expansive understanding of principals' sensemaking within highly diverse contexts.

Hence, this study commenced with the notion that educational change has created and continues to create conflicting demands that result in confusion, frustration, and uncertainty for practicing school principals. Moreover, schools, the larger educational system, and society were viewed as a broad context for principal identity formation and meaning making. Although my review of the literature underscored how structural-functionalist theories continue to dominate current understanding about educational leadership, this study aimed to build on recent scholarly work that has elucidated the potential use of identity, with its ephemeral and dynamic character, as conceptual tool to understand principal leadership as a process of social construction and sensemaking within complex, contextually-varying environments (Ryan, 2007; Tooms et al., 2010; Thomson, 2004). Departing from role-bound theories of leadership, it was my intent to gain more nuanced theoretical and practical understanding of the principalship by abandoning research paradigms that value certainty, rationality, and predictability.

As suggested by Mertens (2005), theoretical frameworks shape and direct a study in addition to linking one's research to a broader body of literature. Morgan's (1998)

comparison of theory and metaphor has important implications for my work as a qualitative researcher. While providing valuable insights by allowing us to see things in new ways, theories and metaphors are also simultaneously restrictive, biased and potentially misleading. In this way, the development of a theoretical frame is inherently paradoxical. Therefore, as suggested by Morgan (1998), I commenced this study being mindful that "there can be no single theory or metaphor that gives an all-purpose point of view, and there can be no one 'correct theory'" (p. 10). By seeking the informative voices of practicing Alberta school principals, I aimed to be open to new ways of seeing and understanding the principalship. The research design and methodology used to explore the relationship between principal identity and educational change are described in the following chapter.

Chapter Three – Methodology

This chapter outlines the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions underpinning this study and explores my role as researcher. Next, methods are presented, including descriptions of participant selection, data sources, and data collection and analysis processes. After outlining trustworthiness criteria and benefits to participants, delimitations and limitations of the study are included at the end of the chapter.

Research Paradigm

Highly abstract principles or beliefs about ontology, epistemology, and methodology shape how I see the world and how I act within the world (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The methodological direction of this qualitative study has been influenced by a relativist ontology (i.e., multiple realities and truths may exist simultaneously) and a subjectivist epistemology (i.e., understandings are socially constructed between participants and researcher) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Merriam (1988) has asserted that the most appropriate inquiry method for a research study should be "determined by how the problem is shaped, by the questions it raises, and the type of end product desired" (p. 6). As this research explored principals' perceptions, an interpretivist approach was deemed most appropriate to raise conscious understanding of how principals made sense of their multi-dimensional roles within dynamic and ever-changing school contexts. Unlike the positivists who assume reality is observable and aim for objectivity by controlling researcher bias and outside influences, I believed that what is known and believed to be true about the world is socially constructed – meaning is thereby filtered by the participants in situ (Scott & Usher, 1996). In refuting pre-determined and

standardized modes of knowledge, I aimed to "understand multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge" (Mertens, 2005, p. 14).

The strength of an interpretivist orientation, Scott and Usher (1996) further argued, is that knowledge is concerned with meaning and illumination rather than prediction, control and generalization. In recognition that, reality cannot be separated from our knowledge of it, the interpretivist researcher posits that the researcher's values impact all phases of the research process. As "multiple mental constructions can be apprehended, some of which may be in conflict with each other, and perceptions of reality may change throughout the process of the study" (Mertens, 2005, p. 14), meaning or understanding of the social world and what was of great importance to this study was negotiated through dialectic processes between the researcher and study participants. In assuming an interpretivist stance, I did not aim to tell *one story*; rather, I endeavoured to "present complex accounts as polyvocal texts, or stories told in the voices of many different people" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 49). By attending closely to the principals' lives, the distinction between researcher and researched and subject and object was blurred through the process of [re]creating meaning.

Cognizant of the dialectical and interdependent relationship existing between knowledge and reality, an emerging and multifaceted research methodology was used:

> To seek multiple perspectives not to prove the *truth* about reality but to avoid the monolingual knowledge that emerges from unquestioned frames of reference and the dismissal of the numerous relationships and connections that link various forms of knowledge together. (Kincheloe, 2005, pp. 326-327)

By selecting an interpretivist framework, the focus was on using naturalistic methodologies to develop a body of knowledge. Specifically, I conducted a

qualitative, interview-based study that explored a multiplicity of perspectives to gain a more nuanced understanding of how principals make sense of their multi-dimensional roles within dynamic localized contexts. Although some choices about data collection and analysis were made in advance, I was aware that complex and unpredictable interactions within the field necessitated researcher flexibility and methodological negotiation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe, 2005).

In closing, the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning this study include: (a) knowledge is socially constructed and historically situated; (b) multiple realities exist and are shaped by contextual factors and differing values; (c) an interactive relationship exists between the researcher and participants as both seek greater understanding; and (d) qualitative methods provide for thick description, detailed analysis and more thorough critique. Here, in assuming an interpretivist approach, there was recognition that the principals' understandings of their roles and identity continuously changes. These epistemological and ontological assumptions, in addition to the nature of the research questions and context, shaped this methodological bricolage.

The Researcher's Role

My role as researcher reflected Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) depiction of the qualitative researcher as a *bricoleur* who assumes numerous roles, along with a variety of tools and practices, to delineate understandings and to construct interpretations. Like Guba and Lincoln (1994), I viewed the interpretivist researcher as a "passionate participant" (p. 115) that orchestrates the inquiry process and ensures multi-voice reconstruction of meaning. I aimed to seek multiple realities rather than trying to discover "one truth," "one reality," or a "final solution" (Peshkin, 1993, p.

28). As bricoleur, I hoped to foster a more nuanced understanding through the provision of “not only commonplace description, but ‘thick description’” (Stake, 2000, p. 102) and integrated interpretations of complex, changing contexts[3].

Within an interpretivist study, the researcher is immersed into and thereby influences the context being studied. As researcher, I served as an instrument for data collection, analysis, and synthesis (Creswell, 2008). Because “the researcher digs into meanings, working to relate them to contexts and experience” (Stake, 2005, p. 450), this research was ultimately impacted by and served as a product of my own values and assumptions. Ongoing reflective and reflexive interrogation of my beliefs and values acknowledged the interpretive aspects of knowledge production within the bricolage and how:

> Interpretation is always at work in the act of knowledge production – the “facts” never speak for themselves. As inhabitants of the world, researchers are oriented to it in a manner that prevents them from grounding their findings outside of it…researchers are destined to be interpreters who analyze the cosmos from within its boundaries and blinders. To research, we must interpret. (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 329)

Heeding Stake’s advice (2005), I was “ever-reflective” as I engage in data collection, analysis and reporting. My reflective and reflexive notes were first recorded in my researcher’s journal and later were included within Chapter Four and throughout this dissertation.

Methods

Participant Selection

To address my research question and sub-questions, I conducted a qualitative, interview-based study that ensured the representation of a multiplicity of

[3] Although I recognize the importance of and need for thick description to support conclusions, at times, out of necessity, I had to protect the participants’ identities by removing some detailed data.

perspectives. Subsequently, sampling decisions were made on the ability of participants to provide data, which contributed to emerging conceptual understanding or theoretical development (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2000).

Since this research assumes multiple realities, purposeful selection was used to select a sample of principals in which the phenomenon was occurring, rather than looking for a random sample of principals in which the given phenomenon might hopefully emerge (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Mertens, 2005). I decided that it would be beneficial to select six principals as this number of participants allowed for in-depth interviewing while ensuring a multiplicity of perspectives. The criteria used to select the principals included:

1. Currently a practicing principal, in a public or separate school, within the central region of Alberta, Canada.
2. Having a minimum of three years experience in the principalship, and additional leadership experience prior to the principalship (e.g., as a teacher leader or assistant principal).
3. Having completed either course or research-based graduate studies at the Master's level or currently enrolled in or completed studies at the Doctoral level.
4. Being in a situation that provokes additional thinking and new conceptualizations about leadership roles, identity, and practice (e.g., appointed to a new school, or mentoring a new assistant principal, or attending graduate studies).
5. Had participated in AISI (Cycles 1, 2 or 3) and actively involved in the planning and implementation of the school's current AISI Cycle 4 project.
6. Being interested in learning about the principalship within educational change and being willing to engage in multiple interviews over the course of approximately four months – from November 2009 to February 2010.

7. In addition to the aforementioned criteria, principals were selected because they work in diverse social contexts that represent important variation in school type and characteristics (e.g., urban/rural, program offerings, school enrollment count, grade levels, student achievement results, and socio-economic level) (Mertens, 2005).

Informed colleagues from academia were asked to recommend the names of principals who might possibly meet the proposed criteria. Purposeful sampling ensured maximum-variation which later allowed for analysis that considered what was unique in addition to what was common across diverse, localized contexts (Mertens, 2005). These principals represented five different school jurisdictions within the province of Alberta.

Access, Entry, and Ethics Procedures

This research was conducted under stringent ethical codes that adhered to the University of Alberta and Tri-Council's ethical standards. As a researcher, I fostered a relationship indicative of genuine respect for the participants – ensuring minimal risk exposure at all times.

Once ethics approval was received, I had a telephone conversation with potential participants to explain the purpose of my study and the nature of their participation. This exploratory conversation assisted in determining the degree that the given participant met the selection criteria. If the principal met the criteria and was interested in participating in the study, a formal information letter about the study and a consent form was first sent to the school superintendent or I forwarded the Cooperative Activities Program (CAP) research project application to the Associate Dean of Research. After obtaining permission and written consent to

conduct the study within each jurisdiction (either through the CAP process or directly through the superintendent), an invitation to participate, in the form of an information letter and consent form, was mailed to each principal (see Appendix A for ethics approval documentation).

I sought free and informed consent of all participants. In addition to the information letter, the nature of the research was thoroughly explained to participants prior to each individual interview, identifying: (a) the purpose of this study; (b) how and why the participant was selected; (c) how the research would conducted; (d) anticipated time commitment; (e) potential risks and benefits to the participant, including how privacy and confidentiality would protected; and (e) how and where findings may be reported and disseminated. Information pertaining to the participants' right to opt out of the study or to exercise power of veto over any data which they supplied was also explained in the letter and at each individual interview. After participants had an opportunity to ask further questions, written and informed consent was obtained.

Establishing rapport and researcher credibility was paramount in the initial contact and subsequent meetings with the school principals. Prior to interviewing, I acquainted myself with each school by reviewing their respective web sites and AISI plans. I initially and continually established trust with participants by openly discussing the nature of the study and our respective roles; respecting participants' confidences; refraining from making evaluative comments; and honoring that this study captured only a glimpse of these principals' fully contextualized lives (Wolcott, 1995). Fostering trust was an ongoing priority for me as I believed that dialectic engagement would push fixed responses toward greater reflective dialogue; moreover, I felt that rapport building was crucial in encouraging participants to be

more open and willing to share their experiences, understandings, and questions. Rapport building was enhanced over time, particularly as I shared my own questions and experiences in the principalship. In addition to participating in school tours, casual pre- and post-interview conversations allowed me to build trust with each participant.

Data Sources and Collection

Principals' perspectives were collected primarily through multiple individual interviews in addition to notes recorded in my researcher's journal. Data collection occurred over four months from November 2009 to February 2010.

Individual Interviewing

Individual interviews are a common source of data in qualitative research as they illuminate rich, holistic description of context, themes and issues (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1998). Interviews are deemed useful as a means to more fully understand participants' perceptions and to adapt to salient understandings and unexpected responses (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 2005).

Principals were invited to participate in three individual interviews. Potential dates for the interviews were determined in consultation with the participants and demanded flexible scheduling in order to accommodate emerging and unanticipated principal or school needs. Interviews were held at the school (most within each principal's office) or at a location that best accommodated each participant's personal and professional schedules. I completed a contact summary sheet of all communications and interactions with participants (see Appendix B).

Prior to the interviews, I developed an in-depth interview guide (see Appendix C for the semi-structured guides used) that took into consideration (a) the

purpose of this study and research questions, (b) what perspectives or information I needed to clarify (based on previous interviews conducted), and (c) the amount of time and accessibility that I had. The interview guides were designed around the main research question and two sub-questions and included a number of general, open-ended questions that were used to initiate conversation. In addition, a number of prompts or follow up questions were developed to elicit additional information from the principals' perspectives. These guiding questions were piloted beforehand with two other principals who did not participate in this study.

Upon confirmation of participation within the study, participants were provided with the key questions that guided the interviews (see Appendix D). At the onset of each individual interview, the purpose and scope of the study was described and I reviewed ethical considerations, and the provisions employed to ensure confidentiality. Participants were asked to consent to the use of an audio-recorder to record the questions and responses. Questions for subsequent interviews were also developed to further probe into what was shared in previous interviews or to check my emerging interpretations (i.e., served as a form of member checking).

Face-to-face individual interviews, lasting approximately 45 minutes to 1.5 hours, were semi-structured to allow for the inclusion of individual differences. Semi-structured interviews were used because of the degree of flexibility for me, as the researcher, and each participant to clarify and elaborate beyond the scope of the predetermined questions and to ensure the flexibility necessary to address questions developed from previous interviews and ongoing data analysis (Creswell, 2008). Interviews had a conversational tone that allowed for exploration and inquiry into the unique lived experiences of each participant. Simultaneously listening, recording non-verbal cues and environmental features, paraphrasing, determining when or what

to probe or clarify, monitoring the digital recorder, and trying to understand proved to be complex work requiring intense concentration. With recognition of this complexity, I took additional care into planning, practicing, and reflecting on the process.

Consideration was given to Hansen's (2006) assertion that "if you are blind to the context of construction, you are blind to the in situ sense making that is enacted in constructing organizational reality" (p. 1064). Therefore, at the first interview, participants were asked to complete a brief demographic information sheet (see Appendix E). The information provided (e.g., number of years in education as a teacher or principal, school context, and career goals) was used to create the profiles of each participant and school (see Tables 1 and 2) and to customize the interview guides. To ensure confidentiality, participants selected the pseudonyms assigned to them and their schools. More detailed descriptions about each participant and his/her local school context has been included in Chapter 5.

After all sixteen interviews were completed[4], a brief follow up interview (approximately 15 minutes in length) was held with three principals to clarify information provided and check emerging interpretations. These follow-up interviews were conducted over the telephone.

Interview audio-recordings and notes were transcribed by me and a transcriber (I transcribed nine interviews and three follow-up interviews transcripts). Emerging interpretations of the interview data were shared orally with participants at the onset of subsequent interviews. In addition, verbatim quotes from the transcripts and emerging interpretations from all two or three interviews were returned to

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[4] I interviewed four principals on three separate occasions (interviews lasting between 45-80 minutes). As per the preference and request of the remaining two principals, I conducted two longer interviews with each interview lasting between 75-100 minutes.

participants for a final member check after completing all interviews and follow up conversations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A copy of each participant's description, as included in Chapter Five, was also provided to participants as an additional means of member checking (see Appendix F). Participants were invited to review these documents and then to exercise their veto rights if so desired. Changes or corrections, as requested by participants, were made accordingly. Because language transforms the meaning, depth and clarity of the spoken word or that which is heard, member checking attempted to develop understandings that are as true as possible to the intents of the participants (Wolcott, 1995). However, I was mindful of Guba and Lincoln's (1989) assertion that "all human constructions are problematic. We can not expect them to be ultimately true, or to remain constant for a long period of time" (p. 70). Hence, I am cognizant that I can never be certain to have captured the meaning of an experience as lived and felt by the participants. The meanings agreed upon are only "true" at this point in time and may not be true at a later time.

Table 1. Participant profiles.

Participant Pseudonym	**Gender**	**Age (range)**	**Years/Type of Educational Experience prior to the Principalship (range)**	**Years Experience as Principal (range)**	**Graduate Degree(s) Obtained and Area of Specialization (in addition to BEd)**
Karen	Female	50-59	1-5 Teaching 10-15 Red Seal Journeyman Cook	10-15	MEd (Educational Administration and Leadership)
Wade	Male	50-59	20-25 Teaching 10-15 Department Head 1-5 Assistant Principal	1-5	EdD (Secondary Education) MEd (Instructional Technology)
Carrie	Female	50-59	15-20 Teaching / School Counselor 1-5 Secondments (Alberta Education, educational publishers) 1-5 Acting Superintendent (2 -1/2 days per week) 1-5 Nursing	10-15	EdD *in progress (Educational Administration and Leadership) MEd (Educational Administration and Leadership) Diploma (Counseling and Administration)
James	Male	40-49	10-15 Teaching 1-5 Assistant Principal	10-15	PhD *in progress (Educational Administration and Leadership) MEd (Curriculum and Instruction) Diploma (School Librarianship)
Nelle	Female	50-59	20-25 Teaching 5-10 Assistant Principal	5-10	MEd (Educational Administration and Leadership)
Neil	Male	50-59	10-15 Teaching	15-20	MEd (Educational Administration and Leadership)

Table 2. School profiles.

Participant Pseudonym	School Pseudonym	Total Student Enrolment (range)	Grade Levels	Program Offerings
Karen	Smithers High School	Less than 250	Youth between the ages of 14-19	At-risk or out-of-school youth are provided with an individualized, alternative education program that provides opportunities for students to successfully attain provincial learning expectations. Other support services include: breakfast and lunch programs, work experience programs, earned transportation tickets, career counseling, native studies and cultural events, and advocacy with various agencies (e.g., AADAC) and professionals (e.g., such as probation officers, and social workers).
Wade	Evergreen Junior High	400-500	7-9	In addition to regular academic and complementary course offerings, provides daily physical education and broad range of extracurricular and student leadership activities.
Carrie	Clear Water Elementary-Junior High School	400-500	K-9	In addition to regular academic and complementary course offerings, provides programming for the jurisdiction (including special needs and behavioural programming). CTS facilities are shared by other jurisdictional schools. Additional supports provided by youth workers, family counselors and RCMP liaison officers.
James	Meadow-lark Junior/ Senior High	600-700	8-12	In addition to regular academic and complementary course offerings, provides Outreach, Knowledge and Employability, Registered Apprenticeship, and special needs programming (only special needs program within the jurisdiction).

Participant Pseudonym	School Pseudonym	Total Student Enrolment (range)	Grade Levels	Program Offerings
Nelle	Fir Street Elementary	400-500	K-6	Provides regular English programming as well as enhanced learning assistance for those students with learning disabilities who exhibit a 2 year delay in Language Arts and/or Math (receive through small group instruction during part of each school day).
Neil	HQ Elementary	200-300	K-6	In addition to regular academic offerings in English, provides French as a Second Language in Gr. 4-6 and Ukrainian Bilingual instruction in Gr. 1-6. Also as a district site that provides specialized programming for students who require comprehensive programming modifications in core subject areas. Students with learning disabilities who exhibit a 2 year delay in Language Arts and/or Math receive enhanced learning assistance through small group instruction during part of each school day.

Researcher's Journal

Since the time I initially conceptualized this study as a doctoral student, I first recorded journal entries that served as a record of my questions, insights, hunches and my own evolving reflections about my identity as a school principal and researcher. After each interview, I also used the journal to record my initial impressions and thoughts, in addition to describing what I perceived to be as emerging themes or potential follow-up questions that I wanted to pursue in subsequent interviews. Later, my researcher's journal served as an analytical tool to reflect upon theoretical understandings and relationships between categories emerging through data analysis.

Because "I do not merely impose interpretation on the text after I have created it; the choices I make regarding what to write about, and how to write it, are themselves interpretation" (Kouritzin, 2002, p. 127). Subsequently, my journal notes are viewed as value-laden and interpretive as opposed to neutral renderings. As Fine (1994) asserted, the researcher influences and is influenced by participating in the environment; therefore, researchers need to:

> Probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations… [this requires reflection and discussions of] what is, and is not, "happening between," within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation…and with what consequence. (p. 72)

Hence, I used my researcher's journal to "write into knowing, as opposed to writing about what I know" (Kouritzin, 2002, p. 127).

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously within this study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Charmaz, 2000; Creswell, 2008). To begin, I reflected on each interview and listened to and read each transcript and journal entry several times

to develop an overall sense of the data content and potential meanings. Next, I used *open coding* to identify meaning units (e.g., words, phrases, sentences, or short explanations) that conveyed discrete ideas or concepts (Creswell, 2008). A self-created coding and shorthand system was used. Using the *constant comparative method of analysis* (Creswell, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mertens, 2005), I assigned categories or codes, at various levels of abstraction, to the meaning units. Next, I looked for similarities and differences between the meaning units. I grouped similar meaning units together within specific categories. Because initial coding occurred close to the data, the assigned categories, at this stage, were at a relatively low level of abstraction. These categories were flexible and modified throughout the data analysis process (Mertens, 2005). Throughout the comparative analysis process, I also sought out disconfirming evidence, counter-interpretations, and patterns emerging from an absence of data or lack of patterns in order to better differentiate one category from another (Charmaz, 2000). This continuous process of generating and connecting categories by comparing incidents in the data to other incidents supported greater richness and trustworthiness of my findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Upon completion of open coding, I grouped the emerging categories into higher level categories on the basis of relationships and theoretical connections. The creation of coding hierarchies allowed for the analysis of relationships between categories by paying particular attention to the conditions, consequences, actions and interactions of the issue being studied (Charmaz, 2000). In this way, data analysis was inductive as I did not force the data into a preconceived framework; rather, I remained open to theoretical relationships and connections emerging from the data.

The final phase of data analysis focused on selective coding. *Selective coding* involved the conceptualization of central categories at the highest level of abstraction within the coding hierarchy. The central categories representing the main theme of the research, and addressing each of the proposed research questions, brought together all of the categories into a more coherent whole, which exemplified relationships between the categories (Creswell, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Although I have presented the coding progression toward a higher level of abstraction as a linear, step-by-step process, the actual analysis process was more dynamic as I moved back and forth between levels of abstraction and as additional data were collected. Meaning was derived from holistic interpretation and oscillation between macro and micro contexts and through reiterative, inductive analysis (Hansen, 2006; Yanow, 2002).

As a qualitative researcher, I allowed "the concepts of importance in the study to emerge as they had been constructed by the participants" (Mertens, 2005, p. 14). As such, analysis tended to be recursive in nature as "findings are generated and systematically built as successive pieces of data are gathered" (Mertens, 2005, p. 420). Risk-taking was inherent in such work as I had to tolerate a degree of uncertainty as I allowed for an emerging research design. Although this created greater complexity, such coalescence reflected and honored the intricacies of principals' multi-dimensional roles and identity within diverse and complex contexts.

Following the recommendation of Guba and Lincoln (1985), analysis was discontinued upon data saturation; that is, the categories appeared well-developed, variations in the data were accounted for, and the collection and analysis of new data no longer appeared to yield new insights. However, I was mindful that theoretical

saturation is only a matter of degree – it can never be an absolute determination (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Throughout the study, I kept a "case record" which also served as an audit trail of my data collection and analysis procedures. This record consisted of all interview transcripts, member checks, contact summary sheets, demographic information sheets, journal notes, copies of category hierarchies, and other documents or materials used within the study. Lastly, as I wrote and disseminated my research, consideration was given to the audience as well as my own presence within the text. I used "I" rather than the seemingly more objective use of pronouns or authoritarian wording such as the formal use of "researcher."

Trustworthiness

Within qualitative or naturalistic inquiry, the researcher aims to develop understanding of relationships, patterns and nuances in the phenomena under study. Subseqently, interpretivist researchers acknowledge and accept that no two researchers will produce the same interpretations or theory (Creswell, 2008; Mertens, 2005; Charmaz, 2008). Such epistemological assumptions are premised on a world characterized by multiple realities and, therefore, each researcher has his or her own unique perspectives about the phenomenon being explored. Hence, trustworthiness of the data is not dependent on obtaining consensus around the correct interpretation of the data collected; rather, naturalistic research is deemed trustworthy on the basis of establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981). To help guard against my biases and beliefs, I engaged in a variety of processes that drew upon Lincoln and Guba's (1985) seminal work to establish trustworthiness within naturalistic inquiry.

Credibility, or the establishment of confidence in the truth of the findings, is contingent on how research is conducted and steps that are taken to ensure interpretations are grounded in data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was established by engaging in multiple interviews that allowed for opportunities to capture salient issues and to note divergent information and themes (Guba, 1981). The accuracy and completeness of the data was maximized by audio taping and transcribing interviews. Member checks (in written form and at the onset of each interview) were used to corroborate my interpretations from the individual interviews with participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants were asked to check interview interpretations for plausibility along with supporting quotations for accuracy. Participants were also invited to verify, correct, and elaborate on emerging themes. Feedback from participants was used to make necessary changes to the interpretations. Credibility was also established by engaging in regular peer debriefings with my supervisory committee members to assist me with considering new perspectives and challenging my biases when engaging in data analysis (Guba, 1981). Although acknowledging the subjectivity inherent in such research, I engaged in an extensive reflective process throughout the study. In the interests of establishing credibility, my reflective and reflexive notes were first recorded in my researcher's journal (oftentimes, identifying data that were surprising or puzzling to me and then exploring why the data were surprising or puzzling and what beliefs were challenged when I heard the particular response or idea from the participant).

Transferability refers to the extent to which the particular findings of the study have applicability in other contexts or with other respondent groups (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is recognized that the data represent experiences of the specific participants and cannot be generalized broadly to other situations. Since "the purpose

of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case… the utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in its extension of experience" (Stake, 1994, p. 245). "Holistic description and explanation" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29) are provided to enable the reader to make sense of the naturalistic world through their own personal experiences; thereby placing the onus on the reader to determine the degree of transferability. To assist readers with assessing the transferability of these findings, I used the verbatim words of the participants in quotations comprised of "extensive and careful description of the time, place, content and culture" (Mertens, 2005, p. 256).

Within this study, *dependability* or the determination of whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if replicated with similar participants within a similar context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), was achieved through overlapping methods used in tandem "to overcome invalidities in individual methods" (Guba, 1981, p. 86). As previously described, to increase dependability and the legitimacy of the methodology and findings, I created a case record (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1998) which included transcripts, member checks, demographic profiles, journal notes, coding labels and hierarchies, and other documents or procedures that trace this study from the initial research questions through to data collection and analysis.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined *confirmability* as establishing the extent to which the findings of a study are determined by the participants and conditions of the study rather that the researcher's biases, motivations, and beliefs. In the interests of *confirmability*, my individual predisposition was considered within the context of my work as I actively searched for differing perspectives. For example, my biases, motivations, interests, and perspectives were revealed through the writing of Chapter Four and then tested during the ongoing peer debriefings with my supervisor, as well

as my doctoral supervisory committee. A fellow graduate student reviewed the case record and followed the audit trail of the majority of the data collected. Participation in various conferences and other academic venues also afforded opportunities to share emerging interpretations. External critique challenged my thinking and inspired me to consider alternative perspectives. Continued use of a researcher's journal and the writing of Chapter Four supported the practices of reflection and reflexivity (Guba, 1981).

Delimitations

The following outlines delimitations and why these delimitations were necessitated within the context of this study:

1. This research was delimited to the study of six principals over a four month period of time. The decision to have six principals allowed for representation of a multiplicity of perspectives; yet on the other hand, delimiting the number of participants kept the sample small enough to engage in multiple interviews and therefore achieve greater depth and richer descriptions of each principal's specific school context and issues.
2. In an effort to identify principals that met the specific criteria (as previously described under "Participant Selection"), academic colleagues were asked to recommend the names of potential principal participants as these colleagues were in a position to identify current or past students who might be willing participants. The specific criteria were established to both define who would be potentially included and excluded from the study. Efforts to select the participants for this study was challenging; however, the establishment of specific criteria facilitated consideration of the degree to which each principal also contributed to

maximum-variation sampling. The criteria used and efforts to achieve maximum-variation sampling offered the opportunity to enhance what could be learned from these different principals who assumed a range of roles within diverse contexts.

3. Participants were selected on the basis having completed their Master's studies or enrolled in or having completed Doctoral studies. In both instances, I sought participants who attended graduate programs offered at a research intensive Canadian university (e.g., one that receives funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)). This decision was made to ensure that the participants were engaged in graduate studies integrating research and practice. Also, I expected that such principals would have some degree of exposure to literature relevant to the Canadian educational context. As a current Doctoral student, I hoped that both the participants and I would have been exposed to some of the same theories, literature, and researchers. This "common ground" served as a means to explore principals' meaning making.
4. All six principals work within the central Alberta region. Although potentially limiting understanding of diverse local contexts within each jurisdiction and in other jurisdictions within Alberta, geographical proximity ensured ease of access to schools on a regular basis.

Limitations

Paradigmatic and methodological choices in any research design inevitably produce a number of limitations. Although recognizing that there may be other limitations inherent in this work, the four main limitations of this study are listed below. Whenever possible, I took steps to mitigate against the effects of these and

other limitations. Efforts to ensure the credibility of the study were addressed in greater detail in the section titled, “Trustworthiness.”

1. This study relied on voluntary participation and participant recollection. Because the primary source of data was individual interviews, the data may be limited by the extent of the participants’ willingness to share and dialogue openly. Interviewing, after-the-fact, demanded reliance on the participant’s memory of specific details, events and their meanings. In some cases, the participants may have only offered socially- or politically-acceptable responses. Other times, the participants may have lacked the knowledge or experiences to respond adequately to the questions posed, or may have derived a different meaning of the questions than intended by the researcher. Lastly, participants may have tried to present themselves in a “favourable” manner or may have contributed adversely due to hypothesis guessing.
2. The type of accessibility and amount of time that this research required of the participants may have resulted in a particular type of person volunteering for the study. The participants’ personality traits, motivation to learn, openness to reflection, and value of collaborative dialogue may have indirectly or directly influenced findings.
3. As a recently-appointed principal, I was keenly interested in how principals made sense of their multi-dimensional roles in their local contexts. Thus, this inquiry was limited by my personal experiences and understandings and my ability to discern relevant meanings despite my own socialization within the principalship. Despite efforts to engage in reflexive thinking and journaling, my inability to see what is taken-for-granted may have inadvertently influenced my interpretations and how I textualize this study.

4. As I rendered private moments in a public space, both the participants and I were aware that we faced personal and professional ramifications for critiquing the system that we work within. Despite ensuring confidentiality and providing opportunities for the participants to verify my emerging interpretations, principals may have been reluctant to speak openly and share specific examples that may potentially identify them or their school contexts.

Summary

Within Chapter Three, I have explained the methodological choices made throughout my study. In the following two chapters, I share my experiences with the principalship and provide background and contextual information about each participant and his/her unique school settings. The following chapter provides insight into the professional experiences that have shaped my assumptions as the researcher of this study.

Chapter Four – Situating the Researcher

Within an interpretivist study, the researcher is immersed into and thereby influences the context being studied. My own reflective and reflexive thinking has shaped this study and has formed its foundation for making meaning. In this chapter, I will describe my experiences with the principalship to offer insights into similar questions that I posed to the six principal participants during their individual interviews. The intent of this chapter is to position myself as a researcher by exploring, retrospectively, how I made sense of my multi-dimensional role as a principal within a dynamic and ever-changing school context.

Learning about the Principalship through an "Apprenticeship of Observation"

I entered the education profession with my own beliefs about what teaching was and who teachers were, and what leadership was and who principals were. These beliefs emerged from years of face-to-face interactions with teachers and principals. In some cases, my observations were passive. More often than not, I engaged in active observations and interactions that had consequences for me as a student and then later as a teacher and school principal (Lortie, 1975).

From my limited vantage point as a student, I came to intuitively understand what it meant to be a principal. I rarely saw my elementary and junior high school principals unless they were needed to remove an uncooperative student from the classroom. Other than hearing their voices during morning announcements, I only saw these principals at school-wide events such as the annual Christmas concert. I would have never bothered these principals with a question or problem. I viewed each principal and his work within his office as too important to be interrupted by student

needs. Our teachers reinforced that the principal was in charge of the school and that such authority commanded unquestioning acceptance of school rules.

Later, our high school principal was also relatively absent from day-to-day classroom activities; however, his presence was highly prominent during extracurricular activities and other public events. Here, I came to see the principal as a "PR man" who carefully crafted illusions of a unified and vibrant school community. Demonstrating "school spirit" seemed paramount.

During high school, I assumed numerous roles that afforded opportunities to interact first-hand with this principal (e.g., as a student leadership team member, yearbook editor, and captain of several sports teams). Although I expected him to be busy working in his office, this principal was always free to shoot some hoops, hang out in the student lounge, and to cheer from the stands during tournaments. Our principal was especially known for being highly supportive of students who played on the school's sports teams. As the team captain of the senior girls' basketball team, I was well aware of how I was privileged over my classmates (e.g., preferential timetabling and passes to be "excused" from class to do extracurricular work or activities). However, when my parents and I booked time to discuss an academic issue with him, it became apparent that social aspects of school life took precedence over learning. This principal did not seem to question prevailing educational practices, nor did he appear to seek new opportunities that might yield enhanced teaching and learning. In a school overabundant with positive morale and spirit, a concern that could potentially provoke change was viewed as unnecessary and potentially destructive to "the way we have always done things." As a young person, I equated the principalship with being a figure head – important in hierarchical stature

and power, but relatively meaningless when dealing with real issues related to teaching and learning.

By the time I graduated from high school, I knew that teaching was my calling; at no time did I ever contemplate or desire being a principal. However, my understandings of and expectations of the principalship were shaped by these years of observations.

Evolving Understandings of the Principalship Derived from a Mentorship Experience

Initially, as a beginning teacher, I learned and believed in many of the myths about teaching that Britzman (2003) described: (a) everything depends on the teacher, (b) the teacher is an expert, and (c) teachers are self-made (Britzman, 2003). These myths played out in various ways. I made sure that I masked my weaknesses and refrained from seeking the principal's help. I spoke definitively and confidently with parents and my principal through my daily interactions and newsletters so that my authority and expertise would not be questioned nor scrutinized. When the principal walked through my classroom, I equated successful learning with my capacity to manage and control the learning environment. When my principal observed my lessons, I demonstrated practical strategies and "tricks of the trade" that were effectively and efficiently used within my classroom. I did not offer suggestions at staff meetings for fear of conflicting with the principal's and more senior teachers' viewpoints. I failed to seek the contributions of others as I understood that beginning teachers had to prove that they could "make the grade."

These myths were unexpectedly shattered by my first principal, Dave. As a mentor, Dave facilitated a variety of opportunities to develop professional

relationships with my other colleagues. Through these social interactions and because of his mentorship, I became suspicious of and later interrogated Britzman's (2003) prevailing myths about teaching in addition to my own assumptions about the role of the principal.

Dave didn't fit my preconceived image of the principalship. Yes, he worked hard in his office, but he also worked alongside students and teachers. Dave didn't scrutinize or seek perfection – rather, he encouraged risk taking and often quipped that "mistakes are opportunities for learning." Even though he paid attention to school-wide events, everyday teaching and learning was the priority. When I sought out pre-established teaching approaches, he challenged me to reflect on what teaching was doing to me and my students. Oftentimes, his questions and upfront observations left me feeling confused and disrupted. Yet on the other hand, those same questions and observations prompted thinking, learning, and improved practice.

Dave modeled lifelong learning. He read constantly. He regularly sought out collaborative opportunities between educators within and beyond our school. He "borrowed my class" so that he could try out a new teaching strategy that he learned at a professional development session (he invited my feedback when we debriefed his lesson). Dave continuously checked in with me to see how certain students were doing and to brainstorm different approaches the might better meet students' needs. When we were at a loss as to how to reach a certain child, he quickly called in other teachers and educational specialists to provide input.

In contrast to my observations of the principals during my K-12 schooling, Dave prided himself in "rocking the boat" and "thinking outside of the box." He encouraged staff to "imagine what could be" and to take risks to move closer to our vision. Although the constant emphasis on continuous improvement left some staff

feeling exhausted, Dave fostered inclusive dialogue and energizing debates about change. When dissenting viewpoints were expressed and conflict ensued, Dave did not steer the discussion. He listened carefully and allowed for the braiding of understanding that comes from interweaving multiple voices and perspectives. Although coming to consensual agreement seemed easier and more comfortable, I became increasingly aware of how Dave positioned himself as the "devil's advocate" and allowed for dissensual experiences and resistance that supported greater reflective and reflexive practice among teachers.

I was drawn to Dave's notion that schools were not static. Dave delicately balanced a deep and enduring respect for what came before with an uncanny ability to visualize and actualize better educational opportunities for children. I admired his passion to learn through daily inquiry and reflective dialogue. I was intrigued by his questions because they rarely had answers (but they sure made me think). I appreciated his willingness to challenge "the way things have always been done around here." For example, I'll never forget when Dave replaced the workbooks and textbooks with children's literature and math manipulatives. Although these actions challenged my understanding of how knowledge was produced and what it meant to truly engage learners, Dave's actions defied my previous understanding of what it meant to be a teacher and a principal. Dave helped me to escape the ill-conceived notions of teaching and leading derived from my "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975).

As a young person, I was often drawn to or found myself in a variety of leadership roles. With Dave's encouragement and carefully crafted opportunities, I again saw myself assuming a leadership role within our school. I began to identify with being a teacher-leader or someone who could work with others to reinvent our

school in ways to better serve our students. At the time, I did not know that Dave was building "leadership capacity" (Lambert, 2002). However, Dave's belief that school leadership should be a choice open to all school members (including teachers, students, parents and other support staff or agencies) in a range of situations and at different times rang true for me. Dave's approach to change was one that I identified with – that is, the collective agency necessary for enduring change to occur naturally emerges in a "bottom-up" manner rather than being something imposed by the formal leader on others. I could now see myself as aspiring to the principalship – someday.

Lortie's (1975) description of the "apprenticeship of observation" seems to accurately describe how my professional identity was impacted by the principal leadership that I observed and experienced. I am certain that Dave had to manage the facilities, balance the budget, and deal with a vast number of managerial duties. Yet, when I think about Dave's principalship, I do not recall him being focused entirely on his administrative responsibilities. Rather, I recall someone who made sense of the principalship in ways that embraced changes that would support teaching and learning, someone who leveraged dissensus as a means to fostering reflective practice, and someone who sought out better possibilities for the future.

My First Principalship

Most of my education career has taken place within a large, Canadian public school jurisdiction that serves approximately 100,000 students, in Kindergarten to Grade 12, in over 200 schools. Our jurisdiction has prided itself for being on the cutting edge of educational innovation intent on enhancing student learning. In fact, our jurisdiction is often cited by researchers and practitioners as an exemplar of leadership in a variety of teaching, learning and leadership initiatives. In particular,

our district has been recognized and gained notable exposure, nationally and internationally, for engaging in policy reform that supports site-based decision making, open boundaries, and *schools of choice* (i.e., alternative program delivery) (Ouchi, 2003).

In my third year of teaching, my classroom was one of several featured in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum (ASCD) video focused on reporting and communicating student learning. Shortly after the filming crew left Edmonton, ASCD's executive producer contacted me to write the accompanying facilitator's guide (Wright & Kiernan, 1996). In addition to being excited and proud, my work with ASCD afforded many opportunities for me to present and engage with a variety of Canadian and American school jurisdictions on assessment and evaluation of student learning. After teaching for three and half years, Dave and two associate superintendents encouraged me to seek a leadership position in central office. I was told that my approach to teaching and learning was innovative and that I had a very passionate, energizing, and collaborative way of sharing what I had learned and what was working or not working in our school and broader jurisdictional context. Feedback from teachers who came to visit my class or who attended the in-service professional development sessions that I presented was overwhelmingly positive. One of the associate superintendents indicated to me, "We need more consultants who are willing to share and collaborate with others. We like how your presentations include references from the research alongside of your experiences in school to illustrate and engage teacher colleagues in discussions about the relationship and tensions between theory and practice." Such positive feedback, and the opportunity to support and learn from other teacher colleagues in their efforts to reconceptualize schools to better meet the needs of students, was energizing to me. Being a consultant

would allow me to share my experiences (not necessarily having to be an expert), while learning from the experiences of others. Feeling a profound sense of responsibility, I decided to leave my classroom to pursue other opportunities that would enable me to support teaching and learning on a broader scope. Thus, over the next seven years, I worked within our district as a consultant, a supervisor of resource development for kindergarten to grade 12 curricula, and lastly, as a director of external services and staff development.

In these varying positions, I engaged with and watched teachers and principals from afar. I was often puzzled why my principal colleagues struggled to make sense of their roles and work. From my vantage point, policy and practice seemed very black and white. Yet, for most of the principals with whom I interacted, everything seemed to be complex, contradictory, uncertain, and cloaked in shades of grey. One principal colleague told me, “Until you walk in the shoes of the principal yourself, you won’t understand.” This comment haunted me and eventually prompted me to return to school – this time, as a principal.

In 2003, I was appointed to the principalship of a school that offered three distinct programs to over 500 students from kindergarten to grade six, including: (a) a regular program that balanced personal development and high academic expectations (called “Mainstream”); (b) a traditional Back-to-Basics alternative program (we were one of 15 sites within Alberta that offered traditional programming) focused on academic mastery through whole group teacher-directed instruction; and (c) a special needs classroom with specialized behaviour and learning assistance programming for students with severe behavioural disorders. Tension existed as senior administrators expected each program to be distinct in pedagogy and resources; however, other jurisdictional policies and expectations demanded a common school-wide

instructional focus and professional development plan. I was now the principal of a school that had a history of struggle in providing discrete program instruction within an integrated school community.

My Principalship: How Others Informed My Principal Role and Identity

As I walked the halls for the very first time, I wore a nametag stating, "Mrs. Lisa Wright, Principal." I envisioned myself as a leader that valued learning, collaboration, and collective reflexivity. I saw myself as someone who would engage other school members to make tough decisions in the best interests of children. Although I believed that I might be a catalyst for change – mobilizing others to question and then take the risks necessary to challenge the status quo – I felt that ongoing integration and sustainability of educational change would be a shared responsibility among different school members.

However, as I headed to our office area, I was not prepared for the sheer congestion awaiting me. Parents were lined up to meet with "the new principal" about teacher assignments, student medical needs, long bus ride times, and so on. Preoccupied with my ideal perception of being a principal, I was disrupted with the multiplicity of ways others positioned me and defined my work. For example, some parents commented:

> *This school has been plagued with conflict between the programs. Hopefully you can get everyone to work together for the best interests of the entire school.*
>
> *We have been promised that the next principal would be sympathetic and understanding to the needs of the Back-to-Basics program.*
>
> *If we are going to improve our provincial test scores, you will need to replace the Grade 4 teacher. If you don't, we'll go "over your head." You need to involve us [parents] in the hiring of a new teacher to ensure that the teacher is a good match for the program.*

In a similar vein, the teachers held expectations that positioned me in diverse ways:

> *We heard through the grapevine that you were sent out here to "fix" our financial deficit. That's the job of the principal – as teachers, we trust that you will deal with the budget without increasing class sizes or taking away our collaborative planning release time.*
>
> *If you want to address the infighting between programs, you are going to have to find a new location to house the alternative program.*
>
> *We have a lot of autonomy here. We prefer to meet in our own programs and set our own agendas. That allows the admin team to "do their own thing" when we meet.*

Although I saw myself as an active developer of my principal role and identity, I quickly noticed that I was continually and deliberately being positioned by others. I felt uncomfortable because I believed that I needed to be the principal of the school, not an advocate for different program interests. Being collaborative was second nature to me, so I found it frustrating to hear that teachers did not want or expect me to participate in collaborative planning. The emphasis on standardized test scores and Fraser Institute[5] "rankings" left me wondering if teachers and parents would be willing to explore a variety of assessment tools that would enhance instructional planning. But perhaps, most surprising, were the veiled threats that suggested that my principalship would be unpleasant if I changed "how we do things around here."

In the first months of the principalship, I did not confront or resist how I was positioned. Rather, I struggled with my legitimacy as a new principal in the eyes of

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[5] The Fraser Institute is an independent Canadian public policy research and educational organization that produces and publicly releases annual "school report cards" that measure the ongoing performance of elementary and secondary schools. Each report card includes individual schools' results over a number of years. Data used to compare and rank schools is based on Alberta's provincial achievement test and diploma examination results.

students, parents and staff. I made surface-level changes that perpetuated long-standing, stereotypical images of the principal. I wore dark suits and pulled my hair back. On my bookshelf and desk, I displayed key program resources, my degree, and other certificates of professional achievement. To demonstrate authoritative expertise, I prefaced discussions with statements such as, "According to the Foundational Principles as approved by the Board of Trustees in 1995…" I never let my staff or the parents know that I had only been a teacher for a mere three and a half years.

Different school members had varying expectations that often conflicted and competed with others' and my own expectations and values. To a great extent, I lacked confidence. I justified my inaction by telling myself that a new principal needs to listen and watch before making any changes. Feeling highly scrutinized and vulnerable, I often assumed the positions assigned to me by others. I lacked the courage to challenge the value positions of the dominant group within our school[6]. For example, parents and teachers in the Back-to-Basics program were vehemently opposed to revenues generated through per-pupil allocations being used within the Mainstream program to buy resources, to access and pay for external supports (e.g., psychologists), or to hire teachers (to maintain the Mainstream organization with double grade groupings such as a Grade 5/6 class). However, I started to contemplate the dissonance between my values and my role as principal. How could I justify the expenditure of funds to reduce class sizes in the Back-to-Basics program (already meeting the provincial targets for class sizes) if the result would be a reorganization

[6] There were over 400 students in the Back-to-Basics program. Most of these students were of middle or upper socio-economic status. In addition to being involved in daily classroom happenings, most of these students' parents were highly involved in decision making regarding school governance and alternative program delivery. Consequently, the Back-to-Basics program dominated the school as a result of sheer numbers and the parents' very active involvement within the school and district.

of the Mainstream program into K-3 and 4-6 class groupings? Despite the strong pressure to keep "Back-to-Basics money" in the Back-to-Basics program, I could not live with the ramifications of such a decision. Such a decision would have implications that would be detrimental to our Mainstream students. Little did I realize, I was beginning the complicated, humbling, and complexified work of exploring how I, and other principals, make sense of our multi-dimensional roles within dynamic school contexts.

Practices and Policies Informing My Role and Identity Formation

During the first year of my principalship, I was in survival mode. Left to "sink or swim," I listened and watched to gain understanding of our school context and needs. Although I focused on building relationships with all school members, I spent much of my time attending to operational aspects of my work (e.g., budgeting, scheduling, staffing, and maintaining facilities). As I marked items off of my "to do list," I felt a sense of accomplishment. I felt as if I was good principal and efficient manager; yet, I believed that my ability to be an instructional leader would need to develop since I had limited teaching experience.

When I attended our monthly First Year Principals' meetings, I was afforded opportunities to learn about district practices and procedures. Although there were opportunities to dialogue and ask questions, most sessions focused on managerial responsibilities as defined in the School Act and other policies. The principalship was legally defined and depicted as a key position within the educational hierarchy. Although principals were viewed as instructional leaders, considerably more attention was given to operational aspects of the principalship related to staffing, student conduct, transportation requirements, and facilities maintenance. The dynamic nature

of the principalship was often acknowledged; however, there was an absence of discussion, resources, or research that shed light on how to address the potential dissonance that may exist between a principal's values and the multi-dimensional role that they play.

As I negotiated complex interactions with a range of school members within our unique school context, I was continually influenced by externally-developed policies. An awareness of policy informed my understanding of the principalship, including the accompanying responsibilities and functions. However, my role as a principal appeared to be viewed as separable from myself as a person. Anyone, ideally, could have taken up my role – but not my identity. My identity was more fluid and individualized as influenced by my own values, relationships, goals, vision, and as necessitated by our school context. For instance, in assuming my instructional leadership role as defined by policy, I positioned myself differently when I amplified or diminished certain positions within each program. When I walked through the Back-to-Basics classrooms, I positioned myself authoritatively and assumed an expert stance – I held teachers accountable for the use of specific pedagogical approaches and the delivery of the Hirsch's (1987) core knowledge outcomes. As a dutiful employee, I was expected to hold teachers accountable for meeting the Board-approved program principles and practices. On the other hand, within the Mainstream classrooms I was more collaborative in my approach with teachers – positioning myself as a co-learner, mentor, and colleague who explored different pedagogical approaches to best meet the specific learning needs of the students.

I often commented that I had a "split sense of self" as I moved between the three programs in our school. On one particular day, I remember walking out of a grade three Back-to-Basics classroom armed with a checklist of outcomes and

pedagogical approaches that I held Back-to-Basics teachers accountable for during the course of my supervision duties. It only took me about five steps to enter the Mainstream classroom across the hall. As I entered the Mainstream class, my checklist was tossed aside as I knelt down to join a grade three student and teacher who were conferencing about a mathematics problem that explored regrouping using manipulatives. In that defining moment, I realized that I needed to be cognizant of how external policy positioned me as a principal and how these policies potentially conflicted with my values and beliefs about teaching and learning. In recognition that my actual role differed from my desired identity as a principal, I began to confront and question policies that dictated my role within this very specific school context. I now wondered: (a) "Why are we doing this?" (b) "Who is benefitting?" (c) "How might we better meet the needs of all students?"

Experiencing Dissonance between My Values and Mandated Role

As a principal, I held specific claims or rights to speak and assumed different obligations and duties that reflected differences in power and authority. How I was positioned by others and by policy often conflicted with my personal values and understandings about school leadership. Dissonance existed between my beliefs and the role I performed. For example, expressing dissatisfaction with approaches of instructional leadership that focus on the principal as the center of knowledge, power and authority, I welcomed multiple and distributed sources of leadership that naturally emanated out of complex social and situational contexts. Subsequently, I encouraged teachers to serve as instructional leaders – believing leadership was a choice open to school members in a range of situations and at different times. Moreover, I perceived leadership as occurring within the context of the community,

rather than as a mere function of one's position. I held fast to the belief that collective agency and educational change naturally emerged in a “bottom-up” manner rather than being something imposed on others.

However, as our district began to officially promote system-wide improvement, principals were required to spend 50% of the instructional day in classrooms and were held accountable for “superb results” as measured by student achievement outputs and high school completion rates. Tension resulted from these new expectations that quantified my role and student learning – the focus on “50% of the time in the classroom” compelled me to perpetuate more traditional conceptualizations of instructional leadership despite my misgivings. Moreover, I felt discomfort with the wording of the Back-to-Basics Program’s Foundational Principles which stated that “the principal is the primary decision-maker on all instructional matters.” Despite my discomfort, I put aside my personal beliefs about leadership in order to meet these external expectations. When I considered “who I was expected to be” as a principal, I started to position myself as an instructional expert, responsible authoritarian, and even a heroic leader who needed to mobilize others to successfully meet and exceed established targets and to ensure program continuity as defined by senior administrators.

Our district’s policies were not meant to prevent the sharing or distribution of leadership; however, the practices and language embedded in many policies had unintended consequences arising from the need to be able to hold one person, the principal, accountable. Efforts to foster collaboration and encourage more distributed forms of leadership were slowly undermined when I took up the values prescribed by policy. Although I still encouraged different school members to assume leadership roles as dictated by the situation and their own interests and expertise, I noted that

teachers typically viewed me, the principal, as holding and seeking the real power. Moreover, teachers were questioning the authenticity and extent of their discretionary decision-making abilities. Looking back, our teachers may have seen the distribution of leadership as a guise for the delegation of administrative work (considering that I was focused on "surviving" my first years in the principalship, this is likely).

In a similar vein, I was strategic in fostering "buy in" around externally-mandated initiatives. When I did not believe in certain directives, or when the directive conflicted with school values, I addressed dissonance my reminding myself of my obligation to function as an extension of senior administrators. For example, while much of our work had centered on ensuring distinct programming that aligned with the philosophical tenants of each program, we were now being asked to identify one instructional focus that would cross all programs and serve as the basis for decision making related to professional development and resource acquisition. To ensure implementation of what would be viewed as a "negative" or "contradictory" change by our teachers, I prefaced my comments with, "As required by the Superintendent, we will need to…" In this way, I could fulfill my mandated role, yet I could signal to staff that the directive was not one that I philosophically supported or valued within the context we worked in.

Other times, I chose and then carefully "planted seeds" with key, influential teachers who were encouraged to introduce or promote new initiatives with the larger staff. For example, our school had traditionally held assemblies where the principal and assistant principal would introduce the "character trait of the month" and outline behavioural expectations or rules that related to the given trait. Over time, I informally met with key teachers in each program to talk about ways to shift the focus of the assemblies to our students. Together, we would brainstorm alternative

models that allowed students the opportunity to plan and lead these assemblies. I asked these teachers, “How can we showcase your students’ learning? How might students work with the administration to plan and lead these assemblies?” These influential teachers received more “air time” during subsequent staff meeting discussions about our monthly assemblies. It is not surprising that our teachers may have seen the use of such distributed forms of leadership as a means to strategically create “buy in,” squelch dissenting views, or avoid conflict.

During my last year in the principalship, we were planning for the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI)[7] Cycle 3. Again, tension existed as I navigated between “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches to building leadership capacity. Even though I believed that we needed to distribute leadership by relinquishing decision-making authority to others in the school, I continued to face a serious tension with the all-pervasive culture of accountability in which I operated vis-à-vis my senior-level district administrators and external stakeholders. When thinking about expectations to magnify individual and organizational potential, I was not always confident that pooling the expertise of school members was more effective and efficient than relying on more directive leadership approaches.

As a dutiful employee, I reconciled this tension by reminding myself that I was accountable for meeting the requirements of a position that I applied for. I justified my choices as “short-term compromises” until the time that I was “confirmed” as a principal (newly-appointed principals were on probation for one year). I felt certain that upon receiving my principal designation, I would have greater

[7] More information about AISI is included in Chapter 1 and is available at http://education.alberta.ca/admin/aisi.aspx.

latitude in regard as to how I could enact my leadership practice based on my own and other school members' values.

Over time, I became increasingly uncomfortable with my identity as an instructional expert, heroic leader, and authority figure. I questioned when, why, and how I lost sight of being a learner, collaborator, mentor, and team member. What happened to my beliefs about the expansive distribution of power as a potential means to improving teaching and learning? Why was I squelching the conflict that I deemed essential to interrogating how our school practices and traditions were constraining school improvement? How could I live authentically when I was compromising my own (and other school members') values in order to meet external demands?

As I questioned the emerging tensions inherent in my role and the current policy context, I realized that I could be more deliberate in how I positioned myself and the stories that I portrayed to others (e.g., "Although these are the guidelines that have been established for AISI Cycle 3, I would like us to work together, *within* our respective programs and *across* programs, to see how we can design a professional development program that best meets your needs. I am prepared to speak to the Superintendent if we find these guidelines restrictive."). I felt more confident and willing to resist how I was being positioned in certain situations (e.g., "I understand that you need our space utilization report; however, I will not submit the report until I finish my one-on-ones with teachers. Teacher supervision and support are my priority."). Although speaking up and revealing my own and school members' values did not always exempt us from given mandates, I believe that senior administrators listened to our perspectives and at times allowed us greater flexibility than was otherwise the norm.

Trying to Understand "Who I Am" as a Principal

My fragile understanding of the principalship was especially put to the test when a crisis occurred. For example, during the morning recess break in another elementary school, a man entered the girl's washroom and sexually assaulted a young female student (in the days following, this man attempted to assault another student in a different school). As principals, we were immediately alerted and were expected to evaluate existing safety procedures and communicate practices that demonstrated that our schools were safe places for children. Upon receiving word of this horrible event, my immediate thoughts centered on my own children. Were my son and daughter safe in their school?

That day and in the days that followed, we focused on student and staff safety. I was expected to fulfill a number of roles. Much of my time was spent alleviating fears and addressing concerns, while simultaneously projecting quiet confidence in our safety plan. I shielded students from the media. We worked with an Occupational Health and Safety consultant to update our lockdown procedures and work-alone policies. Revised district and school policies were presented to our staff. Letters were copied and sent home – these included several updates from the Superintendent and others written by me about changes in school procedures (e.g., student drop off and pick up times and increased supervision). When our staff resisted changes to absenteeism and "lates" reporting, I explained the need for the change from my perspective as both a principal and a parent. Yes, there were litigious issues; however, I appealed to teachers' emotions when I positioned myself as a parent. I asked, "How would you feel if we finally noticed and called you at 10:00 am to let you know that your child was missing? We can't allow an hour and half to lapse when a child's safety or life might be at stake." When staff asked questions that I

could not answer, I called my principal mentor or central office for guidance. Such leadership, administrative work, and public relations management was taxing.

Once this complex situation settled and necessary changes were in place, I reflected on how I made sense of my work as a principal during this difficult time. At one point, my eyes were drawn to a professionally-printed brochure for the Back-to-Basics program that stated that the "Back-to-Basics Alternative Program is dedicated to helping average students maximize their academic potential." In an effort to emphasize the importance of helping students become critical thinkers, the brochure refers to René Descartes' statement, "Cogito ergo sum," that continues to be foundational within philosophical arguments. Central to the Western quest for meaning, "Cogito ergo sum," as asserted by Descartes, is usually translated as "I think, therefore I am."

As I faced the elusive search for "who I am" as a principal, Descartes argument was particularly relevant during this crisis. Although Descartes asserted, "I think, therefore I am," I was not always sure who the thinking "I" was. I wondered if "I" was Mrs. Wright the *School Principal*. Or, was "I" Lisa Wright who was a *Representative of the District* and therefore an *Extension of the Board of Trustees*? Perhaps "I" was Mrs. Wright the *Teacher.* Maybe "I" was Lisa the *Colleague*. Other times, "I" was Lisa the *Learner*. Sometimes "I" was Lisa the *Mother* of her own children. Assuming unique roles and diverse responsibilities, I was continuously labouring to negotiate different social positions in my personal and professional life.

At times, I would accept or reject certain positions. Other times, I would self-position so that one particular identity would be more predominant over others. More often than not, these identities and accompanying responsibilities were in a constant state of interplay and flux. Subsequently, I was not one, but many. My identity was

not singular when I dealt with the safety incident; rather, it was multi-dimensional as I engaged in my practice as a "principal-employee-representative of the Board-colleague-mother" (or any other number of combinations).

In a similar vein, I struggled with Descartes' notion of "I think." Yes, "I think," but about what? When? How? For what purpose? For whom? While our Back-to-Basics students were bused in and often had cell phones and a parent or nanny waiting to meet the bus after school, I was very aware that many of our Mainstream and special needs students walked home alone each day. I wondered what we could do to keep these children safe before and after school. I contemplated how our revised policies better protected some groups of students over others. Recognizing that some students required different supports to be safe, I worked relentlessly with our region's police resource officer, our local community's advisory board, Child Services, and other organizations to address the safety of students who walked home (e.g., implementing a buddy walking system, extending afterschool supervision, and pruning shrubbery to create better visibility between the school and neighbouring homes). How I understood and made sense of my role was of significance to teachers, students, and other school members. I was becoming convinced that my identity as a principal had profound implications for teaching, learning, and leading within our unique school setting. My values and what I stood for influenced changes in practice and policy at the local school level.

Challenging the Notion that "To Be Successful in the Principalship, One Must Abide With It" (Wolcott, 1973, p. 306)

During the third year of my principalship and throughout my graduate studies, I realized that my conceptualization of the principalship also emanated from

conventional views of leadership and schooling that were perpetuated through a variety of socialization practices. I was socialized into the principalship as I read and implemented policy directives, when I engaged in my regular one-on-one meetings with the Superintendent and my district-assigned mentor, and through my ongoing and deliberate interactions with others.

Increasingly, I felt like an imposter. Away from work, I would imagine myself as a "leader of learning," an "advocate for public education and improved educational opportunities for all children," and as a "catalyst for change." Tension existed between "who I was" and "what was expected of me," and "what I valued." In the process of *being a principal*, I seemed unable to escape the influence of the larger system.

To survive in the principalship, I learned that it was easiest to conform to external demands and what others (e.g., schools members, central office personnel, and the larger community) saw as my role. I performed as expected. I feared making mistakes and therefore I was less inclined to take risks and "rock the boat" as required to change our school for the better. I worked hard to "tow the party line" and "be a district player." Performing these roles prohibited me from being the kind of principal that I envisioned as crucial to leading school improvement.

Initially, I tried to meet the expectations of others. For instance, working within a school with multiple program offerings, program discreteness was emphasized in school advertisements, the recruitment of teachers, and when organizing professional development. Teachers were not expected to plan or meet with teachers in the other programs. Students only played with the children from their respective programs. However, in that defining moment when I walked across the hall from the Back-to-Basics to the Mainstream classroom, I developed an increased

awareness of competition and inequities between programs. This realization provoked a change in my leadership practice and how I envisioned school improvement.

From that moment on, I focused on what I believed in and started to become the principal of *our school*, not the principal of three distinct programs. I challenged teachers to explore what enabled or restricted their capacity to provide a quality educational experience for *all* students in our school. Teachers, parents and central office resisted when I questioned long-standing traditions, structures, and routines – most were reluctant to critique or imagine new possibilities for our school. Some told me, "to let things go;" others reminded me that there "was no need to change what wasn't broken." I faced complacency, resistance and uncertainty as I negotiated the dual identity of "agent of change" and as the "school principal [who] serves their institution and their society as monitors for continuity" (Wolcott, 1973, p. 321).

In the face of feeling inadequate and frustrated, I relinquished my principalship. I commenced graduate studies in *Educational Administration and Leadership* so that I might be with other principals who were willing to render themselves vulnerable as they negotiated tensions between their personal values and reform agendas. I wanted to gain more nuanced understandings of how principals negotiate dissonance among competing policies and contradictory practices within their local school contexts. Do they accept, confront, or resist how they are positioned? As they go about engaging in school improvement, in what ways do principals discard past identities, allow new and past identities to commingle, and conceptualize new identities that allow for change?

Looking Forward: Reflecting on My Experiences with the Principalship

Why is learning about how principals make sense of their multi-dimensional roles important? Why do we need to gain understanding of what it means to *lead* educational change? Although each of the aforementioned experiences within this chapter may appear distinct, when braided together they provide more nuanced understanding of the complexities of *becoming* or *being a principal*. These experiences illuminate identity as being both individual and social, taking inclusive and exclusive forms, being lived as simultaneously virtuous and unjust, and being both constructive and destructive in nature (Bullough, 2005). Consequently, each experience yielded implications for my leadership practice and how I conducted this research.

When I consider my experiences with the principalship, I did not anticipate the importance of the *self*, the *me*, or the *I* in leadership practice (Wright, 2009, 2008). Yet in many instances, the *self*, the *me*, or the *I* defined practice and its supports and consequences. The awareness of positionality and identity (i.e., consideration of "who am I?" and "what I value") was integral to my present and future leadership practice. Through graduate studies, I began to question how my own or our school practices perpetuated societal norms. In doing so, I considered how my values, in addition to institutionalized meanings that were evident in externally-defined practices and policies, supported and limited efforts to improve teaching and learning.

My sense-making of the principalship was expressed, enabled, and understood through my relationships with others, as well as through institutional policies and practices. When faced with a number of school improvement challenges and unanticipated crisis within our local context, I began to understand that there is not one definitive way to *be a principal*. Just as I accepted, questioned, confronted, or

rejected positions, I assume that other principals face complex, changing conditions. I assume that these conditions prompt other principals to search for an improved role and coherent sense of identity.

I still cling to the belief that deliberate actions can send out tiny ripples that may impact this complex social system. If other principals, like me, are confused and perhaps disenchanted with efforts to improve schools, a study of how principals make sense of their multi-dimensional roles is necessary to understand the linkage between principals' identity formation and educational change and how and in what ways principals address consonance and dissonance between their values the complex roles they perform.

Final Thoughts

In this chapter, I described my background and select experiences to illustrate how I made sense of my multi-dimensional role as a principal within a dynamic and ever-changing school context. This chapter was difficult to write as I felt as if I was exposing what I perceive to be my shortcomings and vulnerabilities. Despite the challenging nature of this reflective process, I pursued as I felt that such weaknesses, questions, and frustrations could not be mine alone – I believed that other principals may also have similar lived experiences. However, by positioning myself as a researcher, I hoped to give the reader richer understanding of "who I am" and the values that influenced my practice both as a school principal and now as a researcher. The next chapter illuminates some of the values, as well as background and contextual information, about the six principal participants in this study and their unique school settings.

Chapter Five – Situating the Participants

Whereas the previous chapter positioned me as a principal, Chapter Five focuses on situating the six principal participants within this study. The intent of this chapter is to provide background and contextual information about each participant and his or her unique school settings[8]. To protect the identity of the participants, the names of people and places in this chapter and the remaining chapters are pseudonyms.

Karen

Karen was a warm, soft-spoken, and humble Aboriginal (Métis) woman in her fifties. On three occasions, I interviewed Karen at a round table in the middle of her tidy office that was simply decorated with Aboriginal artifacts. We sat next to a large window that afforded a quick scan of a city street and students' comings and goings.

I must admit that I had never been in a school such as this one. As I looked around, I saw framed student testimonials depicting how students overcame harsh lived experiences, graduating class portraits (with young women in their graduation caps and gowns, holding both roses and newborn infants), a basket of condoms on the receptionist's desk (with a note saying, "Please limit yourself to two."), a brochure stand (filled with information related to AADAC[9], Aboriginal academic upgrading, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, parenting, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, academic bursaries, eating disorders, and miscellaneous university program

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[8] Unless otherwise noted, statements in quotations are the verbatim words of each participant.
[9] AADAC stands for the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission which is an agency of the government of Alberta.

booklets), and numerous posters (depicting character traits or promoting the notion of "dreams").

Karen entered the education profession after working as a professional cook. After attaining her education degree, she started teaching at the Smithers High School. During her first year of teaching, she was "tapped on the shoulder" (Karen, Interview 1) and encouraged to apply for the principalship within the school. Because she was encouraged and she felt that others had confidence in her ability to be a principal, she applied and was successful. Karen has over ten years experience in the principalship at the Smithers High School. With so many years of experience, I expected Karen to exude confidence in her abilities. This was not always the case. In fact, Karen quietly admitted that she "lacks confidence" because she is "still learning how to be a principal" (Interview 1). However, Karen credited her fellow classmates and professors, along with the exposure to course context and educational research, as contributing to her growing confidence and crucial affirmation of her work as a principal.

Karen took great pride in her growth and work as the principal of Smithers High School. Smithers High School provided a publicly-funded alternative educational program for students who range from 14 to 19 years of age and have been unsuccessful within mainstream educational programs. Smithers High School served less than 250 students from across a large urban setting. The students who "continuously enroll" in the school were considered at-risk or out-of-school youth – approximately 95% of the students were Aboriginal. Within this school, students were provided with independent program plans that support their abilities and interests. The teacher-student ratio was low. Students were provided with breakfast and lunch and there were no school fees. Karen and her staff work closely with a

variety of support services in an effort to support the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of their students. Students had access to supports such as acupuncture therapists, social workers, nurses, housing registrars, and Family Services (counseling related to family dynamics and health issues). Prior to our second interview, Karen took me on a tour of their facility which was designed with an open concept that facilitated relationship and community building. I saw students and teachers within on-site laboratories (e.g., design studies, art, cosmetology, fashion studies, and foods) and classrooms (equipped with small tables, computers, interactive white boards and hands-on learning equipment). In addition to full-time administrative responsibilities, Karen also chose to teach Food Studies (approximately 10% of her time). Karen supervised over 25 staff (including teachers and support staff).

Within her final MEd project and throughout the interview, Karen shared how:

> Society determines a kind of cultural consensus of how individuals are supposed to be or act in certain situations. When one does not fit into a role or category such as the academic world, work world, or the social/society expectations of acceptable behaviour according to the culture, standards, and powers of the day, this difference results in alienation, conflict, or conformity to mainstream. The measuring stick often changes, and is often biased…If an at-risk youth is to be engaged in learning, it will generally be on their terms. (Karen, 2004a, p. 5)

Believing that disadvantaged (e.g., socially, economically, and otherwise) youth deserve an opportunity for full and equal participation in the life of their community, Karen valued student-centred and student-driven educational approaches. Thus, the Smithers High School fostered a supportive environment that focused on relationship building and exemplified the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Karen felt that it was her job to “be there” for students when, and if, they needed her. Educational change centered on students’ needs. For example, most of the students within the Smithers High School carried and used cell phones. Karen was

contemplating how to leverage cell phones and social networking technologies as a pedagogical and communication tool that could enhance the quality of education and other supports available to the students within the school.

Although Karen stated, “with only one year’s teaching experience, I can’t claim to be an instructional leader” (Interview 1), she had a quiet assertiveness as she shared how she felt that having a strong sense of purpose shaped her practice as principal. Karen emphasized, more than once, that she had a democratic leadership style whereby she engaged staff and students in school decision making. Karen was strongly opposed to authoritative or directive approaches to leadership. However, Karen readily admitted that a directive approach was sometimes viewed as inappropriate from the points of view of her staff as:

> Not everyone wants to participate in decision making as the process can be long and not always viewed as necessary depending on the issue … but I still think that the process is important, even if time consuming from their [the staff’s] perspectives. (Interview 2)

Regardless, Karen felt strongly that, “You know it doesn’t work if people are just feeling forced to do something they’re not comfortable with” (Interview 2).

When faced with conflict, Karen would draw upon a variety of mediation techniques based on “Aboriginal ways of knowing and being with others” (Interview 2) instead of assuming an authoritative stance. Her own childhood experiences with authority allowed her to empathize with school members and recognize that an authoritative approach to discipline would especially conflict with Aboriginal students’ life experiences:

> I’m not a traditional disciplinarian and I think that comes from my Aboriginal background… And so the whole issue of dealing with conflict and authority, I suffered that through my growing up years. They say it’s an Aboriginal trait – not being able to discipline properly. You know, like kids kind of raising themselves. Well I grew up in that model, so I get it when kids and teachers struggle. It could be perceived as bad parenting where it’s really another way

> of raising and disciplining children. It's a different world view. (Karen, Interview 2)

Although married with three children and three grandchildren, Karen spoke rarely about her family. However, Karen shared how her mother passed away four months before she completed her graduate studies. As a tribute, Karen transcribed her mother's handwritten life story into a chapter within a final course assignment. Because I had just completed the transcription of my father's life story, Karen and I talked about the emotions and learnings derived from such work. Karen shared how her mother's courage and resilience influenced who she was and how she approached her work as a school principal. In her assignment, Karen wrote:

> There are no words to express how important and special we all felt we were to mom. She had a gift of making every one of us feel as though we were her favorite. Her protection of her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren was fierce. An attribute that sometimes maybe a son and/or daughter in-law did not always appreciate. Her perception in her protection of us was sometimes thought to be a little askew. Her regret was that she could not always protect us when we were younger. (2004b, p. 2)

Although Karen did not use the word "protection" when she described herself as a principal, she empathized with students and often spoke about "understanding where they came from and how they got there," "needing to advocate for those who 'slip through the cracks' or 'don't fit the norm,'" "having a compassionate, but 'not saving' approach," and "needing opportunities for new beginnings and fresh starts" (Interview 2).

Karen's personal life experiences had a significant impact on her identity as a principal. When asked about her memories of going to school, Karen shared that she only finished grade seven and her memories were:

> Foggy, it's out of focus. I don't have a lot of school memories…I'm just coming into being as a human being. I think that's part of my success, I don't have this preconceived picture of what it [the principalship] should look like or needs to look like…Growing up, we were in the social assistance model,

> and we moved every year. We were pretty transient, which these students relate to. I also relate to staying and making a connection and how hard that is. (Interview 3)

Karen talked about "living the victimhood once" and how she "see[s] that [same victimhood] as a barrier to the youth we work with in our school" (Interview 2). Karen's educational experiences as a student had a profound influence on her identity as a school leader.

During our second interview, Karen noted that it was ironic that I was researching at a time when she was personally "struggling with leadership styles and what is being asked of me…Leadership styles that I may be incapable of doing" (Interview 2). Although allowing me to witness her vulnerability, she indicated that "politically I can't talk about it" (Karen, Interview 1). Despite feeling unable to share the particulars of the situation (understandably so), Karen often referred back to "the conflict," "getting the letter," and not being sure if she would be willing "to compromise on this one" (Interview 2).

During our final interview, Karen told me that a great deal transpired since our previous meeting. She indicated that this would be her final year at Smithers High School. Despite efforts to actively advocate for the democratic and collaborative approaches that had been so successful with the students, staff, and community partners, the Board was adamant about moving to a directive leadership approach that they deemed to be more efficient and effective. Karen shared:

> Change takes time and maybe change doesn't happen fast enough for others. Maybe it's [the process inherent in democratic approaches] seen as resistance, as being opposed to change. I think this has been like a leadership style that's worked very well in getting us where we are. But it may need to go further, but I'm not a change-master-disciplinarian-type of leader. And so maybe that's what being asked now… The question is, "Am I willing to take the hit for it?" (Interview 3)

This time, Karen was not willing to compromise. Karen chose to leave.

Wade

Wade was a confident, outgoing, and articulate Caucasian man in his fifties. Married and with two children (currently in elementary and junior high school), Wade worked hard to balance his home and professional obligations and felt that he was able to do so – except duly noting that he found it “nearly impossible” (Interview 1) to be at home as much as he would have liked at a time when his children were very young and he was also teaching, enrolled in graduate studies, and involved in his district’s leadership mentoring program.

On the day we met for our first interview, Wade presented with influenza-like symptoms. He explained to me that the H1N1 virus had spread through the school a couple of weeks ago, and he had just “come down with a sore throat” (Wade, Interview 1). Despite feeling ill and losing his voice, Wade was committed to being interviewed at length, in addition to just “being here” as it was a busy week for the school. Wade was a gracious host – offering me coffee and then a lengthy school tour. The interview took place in Wade’s office which contained a corner-fitted desk, three chairs, a security monitor, a filing cabinet, one bookshelf (contrary to the many principal offices I visited, Wade’s shelves and desks were not overflowing with papers and binders), and his framed Masters and Doctoral degrees (interestingly, when I was introduced to the Assistant Principal, I noted that her office was the bigger of the two and contained new, matching furniture). Like the fleece jacket he wore, Wade had a relaxed presence.

This “go with the flow” (Wade, Interview 2) attitude was also evident on the day of our second interview. On that particular day, the temperature had plummeted below minus 30 degrees Celsius. As I approached the school, Wade was outside, bundled from head to toe, with maintenance workers as there was an issue with a

leaking natural gas line. Later, he brushed off my comment that it looked like a "rough way to start the day" by saying that "these things are bound to happen – especially when it is so cold. You just need to anticipate the unexpected and deal with it. No need to worry" (Wade, Interview 2). When further asked about the uncertainty inherent in the principalship, Wade shared "that being a principal is like being a juggler. You have to have the capacity to multi-task, but also keep your sense of the greater vision of what your organization is doing, which is educating children" (Wade, Interview 2). Engaging in "leadership by walkabouts" allowed Wade to develop a strong sense of "situational awareness" which he deemed essential to his success (Wade, Interview 1).

With a passion for lifelong learning and a strong commitment to improving his practice as a principal and teacher, Wade completed his district's leadership mentoring program, in addition to obtaining his Masters in Education (specializing in instructional technology) and Doctor of Education (specializing in secondary education). Wade described his participation in the mentorship program and graduate studies as being a "transformative and powerful, life-changing experience" (Interview 1). During his graduate programs, Wade studied and took elective courses in educational administration and leadership. Wade taught over 20 years before assuming the role of principal at Evergreen Junior High over the last four years. In addition to his full-time administrative responsibilities, he chose to allocate approximately 15% of his time to teaching. Wade supervised almost 40 staff (including teachers, support and custodial staff).

Evergreen Junior High served approximately 400-500 students, from both rural and a small urban setting and is set in a small community outside of a large urban centre. Students were primarily Caucasian and came from diverse socio-

economic backgrounds. In addition to offering a strong academic program and a wide range of complementary courses to all three grade levels, Evergreen Junior High emphasized daily physical education programming and a wide range of intramurals, extra-curricular activities, and student leadership opportunities.

What struck me most about Wade was his positive demeanour and relentless focus on the holistic well-being and education of the youth who attended his school. In fact, when asked how others would describe him as a principal, he responded, "Happy" (Wade, Interview 1). At first, his response puzzled me; however, as the interview progressed, it was evident that Wade was indeed a "happy principal." He told me that he was a "people person," that "relationships matter and that "people come first" (Wade, Interview 1). Over and over again, Wade's focus on the children, staff, parents, and others was evident. When he spoke about the "people work" (Wade, Interview 3), he spoke quickly, leaned forward in his chair, and used animated hand gestures. As we strolled through the halls and classrooms, Wade smiled at everyone and acknowledged others by name and with a personal comment.

Throughout each interview, Wade spoke about the importance of respect and responsibility. Wade situated his work and educational change within the context of student needs – ensuring that students (and other school members) felt valued, safe, and appreciated was a priority. Keeping students at the forefront of his thinking helped Wade address conflict:

> I like to talk directly with the person …Get clarity so I know what it is they're concerned about because that's important for me to make sure I'm interpreting it correctly … But the key is always in that dialogue is bring it back to what will help the children the best within our system in terms of learning and that's where that dialogue will often be steered towards … I'll say we've got a common theme here is that we both care about the children doing the very best we can. (Interview 2)

In an environment that was constantly changing, Wade stressed that a principal needs to:

> Filter which things you need to really engage in and which things you can distribute to others to handle and look after. Because otherwise I suspect that your leadership dynamics could be stifled if you're being pulled too many directions without that situational awareness of where the focus of your institution is going. (Interview 1)

It appeared that Wade's focus on "student needs" strongly influenced his understanding of his identity as principal and served as a core value that shaped his leadership practice:

> I think a constant in our role as education facilitators in the school and as team builders is to ensure that when compromise is made that the caveat is for the best interest of the students and the learning in the community and it's not just to satisfy a certain ego dynamic. (Interview 3)

Ongoing reflection in, on, and for practice allowed Wade to consider his identity as the formal school leader.

Wade was passionate about creating and maintaining a healthy learning environment. After performing a number of cardiovascular assessment experiments with students enrolled in an optional science program, Wade noticed some interesting trends from his data analysis over the years. Believing that "healthy bodies are essential to learning and lifelong well-being" (Wade, Interview 2), Wade initiated contact with the regional health authority, the medicine faculty at a large Canadian research institution, and his jurisdiction to develop a research protocol, to secure grants and technical support, and to implement a longitudinal study intent on monitoring youths' cardiovascular health and evaluating the potential strategies used to facilitate active and healthy lifestyles for youth. During the school tour, Wade was eager to show off the school's gymnasium (numerous athletic award banners hung

from the rafters), a fully-equipped fitness room, and the vending machines filled with milk, unsweetened juices, yogurt, and other healthy snack choices.

Wade's commitment to building healthy lifestyles extended beyond his school's walls. He also facilitated and led "Living Healthy" [pseudonym], a district-wide school improvement project (included over ten schools at the elementary, junior and senior high levels) that aimed to enable students to become more actively engaged in meeting the expectations outlined in the Alberta Physical Education Program of Studies, and improve students' and staffs' activity levels and cardiovascular health (including monitoring of physical activity through the use of an activity portfolio). Although it has been some time since Wade was in graduate studies, his passion for research was still evident. He has been instrumental in partnering his district with a Canadian research institution to establish a peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary, web-based journal (intended for a broad audience) with the purpose of sharing research by high school students. He supported and encouraged local high school students to submit research results in any discipline (e.g., science, health, sociology, history or political science) that are of importance to students or the larger community. Moreover, within Wade's responses to my questions, the identities of researcher, learner, and school leader (or principal) often comingled. In fact, Wade was still actively contributing to the scholarship of teaching, learning, and health services by co-publishing several articles in prestigious medical journals. Believing "that as a principal you still are a researcher" (Wade, Interview 2), was an identity that gave Wade a sense of direction and served as a source of satisfaction and pride:

> Doing this research allows us to reflect on what we do in our pedagogical routines and look at what we can do to help people learn more effectively, to

> bring joy, happiness to the learning process, looking at the connectedness with nutrition, healthy lifestyles, mental health, physical activity, and novelty. It challenges us to constantly grow and to expand the sphere of research that is impacting what we do, so it definitely is an exciting time to be in education. (Wade, Interview 3)

Our last interview was particularly memorable. I arrived at the school three hours prior to the interview so that I could participate in the Olympic Torch Relay that would pass by Evergreen School. I found Wade rushing around the school with his cell phone in hand. He had just found out that he needed to select one student to run the leg of the Torch Relay from his school to the neighbouring high school. Within a short time span, Wade made arrangements to pay for the Torch, ensured proper parental consent for the student's participation, directed local community members as to where they could park and watch the relay, welcomed and introduced the mayor and the associate superintendent to me and other school members, made an announcement to students regarding procedures and expectations for their participation in the relay, and organized the set up of Olympic signage, flags, and loud speakers. Wade wasn't overwhelmed by the sudden change in plans, the media cameras, the hundreds of students and community members with noise-makers, or the additional preparations. He saw this as a "once in a lifetime opportunity that will be interesting and educational for our students" (Wade, Interview 3) – even his wife and children had come out to watch the relay with his school community.

Wade selected a visually-impaired student, Joshua, to carry the torch. When I asked him how and why he selected Joshua, he said, "Like anything else, when I was asked, I took a moment to reflect before I chose Joshua. I chose him because he is such a positive ambassador and he exemplifies the values of our school. Choosing Joshua demonstrates how this is an inclusive school" (Wade, Interview 3). As I

watched the transfer of the flame to Joshua's Olympic torch, tears streamed down my face. I did not know Joshua and I was just getting to know Wade. Yet, I was filled with emotion as I watched Joshua and Wade standing together at that moment – a young boy who had so much to overcome in life standing alongside of a principal who exemplified how "schools should be places of hope" (Wade, Interview 1).

Carrie

Carrie was an articulate, highly productive, and passionate Caucasian woman in her fifties. Carrie was married to a school principal and had one son. This past year, Carrie moved to a principalship in a district situated in a geographic region that was a considerable distance from her family home. During the school week, she stayed with her aging parents who live near her school community. She arrived at school by 6:30 a.m. and often stayed until 8:00 p.m. On the weekends, Carrie drove over four hours to return "home" to her family. During our last interview, I asked Carrie about the gold cross necklace gracing her neck. Carrie shared how her faith was core to who she was as a mother, wife, educator, and community member.

After working several years as a nurse, Carrie decided to move into education. With over 15 years experience teaching (including administrative experience gained while working as a school counselor), Carrie described her transition to the principalship as smooth and natural. During her more than 10 years in the principalship, Carrie was seconded to Alberta Education and also served as an acting Superintendent (two, half days per week – over a duration of four months in addition to working full-time as a principal). All of Carrie's school and jurisdictional work had taken place within central and northern Alberta rural contexts. Currently, Karen was continuing her work with an international publishing company and served

as a consultant to a large American school jurisdiction that was focused on curricular and assessment reform.

Working at Clear Water Elementary-Junior High School, Carrie stated, was "a really exciting opportunity to work in a new community, to focus on instructional leadership, and to further my research on teacher professional development" (Interview 1). The Clear Water School was built within the last ten years. When I entered the foyer, I took in the high ceilings and skylights, the open rotunda for student performances, and the massive wooden mural of the school community. I was surrounded by Christmas trees beautifully decorated with hand-crafted ornaments and large gift baskets overflowing with treasures and treats (later, I learned that the junior high school and kindergarten students collaborated to make the ornaments and that the parent council had organized the gift baskets for a silent auction). When Carrie toured me through the school, I was impressed with displays of student work, the size of the classrooms, the large windows and open spaces, and wide-spread access to new technologies.

Clear Water School offered Kindergarten to Grade Nine programming to 400 - 500 students. This "school of choice" had a waiting list of students who wanted to "get in to this school because we are so academically strong" (Carrie, Interview 1). The student population at Clear Water was fairly homogeneous – although this was a public school, most students were Caucasian and Catholic with a small number of Aboriginal students. In addition to regular academic and complementary course offerings, Clear Water was a district site for special needs and behavioural programming. The school's industrial arts and home economics facilities were shared by other jurisdictional schools. Additional supports were available to students and their families (e.g., youth workers and family counselors). Sharing the facility and

support personnel with other schools was not problematic; rather, Carrie spoke about cross-school collaboration and communications benefitting her own school. In addition to full-time administrative responsibilities, Carrie allocated 30% of her time to teaching. Carrie supervised almost 60 staff (including teachers, support, and custodial staff, as well as district support personnel).

Because I had the prior opportunity to take several graduate courses with Carrie, my interviews with her seemed faster-paced, and more open, revealing, and conversational in nature. Whereas I needed to get to know the other participants and to slowly build rapport and trust, Carrie and I already knew each other, to some extent, from class discussions. Based on our class interactions, I had learned that Carrie arrived at school in the early morning and usually worked until 8:00 pm. I was also aware that Carrie often drove over fours, on icy and treacherous roads, to attend our graduate course. Based on this information, I made the assumption that Carrie was extremely dedicated to her school and her own professional learning.

Carrie had an uncanny ability to juggle anything and everything that came her way without becoming flustered or exhausted. On the different interview days, I observed Carrie as she negotiated an impromptu meeting with an angry parent, managed the school's first school closure due to inclement weather, and several other interruptions (e.g., urgent phone messages, teacher requests for immediate assistance, last minute preparations for the Christmas concert, and unanticipated discussions with the administrative team). Carrie responded in a confident, professional, and efficient manner. Whenever Carrie felt "stuck or unsure," she felt that she could "always call upon the large network of colleagues that I have established throughout my career" (Interview 2). Ambiguity and contradictions were viewed as "to be expected" (Carrie, Interview 1). The unanticipated nature of her work seemed to be energizing to Carrie.

She suggested, when “up against uncertainty, there is often a window that opens and allows us to think and change in ways we didn’t ever expect” (Carrie, Interview 1).

Admittedly, Carrie shared, “I like change and innovation, but typically staff can’t handle too much change or change that comes too fast” (Interview 2). When I listened to Carrie, it became evident that she connected change with professional learning and risk taking. Through professional development, teachers became inquirers and researchers – in fact, Carrie placed great value on practitioner-generated knowledge as a means to improving teaching or leadership practice. Throughout her career, Carrie modeled her passion for learning. Carrie had completed a Diploma in Education (specializing in counseling and school administration) prior to completing her Masters in Education (specializing in educational administration and leadership). Carrie was currently completing her Doctoral studies (also in educational administration and leadership). During her graduate studies, as well as in ongoing professional development, Carrie valued “research for a purpose” (Interview 2). Carrie was very pragmatic.

In addition to her desk and shelves, Carrie’s office contained a round table and large cart filled with instructional resources, manipulatives, and teaching supplies. Seeing herself as having extensive experience and expertise in educational pedagogy and professional learning, Carrie saw her primary role as being an instructional leader or a principal “leading curriculum” (Carrie, Interview 1). Carrie exemplified a “teaching and learning principal” (Carrie, Interview 1) – that is, someone who was actively teaching, consulting, editing a text book series, and learning instructional approaches alongside of staff.

As a principal, Carrie felt that she needed to buffer her school, to the greatest extent possible, from recent educational politics. Sometimes, Carrie felt that she

needed to just "draw everyone in and insulate them" (Interview 2) from that which she deemed harmful to or distracting from teaching and learning. However, Carrie emphasized authenticity. When faced with a directive conflicting with the school's vision or her personal philosophy, Carrie indicated that she shared such concerns with staff; yet she was prudent in her efforts to help staff make the best of the situation or to be professional as they adapted to what needed to be done in a way that addressed the school's specific context. While purporting the importance of building leadership capacity among teachers, Carrie also asserted that as instructional leader she often needed to mandate change in practice. She told me that she needed to hold teachers accountable for change intent on improving teaching and learning. Since Carrie was "hired and placed in this hurting school to deal with some long-standing problems," she indicated that the question is not "'Shall we?' Rather, I need to say, 'We will...'" (Carrie, Interview 2).

Confident that her expertise, experience, and research had a direct impact on educational change within her current and previous schools, Carrie hoped to pursue a university or college faculty position in teacher education or a central office position related to curriculum and assessment leadership.

James

James was a genuine, passionate, and well-spoken Caucasian man in his forties. Married to a teacher and with one daughter presently enrolled in his school, James explained how he went to great lengths to balance his personal and professional obligations. He aimed to be home for dinner at least four evenings per week and he tried to keep Saturdays as "sacred family time" (James, Interview 1). However, James knew that being the principal of a rural high school meant that he

would often be interrupted with phone calls that started with, “I am sorry to bother you at home, but…” (Interview 1).

On one occasion, I heard James joking that he had spent over 45 years of his life in school as a student, teacher, or principal. This was no surprise to me. After taking a couple of graduate classes with James, I knew that he was extremely inquisitive, reflective, and eager to learn. In James’ office, he had an impressive collection of professional books that he copiously read (*Who Moved My Cheese?*, *Silver Boxes*, *Fair Isn’t Always Equal*, *the Special Needs Brain*, and *Sense of Urgency*). His desk was immaculately tidy. The shelves and tables held sports memorabilia, family and school-related photos, John Deere paraphernalia, a stuffed Tigger, and an “Easy Button” (when the button was pressed, a voice stated, “That was easy.”).

Outside of academia, colleagues in the field knew James as an advocate for public education and as a facilitator who presented and wrote on topics pertaining to school leadership. While in British Columbia, James completed his Bachelor of Education (in elementary education with a focus on First Nations culture), a Diploma in school librarianship, as well as his Masters in Education (specializing in curriculum and instruction). After teaching almost 15 years, James accepted a position as assistant principal within Meadowlark School. Although James hoped to gain better understanding of school leadership as an assistant principal, the unanticipated move of the school’s principal resulted in James’ appointment to the principalship the following year. For over ten years now, James has served as principal of Meadowlark High. At the time of this study, James had completed his Doctoral coursework (in educational administration and leadership) and was planning to spend the next year working on his research program as a full-time student.

Following his career within public education, James admitted that he will “likely still stay in school” as he aspired to teach at a university or college someday (Interview 3).

Located in the town of Brandon, Meadowlark High School served approximately 600 to 700 students in grades 8 through 12. Students came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and a large number of students lived with foster families. Almost 200 students self identified as being First Nations, Métis or Inuit. Only 25% of graduating high school students pursued post-secondary study at a university, college, or technical school. In addition to regular academic and complementary course offerings, Meadowlark High offered the jurisdiction’s only special needs program and also provided Outreach, Knowledge and Employability, and the Registered Apprenticeship Programming. Meadowlark High was among a group of high schools with high rankings on provincial and diploma achievement test results. Students were actively encouraged to participate in jurisdictional sports (e.g., football, basketball, and badminton) and other opportunities (e.g., student leadership team, drama club, and honours band).

As we toured the school, I marveled at the murals and doors painted by students. James proudly indicated that artwork stays up for at least ten years as “it gives students a sense of ownership and when they attend their ten-year reunion they see that their work is still proudly displayed” (Interview 3). Along the way, I observed other examples of the connectedness between Meadowlark High and the greater community. Former parents now worked as staff members or volunteered in the school. The previous principal was substitute teaching. Another former parent

came in monthly to change the SADD[10] bulletin board. Meadowlark students were busy organizing a "Hats for Haiti[11]" fundraiser at the neighbouring elementary school.

James supervised over 50 staff (including teachers, support and custodial staff). Whereas most of the students lived in the small central Alberta town of Brandon (population less than 1,500 people) or the surrounding rural area, two-thirds of the staff were commuters. James, and the remaining third of the staff, lived in this rural community. In addition to his full time administrative duties, James would periodically teach a course (e.g., a new elective related to student leadership that he developed with two other teachers).

James emphasized that "community exists both inside and outside schools" (Interview 1). Pointing to an article he wrote about school leadership, James highlighted how "differences in culture, staff, student attributes, community composition and economic factors must all be considered when making decisions" as a school principal (2004, para 7). Subsequently, James often attended local events (e.g., hockey games) as there was "no substitute for learning about a community by just being part of the community" (Interview 2). The ongoing commitment to knowing the community's values was viewed as essential to developing relationships with stakeholders, creating a shared vision, and implementing educational innovations. James also placed great importance on establishing trust and fostering collaboration within the school. These values stemmed both from his experiences

[10] SADD, Students Again Destructive Decisions, is an organization that aims to inform, educate, support and empower youth to make positive decisions in their lives (related to using alcohol, illicit drugs, or other unhealthy behaviours).

[11] Students at Meadowlark School were fundraising to support to help the people affected by the earthquake in Haiti. For a minimum donation of $1.00, students were able to wear a hat or cap during the school day.

when the British Columbia school administrators were removed from the ranks of teachers, and when he had to deal with a teachers' strike as a new principal in Alberta. James was high cognizant of the extent that his actions and decisions were being scrutinized by the communities within and outside of the school.

As we toured the school, James showed me the mission statement of Meadowlark High in the entrance. The four-pronged focus on learning, excellence, success and community was an expectation not only for academic and school-related endeavours, but for everyday life as well. Although he felt that education was always in a state of flux, James told me how one of messages in the school newsletter focused on how the school's mission statement was central to how staff negotiated constant change, uncertainty, and ambiguity:

> A popular television commercial shows an "EASY" button gets a company through hectic times. Do we have an "EASY" button? The Meadowlark High mission statement is our easy button. It reminds us daily of why we are here, what are goals are, who we serve and encourages success…With our mission to guide us, we will certainly endeavour to succeed. (James, Interview 3)

As he prepared to return to university next year, transition planning dominated James' time and thoughts. Expecting to return to the principalship of Meadowlark, James explained:

> Whoever takes my place [in the principalship] for a year, I want them to be comfortable and to do a good job with it, but I don't want them to have to lead because they won't know the staff, they won't know the community, they won't know a lot of things. If all going according to plan, they'll believe and feel they're only there for a year. They're basically just managing, so put a manager in there. Somebody's got to lead. I need to…create that sense of urgency around what's important and continue to move the building towards the goals that we've set as a group. (Interview 2)

Consequently, James invited "six of [his] stars" (Interview 2) (e.g., teachers, the head secretary and librarian) to discuss the school's vision and plan for the future. James wanted to ensure that this group was empowered to provide leadership in his absence.

Many discussions centered on future plans and "how to preserve the 'Meadowlark Way'" (James, Interview 2). James told me that a leader can't look in the mirror to determine whether or not they are successful – rather, as leader you need to "surround yourself with brilliance and look good by reflection. I don't necessarily have to know or be good at everything. I just have to know who is and find people's strengths and empower them" (Interview 1). Good principals, James argued, look for evidence of their leadership in the reflection of others.

Nelle

Nelle was a soft-spoken, attentive, conscientious and caring Caucasian woman in her fifties. Nelle was married and had two adult daughters who were also married. When I first contacted Nelle to invite her to participate in this study, she was concerned about the time commitment involved outside of the regular work day. I later learned that this concern partly stemmed from the fact that Nelle had a new grandson. Being a "Baba" (i.e., grandmother in Ukrainian) was a great source of joy and priority in Nelle's life. Nelle often referred to her family when responding to the interview questions. Several family photos were near her computer work station and nestled among the inspirational artifacts, Willow Tree angels, Tickle-Me-Elmo, stuffed bears, and a vast collection of displayed books (e.g., *Dream* by Susan Bosnak; *To a Child, Love is spelled TIME* by Lance Wubbles and Mac Anderson; and *Building Moral Intelligence* by Michelle Borba) within her office.

During the almost 25 years that Nelle taught elementary school, she had a passion for and great interest in curriculum. She served as a teacher-leader – often presenting workshops and developing curricular and instructional materials to be shared with others. Prior to the principalship, Nelle worked as an assistant principal

for over five years. During that time, she completed her district's leadership preparation program as well as her Master's in Education (specializing in educational administration and leadership).

Nelle had spent over five years as a principal at Fir Street School. Fir Street served 400-500 students in Kindergarten to Grade Six and provided regular English programming as well as enhanced learning assistance for those students with learning disabilities who exhibit a two-year delay in Language Arts and/or Math. Nelle supervised over 40 teaching, support, and custodial staff. Approximately 10% of Nellie's time was spent teaching character education as well as providing enrichment experiences to the Grade Six students who were engaged in history, geology, energy, botany and wildlife study of a Western Alberta region. Besides teaching a component of this program, Nelle worked with parents to organize and fundraise for a culminating experience centred on an intensive outdoor academic-focused excursion to the region studied. In addition to its educative value, the program focused on instilling a sense of appreciation and responsibility for the natural environment and providing a further opportunity for students to develop a sense of responsibility, co-operation, independence, and leadership.

As she contemplated her career path, Nelle described a degree of continuity in her journey from teacher to assistant principal to principal. Nelle's eyes welled up as she told me about the first day of her principalship. She recalled:

> I always remember that moment [standing on the playground supervising], when I realized they all belong to me. You could make a difference in a classroom as a teacher, but now I just have a bigger classroom… Yeah, standing on the playground, it was "Oh my gosh, they all belong to me and what a responsibility." (Nelle, Interview 1)

Even though Nelle accepted this responsibility, it was not one that she shouldered alone. She shared this responsibility with others – teachers, parents, students, and central office personnel. Nelle expressed how she:

> Learned through experience that I cannot be here for each and every one child. The window to all those children is through the teacher and so if I have spend time with the teacher and if I build my relationship with the teacher then I know what's happening in those classrooms for those students. (Interview 1)

Also, disputing the positional power inherent in the principalship, Nelle advocated strongly for new conceptualizations of school leadership. Within Fir Street, Nelle had adopted a co-principalship model. Although she was still the formally-designated principal and Barb [pseudonym] had the official title of assistant principal, Nelle and Barb collaborated continuously and shared responsibilities and decision making related to all instructional and operational matters. When considering succession planning and how to mentor an aspiring school principal, Nelle supported Barb's learning when she described how "I forward absolutely everything to her. I cc [copy] her on everything" (Interview 2). She also felt that "the APs [assistant principals] need to be at all the [district level] meetings too" (Interview 2). Nelle had confidence that she and Barb could leave the school building to attend meetings as they had "many capable teachers who would benefit and learn from having the opportunity to serve as the acting principal in our absence" (Interview 2). At the conclusion of our last interview, Nelle indicated that in hindsight, "you should have been interviewing both of us. If I am walking the talk, she [Barb, the assistant principal] should have been here so you could interview us as a team. She should have been here with us" (Interview 2).

Over the past three years, Nelle and Barb's work and vision for the school centered on the power of "dreams." With 2010 being an Olympic year, the theme of

"believe" was currently being used to "support the school's vision and to heighten the important of believing in oneself and believing in and nurturing our kids and their dreams" (Nelle, Interview 1). When asked how being a mother and grandmother influenced her identity as a principal, Nelle shared:

> I had two daughters – academically they had no problems in school. My husband didn't, I didn't. So for me academics were very important. Our son-in-law is learning disabled. When he talks about school and what it was like for him, he didn't feel successful. And after being part of our family, he's had the courage to do it. He's just going back for his third year now. We helped him learn to study with his learning disabilities…It gave me a better appreciation for students who struggle and how important it is to nurture… Last year, our theme was encouraging parents to be dream keepers, and how important it was for us to keep and nurture our children's dreams. This year, it is to have our children believe in their ability to reach their dreams… And I think a lot of that came from what I learned from my son-in-law. (Interview 1)

The dreaming and believing themes meshed with Nelle's strong belief in the capacity of students to facilitate change within the school environment. She talked about a technology mentorship program that allowed "you to use your leadership students to help move a school" (Nelle, Interview 2). As part of an AISI project that focused on helping teachers acquire new technology skills, one teacher was hired to teach a specialized, integrated module to a small group of student leaders from each of the K-6 classes. Upon completion of the modules, these students would:

> Share their learning with the other students in their class. The homeroom teachers then had highly-skilled mentors in their classrooms and then they could use that skill set for another unit… One priceless moment was when I walked into the computer room and there was the teacher waiting with her hand up looking for the student mentor. "Like how do you do this?" … and the mentors came around to help her. This really helped moved the school because the teachers counted on the kids. They weren't scared of the technology anymore because the student mentors were there to help. (Nelle, Interview 2)

Students were viewed as yet another source of leadership that supported and promoted changes in teaching and learning. However, Nelle admitted, “Is Fir Street perfect? No. That is why we are always changing and seeking new ways to improve what we are doing” (Interview 2). Student ownership, leadership, and involvement were viewed as essential to the change process.

Prior to our last interview, I received an e-mail from Nelle. We had to reschedule the interview due to the unexpected death of her father and with her grandson being hospitalized. When we finally met, I noticed that Nelle was very pale and tired. But ever the consummate professional and the type of person who puts others before herself, Nelle was quick to tell me that upon her return to school after a weeklong absence, she noticed that several staff “were hurting and need our support to get back on track” (Interview 2). Then she proceeded to address each of my questions with thoughtfulness and a genuine reflective spirit. When I apologized for taking her time when she was so busy and preoccupied, she gently reminded me:

> As principal, I need to model for others. My personal issues cause me to pause and re-evaluate what is important and what is just petty. But I need to model that we can’t allow personal troubles to impact our work with the children. ” (Nelle, Interview 2).

Although I did not have the opportunity to tour the school that day, as originally planned (it slipped her mind, understandably so), I did not need to see Nelle walk through the halls and the classrooms to see how much she cared. Her deep, enduring care was already so evident to me – in the way that she would pause and think of relevant examples to address my many questions, and in the way that her eyes would light up or fill with tears when she talked about some of the defining moments of her principalship. Considering the week that Nelle was having at home,

her mere presence in the school that day was an indicator of her deep care and commitment to the children and other members of her school community.

Neil

The principal of HQ Elementary, Neil, was an organized, friendly, and caring man in his fifties. HQ Elementary was located in the small central Alberta town of Nazawz'dy. Agriculture was the primary economic base within this town. Like Neil, a large percentage of the town's population was of Ukrainian Canadian descent. Although Neil and his two daughters lived on his homestead in a neighbouring town, they were considered community members as they attended school, shopped, worked, and participated in extra-curricular activities within Nazawz'dy.

Prior to assuming the principalship, Neil taught over tens years in rural junior high and elementary schools. Majoring in physical education, Neil coached a number of athletic teams in addition to assuming other teacher-leadership roles. When his previous school faced closure due to declining enrolment, Neil made a "strategic decision about [his] fate" (Interview 1) and applied for the principalship of another small elementary school. Lacking extended, formal administrative experience as an assistant principal, Neil decided to pursue a Masters in Education specializing in educational administration and leadership. Neil spoke passionately about his graduate studies and his almost twenty years in the principalship – he preferred rural school settings and had worked under numerous school superintendents. Within HQ Elementary, Neil supervised over 25 staff (including teachers, support and custodial staff). Neil was currently a full time administrator with no teaching responsibilities.

In addition to regular academic offerings, HQ Elementary served 200 - 300 students and provided dual-language instruction with an English program for

Kindergarten to Grade 6 students and an optional Ukrainian Bilingual Program for Grades 1 to 6. Students with learning disabilities received small group instruction each day. HQ Elementary was also a district site that provided specialized programming for students requiring comprehensive programming modifications in core subject areas. The school building was equipped with a spacious library and classrooms with lofts, a networked and wireless computer lab, several interactive whiteboards and digital document cameras, and a specialized band/art room.

Neil and the HQ Elementary staff focused on creating an achievement-oriented climate that maximized student learning and promoted personal excellence in the local and global community. However, with an influx of foreign workers within Nazawz'dy, teachers had to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Programming for English as a Second Language and providing before and after school care was becoming increasingly important.

Our first interview was in the New Year. That day, I waited for Neil to return from delivering some treats to the grade six Ukrainian bilingual class. After we introduced ourselves, Neil readily pointed to the dry wheat piles sprinkled throughout his office. He described how it is a customary Ukrainian tradition to travel from one rural farmhouse to another on New Years Day – bringing the "Sheesha Radashá" greeting (a 10-line verse wishing a prosperous new year) while sprinkling wheat in neighbours' homes. Neil told me how he would gather the wheat in his office and take it to his homestead. In the spring, he would mix that wheat with his other wheat seed and plant it. As tradition dictated, this should bring him a bountiful crop, good health, and an abundance of happiness. To thank those who delivered the wheat, the farmers would typically invite the visitors in for a hearty meal and drinks. Hence,

Neil wanted to thank the grade six students for their good wishes by sharing some special treats with them.

Neil's passion for the preservation of his cultural heritage was clearly evident during our discussions and school tour. Ukrainian artifacts were displayed throughout the school. Within Neil's office, there were numerous photographs of students wearing traditional Ukrainian clothing. Neil proudly pointed out a picture of the Alberta premier, on a recent visit to the school – the premier also wore a traditional embroidered shirt under his suit jacket.

It had been an extremely busy week. Neil was excited to tell me that the parents had recently organized a Ukrainian Christmas dinner attended by over 300 people. The Ukrainian-bilingual students performed at the dinner and at a town ceremony for the passing of the Olympic Torch. Neil was also knee-deep working on the production of a CD featuring students singing traditional Ukrainian Christmas carols. Although many of these events and projects were unanticipated and time consuming, Neil was committed to each and he welcomed the opportunity to showcase and help preserve the Ukrainian culture for future generations.

Similar to my experiences in a multi-program school, Neil admitted that "tension often exists between programs…it's a perception that the Ukrainian students are getting specialized treatment" (Interview 1). It was challenging for Neil to address these concerns, as the parents "do it behind the scenes so you hear about it second hand… Basically we deal with it at the school council level and go from there" (Interview 1). Subsequently, the HQ Elementary staff worked tirelessly to ensure inclusivity and a sense of community. In fact, the majority of activities and projects were "about the whole school and involve all of the students" (Neil, Interview 1).

Neil often spoke about the impact of his graduate studies and principal mentors on his identity as a school leader. Firmly committed to a life and career in service of others, Neil spoke about Sergiovanni's conceptualization of servant leadership when describing how he made sense of his role. He described his identity as a "servant leader. We [Neil and his assistant principal] are your leaders but in essence we are your servants. We're here to serve you – teachers, parents, and children. To try and do what we can to support your varying needs" (Neil, Interview 1). The notion of service seemed to extend beyond students and families; in fact, Neil emphasized how he was needed to protect and serve the teachers and other staff members that dedicated themselves to the children of HQ Elementary. Teacher wellness was a priority when considering timetabling (e.g., to reduce workloads, large combined classes were reorganized into smaller homogeneous groupings for core instruction), supervision schedules (e.g., having uninterrupted lunch hours for teachers so "they can return feeling refreshed and at their best"), staffing (e.g., ensuring that beginning teachers are mentored and provided with ongoing support), school communications (e.g., the outdoor signage stated, "Be a snow angel and shovel a senior's walk"), and absenteeism (e.g., ensuring the availability of substitute teachers when staff needed to attend to medical appointments). After I watched Neil reading the scrawled note on the staffroom whiteboard stating that "Tanya has gone to the city to purchase wigs. She starts her first chemo treatments this week," he quietly told me that two of his staff were on medical leave with life-threatening illnesses. Neil then proceeded to show me the new sofas, water cooler, and latté maker he purchased for the staff room. He stated that "staff need to feel valued" and if "we don't take care of each other, we will not be successful in our efforts to maximize student learning" (Neil, Interview 2).

When asked if he ever had to compromise what he believed in, Neil spoke at length about "balancing the role of change agent with making the work doable, manageable and healthy" (Interview 2). When his previous Superintendent directed him to create additional extracurricular opportunities for students, Neil felt he compromised the well-being of his teachers. Moreover, he felt that additional tasks, clubs, and activities were "pulling us away from our primary purpose which is to educate children" (Neil, Interview 2). Neil emphasized that:

> There's no life like school life. Yes, there's a few deterrents with difficult parents or challenging students, but there is no life like school life. It's just awesome to know that you're going to come in, work with a lot of motivated colleagues and you see the little kids and they're just so awesome to be with. (Interview 1)

For the time being, Neil had no intention in leaving the principalship unless he faced personal health issues.

Summary

In addition to describing the six unique school settings, this chapter also provided background and contextual information about each participant and how their respective values were an integral part of decision making. All six principals had strong values or conceptions of what was desirable, including cooperation, trust, relationships, team work, loyalty, excellence, and learning. However, when confronted with expectations to lead educational change, James and Carrie placed greater emphasis on control over openness to attain certain outcomes. Although each principal valued risk-taking, Wade stood out as the one principal who continually challenged status quo practices pertaining to school life.

Each of these principals faced internal and external demands that challenged their authority and the existing practices within their schools. Hence, principals had

to often weigh one value against another – that is, choosing to uphold or act in favour of higher, more salient values at the expense of lesser values. For instance, principals valued the welfare of students and staff; yet, principals often had to make judgments and decisions that favoured one group over another. The identities that these six principals assumed as they engaged with others and in educational change are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Six – Identities Principals Assumed While Engaged in Educational Change

Although the principalship has received increased attention in recent educational discourse, relatively few studies explore principals' perceptions related to how they make sense of their multi-dimensional role within ever-changing contexts. To address this gap, this chapter outlines findings, through the words of the participants, to address the following question: *What are the identities that principals assume as they engage in educational change?* The latter section of the chapter draws on the literature previously reviewed to present a synthesis of the findings in regard to the relationship between principal identity and educational change.

Findings

Principals in this study maintained that working in a context characterized by continuous change influenced available identity potentials. Neil was highly aware of the need to adapt to multiple contexts and uncertainty:

> I need to make sense of who I am in a certain situation as there is no master plan or script that tells you how to deal with a situation that unfolds unexpectedly. I improvise. I go with my gut. I adapt accordingly. (Interview 2)

Neil articulated what the other principals in this study observed about their leadership practice. There was "not one best way" (Nelle, Interview 2) to respond to changing contexts encountered. When asked about the meanings attached to their role as principal, each participant spoke about the identities critical to initiating, implementing, and sustaining educational change within their schools. Principals' assumed identities of "Organizational Architect," "Mediator," "Awakener," and "Protector" were complex and subsumed a number of associated identities that

continually shifted as principals worked in their schools. Although each of these identities is presented here as distinct, they are in no way mutually exclusive.

Principal as Organizational Architect

Principals saw themselves as organizational architects who carefully crafted how their schools existed within natural, dynamic environments. Assuming the identity of organizational architect subsumed the related identities of visionary and analyst.

Visionary

Principals saw themselves as visionaries who planned for their schools' future. With awareness that the school principal alone could not facilitate improvement, principals spoke about understanding and integrating their own values with "the values and mores of the school and community to move forward in a way that is realistic and likely to be supported" (James, Interview 3). Interestingly, some principals stated, "it takes time to get the school where I want it" (Nelle, Interview 2); thus, being a visionary appeared to involve slow and steady influence of school members in a direction defined and supported by the principal.

Although principals influenced the vision, having a shared sense of direction appeared crucial to determining school priorities. Common to principals' perceptions of being visionary was the understanding that inclusive approaches to establishing core values was "essential to buy-in" (Karen, Interview 2). Thus, principals espoused participatory and democratic approaches to leadership to mobilize others to contribute to and support the principal's vision for the future. However, principals generally advanced school goals by buffering teachers from an onslaught of demands – either

avoiding or engaging with demands in limited ways. For example, Karen explained how she "tr[ies] to be selective in what takes up staff time…some funders allow for greater leeway and we can then focus the grants on what we want to do" (Interview 1). In declining to seek funding from particular sources, Karen buffered teachers from particular ideas or resources that distracted from the school's vision.

Unanticipated situations demanded ongoing reflection and adaptation of plans. The visionary identity was assumed as principals assessed if "division policies, some best practice, or the latest research aligns with our purpose" (James, Interview 1). School members were invited to consider how different issues or innovations related to the school's vision. Nelle kept asking staff "to imagine if this helps or prevent us from realizing our vision" (Nelle, Interview 2).

Principals generally expressed having a great degree of autonomy. Principals shared that there was "substantial wiggle room so you can stay true to what you believe" (Karen, Interview 2). In seeing themselves as visionaries, principals established legitimacy and a sense of urgency by aligning new policies or alternative practices with the school's vision.

> There's always a way to pursue staff priorities while working within division or ministry priorities…My role has been to make staff feel, believe and live that they're working on one initiative – improving junior high success rates. (James, Interview 2)

Principals creatively integrated change initiatives into their schools' vision. By aligning multiple priorities within a cohesive vision, principals fostered greater buy in from teachers.

Despite efforts to include others in the visionary process, principals' personal and professional interests and creative potential inevitably influenced the school's vision and the identities and responsibilities of other school members. For example,

strong identification with the societal need to improve cardiovascular health resulted in Wade's creation of the "Living Healthy" program and his relentless pursuit of alternate funding, new partnerships, and state-of-the-art resources that otherwise simply would not have been available to the school without this initiative. In taking up the identity of visionary-organizational architect, Wade's interests influenced, to a great extent, the priorities of the school and teacher identity.

Analyst

Principals saw themselves as analysts who precariously balanced micro and macro perspectives by considering complex situations in relation to the school's vision.

> You can't over react as that takes away from the bigger sense of purpose. Filter which things you need to really engage in and what you can delegate, deal with after-the-fact, or not at all. Your leadership dynamics may be stifled if you're pulled too many directions without situational awareness of where your institution is going. (Wade, Interview 3)

In particular, the analyst identity was taken up when negotiating competing innovations. Wade explained, "the pendulum of change swings severely and may not be research based… As leaders, we have to moderate huge swings... and seek a degree of stability" (Interview 3).

To be effective as an analyst-organizational architect, one had to be "physically present" (Karen, Interview 1) to observe the natural environment. Like the other five principals, Wade suggested, "situational awareness is embedded in appreciation of the organization, not only in the smaller context but the larger context… a peripheral sense of what's going on to move the organization forward" (Interview 1). Situational awareness afforded principals a greater sense of what needs should take priority at a given point in time. For example, Karen emphasized that her

time in classrooms and the soup kitchen illuminated that Smithers' students needed "Maslow-like wrap-around services to address physical, emotional, and spiritual needs…without the basics, students survive but are not capable of substantial learning" (Interview 2).

Principals often took up an analyst identity to improve organizational design. Analysis of the local context included both proactive and reactive uses of data to facilitate improvement. Wade proactively searched for opportunities to improve program delivery. He explained, "I was watching what was happening. Subject disciplines were in different areas…. We centralized departments to facilitate collaboration" (Interview 2). For Neil, classroom visitations and impromptu discussions assisted with "identifying barriers in teachers' way" (Interview 2). Proactive analysis also included long-term succession planning. Nelle described "analyzing how you leave the school and putting things in place so changes will be maintained" (Interview 2).

Reactionary analysis involved examination of external data sources (e.g., achievement tests and stakeholder surveys). Carrie explained that data analysis created urgency and "direct[ed] decisions about time and resources and determine[d] what changes or pilot studies to pursue" (Interview 2). Furthermore, "You look at poor results and everyone has no choice to ask, "What needs to change? How do we address these issues?" (Interview 2).

In addition to natural environment and external data sources, principals analyzed available human resources. Whereas Karen identified "key teachers that will promote change and support others" (Interview 3), Carrie connected with those likely to derail change efforts.

> Before I send out a memo about a new project or policy change, I say, "I'm going to be sending this out. I just wanted to give you the heads up and … get your first reaction." It is identifying the sabotagers and managing their reactions. (Interview 2)

Since principals' credibility as organizational architects depended upon their decisions and vision as supported by most school members, analysis efforts assisted principals in either enhancing relationships with or managing individuals who could potentially disrupt progress.

Great attention was given to school cohesion. Although principals recommended the analysis of needs and new initiatives from differing perspectives, principals appeared selective as to who participated in organizational decision making and visioning.

> Find out who are your "stars" on your staff and then ask them what they think because, frankly, wouldn't your best people tell you if it's a good idea or it won't fly? …The other group I've surrounded myself with is the "whole school people…" (James, Interview 1)

Again, the positional power of the principal was used to mediate meaning; thereby defining opportunities for others to participate fully in school life and decision making.

Principal as Mediator

The precarious placement between those above (e.g., senior administrators) and below (e.g., teachers) them in the "conduit" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 173) created a number of recurring dilemmas for principals. Principals took up a mediator identity, and the sub-sumed identities of disseminator, meaning maker, and problem solver, to make sense of change efforts and to resolve contradictions in their own and others' thinking.

Disseminator

When asked about leadership practices that promote change, Carrie claimed that "communication trumps all" (Interview 2). Most principals associated communication with disseminating information and facilitating knowledge sharing. Principals were the primary disseminators of information as "everything from official provincial policy to commercial stuff is channeled through my e-mail or mailbox" (Karen, Interview 3).

Principals perused and assessed content before sharing with others. Often, principals were selective about what was shared. They filtered information to buffer teachers from issues that distracted from "what teachers do best… if all that crap gets through then they're going to be focused on being mad at X" (James, Interview 2). Wade, on the other hand, aimed to make information accessible and manageable for other school members.

> I am privy to certain dynamics and information that my colleagues in the school may not have… I challenge myself, "How can I share that with our team in a manner that's not intimidating, that's not seen as another thing on an already full plate?" (Interview 2)

Reasons for distributing or withholding information varied. For example, James explained how his sabbatical necessitated sharing more information:

> I normally filter from staff until I see changes directly impacting day-to-day teaching… If that group of six is going to empower and lead, then they have to be aware of what's coming. So they're not shocked, so they don't overreact. (Interview 2)

Although information sharing empowered the group providing leadership in his absence, James controlled staff dynamics by allowing some staff access to information that was denied to others.

When directives required principals to hold back information, principals generally felt concerned that relationships might be damaged. Nelle insisted that withholding information "compromised my values… Staff will be patient as I developed deep trusting relationships over time, If I am holding back, they'll know it is not of my choosing" (Interview 2). When openness was restricted, principals felt isolated and experienced stress.

Dissemination of information extended across and beyond school boundaries. Principals self-initiated opportunities to share knowledge gleaned from school-based initiatives with external audiences (e.g., with other schools, at conferences, or the university). Taking up a disseminator identity, Nelle promoted the school's vision and accomplishments as "staff are motivated to work harder and take risks with recognition" (Interview 2). Other times, principals felt compelled "to share because the Board says we have share what we are doing or see other schools and report back" (Karen, Interview 1). In assuming a mediator identity, knowledge dissemination was viewed as a professional responsibility.

Meaning Maker

Principals assumed the identity of meaning maker – clarifying and interpreting information in a timely manner. Bombarded with an endless array of initiatives, principals aimed to clarify, "Is this expectation a 'thou shall' or do we have a choice to adapt this?" (Neil, Interview 2). Once senior administrators clarified expectations, principals met with staff to:

> Clarify up front if the decision has been made. If you genuinely want feedback and involvement, then say so. If you are collecting feedback, but still reserve the right for final approval, let others be aware of that. (James, Interview 3)

Although clarification involved clear articulation of expectations towards goal attainment, closer examination suggested that goal attainment was often equated with the principal's vision for school improvement. For example, Carrie stated, "If they don't know where I'm coming from… I'm gonna be picking up the pieces to get it sorted out" (Interview 1).

Principals spent copious amounts of time and effort crafting communications by "sharing terms and acronyms so language is understood" (Wade, Interview 2). Carrie wrote weekly messages to "ensure that there aren't missing bits that prevent work from getting done. This is the road map for the week, so it has to be right" (Interview 2). Other situations warranted even greater detail. At Smithers, Karen "kept accurate records… [because] we've had kids arrested here for murder. The police come in and we have to shed light on the situation" (Interview 3). Regardless of the nature of the information (i.e., gleaned from classroom visitations, policy or surveys), principals continuously reflected upon and clarified available information.

However, principals didn't merely pass along and clarify information; they also interpreted information. Progress was believed to be accelerated when school improvement attended to the values of stakeholders; hence, principals listened to others' perspectives. Understanding a sender's (e.g., parents and partners) intent was time consuming as principals had to ensure their "understanding is consistent with the intent of the messenger" (Wade, Interview 2). Principals attended to stakeholder (e.g., parents and community members) expectations by "double and triple checking to clarify what was said so we truly understand each others' reasons and goals" (Karen, Interview 2). With an expansive view of leadership, Wade noted:

> We no longer are loosely coupled or almost de-coupled as autonomous units, but schools are moving more to a community model …We need to make sense of what our constituents are saying they want and need. (Interview 3)

Interpretation was particularly challenging when intended meanings were “hidden” or “between the lines” (Neil, Interview 1). As Carrie declared, “Nothing is black and white. I decipher nuances of gray. What do they [senior administrators] really want me to do?” (Interview 2). Consequently, interpretation was highly ambiguous, political work.

As employees, principals needed to “interpret and present information professionally” (Nelle, Interview 2). Positioned between central office and teachers, Karen interpreted messages to “make some sense out of this stuff so that there is calm, not chaos, among teachers when they hear the news” (Interview 3). When assuming the identity of meaning maker, principals occasionally downplayed their own values to adhere to external directives.

> It doesn’t matter if you agree… Communicate that this change will help them [teachers] and students even though there might be some detractors in the long run. It’s your job to make it a positive experience. (Nelle, Interview 2)

When anticipating resistance, principals “massaged [the message]… I spin it positively” (Nelle, Interview 2). Principals had power to shape how others understood and experienced change.

Problem Solver

For the most part, principals were positive and viewed problems as “to hear new perspectives and to gain understanding of who we are” (Karen, Interview 1). Although somewhat reluctantly, principals shared how a problem solver identity allowed them to mediate different perspectives and values. Because preserving a reputation of being a cohesive, collaborative and peaceful school was deemed important; principals were on alert for potential problems and proactively crafted

messages to address issues. For example, knowing that the English parents were sensitive to specialized activities for the Ukrainian students, Neil used a number of strategies (e.g., newsletters, website, and School Council meetings) to reduce parental scrutiny and to "keep a lid on an always simmering situation" (Interview 1).

As problem solvers, principals tried to prevent "a kneejerk solution and finding out you didn't have all the facts and you just exacerbated the problem" (James, Interview 1). However, disputes that occurred were settled through collaborative and conversational approaches. When hearing grievances, principals described having relaxed body language, using a low voice and respectful language, and refraining from interrupting or speculating about others' motives. Drawing on Aboriginal mediation approaches, Karen also suggested that emotionally-volatile situations demanded a "cooling off period" to prevent the escalation of conflict (Interview 2).

Principals did not typically leverage conflict as a means to interrogating the status quo. Principals preferred to reframe or refocus problems within the context of their schools' shared visions. When conflicting viewpoints existed, Wade suggested:

> Through these differences, we have to move towards being a better, more unified institution. I'll say, "We both care about the children and doing the very best we can. How we can we work through this so we improve?" Through mutual respect, things often work out. That's the caveat for decision making. (Interview 3)

Principals minimized teacher resistance by forging strong, trusting relationships. Nelle shared how "story sharing builds relationships, helps them [teachers] understand who you are so you can start to make some changes" (Interview 2). Long-standing educational practices were rarely disrupted despite policy changes. For example, Nelle reassured teachers that what was core to their practice would remain so despite changes in reporting requirements. Nelle asked teachers, "Does it change

the essence of what you do? No. Does it change some of the busy work you do? Yes" (Nelle, Interview 2). When they faced conflicting teacher perspectives about best practices, principals aimed to "involve teachers in decision making processes to determine which innovations should be pursued and to foster greater buy-in" (Neil, Interview 2). Other times, principals squelched conflicting perspectives by sharing "where the research and our admin team is heading" (Carrie, Interview 2). Thus, principals were uniquely positioned within their local contexts to use their formal authority to mediate and solve problems.

Principal as Awakener

Awakening, as a continuous quest for understanding, was critical to leading in complex and ever-changing school contexts. Principals assumed the related identities of teacher and learner as they gathered and created new knowledge to improve practice and people's lives.

Teacher

Despite the formal title of "principal," participants called themselves "teacher[s] at heart" (Karen, Interview 1) and often referred to the intrinsic rewards of teaching (Lortie, 1975). With the exception of Neil, five principals chose to teach while working as an administrator. For Wade, teaching offered "contextual appreciation of student dynamics and I keep embedded in the practice of pedagogy and its relationship to leadership" (Interview 1). Principals often took up a teacher identity to resolve tensions between managerial and instructional responsibilities.

By focusing on the needs of students, the instructional role of teacher naturally melded with instructional leadership responsibilities:

> I ask teachers prompting questions. Like, "What do you like or dislike about that math series? How do we engage kids more deeply with new technologies?" …I keep them moving forward in their thinking. It's a lot like teaching. You challenge the ones who can take it and put PD and resources into those who need support. (Carrie, Interview 1)

The roles of teacher and principal appeared continuous in regard to specific work responsibilities as both "have leadership roles over classrooms and schools, talking with parents, working with community" (Wade, Interview 2) and require "understanding that children and adults learn at different rates and the importance of building on strengths... Being aware of curriculum when you're a teacher and as a principal being aware of policies, procedures, and curriculum" (Nelle, Interview 2). In assuming the identity of teacher, principals engaged in instructional practices such as questioning, modelling, discussing, coaching, facilitating, and sharing stories.

Relationship building was central to principals' conceptualizations of themselves. Teaching practices intent on "getting to know one's students" were adapted so principals could track how they "connected with and had a good professional and personal conversation with each staff member" (Nelle, Interview 1). Building strong relationships was seen as critical to garnering buy-in and fostering social trust to support risk taking.

Another dimension of the teacher identity was the ongoing modeling of desired behaviours such as "work ethic, how to collaborate and reflect" (Neil, Interview 1). Principals emphasized aligning espousals with theories-in-use. By "walking the talk, principals enforce values and what's important" (Neil, Interview 1). Working as a principal in a Catholic high school, Carrie assumed a teacher identity to help staff to gain more nuanced understanding of how the core values of the church could be infused within existing practices.

> I tried to explain what made us different than a public school… I modelled how faith could be part of the discipline process … I would coach the teachers and ask them, "Why aren't you at church? Kids need to see their teacher at church." (Interview 2)

In assuming a teacher identity, principals participated in school-based professional development, team taught, served as mentors, and collaboratively planned alongside teachers. Participation in graduate studies prompted principals to return to their schools to share their learning. Deciding to facilitate a book study, James shared, "*Fair Isn't Always Equal,* hit a chord and created the discomfort needed to get things moving" (Interview 1). The identity of "teacher of teachers" allowed principals to feel that they made a difference in the lives of teachers and students. Great connectedness also existed between being a teacher and being a learner.

Learner

The dynamic nature of schooling demanded continuous pursuit of knowledge and skills to awaken new insights into school improvement. Thus, career and lifelong learning were embraced by principals. In assuming a learner identity, principals rendered themselves vulnerable as they acknowledged "I'm not an expert or the be-all-end-all" (Karen, Interview 1). Carrie shared, "I learn from staff as much as they possibly learn from me" (Interview 2).

Principals claimed that learning was enhanced though "sideways learning formations" (Karen, Interview 3). Different school members led when and where they "have different skills and expertise that makes sense for them to be the leader" (Karen, Interview 3). The belief that school members bring different but equally critical pieces of knowledge was held by all principals. Strengthening social relations

validated "local expertise" (Wade, Interview 2) and honoured "capacity building" (Carrie, Interview 1).

Principals also awakened their understanding by interacting with and listening to other school members. Since "our school world is shifting to be more integrated in the community;" Wade suggested that principals put their "ears to the rail of what the community's thinking and what they value" (Interview 2). Subsequently, learning was enhanced through "two-way communication" with school members and external stakeholders (Wade, Interview 2).

Learning, as viewed by all six principals, occurred and was enhanced within collaborative communities of practice. For the most part, principals' understandings evolved through social interactions and dialogue. For example, Karen described how graduate courses "were my safe testing ground. I didn't always get answers, but I got different viewpoints and strategies to reflect on" (Interview 2). The relationships between theory and practice were explored and made explicit through co-construction of understanding with classmates and professors. When principals viewed theory as "pragmatic and having a high degree of relevancy to practice" (Carrie, Interview 2), learning was deepened through the negotiation of dialogical tensions between theory and practice, reflection and action, continuity and change, complexity and routine, authority and participation, and global and home. Engagement with tension and ambiguity allowed principals to move beyond one-size-fits-all solutions.

Being awake to one's own values and assumptions was an essential precursor to learning. Long-standing assumptions were purportedly disrupted through academic reading and dialogue. Thinking evolved as principals experienced "internal academic conflict" (James, Interview 1):

> I was once clear in my head about certain issues, procedures, policies, and practices. The fact that readings in the doctoral program and dialogue with other people have caused me to question some of my assumptions would be accurate. (James, Interview 1)

What it meant to be a school principal was explored through topics “that escape thinking in the day-to-day” (Karen, Interview 2). As she considered issues related to power relations, child poverty and racism, Karen realized that she was “becoming desensitized… [Moreover}, reflection illuminated my own issues with authority and how I can really be empathetic to working with high-risk youth populations – but it’s a trigger in me as well” (Interview 2). Being a learner seemed to be synonymous with being a reflective practitioner.

Educational research also informed principals’ practice and decision making. Nelle, like the other principals, described how pragmatic engagement with certain educational literature provoked a change in leadership and teaching practice:

> Through the character education research from AISI, we changed how we deal with children. Instead of being punitive, more black and white, we learned through the character education research that there are limitations in traditional discipline cycles versus building moral intelligence and character virtues in children. (Interview 1)

As learners, principals accessed research to “see what happened before, and what you can apply to your system and problem” (Wade, Interview 2). Being a practitioner researcher, according to Wade, allowed principals to “reflect on our pedagogical routines so we can be more effective” (Interview 1). “Conducting in-house research, collecting rich data, and working with the university” (Wade, Interview 1) aligned with professional aspects of Wade’s learner-awakener identity. Principals viewed graduate studies and research in ways that were commensurate with the value placed on awakening themselves and others to enhanced understanding. Not one principal mentioned pursuing graduate studies to gain a credential.

Principal as Protector

Although educational change has resulted in numerous challenges for school leaders, principals were cognizant that other schools members were also bombarded with competing expectations and increased work complexity. Subsequently, principals stepped into the identity of protector to alleviate tension and fatigue from excessive change and to safe-guard the school's vision. Assuming the identity of protector subsumed the identities of caregiver and advocate.

Caregiver

A caregiver identity emerged as principals protected people and safe-guarded resources within their schools. Believing that "the strength of the leader will determine the strength of the school," Carrie and the other principals focused on "making sure that my staff is treated well, and that my school is safe or at least seen in the right light" (Carrie, Interview 1). Because of teachers' direct impact on student learning, principals "protect[ed] teachers as much as possible" (Nelle, Interview 1) and considered how their leadership supported or hindered staff wellness. To ensure teachers "were their best," Neil minimized meetings and extra-curricular requirements and encouraged staff to promptly attend to health concerns because "the district doesn't care...If you're not healthy you can't help anybody" (Interview 1).

Principals generally pursued change initiatives "when resources are available for support" (Nelle, Interview 2). However, Karen and her staff were highly selective in regard to the funding sources they pursued as "it is easier to apply for a crime prevention grant than to put in work for an AISI project" (Interview 1). Thus, principals protected people in addition to being responsible guardians who monitored

the use of scarce resources through "fiscal prudence, transparency and accountability" (Wade, Interview 2).

Precariously balancing pressure and support for change was an ongoing challenge. The "price tags that go with each new initiative" (Karen, Interview 3) were continuously monitored. Subsequently, principals "buffer[ed] teachers from expectations for change because it would otherwise be overwhelming" (Nelle, Interview 2). Although safeguarding the time needed for integration of new practices, principals were aware that protective instincts could contribute to institutional inertia. "Part of that change savvy of the principal" was ensuring that "you can't make excuses that get in the way of progress" (Wade, Interview 2). Therefore, principals tried to simultaneously provide support while gently nudging teachers to improve practice.

In extreme cases, principals showed care by cocooning others from outside forces. Carrie shared that when the regionalization of school jurisdictions became a political nightmare, she:

> Literally enveloped staff away from negativity which we didn't have control over. If we didn't perk up the teachers it was gonna hit the kids…We had to be in a bubble and keep everything else away from them [the teachers and students]. (Interview 2)

In contentious situations, Karen, Carrie, and Neil spoke about "taking the heat" or "being the fall guy." In an effort to care for and protect staff, principals knew that "in an ugly situation, teachers need to know I have their backs" (Carrie, Interview 1).

Finally, the principals' caregiving identity reflected a deep, enduring care for future school members. Although Wade explained how succession planning "shows a prudence and also a care not only for yourself but for the others who are coming into the system afterwards" (Interview 2), principals rarely engaged in self-care to address

their own fatigue, stress, dissatisfaction, or frustration. For themselves, there was little protection for principals.

Advocate

Principals viewed themselves as advocates of their staff, school, and jurisdiction. Through advocacy efforts, principals signalled to teachers that they cared and believed in teachers' abilities to improve schooling. Establishing trusting relationships and developing situational understanding assisted principals with "speaking on your [teachers'] behalf about your interests and address hurdles…As we advocate for your needs, we are your biggest cheerleaders" (Neil, Interview 2). Thus, advocacy included both promotion of and support for teachers' work. In assuming an advocacy identity, James worked with staff to "figure out what the 'Meadowlark Way' was…and we shared this with everyone. The things teachers were very proud of were celebrated and put out there for people to see." (Interview 1).

Principals self-identified as advocates when liaising with other stakeholders. Wade availed himself of every opportunity to speak to school needs:

> When senior admin come in, I do a walkabout to share the wonderful things we're doing and what we'd like to improve…I'll be honest and say, "These are things I've thought about, what do you think?" There's a time that you have to be an advocate, supporter, and lobbyer of students and staff. I enjoy being that person. I don't so much see it as frustration, I see it as a challenge to improve while advocating for them. (Interview 2)

Sharing and celebrating success was energizing and positive; however, advocacy efforts to address needs and problems required risk taking as principals rendered themselves vulnerable to external scrutiny. Hence, advocacy work often entailed a degree of image management as principals preferred to depict school life as "smooth sailing" (Neil, Interview 2) to others.

Interestingly, each principal championed a particular cause (or several causes) of great personal or professional importance. Neil shared how “our heritage, culture and religion are a very important part of my life” as he explained how he advocated for the preservation of the Ukrainian culture by “recording our kids doing Ukrainian Christmas carols that were played on a Ukrainian radio program” (Interview 1). On the other hand, Karen spoke about the “letter writing campaign to the Board to explain why a non-authoritative leadership approach is needed here” (Interview 2). While her Board promoted a directive leadership style, Karen advocated for democratic leadership approaches. Being an advocate reflected a professional activist tendency whereby Karen was driven by a belief in the value of mobilizing other school members in the best interests of student learning and the conditions that would allow this to occur.

Synthesis: The Relationship between Principal Identity and Educational Change

Emerging Identity Potentials Assumed by Principals

Principal identity was influenced by and influenced educational change. As principals individually and collectively formulated and negotiated definitions of what schools are and might be, what a principal is supposed to know and learn, as well as what it means to be a leader, they conceptualized themselves as organizational architects, mediators, awakeners, and protectors (see Figure 1). Although presented as unique identities and sub-identities, these categories were not mutually exclusive (as depicted in the dashed circles). A degree of overlap and reciprocity existed as principals’ identities continuously shifted and evolved over time.

At times, these identities were mutually supportive; but oftentimes, these identities competed with each other and with other identities (e.g., mother).

Understanding which identity was most salient, in a given situation, was a complex achievement. For example, as principals valued collaborative learning they often engaged alongside teachers in professional development.

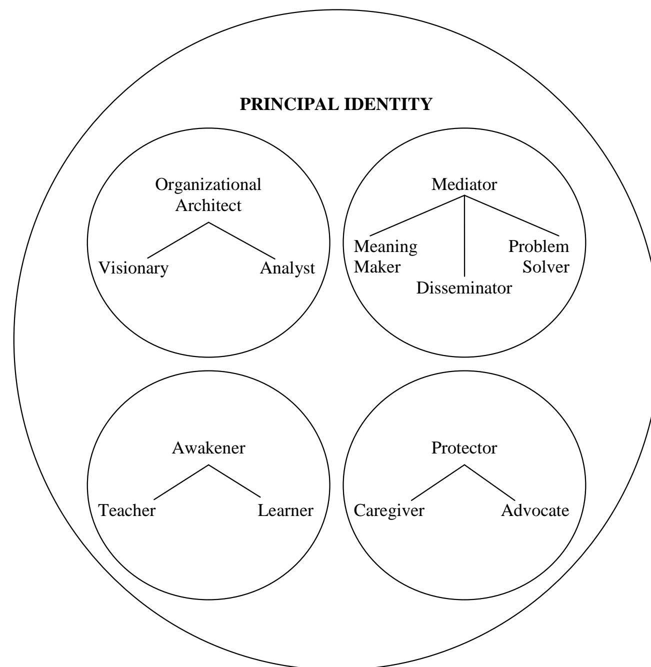

Figure 1. Identities assumed by principals while engaged in educational change.

Despite valuing and assuming an awakener-learner identity, principals spoke about how their “mind[s] always thinking of what’s next and what could help” (Nelle, Interview 2. Hence, learning (i.e., participating in professional development) activated thinking about schedules and resources (organizational architect identity), sharing new learning with other school members (mediator identity), updating School Council on instructional changes (mediator identity), and using new approaches to marketing one’s school as innovative (advocate identity). Principals struggled to negotiate the multiple identities and tasks that distracted from being learner and also being seen as a learner. In other cases, principals’ took up a problem solving identity

to “keep a lid on problems” (Neil, Interview 2) and to preserve harmony within the school. Assuming a problem solving identity competed with principals’ desire to serve as advocates for improved educational opportunities. Seeking cohesion as a problem solver competed with being an agent of change.

As principals engaged in educational change, they saw themselves foremost as protectors of people and organizational arrangements and practices. Through their work as organizational architects, principals served as mediators who influenced the understandings and experiences of others. Awakened to new learning gleaned from professional reading, professional development or graduate studies, principals also took up a teaching identity to share new knowledge or to influence next steps in school improvement processes. Although some scholarly attention has been directed at the organizational architect and instructional leadership (i.e., awakener-teacher-learner) identities of the principal, this study provided in-depth empirical analysis of these identities as well the protector identity which has yet to be explored, in any depth, in the literature. The study of these six principals’ experiences contributes to an emerging body of literature about the identity of school principals (see Table 3).

Table 3. Literature related to principal identity and educational change.

Literature Related to Principal Identity and Educational Change			
Organizational Architect	**Mediator**	**Awakener**	**Protector**
Ball, 1987; Bennett et al.,2003; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Copland, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Elmore, 2000; Goldring & Greenfield, 2002; Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2004; Hoy & Miskel, 1987; Spillane 2006	Anderson, 1990; Ball, 1987; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Grimmett et al., 2008; Poole, 2008; Ryan, 2007	Barth, 2001 & 1986; Blase & Blase, 2002 a & b; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Glanz, 1995; Glickman, 1985; Hallinger, 2003; Hopkins, 2005 & 2001; Lambert 2002 & 1998; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Pajak, 1989; Rowe, 007; Smith & Andrews, 1989	Ball, 1987

A deep interconnection existed between principals' professional work and identity (Blackmore, 2004; Thomson, 2004). As suggested by Lave and Wenger (1991), these principals continuously crafted their identities as they engaged in a "community of practice." How principals interpreted their identities, made sense of their multidimensional role, and constructed knowledge about the profession was negotiated through their belonging to particular communities as well as through collaborative and dialogic interactions (Wenger, 1998). Through structured social learning (i.e., experiencing and talking about identity), principals came to assume ownership of particular ways of being and leading.

Although Lave and Wenger's (1991) seminal work provided examples of identity formation within single communities; in the actuality of these principals' lives, they lived an expansive view and practice of leadership whereby change was derived from and sustained by relationships in multiple communities (e.g., with parents and community agencies). With a broadening in the scope of change and leadership responsibilities, principals worked in expanding social networks or

communities of practice. Thus, principals continuously and oftentimes simultaneously encountered different individuals or institutions which allowed for new knowledge of instrumental practices and content, as well as new understandings about the availability of identity potentials (Castanheira et al., 2007).

As suggested by Blackmore and Sachs (2007) and Joseph Blase (2005), principals gauged their identity and presentation of self to maintain the social capital necessary to lead as well as to be accepted and respected as a leader. Carrie began to wear a cross pendant only after determining that the majority of the Clear Water community was Catholic. Neil, on the other hand, participated fully within Ukrainian events of the local community. In both cases, principals demonstrated "fit" within their school communities – ensuring that a clash of values would be unlikely (Anderson, 1990; Tooms et al., 2010). Being a principal required individuals to secure their place within the school by conforming to a prescribed role. Principals took up identities and foregrounded behaviours that appealed to those within the community of practice.

What principals constructed through interactions influenced their identities as principals-within-schools, as well as principals-beyond-schools. This notion of being a principal "within" or "beyond" school is an adaptation of Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) description of "teachers' positions on the in- and out-of-classroom places on the landscape" (p. 172). Engaging in numerous communities of practice and subsequently developing different relationships, principals assumed multiple identities that were both reinforcing and competing (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Rather than viewing identity as static, principals took up multiple identities based on the braiding of past histories and new experiences within and interpretations of their local contexts. These findings support Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) theory that

identities are conceptualized and continually shift as individuals go about living their lives within unique contexts or "professional knowledge landscapes."

As principals conceptualized their identities, the response to "who I am" and "how I behave" varied in differing social contexts and was influenced by principals' values, interests, and personal and professional experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Ryan, 2007). For example, when confronted with conflict, Carrie's past school counselor identity and Karen's lived experience as an Aboriginal youth, shaped the ways that they took up their identities as mediator-problem solvers. Hence, the integration and organization of disparate social, situational, historical and biographical experiences and constructions of self influenced decision making and behavioural choices (Collinson, 2006; Ryan, 2007; Warin et al., 2006).

Whereas Connelly and Clandinin (1999) found that administrators' stories of identity focused primarily on "things seen by looking up the conduit and down to the landscape" (p. 173), these six principals described a more complex vantage point reflective of an expansive view of leadership. Although principals' stories support Connelly and Clandinin's depiction of the administrator being sandwiched between those "above" and "below" them, a web of interactions expanded the hierarchical structure of the conduit as described by Connelly and Clandinin (1999). For example, principals generally viewed themselves "as equals with teachers" (Nelle, Interview 2) as they developed relationships with and responded to the differing expectations of other school members (i.e., parents, students, and support staff), central office (i.e., senior) administrators, Ministry (i.e., policy makers), community agencies, universities, business partners, and other stakeholders (see Figure 2).

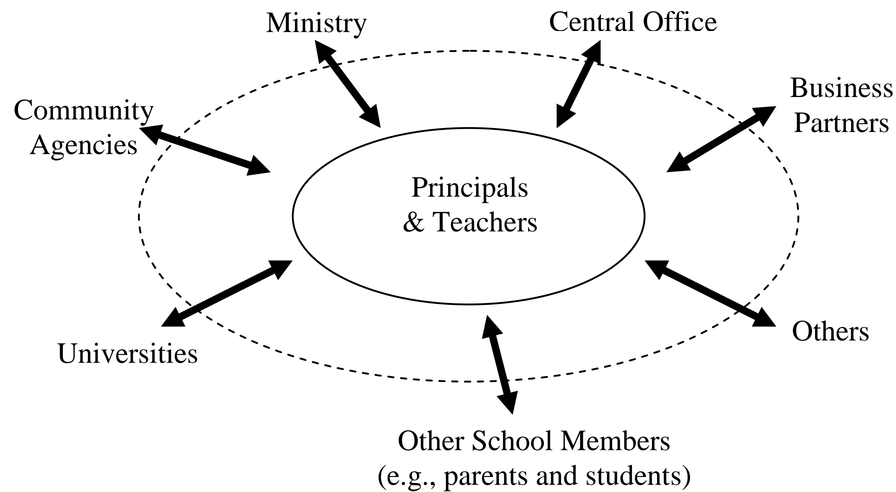

Figure 2. A theoretical model of the reciprocal relations and web of interactions influencing the identities assumed by principals as they negotiate educational change.

The findings suggest that relationships developed through the educational change process do not merely influence principals. Instead, individual identity, educational change, and interactions with others are mutually constituting. Using identity as a lens to consider the principalship challenges predominant assumptions that there is a unidirectional causal influence from the "top" to the "bottom" of the hierarchy. As Wade considered how his identity influenced school vision, he described how "the transformative process is a two-way bridge…It's the staff transforming you, as you transform with them to improve your system. It is an ongoing process but it would be naïve of me to say you have no affect" (Interview 2). Hence, principals felt that they had to be skilled at building consensus among the individuals and groups within this web – framing interests in ways that were mutually beneficial (Zoller & Fairhurst, 2007).

Principals and teachers engaged in dynamic, reciprocal relations with others, within and beyond the school, as they engaged in educational change. Although the

hierarchy still existed, and principals admitted so, these principals did not feel that they led alone. Rather, they spoke about valuing and welcoming the contributions of others as they engaged in the change process. Through ongoing dialogic relations with others in this web of interaction, principals came to see openings for different identity potentials (Castanheira et al., 2007). As they negotiated change, multiple identities were assumed simultaneously; however, some identities were more prominent in given situations. Thus, principals' identities were in a constant state of change.

Just as Blackmore (2004 & 1996), Poole (2007), and Thomson (2004) reported that principals and teachers found it challenging to maintain valued identities under new accountability pressures, the principals in this study were concerned about new policy directions. Subsequently, as principals considered the policies that influenced their practice, the stakes seem inordinately high as these individuals derived a significant portion of their identity from their work in the principalship. Consequently, system-wide initiatives or educational reform were monitored closely by principals as radical change was viewed as having an implication for their identities and the identities of other school members (Poole, 2007). However, the principals in this study also expressed having a degree of agency to construct their identities and often conveyed appreciation of the flexibility in Alberta's system-wide school improvement initiative (i.e., AISI). "Identity-based injustice" (Poole, 2007) was only evident when Karen, Carrie, Nelle, and Neil shared stories about working for an authoritative Board or superintendent who defined their practices and prevented them from living their values within their school contexts.

Principals' identities were, therefore, tied to a sense of efficacy. Hence, emotions constituted and affirmed principals' own identity understandings (Beatty,

2000; Blackmore, 2004; Poole, 2007). For instance, Karen upheld a “strong sense of self based on my belief that democratic leadership is central to success” (Interview 3). Karen’s identity, and subsequently her leadership practice, was shaped by her previous identity as an at-risk youth who had negative experiences with authority. The Board’s directive to use a top-down leadership approach ignored the other histories that created Karen’s identity outside of the one with which the Board interacted. The devaluing and denial of this proprietary identity was a source of unhappiness, stress, and disconnect for Karen. When Karen could not “be who the Board wants me to be” (Interview 3), she resigned, as abiding the Board’s directive “would fail students, our school, and would compromise what I believe” (Interview 3). Thus, Karen was not willing to succumb to the co-optation of her identity as a principal. Being forced to lead as who she was not had significant identity repercussions for Karen. Well-being was negatively impacted when principals faced directives that were unfamiliar, uncomfortable or conflicting with their values.

Like many teachers, principals’ identities took the form of stories of servantship, professional duty, and a calling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Lortie, 2009 & 1975). When Connelly and Clandinin (1999) considered the difference between teachers and administrators’ identity, they suggested that “what appears to be missing are educational stories to live by” (p, 173). My analysis illuminated many educational stories that impacted principals’ identities. For example, (a) Wade accounted for his selection of Joshua as the torch bearer; (b) Nelle and Neil spoke about how their leadership practice was influenced by changing student demographics; and (c) Carrie shared how the new curriculum was impacting teachers and her instructional leadership practice. These many references to children,

curriculum, and programming supported the notion that a degree of continuity exists between being a teacher and being a principal.

In several interviews I was told, “There is nothing better than being a principal” (Neil, Interview 2). Principals were generally reluctant to consider pursuing other opportunities as leaving the principalship and the people with whom they shared common values, vision and experiences would separate principals from the role and processes through which they were both seen and see themselves as having a particular identity. As educators, principals defined themselves by a highly-developed sense of sharing and belonging to communities focused on improving educational opportunities for future generations.

Identity Salience

Leading educational change was not always a straightforward manner – principals’ were both enabled and constrained by the contexts which they worked and learned. As they tried to make sense of their role, certain identities were viewed as integral to principals’ understandings of what it means to lead change and best reflected how principals perceived the legal-definitions of their role and responsibilities (Anderson, 1990; Ball, 1987; Province of Alberta, 2007).

Although each of the four identities were assumed throughout the change process, principals’ values and contextual factors influenced which identities were more salient at a given point in time. As suggested by Stryker and Burke (2000), principals intuitively self-organized these identities into a hierarchy of importance within differing situations. More salient identities had more power and significance than others (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Although principals also spoke about being a team member and other less prominent identities, the organizational architect,

mediator, awakener, and protector identities served as the primary cognitive sense-making framework to understand change and to respond (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

As a self-identified Métis, Karen felt that her personal identity influenced her leadership practice as she could more readily identify with Smithers students. Karen explained that her Métis identity “makes it easier…it’s intrinsic – I don’t have to guess what it’s like” (Interview 2). From the onset, Karen also made it clear that she valued distributed forms of leadership. She described herself as “a democratic leader, student centered and bottom-up” (Interview 1). Karen’s values and past and personal identities were braided with and therefore influenced the professional identities she assumed (Bradbury & Gunter, 2006; Thomson, 2004). Her values and identities also influenced the time she spent cultivating professional openness and full participation in school leadership. Karen also presented evidence of how her commitment to inclusivity in decision making affected the salience of the democratically-oriented visionary identity. In addition to Karen’s own values, the salience of her identity reflected a commitment to “the role relationships requiring that identity” (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286).

These principals lived their lives in and thorough specialized networks of social relationships. Participation in this web of interactions depended upon and reinforced the possession of particular identities. Through reflective and reflexive practice, Karen continually self-verified her identity; thereby, increasing the probability that increased salience would be reflected in her behaviour. In another case, the stability in the salience of Wade’s identity as learner and researcher remained prominent as he strategically sought out opportunities to dialogue and work extensively with medical professionals, university researchers, and community wellness personnel. Thus, principals maintained existing and sought out new

relationships that enabled them to behave in accord with highly salient and valued identities. As suggested by Hargreaves and Fink (2006), principals assumed identities were also intent on supporting those within and beyond the school boundaries, today, as well as for the future. The salience of principals' identities changed over time as they worked and reflected with others and as they engaged in self-verification (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

At times, identity salience was also impacted by the internalization of role expectations (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Appointed to "clean up some big messes" (Interview 2), Carrie emphasized her identities as an organizational architect and mediator as she addressed central office mandates. Carrie reconciled her values with new expectations inherent in her appointment to this principalship. Although she described herself as highly collaborative in previous assignments, Carrie assumed a "We will – not, would you like to?" (Interview 2) approach to school improvement. In accepting and internalizing expectations, Carrie was willing to assume a more directive approach that she and senior administrators saw as essential to addressing long-standing issues at Clear Water. The more salient identities of organizational architect and mediator still aligned with Carrie's values – that is, school leaders manage people and communication to develop structures that support high quality teaching and learning.

Living and leading within differing communities of practice generated emotional attachment as well as an enduring motivation and commitment to a collective endeavour and identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Thomson, 2004). Valuing the distribution of leadership, Nelle saw her assistant principal as a co-principal and students as mentors who supported learning with new technologies. Nelle's approach allowed her to build strong relationships and a shared vision with other school

members. The more connected Nelle was to others on the basis of possessing a particular identity, the more likely the salience of the given identity and the degree to which that identity would be activated when Nelle faced a new situation (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Thus, Nelle assumed an organizational architect identity to redesign structures for teachers so they could identify and work with student mentors to assist with learning of the new mathematics curriculum. Moreover, the importance that principals placed on relationship building resulted in greater prominence of a protector identity. Principals were relentless in regard to safe-guarding individual and collective relationships as they were so hard to establish and sustain. Thus, the importance and complexity of these commitments gave the protector identity greater salience.

Identity salience was also evident when principals' values and meanings of their identity within a situation matched what they perceived as the established identity standard (i.e., the meaning shared by others) (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Neil's self-definition of the identity standard (i.e., his cultural and religious values) aligned with meanings shared with parents of the Ukrainian program. Similarly, James considered reducing his teaching assignment because teachers and parents expected administrators to be available during the day. Mismatches between a principal's self-relevant meaning of his or her identity and the standard held by others led to increasing discrepancy and negative emotions. When Neil struggled with perceived inequities between programs, he assumed a mediator identity to proactively address chronic complaints from the English parents. In addition to alleviating the emotional toil he faced, the integrity of the Ukrainian program was protected as Neil strategically promoted school-wide events that gave an illusion of equity and school cohesion. In most cases, principals reported feeling like "imposters" (Karen,

Interview 1) as they tried to live up to others' expectations (Lortie, 2009). These expectations shaped principals' identities and behavioural choices.

Facing changing student demographics, expanded connectivity with stakeholders, and demands for creativity and innovation, principals generally disputed the principalship as the center of authority, expertise, and power. Unless faced with a directive or officially-sanctioned mandate, principals generally espoused choosing participatory (e.g., distributed leadership) and democratic leadership approaches. These views of leadership aligned with principals' values and assumed identities. Principal's self-descriptions appeared to reflect a commitment to inclusiveness and relationship building within and across the school's social network. For example, principals empowered others to contribute to the school's vision (i.e., architectural designer-visionary identity), spent time clarifying and interpreting information (i.e., mediator-meaning maker identity), leveraged input regarding new initiatives (i.e., mediator-problem solver identity), and advocated on behalf of school members (i.e., protector-caregiver identity). The identities assumed by principals intended to transform traditional, top-down leadership approaches into more constructive and reciprocal social relations which were believed to enhance innovation and the sustainability of change. However, I often observed a discrepancy between what principals espoused and their theories-in-use (Schön, 1986). The constraints and continuous change in the local contexts and large system made it challenging for principals to always live and practice what they valued. Hence, principals occasionally enacted positional power in response to pressures for increased efficiency, excellence, and results.

A Micropolitical Perspective on Principal Identity

The four identities assumed by principals as they engaged in educational change were fraught with ambiguity and tension. In fact, the study of these six principals suggested that principals' professional identities may be less coherent (Hoover & Klintbjer, 2004; Stryker & Burke, 2000), but not nearly as fluid as other researchers have claimed (Britzman, 2003; Collinson, 2005b). Moreover, these identities are problematic in that they only provided a glimpse into what Ball (1987) described as the hidden "organizational underworld" (p. xi). Even though principals were mindful that the transition from teacher to administrator involved the acquisition of positional power, they seemed unable or reluctant to talk about micropolitical issues of leadership and school life (Ball, 1987). Despite the fact the principals interrogated notions of power within graduate study, theoretical engagement did not significantly impact principals' daily practice. However, politics and power clearly accounted for given leadership approaches or outcomes. In fact, data analysis illuminated how these four identities were derived from access to sources of organizational power (Ball, 1987). The degree to which principals promoted change or preserved the status quo was largely influenced by the identities that principals assumed within these complex contexts.

Principals ultimately had positional power to bring increased attention to alternative stories or accounts of problems. For example, Wade's interest in wellness and recreational athletics influenced school priorities and how others experienced school improvement. In taking up a visionary-organizational architect identity, Wade leveraged his own and others' creative potential to seek out initiatives that placed his school apart from others as a site of excellence and innovation. Wade elicited cooperation to achieve his vision by selective hiring of like-minded teachers and by

developing a compelling rationale about student health that was backed by world-renown medical researchers. Moreover, the intentionality of Wade's leadership practice was influenced by his visionary-organizational architect identity. In crafting an image of a cutting-edge school, Wade secured additional funding that if diminished would have negative consequences on the availability of teacher relief time, access to new technologies, and the school's reputation. Hence, principals were creative in ways that supported their preferred identities and vision for the school and elicited cooperation of others in the construction of new organizational goals and identities. The beliefs and power of the principal shaped school vision, processes and outcomes in addition to altering policy messages.

Upon further analysis, the visionary-organizational architect identity often conflicted with principals' espoused values of democracy, collaboration, and distributed forms of leadership. Although principals used terms like "our school" and "we" during the interviews, principals sometimes contradicted themselves as they spoke about mobilizing others to support *their* vision for the school's future. School members' commitment to the principal's vision was often explicitly secured (Ball, 1987; Hatcher, 2005). Teachers who readily bought into the principal's vision were rewarded with precious resources and additional time to support goal attainment. Supportive teachers assumed formal leadership responsibilities and were held up as exemplars. When chronic differences existed, principals engaged others in dialogue intent on reframing or refocusing questions, alternate viewpoints, and critique within the context of the vision already established. When confronted by opposing parties, the assumption of a mediator identity tended to result in compromises that were rarely different from ideas favoured in the past. Thus, mediated decisions often upheld familiar ideas at the expense of innovation.

As visionary-organizational architects, principals' analysis of who might impede change appeared to be a political maneuver to ensure that a motion requiring approval of a governing body (i.e., typically teaching staff) was discussed well in advance of the actual, public debate. Political theory illuminated how principals' assumption of a visionary and mediator identity was akin to the work of lobbyists (Hatcher, 2005; Poole, 2008). Oftentimes, principals exercised their formal authority as they encouraged and at times forced reluctant or resistant teachers to "find an alternate assignment where they might be better suited" (Carrie, Interview 2). Decisions about the fate and work of school members were ultimately in the hands of the principal.

As previously discussed, principals were highly protective of the school's vision and the people who shared that vision. By buffering teachers from parental and jurisdictional demands, principals were able to get close to teachers and build trust over time. Similarly, advocating for teacher interests when dealing with central office also built allegiance with teachers. Through such exchange relationships, principals gained loyalty and the compliance of teachers. Assuming a protective identity had a tendency to serve as a means of control. Teachers who were loyal and supported promoted changes reaped benefits such as "access to all the PD [professional development] they could ever need or want to make the change happen" (Neil, Interview 2). Moreover, supportive teachers were left alone as they could be "trusted to make good decisions" (Nelle, Interview 2). Reluctance or resistance diminished opportunities for teachers' professional growth and autonomy.

Notions of power also circulated in James' explanation of how his upcoming sabbatical necessitated sharing more information (and therefore, power) than was the norm with a chosen group of "stars" and "whole-school thinkers" (assistant principals

were excluded because "they're new and overwhelmed already") (Interview 2). While James viewed his behaviour as "empowering others to provide leadership" (Interview 2), his actions preserved existing school practices. James held a privileged position which allowed him to manage meaning – James mediated what was communicated, to whom, and when. Furthermore, assuming the identity of protector potentially diminished social trust. When information was shared with the chosen group, the remaining school members found themselves situated on the periphery of school decision making. Relationships with unchosen school members were likely undermined.

When negotiating the situated practices, language, and policies of their schools and jurisdictions, principals assumed a mediator identity. Principals were in a position to access information before others and to determine the nature of communications shared. Information that the principal deemed to be distracting, contentious, or contradictory to the schools' vision was withheld. In seeing themselves as meaning makers, principals often appropriated the expectations, norms and values of senior administrators and policy-makers. Principals were highly aware of being held accountable for their communication practices. As mediators, principals were never neutral since both active (through problem solving and addressing open conflict) and symbolic forms of mediation (including disseminating, clarifying, and interpreting information) delimited the possibility of agency for school members (Anderson, 1990; Ryan, 2007). Although Carrie explained how pre-written professional growth plan facilitated common understanding and provoked district-wide change in practice, she failed to critique how her requirement for teachers to sign this plan limited teacher autonomy and professional growth. Moreover, Carrie took up the identities of (a) an organizational architect as she analyzed achievement

test results to ascertain support resources required; (b) a mediator as she disseminated and interpreted information related to the district's AISI goals and professional development plan; and (c) an awakener-teacher as she coached teachers on the district's best practices. In taking up these identities to foster change as desired by central office, Carrie was legitimizing and perpetuating prevailing practices and ideologies of the system (e.g., raising the profile of standardized testing, using data as a means to sort and stream students, and prescribing "accepted" best practices). Carrie had no choice but to endorse the mandated vision for teaching and learning without clear examination of how the jurisdictional vision aligned with teacher or student needs within the Clear Water context. Despite the operationalization of new policy directions and practices, principals rarely interrogated how identification with official organizational goals influenced how they framed and interpreted messages for themselves and others. Thus, principals intervened or mediated to ensure that the experiences and practices of the school community were consistent with the common beliefs about what schools should be doing (e.g., promoting parental choice and improving test scores).

Organizational expectations appeared to have a significant impact when a principal was appointed to a school deemed to be in crisis. Facing constant pressure from senior administrators for improved results, Carrie used a number of hierarchical and controlling strategies to accelerate visible change. School improvement, she shared, required a "culture shift…If teachers don't see the same vision that I do, I'm not gonna get them to improve those PATs [provincial achievement tests]" (Carrie, Interview 1). Arguably, the establishment of a common vision was problematic as Carrie realistically admitted, "Some people may want to look elsewhere. This might

not be the school for them" (Interview 1). Having a shared vision was viewed as foundational to longer-term, sustainable change.

In seeking a shared vision, principals strategically and unconsciously communicated and perpetuated biases and viewpoints which were potentially oppressive to certain individuals or minority groups (Collinson, 2006). Being a "school of choice" allowed some principals to attract students of certain characteristics while unconsciously discouraging or preventing the enrolment of other students who may be perceived to have a negative impact on the public ranking of their school. As principals mediated organizational directives and values, they assumed a protector identity as they upheld the school's image – only individuals or groups who supported dominant ideologies or could enhance the school's reputation were safeguarded (Ball & Maroy, 2010).

Principals' emphasis on "protecting our people and vision" (Karen, Interview 2) contradicts Anderson's (1990) assertion that mediation or "meaning management" within organizational and social reality is the primary identity of school administrators. Typically, principals saw themselves as mediators in the course of their work as protectors. For example, when asked about conflict as a means to leverage change, most principals spoke about strategies used to promote school cohesion and reduce possibilities for resistance. Conflict was rarely leveraged to provoke new thinking and to challenge dominant social constructions of schooling and leadership (Anderson, 1990). Those holding different perspectives were at times silenced and viewed as "sabotagers" (Carrie, Interview 2) rather than a source of alternative ideas about change. The identity of protector seemed to precariously operate in an invisible form – appearing to legitimatize official goals while paradoxically protecting the professional autonomy of teachers. Principals in the

study seemed unable or unwilling to reflect on who or what they were protecting, the processes of protection, and how protectionist actions would be supportive of prevailing ideologies that justified the existing system. The protection of staff and "my school" had a tendency to occur at the detriment of the system – failing to foster care for others as reflected within principals' wider professional commitments and citizenship responsibilities.

Finally, Mumby's (2001) notion of power as the "ways in which a subject's position exists through the intersection of discourses that 'fix' meanings in certain ways" (p. 614) contributes to more nuanced understanding of principal identity. Principals' identities were further produced by power (i.e., the exchange of values inherent in reciprocal relations with others). For example, jurisdictional practices contributed to principal identities and experiences that privileged some ways of knowing, being and doing over others. Yet, on the other hand, principals wielded authority to construct, mediate, and transform meaning in their moment-by-moment interactions with others. Given their unique positions, principals had "access to information that needs to be shared and framed in transparent, meaningful and accessible ways with others" (Wade, Interview 3). Although principals acknowledged that they had privileged access to information, principals tried to be forthcoming and inclusive. Despite the fact that principals' inclusive principles were violated when directed to withhold or "spin" information, principals often presented controversial issues as unproblematic in an effort to ensure legitimacy of their schools and leadership practice at the expense of inclusion (e.g., preserving images of harmony and cohesion over the use of conflict as an impetus to change).

Chapter Synthesis

Findings presented in Chapter Six indicate that the degree that principals promoted change or preserved the status quo was largely influenced by the identities that principals assumed while working within very complex contexts. These six principals did not have a single, stable identity; rather, principals' identities continuously shifted and evolved over time and events. Generally, these principals assumed four unique identities as they engaged in educational change: (a) organizational architect (including visionary and analyst sub-identities), (b) mediator (including disseminator, meaning maker, and problem solver sub-identities), (c) awakener (including teacher and learner sub-identities), and (d) protector (including caregiver and advocate sub-identities). The categories of identities and sub-identities presented were not mutually exclusive. A degree of overlap and reciprocity between identities existed as principals negotiated educational change. Micropolitical analysis further shed light on ambiguities and contradictions between principals' assumed identities and illuminated how these identities were derived from and further strengthen by the positional power of school leaders.

These principals lived and worked in a continuously shifting context (see Figure 3). In fact, Neil described how principals are always "navigating waves of change" (Interview 1). The waves encountered ranged in size from small ripples or surface-level changes (e.g., formalizing instructional walk-through processes) to huge tsunamis or systemic reform (e.g., moving to school-based decision making). For principals, waves of change were also political – hence, principals' identities and practices were constrained by the contexts in which they worked. Each principal spoke about the challenge of leading within continuously shifting contexts fraught with ambiguity, tension, uncertainty, and contradiction.

The nuances of the relationship between principal identity and educational change are explored in Figure 3. Findings suggested that the identity of the principal had a significant influence on the school's vision and determined actions (i.e., behaviours of principals and others) taken towards goal attainment. While the four identities (i.e., organizational architect, mediator, awakener and protector), and the dialogic processes associated with them, allowed for change (or the appearance of change); these identities also preserved and legitimized existing organizational activities and prevailing ideologies (Anderson, 1990; Ball, 1987; Ryan, 207).

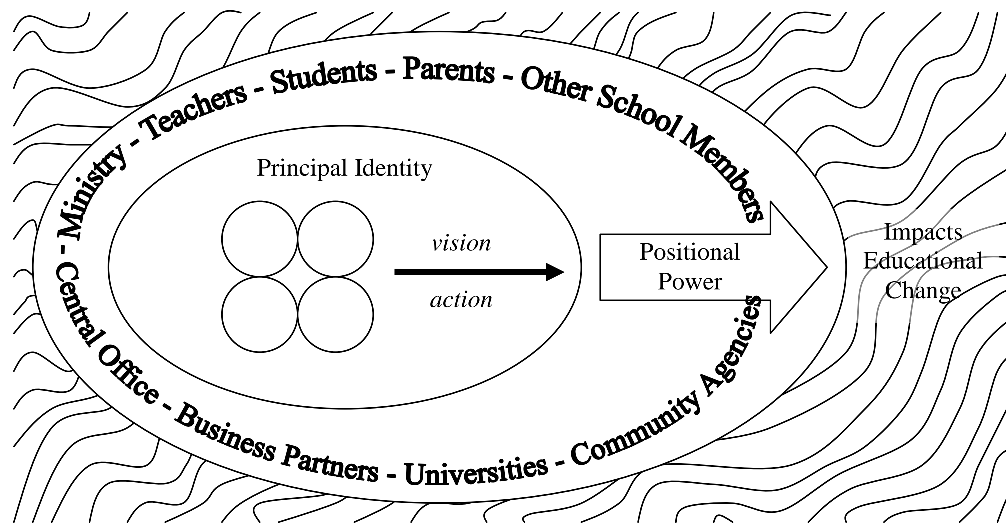

Figure 3. How educational change is impacted by the identity and positional power of the principal.

Ultimately, power was "not something that can be taken up and used or discarded at will" (Mumby, 2001, p. 614). Principals' engagement with others (e.g., central office administrators, students, parents, and community agencies) was inevitably negotiated through the positional power afforded to them through the legal-definition of their role. Thus, principals were uniquely positioned to exercise power in certain ways and were held accountable to achieve certain ends.

If principals encountered resistance from stakeholders, or if the stakeholders held greater influence and authority than the principal (e.g., the Minister of Education or Superintendent), the positional power arrow (in Figure 3) would be shortened to account for diminishing power and influence over change efforts. Conversely, the positional power arrow would be lengthened, and the change process expedited, if principals garnered strong support of stakeholders toward common goals and a shared vision. An expansive view of leadership allowed for a bigger mass of individuals and groups to move towards the shared vision. When principals were able to skilfully negotiate politics, this larger mass of highly-connected stakeholders helped principals harness more energy towards rapid attainment of the school's vision.

The degree of autonomy and power held by principals was determined by the educational contexts in which principals worked. In larger and more decentralized school jurisdictions, principals experienced greater discretionary decision making and influence over change (hence, the positional power arrow would be lengthened). Regardless of the size of the district or the extent of decentralization, principals appointed to schools to deal with specific issues faced increased accountability and additional scrutiny from senior administrators. Under these circumstances, the positional power arrow was shortened as principals reported having less autonomy and influence over the change process.

Prevailing expectations for shared vision, consensus, "fit," and legitimacy limited and even disregarded the role leadership *can* and *should have* towards improving schools. Moreover, these expectations confined the degree that principals were willing to take risks and seek new possibilities. Held accountable for these prevailing expectations, principals tended to perpetuate existing visions of schooling

and often gravitated to long-standing practices that did not provoke conflict or increased surveillance.

The contemporary scholarly (Foster et al., 2008; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Spillane, 2006) and professional literature (Eaker et al., 2002; Fullan, 2007 & 2005; Hargreaves et al., 2009; Marzano, 2003) downplays the principalship and places greater emphasis on grassroots or bottom-up efforts as a means to creating and sustaining educational change. To ignore or minimize the influence of the principal, or other formal school leaders, on educational change is problematic. As depicted in Figure 3, the various educational stakeholders (e.g., parents, Ministry, and central office) interested and involved in educational change continuously interacted with principals. On the one hand, formal positional power enabled the principal to influence others to buy into the vision; yet, on the other hand, much of the informal power ascribed to the principal was provided by those individuals who either chose or at the very least tolerated him or her to lead. Because a principal's relationship with others in the local contexts depended on the principal possessing a particular identity, principals' behavioural choices (e.g., developing a shared vision) aligned with expectations for certain identities.

Skilful principals leveraged grassroots momentum to promote a vision that supported the views of those who followed as well as those who lead (i.e., creating a shared vision). In fact, energizing followers about the possibilities of change (e.g., additional resources, enhanced results, positive media attention, and improved working conditions) inspired followers to embrace and work towards the shared vision. In essence, this is the leadership approach that Wade utilized. Teachers, other school members, and external stakeholders bought into Wade's vision because of the many advantages offered through the vision he presented.

However, as the hub within this web of complex interactions, principals held considerable power as external ideas and approaches were filtered through the meanings that principals' held for their roles. Even under the guise of distributed or democratic forms of leadership, principals were uniquely positioned and had the power to influence which changes were selected or rejected, to determine who was involved in or excluded from decision making, and to choose whose voices were heard or silenced.

Contrary to what was portrayed in the contemporary literature, findings here suggest that principals' identities did, in fact, impact how and to what extent change was fostered and sustained. "Successful" principals were typically those who understood micro- and macro-politics. These principals were able to assume identities that allowed them to influence stakeholders' imaginations about what could be. These principals convinced others that school life could be better if new changes were implemented or if existing practices were done differently. These practices usually needed to be carefully thought through so that implemented pieces of a plan fell into place and change momentum was maintained or even enhanced. Momentum toward change was built as principals used different identities to identify allies (e.g., stars) and convince them to promote the vision. Identification of the "right stars" (i.e., individuals who were trusted, respected, and knowledgeable) was a crucial leadership function. Recognizing the highly dynamic and political nature of school life, principals spent time and placed importance on the identification of allies.

Thus, the relationship between principal identity, educational change, organization, and power suggests that understanding of organizational life should be expanded and "reconceptualized as discursive sites of identity formation and meaning" (Mumby, 2001, p. 614). Although the organizational context yielded great

influence over the work of principals, principals' identities and accompanying values, intentions, and decisions shaped school improvement. Despite the great influence organizational contexts had on those who work in them, Greenfield's (1991) claim that organizations are created through human intention and decision-making fit these evolving understandings of the relationship between principal identity and educational change.

Admittedly, principals disclosed that they were not always able to follow through on their values. When this occurred, principals looked for ways to address and resolve associated contractions. Chapter Seven, specifically, explores how principals addressed consonance and dissonance between their values and the multi-dimensional roles they perform.

Chapter Seven – How Principals Address Consonance and Dissonance between Their Identities and Internal and External Demands

Although educational research describes the leadership tensions, emotional complexities, and value contradictions inherent in accountability policy contexts (Blackmore, 2004, Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Lortie, 2009; Poole, 2008; Spillane et al., 2002a; Thomson, 2004), few studies seek principals' perspectives about their strategic responses to complex and competing messages. Thus, this chapter outlines findings, through the participants' words, to address the question: *How do principals address consonance and dissonance between their identities and internal and external demands?* The latter section of the chapter draws on the literature to further synthesize findings regarding the relationship between principal identity and educational change.

Findings

As previously described, principals' identities continually shifted as they negotiated contradictions between: ideals and reality, individuals (including self) and the collective, and change and stability. Through the responses of assimilation, accommodation and resistance, principals addressed ambiguity and tension between their values and various demands. Although the strategic responses are presented here as distinct, they are not mutually exclusive.

Assimilation

Principals primarily drew on their tacit worldviews and professional assumptions to construct understanding of expectations and the potential consequences to changes in their behaviour. They also described feeling a sense of

harmony when new messages or changes were ones that they supported. For example, Wade was positive about the addition of a new program to his school. His "French background and lived experiences" (i.e., Acadian-French descent and taking French as a Second Language as a student) allowed for easier acceptance and incorporation of French Immersion into Evergreen's existing programming (Interview 3).

When consonance was perceived, principals typically interpreted, transformed, and enacted messages in ways that fit with their existing assumptions and practices. Principals "jumped hoops" when initiatives "align[ed] with what we believe[d] here" (Karen, Interview 1). For example, AISI principles supported Karen's identity as a "grassroots, bottom-up leader" so she felt "more inclined to support this initiative over others" (Interview 1). Karen understood the meaning and intent of AISI through her own worldview. With AISI's focus on local and customized approaches to school improvement, Karen readily organized school structures (e.g., time tables, partnerships, and school decision-making processes) in ways that fostered a democratic approach to school leadership. However, Karen indicated that assimilation of new school improvement practices didn't always transfer to understanding:

> All of us supported the purchase of the latest technologies. But we aren't asking, "How does this change teaching? Create engaged learning?" …You need discussion to get everybody reflecting on why computers were so important in the first place. (Interview 2)

In another case, Carrie believed "assessment must drive instruction" (Interview 2) so she welcomed mandated participation in district-wide professional development related to instruction and assessment. Because the professional development aligned with her beliefs and the school vision, a high degree of cooperativeness was evident as Karen readily disseminated information and promoted

the professional development program, participated alongside teachers in program activities, and used instructional supervision as a means to monitor teachers' implementation of identified best practices. Consonance between external demands and Karen's values underscored the degree that she considered new possibilities for school improvement.

While "absorbing and integrating changes that fit well" (Carrie, Interview 2), limited time appeared to be expended on understanding the intent of policy from others' perspectives (e.g., policy makers and reformers). For example, Neil supported teachers with implementation of the new mathematics curriculum. However, daily interactions reinforced "the importance of practicing and knowing basic facts" (Interview 2) over critical thinking and problem solving as emphasized in the philosophy of the curriculum. Reflection about the underlying pedagogical and epistemological assumptions of the new curricular framework appeared limited.

Assimilation of new approaches had, on occasion, the potential to maintain status quo practices. Although change messages likely differed from what was intended by stakeholders or policymakers, changes that aligned with principals' beliefs and school vision were assimilated with little scrutiny. Since James spent considerable time in classrooms, external expectations to conduct daily instructional walk-throughs aligned with James' beliefs about "being visible and connecting with school members daily" (Interview 1). However, James understood the practice of instructional supervision through the lens of his own worldview and past leadership experiences. How instructional supervision might be modified to provide teachers with support as well as the pressure needed to enhance teaching and learning was given little consideration.

Thus, assimilation involved integration of change within existing schemas and reinforced long-standing practices. When assuming an organizational architect identity, Neil suggested that proposed changes need to "fit like a piece into a puzzle…Change doesn't mean throwing away instructional routines or pedagogical approaches. Changes can usually be absorbed into what we are doing already" (Interview 2). Even democratic processes, Karen argued, inevitably led to a degree of conformity or assimilation of certain ways of thinking about proposed changes:

> The majority rules even when we agree. There's collaboration when we ask, "What's best for kids even if we all don't agree? What can the majority of us live with?" Once the decision is made, the minority needs to accept and support the decision of the majority culture. (Interview 2)

Fostering change was problematic when minority groups were expected to readily assimilate various practices or acquire the characteristics of the majority group within the school.

Principals often felt compelled to assimilate new messages and initiatives because their "leadership is monitored and evaluated through a variety of accountability frameworks and targets" (Carrie, Interview 2). Under the gaze of authority (i.e., Ministry and senior administrators) and the "ever-watchful eyes" of the media and parents, principals were increasingly aware of their visible identities and were reluctant "to rock the boat" (Nelle, Interview 2). Karen worried if "others see me as a democratic leader" (Interview 1) while Carrie expressed concern about being able to "show curricular and policy expertise" (Interview 2). Whereas Neil was skeptical about "how much creativity can be displayed before you're reined in," Wade felt that efforts "to think outside the box" (Interview 1) were valued. Since enacting change that broke with conventional district practices was challenging, most principals "play[ed] it safe" (Carrie, Interview 1) by assimilating demands as

expected. Assimilation of mandated ideas and initiatives signaled to senior administrators that principals were loyal and dependable.

When Neil described how “the number one thing is what’s coming down from the district,” he justified assimilation of district mandates by having “confidence that decisions have been made by central officials with a sense of the big picture” (Interview 1). With heightened self-consciousness, assimilation of mandated practices allowed principals to be “seen in a good light, as a team player, and loyal employee” (Neil, Interview 2). When working under an authoritative superintendent, Nelle admitted to “putting my head down and laying low so they’d [senior administrators] leave us alone” (Interview 2). In such cases, unquestioning assimilation of external expectations was viewed essential to protecting one’s position and school.

Cognizant of contractual responsibilities, principals typically adopted practices that were “the non-negotiable thou shalts” (Neil, Interview 1). Realistic about legal obligations, Nelle concluded, “I have responsibility as being part of a system... I knew those requirements when I took the job. We get paid to do it. I am okay if it is ethical.” (Interview 2). As long as external demands had a degree of fit with Nelle’s beliefs and were not viewed as causing irreparable harm to children or other school members, Nelle “live[d] with such requirements as I know that this too shall pass” (Interview 2). Hence, initiatives were more likely to be supported when consonance existed or when an initiative was seen as a “passing trend” (Nelle, Interview 2).

However, principals generally agreed that they had no choice but to compromise some of their practices to assimilate what was “coming down from senior administrators” (Neil, Interview 2). For instance, Neil shared how “concern from a parent resulted in the superintendent presenting me with guidelines about the

time-out room" (Interview 2). Neil immediately accommodated this directive by announcing to staff, "The time-out room will not be used anymore – case closed" (Interview 2). Failing to follow a directive was likely to result in "negative consequences" (Nelle, Interview 1).

Finally, with a proliferation of school improvement initiatives across the province, principals spoke about the "gravitational pull" that prompted assimilation of new initiatives to ensure "that our school stays competitive" (Carrie, Interview 2). Carrie readily assimilated new practices and structures that put Clear Water "out at the forefront:"

> You want pilot studies, Smartboards, a strong Parent Council, active PLCs [professional learning communities]. You need to demonstrate that you're keeping up with the times and that kids are getting the latest and the best that can be offered. (Interview 2)

With increased competition and scrutiny (e.g., public ranking of schools), principals felt that they had no choice but to accommodate internal and external demands that they did not fully support.

Accommodation

When principals faced pressures from within and outside of their respective schools, they often adjusted their practice to accommodate new ideas and demands. Sometimes, accommodation was a symbolic response; more often than not, accommodation involved compromise that entailed restructuring of assumptions about teaching, learning and leading.

Symbolic Accommodation

Principals occasionally responded to internal and external demands with symbolic responses that were decoupled from core leadership and instructional

practices. For instance, in response to pressures from parents, Neil thought a lot "about optics related to preferential treatment of programs" (Interview 1). Although school-wide events created an image of cohesion, core structures and instructional and operational practices in the Ukrainian and English programs remained relatively untouched. Neil confirmed how "the fundraiser or the Olympic Torch days appeased parents; they didn't change what we do in the alternative program" (Interview 2). Dissemination of information via the web site, newsletters, and at School Council meetings served as symbolic means to accommodating parental demands. Similarly, Carrie used symbolic accommodation as a strategy to address parental expectations that conflicted with her own and teachers' beliefs about the purpose of schooling. When "parents strongly argued for a Halloween dress-up day and parade and our staff were vehemently opposed," Carrie accommodated parental demands for "a fun day in a way that doesn't substantially interrupt learning or teaching… We'll have a Black and Orange Day with a hotdog lunch" (Interview 2).

Symbolic accommodation of practices reflected low degrees of cooperation from principals. All six principals were selective about "which hill to die on" (Nelle, Interview 2). Subsequently, when principals did not experience significant dissonance between external demands and their values, they rarely asserted themselves or expressed dissent. For instance, when expected to conduct classroom walk-throughs using a prescriptive protocol to document observations, James symbolically accommodated this new district expectation. James explained, "I have no issue of going in…making the observations and then walking out and inputting the form" (Interview 2). Despite efforts to complete the associated paperwork, James responded to this external demand symbolically rather than in ways that changed his leadership practice.

A low degree of cooperation was also evident when principals accommodated demands perceived by them as negative or harmful. Interactions between one principal[12] and his or her "superiors" whose leadership style was best be described as "authoritative," resulted in symbolic accommodation of certain practices as a means to "staying quiet and not bringing negative attention towards our school" (Interview 2). In such cases, principals assumed a protector identity as they symbolically accommodated external demands to avoid scrutiny that was perceived as threatening. Even when directives slightly conflicted with their values, principals were creative in their efforts to use the rhetoric or appearance of change. For example, another senior administrator instructed him or her to increase student engagement. With an "if this is what is wanted, we can make it appear" (Interview 2) attitude, this principal planned for "our student leadership team to be at work on his next visit so this will become a non-issue" (Interview 2). The principal shared, "It doesn't take much to respond on a surface level so that the day-to-day workings aren't disrupted" (Interview 2). Although it appeared that students were more involved, the student leadership team had minimal influence on student engagement throughout the school.

Compromise

Accommodation processes tended to be conciliatory if demands were not in flagrant conflict with the principal's values, school vision, or organizational well-being. In such cases, compromise served as a form of collaborative problem solving. For instance, Karen spoke about disputes being settled by mutual concession whereby "we put aside differences and work from unique areas of expertise to help kids"

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[12] This paragraph provides important insight into what Ball has described as the "organization world" (1987, p. xi). However, due to the sensitive nature of information shared, I have omitted the principal's pseudonym.

(Interview 1). Karen valued compromise as a means to gaining understanding *about* and *with* others as "compromising doesn't always mean win or lose. Rather, compromising is about hearing and being genuinely open to another's perspective" (Interview 1). While building school vision, Wade saw compromise as "opening our worlds to other possibilities through discussions and the one-on-one relationships we build" (Interview 2). Nelle suggested the compromise was "really a 'give and take' to move forward" (Interview 2).

As Neil explained, the notion of "give and take" extended to the jurisdiction as well:

> I can live with mandated outcomes as long as we don't all have to do the same things, like "thou shalt do this, on this day, in this way…" Yes, we all do character ed, but we choose how to implement the program in our own schools. (Interview 2)

Principals were more willing to accommodate new information and practices when a degree of flexibility existed. Neil claimed, "Compromise is constructive when the core purpose of the school is not jeopardized" (Interview 2). Hence, all six principals accommodated district-identified practices (e.g., assessment for learning and differentiated instruction) when they had autonomy to choose practices that supported the school vision and to determine how the practices would be implemented, assessed and reported.

Accommodation demanded flexibility. Wade explained how "policies provide guidance, yet school leaders need to adapt policies for people and specific circumstances in their schools" (Interview 2). Karen also described how principals "can't be so rigid in terms of the boundaries" and that certain circumstances demanded "casual boundaries" (Interview 1). For example, Karen disclosed how "lending money to students is not a good thing, but depending on the situation, I need

to think about the consequences if one of our students doesn't have money – so I might give some money to them" (Interview 1). Hence, Karen compromised traditional assumptions about lending money when she felt that students may face serious repercussions.

Compromise also involved acceptance of new practices and restructuring of underlying assumptions if principals saw a potential benefit to students or their schools. Aiming to "heal a hurting school" (Interview 1), Carrie compromised some of her beliefs about teacher autonomy. In an effort to meet senior administrators' expectations to "get everyone focused in the same direction" (Interview 2), Carrie accommodated a directive leadership approach to hold teachers accountable for change:

> It's not normally how I do things… the [teacher professional] growth plans are really defined and almost written for them. Basically you sign your name and what are you specifically gonna do yourself to address this initiative. (Interview 2)

Hired to "clean up some chronic issues," Carrie was amenable to accommodating an alternate leadership approach deemed by her and senior administrators as necessary to "steer the school in a new direction" (Interview 2). Whereas Carrie viewed the restructuring of her beliefs as necessary in the Clear Water context, Karen was unable to do so. Karen felt that accommodating a directive leadership approach, as mandated by the Board, would have a negative impact on students and staff. Consequently, compromise was unattainable.

In other cases, compromise prevented escalation of conflicting viewpoints. Despite professional misgivings, principals occasionally accommodated others' preferences or choices to preserve school harmony. For example, Neil felt strongly about student participation on provincial achievement tests. However, admitting "it's

not the be-all-end-all" (Interview 2), Neil did not follow up with parents who exempted their children from the tests. Neil remarked, "There's no use beating my head against a wall...It's just my view that you're doing your child an injustice. But it is not worth causing a conflict or hurt feelings" (Interview 2).

Although Nelle was unhappy with the superintendent's vision and treatment of principals, Nelle admitted, "You should stand up and speak, but there isn't the opportunity. You are silenced. I guess it is compromising what you stand for" (Interview 2). Other times, the accommodation of new practices was justified as "bringing everybody on side. For our school it may be a step backwards, but that's what you have to do for the jurisdictional family" (Carrie, Interview 2). Hence, compromise was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, principals had to forsake some of their values and what they envisioned for their schools; yet on the other hand, principals recognized that compromise was sometimes in the best interests of the collective good.

Although principals accommodated many new messages and approaches, they were usually unwilling to compromise teachers' well-being or long-standing school traditions. In assuming the identity of protector, Carrie served as advocate for and a caregiver of teachers. Despite efforts to compromise with parents on numerous issues, Carrie used her positional power to protect teachers:

> There was a fair bit of heated debate and the parents said, "We have the right to vote and make suggestions." I said that the operative word there was "suggestion…The bottom line still rests with staff and that we are the keeper of the keys. In this particular case, the key isn't going in. We're gonna leave it locked." (Interview 2)

Even though principals were willing to challenge existing beliefs to accommodate unanticipated needs or diverse experiences, they maintained that "when compromise is made, the caveat is that it must be in the best interest of the students and learning in

the greater school community. It can't just satisfy a certain ego dynamic" (Wade, Interview 3).

Resistance

Principals constructed their own understanding of messages and responded by either engaging with (e.g., assimilation or accommodation) or choosing to resist (i.e., reject) a new idea or approach that did not align with their values. Specific to this study, principal resistance occurred primarily through evidence-based argument, avoidance, and opposition.

Evidence-Based Argument

As principals considered various demands, they sought out and analyzed evidence to inform meaning making. Evidence to inform decisions about which demands to select or resist were garnered from many sources, including practical experience and participation in graduate studies. In addition to diverse theoretical perspectives, principals valued dialogic interactions that afforded "different opinions as to how to respond to a situation" (Carrie, Interview 2).

Generally, principals viewed practical experience and personal judgment as more informative and useable than educational research. Job shadowing and practical activities were preferred over course readings that were "time consuming and don't always relate to the real world" (Carrie, Interview 2). However, upon closer examination, principals made some decisions on the basis of evidence (i.e., educational research or locally-generated data) as a means to furthering their vision or attainment of goals. For Karen, research "affirmed what I am doing is right" (Interview 1). On the other hand, Wade explained how he promoted "Living Healthy" by drawing on "sources from neurobiology, particularly neuroplasticity, to see how

learning is interconnected to physical health…The research helped gain support for the program" (Interview 2). Furthermore, when Wade secured additional grants, he convinced staff to purchase voice amplification systems after "division psychologists shared research showing that children who have hearing impairments as well as those with a normal range also benefit" (Interview 2).

Principals typically assumed the protector identity to resist external demands that contradicted with their values or the school vision. When this occurred, Karen described "listening and gathering data to put together a good, organized argument that explains students' needs and our challenges" (Interview 3). Principals spent copious amounts of time preparing and arguing particular cases that had implications for school members. Arguments were often ideological as principals considered and advocated for what they viewed as desirable:

> Sometimes senior admin need to be reminded that children count. Relationships matter. How does testing and public reporting of results help children? What is the purpose of the curriculum? What are the needs of 21st century learners? How does streaming benefit some over others? We need to bring these issues to the forefront because of their impact. (Carrie, Interview 2)

Evidence-based arguments (drawing on experience, research, letters from industry, and local data) enhanced principals' confidence as they engaged in advocacy efforts.

Research and practitioner-generated evidence was often leveraged to resist changes viewed as unworkable or unnecessary. Neil could "point to research, achievement results, or the accountability pillar data and say, 'What we are doing already works. We aren't going to change and here's why'" (Interview 2). James concurred, insisting that "if you're going to resist, or assert your professionalism, you better be grounded and know that the direction you're moving is supported"

(Interview 2). Hence, principals relied on practical and theoretical understanding to "explain why something is not appropriate at this time" (Nelle, Interview 1).

Oftentimes, principals gathered evidence to counter teacher practices and perspectives seen as outdated. Whereas Carrie gathered research and anecdotal data to show teachers "what problem solving should look like" (Interview 1), Nelle "identified best practices that could be shared and modeled to move this staff forward with new technologies" (Interview 2). Data analysis further elucidated how principals used positional power, along with evidence, to confront teachers with alternate agendas. Neil claimed, "When decisions are a matter of evidence, it is hard for staff to stand up and argue" (Interview 2). Hence, principals were highly assertive in making changes when armed with supporting research:

> The research suggested that if we wanted to improve literacy achievement, students need to read at their specific, individualized instructional level. Some teachers didn't like this approach, but we re-organized the book bins anyway. (Neil, Interview 1)

Alternate perspectives in the literature were not typically sought out – rather, principals generally relied on one-sided evidence to justify a specific approach or to squelch dissenting voices. Moreover, in her work as a principal, mathematics consultant, and resource writer, Carrie, like several other principals, relied on tacit knowledge and experience to inform her practice as "the research literature is not specific to where I'm going and I see it as a waste of time when it's not practical" (Interview 2). Ultimately, there seemed to be a degree of indifference to using educational research to guide problem solving and decision making.

Avoidance

Resistance took many forms and did not always entail active opposition or reaction. At times, principals strategically abstained from change. When principals

avoided demands, they often developed a rationale to defend their lack of compliance. Angered that an online document sharing plan offloaded costs to the school level, James avoided implementation:

> I've been having a devil of a time for the last five years getting a hold of an electrician to put an additional IP outlet. I keep forgetting…There are some managerial ways to resist some of the decisions made for your benefit, without your consent, knowledge or even contribution. (Interview 2)

Similarly, Neil ignored a district expectation to retain surpluses. Instead, Neil strategically "created a pressing need" that allowed him to disregard the directive (Interview 1). He shared, "We bought a Smartboard. Of course, the rest of the schools had their surpluses taken …Why would you want to let the district take an excessive surplus back?" (Neil, Interview 1). Avoidance of district practices and expectations was often politically motivated.

As much as principals did not like the additional work involved in securing alternate sources of funding (e.g., AISI), they were willing to "jump through hoops to benefit our school" (Carrie, Interview 2). However, when confronted with mandates that were restrictive or curtailed principals' autonomy, principals were more likely to resist. Karen explained how "there's a difference between a directive and jumping through hoops" (Interview 3). The perceived degree of voluntariness influenced Karen's response to external pressures. She explained that "directives make assumptions about what is in our best interests. I react first, emotionally, and then I will likely avoid or ignore it once I calm down" (Interview 3).

Opposition

The study participants articulated non-negotiable values and certain points beyond which they were unwilling to change. Principals described themselves as serving society through children, and having the moral responsibility to assert

themselves when ideals (e.g., transparency in funding practices), values (e.g., participatory decision making), or core practices (e.g., assessment to guide learning rather than to rank schools) were being compromised.

All six principals espoused opposing what was “blatantly not in the best interest of kids…Then I’ve stood my ground and said it’s wrong” (James, Interview 3). For example, when James opposed the stakeholder survey developed by his district, he provided the superintendent with “18 pages… on why the questions are not giving them the data that they are looking for to improve schools, and I made a whole ream of suggestions” (Interview 2). Furthermore, Karen suggested the need to be reflective about leadership responses to external demands as “You can’t just pretend to do what others want. If it is wrong, I have the moral responsibility to stand up and say so and hear what others say in response” (Interview 3). For Karen and Wade, in particular, opposition did not entail hostile disagreement. Ideas, practices, and demands were not seen as being right or wrong binaries; rather, Wade and Karen positioned themselves as meaning-makers intent on helping themselves and others gain understanding of multiple perspectives.

But Karen was also realistic about the grim consequences of being oppositional. She warned, “If you aren’t doing what is expected, or if you are not on the path as laid out, there is a risk and cost to your school and even you personally and professionally” (Interview 3). For newly-appointed principals, particularly, there was a perceived cost to open opposition. Neil explained, “The newbies are not going to take that risk…They may lose their principalship” (Interview 2). For some principals nearing the end of their careers, excessive or conflicting demands prompted early departure from the profession:

> A lot of seasoned administrators weren't prepared to stay under the leadership of the new superintendent. When they saw what was expected, they said, "Forget it." Even though they were healthy and on top of their game, they decided that they didn't need this anymore…We lost 20% of our administrators that one year. (Neil, Interview 2)

Stories of colleagues who could not sustain themselves within the principalship were common.

Both James and Karen were unwilling to remain in the principalship if their values conflicted outright with stakeholders' values. James shared, "if a staff or the division was moving in a wholeheartedly wrong direction that just doesn't resonate with me and connect with my principles, then I'd move on" (Interview 2). Even though Karen and James saw resistance as part of being an advocate-caregiver-protector, ongoing pressure to lead in ways that they were *not* wore them down.

In contrast, Nelle was realistic and pragmatic in her understanding of how principals needed to negotiate differing values. Even when confronted with competing viewpoints, Nelle did not condone "giving up when the system needs principals to stay the course to make little changes that create a big difference over the long haul" (Interview 2). She suggested:

> It's very idealistic to say, "At a certain point, I'm going to walk away…" But I don't know many principals who ever took that stand and walked away completely. I have no idea what the breaking point would be for someone to make that decision. (Interview 2)

When Nelle faced dissonance, she focused on intrinsic leadership rewards. She shared, "When you wonder if you're going to get through the conflicting beliefs and mounting piles of paper, some little person pops in with a mushed-up cupcake and you know it's okay." (Interview 2).

Karen, on the other hand, knew her "breaking point" (Interview 3). When expected to conform to a new organizational identity, Karen expressed opposition by

writing letters and making presentations to the Board that outlined reasons for her resistance. Even after receiving several directives to change her leadership style, Karen continued to oppose proposed changes.

> When you are told to compromise what you value, you first resist as best you can…Eventually you might have to agree to compromise or decide to move on. That's the way it is. I am not prepared to compromise my core values for anyone. (Interview 2)

Karen was unsuccessful in her efforts to oppose new organizational goals. After contemplating the consequences of the Board's directive, Karen realized that she was unwilling to succumb to the co-optation of her identity as principal. The dislocation between external demands and the fuller sense of meaning that she placed on her identity was depersonalizing and dehumanizing. Hence, Karen resigned, but was able to assuage the guilt derived from "abandoning these kids and teachers" (Interview 3) by pursuing other avenues to advocate for at-risk youth. Like many teachers, Karen saw her work as a calling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Lortie, 2009, 1975).

Synthesis: The Relationship between Identity and Educational Change

Degrees of Cooperativeness and Assertiveness as Principals Negotiate Demands

Unlike role theory where scripts are pre-defined (Ryan, 2007; Stryker & Burke, 2000), the concept of identity acknowledges the agency of the principal who addresses internal and external pressures by selecting and integrating some demands while resisting others. As previously described, principals assumed many identities as they engaged in a range of social circumstances and activities. Although principals made decisions about who they were and what their schools should be, living one's values and putting ideals into place was seldom straightforward. Principals' responses were influenced by the degree of consonance and dissonance between their identities and multiple demands.

When a degree of congruence existed between principals' identities and external demands, changes were often integrated into existing practices (i.e., assimilation) or resulted in compromise (i.e., symbolic accommodation or compromise based on mutual concession). However, when matters conflicted outright with principals' values, principals often took up a protector-mediator identity when rejecting and communicating external demands as being incomprehensible, irrelevant, or immoral. Principals resisted demands through evidence-based argument, avoidance, or opposition. Thus, the process by which principals negotiated demands was influenced by the degree of consonance or dissonance with principals' assumed identities and pre-existing values, beliefs, and practices (Anderson, 1990; Coburn, 2004; Ryan, 2007).

As depicted in Figure 4, when consonance existed, principals felt that "folks are working from the same page" (Neil, Interview 1). When shared values and vision existed, principals were more amenable to the assimilation of change and were willing to collaborate with others to consider, try, and integrate new practices or adhere to external expectations. Consonance existed and resulted in an atmosphere of cooperation rather than competitiveness. However, a low degree of assertiveness existed as new approaches or knowledge were typically assimilated into pre-existing frameworks for practice, rather than being used as an impetus to interrogate or challenge the status quo. Sustainability of change was limited when little time and space was allocated to thoughtfully engage with new ideas while unlearning long-standing practices.

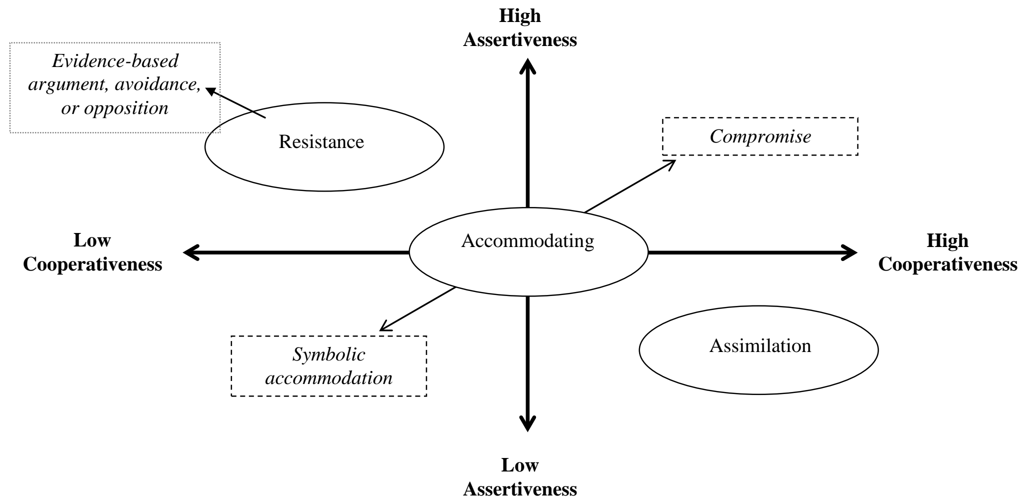

Figure 4. Varying degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness as principals strategically respond to internal and external demands.

On the other hand, principals were more assertive and likely to resist when they experienced dissonance between their identities and external demands. In particular, when assuming the identity of protector, principals demanded recognition of their school's unique needs and enforced claims to their rights or beliefs. When unwilling to cooperate with external mandates, principals demonstrated a high degree of assertiveness as they engaged in evidence-based argument, avoided, or opposed demands conflicting with their values and the school vision (see Figure 4). However, a degree of reciprocity existed as principals gathered evidence to formulate an opposing argument – principals' experiences and beliefs shaped evidence collection and interpretation. Simultaneously, evidence collection had the potential to impact principals' beliefs and challenge taken-for-granted practices. Although Wade often engaged in systematic reviews of research to inform decisions related to which changes to select versus those to reject, most principals hived off crucial from non-

crucial perspectives based on what they heard from like-minded colleagues and on the basis of what they already valued.

Accommodation responses were situated between both high and low levels of cooperation and assertiveness (see Figure 4). If the degree of consonance outweighed dissonance, principals viewed accommodation as compromising that allowed for "a degree of give and take necessary to move the school or the collective forward" (Wade, Interview 2). As distributed forms of leadership and collaborative processes were increasingly leveraged to achieve organizational goals, principals found that intensified dialogic relations required them to adapt to others' values and interests. Principals continually adjusted their identities as external constraints and pressures required lower values or priorities to be compromised over more salient identities (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

While the most enduring image of institutional studies of schooling is that school personnel respond to institutional pressures by decoupling themselves from the institutional environment (Firestone & Corbett, 1988; Meyer & Rowan, 1977), the principals in this study rarely spoke about symbolic responses beyond what has been described in this chapter. Symbolic accommodation generally occurred when principals were reluctant to cooperate with institutional pressures, but were unwilling to assert themselves on a given issue at a particular time (see Figure 4). Principals were less inclined to accommodate pressures that sacrificed higher values and salient identities for lower ones (e.g., James and Neil supported several change initiatives but were unwilling to sacrifice personal health or family relationships). When principals perceived threats to themselves or other school members (e.g., changed reporting requirements), principals often assumed a protector-caregiver identity while

symbolically accommodating external demands as necessary to create the appearance of change.

How internal and external demands were filtered through principals' existing beliefs and practices was similar to studies focusing on how teachers respond to institutional pressures (Coburn, 2004; Oliver, 1991). While Oliver (1991) outlined a range of teachers' strategic responses to institutional pressures, including compromise, avoidance, defiance, and manipulation, her work assumed only top-down imposition of institutional change. However, as suggested in Chapter 6, these principals were confronted by demands from senior administrators and policy makers "above" them in the educational hierarchy (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), as well as facing other demands as a result of existing and new relationships with parents, community agencies, business partnerships and universities. Thus, principals' strategic responses influenced and were influenced by interactive and reciprocal relations with others.

Principal agency and autonomy related, in many ways, to conceptualizations of teacher agency and autonomy. For example, Lortie (1975) claimed that there are norms of autonomy that grant teachers a high degree of discretionary decision making in regard to classroom practice; thus, portraying teachers as having agency to determine practice and construct their identities. Similarly, these principals purported having agency and autonomy in regard to identity formation and leadership practice. But on the other hand, institutional theory offers a different perspective on teaching and leading whereby the agency of individual actors is delimited as the environment shapes and dictates individual behaviour and collective action (in 2000, this "overly socialized" [p. 32] view of actors and deterministic view of the environment was criticized by Scott, Ruef, Mendel and Caronna). In the present study, my analysis

illuminated how principals, like teachers, lived and worked on the middle ground between these two positions. Principals were active agents who had autonomy to form identities as they negotiated tension within internal and external environments; however, identity formation and responses to change were bound by environmental and regulatory pressures that limited decision making and created pressure for principals to respond in particular ways.

Overall, when a degree of consonance was perceived, principals' identities and new approaches were experienced as constructive, creative, energizing, fulfilling, and worthwhile. Similar to claims in the contemporary educational literature (Beatty, 2000; Blackmore, 2004, 1997, 1996; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Thomson, 2004), these six principals experienced emotional strain, exhaustion, disillusionment, and resentment when they compromised their values for demands that were incongruent with whom they were or wanted to be as school principals. When confronted by conflicting demands, James explained, "You just close the door and gather yourself, remind yourself of who you are and what is important, and come back out with a smile on your face and carry on" (Interview 1).

In addition to sense making, identity was a quest for perceived consistency or continuity of characteristics over time which performed a crucial function in governing decision-making and leadership choices (Warin et al., 2006). Even Nelle's description of being "chameleon-like" (Interview 2) depicted a principal who saw herself as an integrated and ordered being in which salient identities held constant despite surface-level adaptations to external demands. Innovation, in and of itself, undermined and even threatened principals' established identities (Ball, 1986).

At times, when principals were confronted with excessive demands that compromised their values, they attempted to "fit" into the identity standards held by

others (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Tooms et al., 2010). For instance, Carrie tried to "portray [her]self as a calm, objective, and level-headed principal who has everything under control" (Interview 2). Attempts to fit stereotypical identities of a school leader were problematic as multiple identities were often in competition (Tooms et al., 2010). Carrie was especially forthcoming about being sandwiched between conflicting expectations to be a manager versus a desire to be an instructional leader:

> Senior admin clearly wanted somebody that could handle some pretty heavy issues. So that has clearly defined my role. They say, "We have concerns. We don't think that this teacher is good."…As I work through things, it's not going to come out the way they'd like because I don't see the issues they're seeing. (Interview 1)

Principals' self-understanding influenced, and was influenced by, the perceptions that others held about the principalship.

As principals tried to lead in ways they were not, they protected what they saw as a private, more authentic identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Tooms et al., 2010). Even though principals assumed a mediator identity to communicate change mandates, the identity of protector tended to be most salient as principals continuously protected the school vision and remind others of what values they personally and professionally stood for. When Carrie shared new district initiatives, she would "let the staff know that I don't like the change, but then ask how they can help us move forward" (Interview 2). Principals buffered themselves from the conflicting views by discrediting the competence and authority of the source of change. For example, James described senior administrators and the Ministry as "out of touch" and "consumed by their own agenda" (Interview 2). In other cases, principals spent time with cadres of like-minded confidantes (usually other principals who were customarily sympathetic and supportive) to discuss burdensome problems, in addition to "laying low" (Nelle, Interview 1) so that senior administrators would be

less likely to intervene in day-to-day school matters. By filtering out some of the dissonance experienced, each of these strategic responses allowed principals “to be true to yourself” (Wade, Interview 3). Despite principals’ best efforts to alleviate dissonance, differences in opinion still managed to frustrate and “get to” principals (Karen, Interview 3).

In the eyes of these principals, pressures to fit prescribed identity standards impacted career satisfaction, motivation, and job security (Anderson, 1990; Ball, 1994; Poole, 2007; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Tooms et al., 2010). When others’ expectations thoroughly conflicted with the identities principals lived or the higher-level values they aspired to, some principals distanced themselves from the role that they held (i.e., the principalship). During our last interview (when Karen told me that she had resigned), it appeared that she had come to terms with an unanticipated career change by seeing herself as a compilation of identities – rather than overly identifying with the professional identity standard held by others. She shared:

> My identity was once completely tied into this school and what I was doing here. That’s not healthy. Being a principal is not the totality of your identity, it’s what you do. Identity is who you are and all the roles we play – it is being a principal, wife, mother and friend. The principalship is not you, because when you lose the principalship and eventually you might, change would be an easier if it wasn’t your sole identity. (Karen, Interview 3)

In this way, Karen choreographed an understanding of self based on the integration of the differing facets of her personal life and work (Tooms et al., 2010). In reacting and formulating a response to demands for a leadership style that was incommensurate with her values, Karen developed a richer, more authentic understanding of who she was and wanted to be. As suggested by Stryker and Burke (2000), not all identities are equal in value and importance –

because some identities were more salient in given situations, they held more significance and power than others.

A Micro-Political Perspective Related to Principals' Responses to External Demands

Being the formal leader, principals asserted, entailed having moral responsibility and a claim as to what was worthwhile or important within their schools. These principals were charged with making decisions because of the expertise they had typically gained over many years. They were appointed to the principalship, usually, because they demonstrated a variety of skills, including the ability to consider multiple perspectives. However, through the course of the interviews it became apparent, particularly in smaller urban centres or rural communities, that micro-politics played into school leadership appointment processes.

How each participant was appointed to the principalship influenced, to some extent, how they responded to outside pressures. For example, assuming the principalship after being tapped on the shoulder as a first-year teacher, Karen still identified with and advocated for teacher needs. With limited instructional experience, Karen drew on inclusive leadership approaches to capitalize on the strengths of school members. Karen predominantly assumed the identity of awakener-teacher-learner as she engaged in organizational design, meaning making, and problem solving. In particular, the centrality of a learner identity resulted in Karen downplaying her authority and positional power. Hence, Karen was highly amenable to compromises based on understanding and including of others' viewpoints, values and interests.

Wade, on the other hand, moved from teacher, to department head, to assistant principal, and then principal. After participating in a variety of leadership and mentorship programs offered by his jurisdiction, Wade had developed strong relationships with senior administrators; in fact, senior administrators and other principals were perceived as being like-minded. Over the years, Wade engaged in a number of defining, shared social experiences (e.g., mentoring, leadership preparation, and professional development) with senior administrators and other principals. Socialization practices facilitated normative identity formation (i.e., principal as awakener-teacher-learner) and shared values among district members, potentially reducing the likelihood of resistance among school leaders. For example, when asked about when and how he resisted external pressures, Wade was similar to the other principal participants when he emphasized how supportive his district was. He appeared reluctant to identify any issues. Thus, individualist theories of identity that purport individuals choose who they are and who they might be could be problematic as they gave little consideration to the political influences that shape principals' identity formation and subsequent responses to institutional pressures (Ball, 1987; Hoover & Klintbjer, 2004). The process of identity formation inevitably had consequences on the potentiality of identity responses.

Thus, organizational politics and power (e.g., as manifested through concepts of control, influence, cooperation and collaboration) accounted for principals' leadership approaches, strategic responses to demands, and educational change outcomes (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991; Blase & Blase, 2002a). On an ongoing basis, principals made decisions based on what they perceived as needing to happen in their schools. Because of the power they held, principals framed information and decision making under the guise of protecting others from distracting or educationally-

unsound initiatives. Even when decisions were brought to the staff for debate, principals controlled or "steer[ed] the talk" (Nelle, Interview 2) in meetings (Ball, 1987). As protectors, principals developed a rationale for their actions by purporting to have expertise to determine "the best interests of the school" (Nelle, Interview 1). Despite espousing distributed and democratic leadership approaches, principals were strategic players (Ball, 1987; Collinson, 2005b; Hatcher, 2005) who both consciously and unconsciously dominated decision-making related to school improvement. Responses to change were often made with minimal involvement of teachers and other school members (Anderson, 1990; Ball, 1987).

Interestingly, principals rarely critiqued how positional power afforded unequal opportunities to determine responses to differing demands. Principals exercised power, even in the absence of dissent or grievance, or as they ignored or avoided pressures to change (Mumby, 2001). In fact, doing nothing (e.g., ignoring educational trends, avoiding specific funders, or buffering teachers from certain ideas) was a choice that principals could make on the basis of the authority and positional power they wielded as they stepped into their identity as protectors of school vision. Although there may be a tendency to view principals' inaction as nothing happening, the strategic choice to avoid a directive or ignore change impacted the day-to-day construction of school improvement (Ball, 1987; Mumby, 2001).

Despite the purported value of participatory leadership approaches by all principals, it was only Wade and Karen who explicitly spoke about needing to be reflexive about responses to external demands. Wade explained how principals "can't wear blinders as you negotiate between what you see as best for the students and the community and what you selfishly see as a powerful individual within your sphere of

influence" (Interview 3). Karen argued for principals to be "open-minded to what others believe and want. These considerations need to account for the ways we cope with or react to change" (Interview 2). Wade, however, was the only principal who specifically articulated how he reflected on his "underlying intentions:"

> I ask myself, "What were some critical decisions I made today? What may I want to do differently? Why did I choose one course of action over another? Did someone or some group benefit over another? Why? Am I being fair and equitable, or am I letting certain voices have more influence than they should over the whole school?" (Interview 3)

For the most part, responses to various pressures were often guided by principals' efforts to ensure legitimacy and cohesion (Ball, 1987) at the expense of reflexivity (Ryan, 2007).

Consequently, it was not surprising to learn that principals did not extol the function and healthy benefit of conflict within organizational life (Ball, 1987). Although principals saw themselves as mediator-problem solvers who devoted time to dealing with resistance and conflict, such work was often viewed as "par-for-the-course" or "fighting fires" (Carrie, Interview 1). Underscoring this rhetoric was an understanding that conflict was inevitable and resulted in "unavoidable maintenance rather than as an investment in school improvement" (Lortie, 2009, p. 144). Although espousing the need for "debate, conflict, and challenging questions to see other options and to see how changing practices systematically impacts others" (Neil, Interview 2), data analysis elucidated how principals were typically preoccupied with creating a harmonious school culture unified by shared vision. Resistance responses were intent on blocking ideas or practices that would disrupt cohesion. Caught between the competing demands of various individuals and groups, while concerned with promoting harmony and ensuring the legitimacy of the school, principals failed

to consider how they might shape their identities in ways that leveraged conflict to generate new possibilities for school improvement.

Because problems of practice were often viewed as idiosyncratic, principals relied heavily on intuition. Hence, gathering and analyzing evidence to promote new ways of doing and being was not always the norm – rather, knowledge sharing was leveraged as political strategy to convince others of the merits or limitations of certain values or concerns. Resistance through argumentation increasingly required school principals to serve as mediators who were adept at political bargaining to advance their own or school interests. In promoting selected viewpoints, principals inadvertently silenced school members who held alternative perspectives.

Overall, these six principals seemed acutely aware of the political nature of their work. Principals cited many examples of convincing others of one meaning or ideological system over another (Gramsci, 1971; Mumby, 2001). Yet, as suggested by Connelly and Clandinin (1999), principals were similar to teachers in that principals philosophically opposed institutional mandates that distracted from core teaching and learning functions (e.g., "high-stakes" testing). When core values were at stake, principals experienced "cognitive dissonance" (Warin et al., 2006); that is, a disruption or interruption in identity. Resistance responses were often generated as a reaction to cognitive dissonance.

However, principals painted a grim reality of individual resistance – particularly when mistrust existed between principals and senior administrators. When Neil "was told I'm not a team player because I ask questions" (Interview 2), he was reluctant to enact strategies of individual resistance. Although principals' authority allowed them to participate in public debate, collective forms of resistance were the preferred means of entering formal discussions predicated on competing

interests and ideologies. For example, Neil shared, “I am not quiet about this, neither are my colleagues. Only together can we keep pushing to know who benefitted from this money so we can improve transparency in the system” (Interview 2). Whereas Connelly and Clandinin (1999) suggested that a pervasive “sense of individualism” (p. 174) exists among principals as they negotiate expectations in the educational hierarchy or conduit, these principals illuminated the benefit of the “greater collective working to assess where we were and where we should be heading” (Wade, Interview 2).

Within their respective schools, principals focused on articulating the values that were integral to their identities and subsequent practice. However, as principals-beyond-schools, these participants gained influence by networking or courting influential stakeholders within an interactive web of social relations. There was a strong sense that principals were more willing question, critique and oppose sanctioned innovation when standing with other colleagues who shared similar values. The likelihood of being silenced or punished for resistance was diminished when principals banded together to debate ideas and achieve goals. Cognitive dissonance was alleviated as principals found comfort and an improved sense of self worth by forsaking individualism for collaborative and collective forms of resistance.

Ironically, even though principals held authority, the promise of change was limited by what was viewed as acceptable and desired by others (e.g., parents, senior administrators, Ministry, and external funders). In this way, principals experienced similar dilemmas to those of teachers as “their positions are still those of doing or not going what is prescribed for them” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 173). As in most formal organizations, an authority system existed within each of the districts I visited. Arguably, the positional power of the principals was diminished compared to the

authority of senior administrators or Ministry officials. As organizational designers, principals relied heavily on the resources provided to them by others. School leadership, therefore, depended upon the principal's cooperation with those holding concentrated authority (Ball, 1987). Hence, principals relied extensively on relationship building and persuasion as the means to garner resources and support for their schools. This dependency limited principals' professional autonomy and ability to engage in public critique or resistance. Although principals held enough positional power to enact smaller improvements, they lacked power to institute major changes that broke from prevailing ideologies (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Lortie, 2009).

Paradoxically, principals accomplished the goals of the organization and reinforced dominant ideologies even though they felt somewhat at odds with the system. For example, when principals assumed a mediator-problem solver identity, they focused on containing and removing any problem that was potentially disruptive to school operations. Pragmatic problem solving typically squelched differing perspectives. Moreover, the fast pace of school life left little time for reflective and reflexive dialogue. Hence, principals had few opportunities to think about or uncover pervasive conflict or institutional injustices (e.g., systematic marginalization or exclusion of certain individuals and groups through alternative program offerings).

For the most part, principals were always on-call and available for action, as evident in the long hours they spent at school. As each problem was addressed, the enactment of a problem solving identity often resulted in the alignment of principals' leadership practice and actions with the expectations senior administrators and the long-standing norms of the system. Moreover, as principals reminded teachers of institutional obligations (e.g., expectation to sign pre-established professional growth plans) or professional requirements (e.g., to attend district professional development

days and follow up with prescribed best practices), principals dealt with teachers and others supposedly "beneath" them in the educational hierarchy in a manner that was remarkably similar to how they were dealt with by senior administrators above them. It was ironic that principals unconsciously perpetuated and reinforced the very system which contributed to the dissonance that principals themselves experienced (Ball, 1987; Wolcott, 1972).

Chapter Synthesis

Although the concept of role and its determining qualities aligned well within 1950s to 1980s environments of predictability and control (Hoy & Miskel, 1987), analysis of principals' perceptions elucidated how static views of the principalship fail to consider how principals interact with and strategically respond to internal and external demands. Consideration of leadership through the concept of identity affords a more realistic perspective that acknowledges principals' agency (i.e., degree of cooperation and assertiveness) and ability to address change.

Dynamic contexts place new and competing demands on the principalship. When a degree of consonance existed between principals' identities and external demands, principals often assimilated new ideas or approaches within the existing school vision and accompanying practices. However, when principals were confronted with pressures that were different or appeared to conflict with established ways of being, principals were reluctant to change. In such cases, principals accommodated change either by symbolic response or compromise. Symbolic accommodation involved surface-level responses, decoupled from core leadership and instructional practices, that created the optic of change. On the other hand, compromise involved restructuring underlying assumptions and practices to

accommodate new perspectives or ideas. The degree that change was voluntary and the extent of flexibility and time afforded for implementation and unlearning old practices determined how willing principals were to accommodate changes that were not always commensurate with their identities and values.

Identity was activated particularly when dissonance occurred. Principals generally assumed protector and mediator identities when resisting change through evidence-based argument, avoidance or opposition strategies. Practical field-based data and scholarly research were often gathered and used to promote or defend principals' interests. Other times, principals strategically abstained from or ignored prescribed demands in an effort to delay or even sabotage mandated changes. However, principals both individually and collectively made efforts to oppose practices that were perceived as harmful to students or put more salient values and practices at risk. When principals experienced significant dissonance between their identities and demands for change, they faced personal (e.g., well-being, motivation, and career satisfaction) and professional (e.g., reprimand, reassignment, or loss of principal designation) repercussions.

As formally-designated leaders, principals held positional power that allowed them to negotiate demands for change differently than other school members. Micro-politics were evident as principals decided which changes would be selected or rejected, and if selected, how changes would be implemented and sustained. Principals' identities and accompanying values influenced the degree to which their schools changed or remained the same. As depicted earlier, in Figure 4, principals' responses to change were influenced by the degree of consonance and dissonance with principals' assumed identities and their pre-existing values, beliefs, and practices. For the most part, consonance existed or resulted in high levels of

cooperation from principals. However, principals exhibited low levels of cooperativeness and increased assertiveness (i.e. resistance) to changes that conflicted with their identities and values. Thus, principals had the power to strategically respond to internal and external demands. Responses varied in degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness depending on the extent that the demand aligned with principals' salient identities and values.

These competing identities resulted in ambiguity, contradictions, and dilemmas for principals. Although principals were expected to be innovative change agents, they were simultaneously held accountable and rewarded for preserving the legitimacy of their schools and the larger system. Thus, principals struggled to be perceived as innovative and creative while maintaining school cohesion. Based on these findings and those outlined in the previous chapters, a synthesis of this study and its implications for practice, policy, and the future research related to the school principalship will be offered in the final chapter.

Chapter Eight – Overview of Study, Synthesis of Findings, Implications and Compelling Questions, and Final Reflections

"What does this all mean? How will this experience change the way I will live out my next principalship?" These questions are taken up in this final chapter which synthesizes the findings related to each of the research questions and presents implications and compelling questions related to practice, policy and future study of school leadership and educational change.

Overview of the Study

Purpose and Significance of the Study

There appears to be growing consensus that educational reform and school improvement efforts have changed the nature of school leadership by altering the knowledge, skills and attitudinal dispositions required by school principals (Adams & Copland, 2007; Armstrong, 2004; Elmore, 2000; Murphy & Louis, 1999; Wallace et al., 2007). However, the contemporary literature provides limited insight into how educational change impacts and builds on the identity of the school principals who are centrally involved in change (Seashore-Louis et al., 1999). Vague understanding of these identities and how these meanings relate to improving schools and responding to change were central to the purpose of this study:

1. *What is the relationship between principal identity and educational change?*
   a. *What are the identities that principals assume as they engage in educational change?*
   b. *How do principals address consonance and dissonance between their identities and internal and external demands?*

The theoretical significance and the contribution of this study can be understood in terms of a call for new perspectives on leadership for educational change (Hargreaves et al., 2009; Lortie, 2009; Seashore-Louis et al, 1999). Moreover,

this study offers original insights into school micropolitics that are largely understudied by educational administration and leadership scholars (Anderson, 1990; Ball, 1987).

Methodology

The methodological direction of this qualitative study has been influenced by a relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Data were collected primarily through individual semi-structured interviews (Stake, 2000. Data analysis occurred during data collection and after data collection had been completed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2008). Through thematic analysis, I coded and categorized data according to patterns and emergent themes (Creswell, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mertens, 2005).

This study drew upon Lincoln and Guba's (1985) seminal work to establish trustworthiness. Credibility was established by engaging in multiple interviews that allowed for numerous opportunities to capture salient issues and note divergent information (Guba, 1981). Member checks corroborated my interpretations from the individual interviews with participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Since the onus is placed on the reader to determine the degree of transferability, the verbatim words of the participants were used throughout this dissertation (Mertens, 2005, p. 256). To increase dependability, a case record was created to trace this study from the initial research questions through to data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2008). In the interests of confirmability, regular peer debriefings allowed for consideration of new perspectives and presented opportunities to challenge biases (Guba, 1981). Continued use of a researcher's journal also supported my own practice of reflection and reflexivity.

Synthesis of Findings

The insights of the six participants, as well as my own lived experiences, contributed to the following synthesis of findings related to the research questions posed and informed my reflections about the relationship between principal identity and educational change.

What are the identities that principals assume as they engage in educational change?

Change demanded multiple ways of being and responding. Principals' response to "who I am" and "how I behave" within changing contexts was influenced by their identities and values (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Ryan, 2007). How principals interpreted their identities varied and was negotiated through principals' belonging to particular communities (Wenger, 1998) and engaging ongoing dialogic relations with others in a complex web of interactions. Participation in this web of interactions depended upon and reinforced the possession of particular identities. Principals came to see openings for different identity potentials based on a number of factors (e.g., institutional values, norms, and policies). Principals often gauged their identity and presentation of self in ways that would be accepted by others and their institutions.

The study findings suggested that principals' professional identities may be less coherent (Hoover & Klintbjer, 2004; Stryker & Burke, 2000), but not nearly as fluid as other researchers have claimed (Britzman, 2003; Collinson, 2005b). Generally, principals assumed four unique and salient identities as they negotiated educational change: (a) organizational architect (including visionary and analyst sub-identities), (b) mediator (including disseminator, meaning maker, and problem solver sub-identities), (c) awakener (including teacher and learner sub-identities), and (d)

protector (including caregiver and advocate sub-identities). Although these identities were described here within discrete categories, the categories were in no way mutually exclusive. As principals negotiated change, they assumed multiple identities simultaneously; however, the salience of principals' identities changed over time as they found themselves in new relationships or situations, or as a result of reflective processes.

As organizational architects, principals crafted how their schools existed within natural, dynamic environments. Principals slowly and steadily influenced school members toward a defined direction. Principals determined which changes were workable in relation to the school's vision and the degree of change that could be tolerated in their local contexts. Situational awareness and data analysis afforded a greater sense of school improvement priorities.

Principals also served as mediators or their schools' primary meaning makers. Disseminating information and facilitating knowledge sharing was a priority; however, principals were selective about what was shared and often filtered information deemed distracting or contentious. Whereas clarification entailed the clear and timely articulation of expectations towards goal attainment, interpretation involved making sense of the intent of others' viewpoints or external mandates. Principals assumed meaning maker-problem solver identities to mediate and understand differing perspectives and values that could jeopardize the reputation of being a cohesive, collaborative and peaceful school.

Principals also stepped into an awakener identity. The quest for understanding and life-long learning resonated with these participants. Being a teacher and principal were viewed as continuous in regard to specific goals, responsibilities, and values. In assuming a teacher identity, principals served as role models while teaching,

participating in professional development, and enrolling in graduate studies. As they engaged in these activities and diverse communities of practice, principals were awakened to new learning and skill development. As learners, principals embraced distributed leadership – negating the notion of "principal as expert" and allowing for different school members to lead when and where they had expertise.

Ultimately, principals saw themselves as protectors. To protect people and safe-guard resources, principals were selective as to which changes were selected or ignored. As caregivers, principals precariously balanced support with pressure to improve practice. Principals also served as advocates who showcased their schools' achievements, lobbied for local needs, and championed causes of personal and professional importance.

Although principals saw themselves foremost as protectors of people and organizational practices, principals intuitively self-organized these identities into a hierarchy of importance. Often, the salience of a principal's identity reflected a commitment to "the role relationships requiring that identity" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286). The more connected principals were to others on the basis of possessing a particular identity, the more salient the identity and the greater degree to which that identity would be activated (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Mismatches between a principal's self-relevant meaning of identity and the standard held by others led to increased discrepancy and negative emotions.

Both smaller changes and large-scale reform influenced leadership practices and behaviours central to principals' self images. Since what was deemed workable within schools was largely defined by principals' identities, a micropolitical perspective elucidated how principals' identities were derived from access to sources of organizational power (Ball, 1987). Because principals had formal authority and

positional power to bring increased attention to alternative stories or accounts of problems, school members' commitment to the principal's vision for school improvement was often explicitly secured (Ball, 1987; Hatcher, 2005). Principals "planted seeds" with influential teachers or rewarded teachers who willingly complied with expectations. When principals were appointed to schools in crisis, control strategies were sometimes leveraged to accelerate visible change toward goal attainment.

Principals held privileged positions which allowed them to manage meaning within their schools. For example, principals determined the nature of communications (i.e., the intent of the message), and to whom and when information would be shared. As mediators, principals were never neutral since both active (e.g., problem solving and addressing conflict) and symbolic forms of mediation (e.g., disseminating, clarifying, and interpreting information) delimited the possibility of agency for other school members (Anderson, 1990; Ryan, 2007). Despite the fact principals' inclusive principles were violated when directed to withhold or "spin" information, principals often presented controversial issues as unproblematic in an effort to maintain legitimacy of their schools and leadership practice. Individuals or groups who supported dominant ideologies or who could enhance the school's reputation were typically safeguarded.

Principals rarely interrogated how identification with organizational goals influenced how they framed and interpreted messages for themselves and others. Hence, principals inadvertently mediated to ensure that the experiences and practices of the school community were consistent with common beliefs about what schools should be doing (e.g., integrating technologies, promoting parental choice, and

improving test scores). Micropolitical analysis shed light on how principals' identities were derived from and strengthened by positional power.

How do principals address consonance and dissonance between their identities and internal and external demands?

As a form of sense making, identity performed a crucial function in governing principals' decision-making and leadership choices. The process by which principals negotiated demands was influenced by the degree of consonance or dissonance with principals' assumed identities and pre-existing values. Study findings illuminated varying degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness as principals strategically addressed internal and external demands through assimilation, accommodation, or resistance responses.

Principals primarily drew on their tacit worldviews and professional assumptions to construct understanding of expectations and the potential consequences to changes in their behaviour. When consonance was perceived, principals' identities and new approaches were experienced as constructive, creative, energizing, and worthwhile. When demands conflicted with principals' values, principals experienced exhaustion, disillusionment, and resentment.

When consonance existed between principals' values and external demands, principals interpreted, transformed, and enacted messages in ways that fit with their existing assumptions and practices. Hence, assimilation responses involved integration of change within current schemas and reinforced long-standing practices. Other times, principals assimilated internal and external demands that they did not fully support in order to avoid scrutiny of senior administrators. In both cases, principals were cooperative in regard to assimilating a given change, but

demonstrated low degrees of assertiveness. Thus, assimilation supported credibility, legitimacy, persistence and continued order.

Principals often adjusted their practice to accommodate new ideas and demands. Accommodation was either a symbolic response or a compromise that entailed restructuring of assumptions about teaching, learning and leading. Accommodation responses were situated between both high and low levels of cooperation and assertiveness. If the degree of consonance outweighed dissonance, compromises that moved others toward the shared vision were viewed as healthy and resulted in an atmosphere of cooperation. However, as principals took up distributed forms of leadership, they were immersed in intensified dialogic relations that required them to accept and adapt to others' interests. In these cases, principals compromised lower values or less salient identities to achieve organizational goals and maintain school cohesion.

Whereas institutional studies of schooling depict school personnel as responding to institutional pressures by decoupling themselves from the institutional environment (Firestone & Corbett, 1988; Meyer & Rowan, 1977), these principals rarely engaged in symbolic responses that were decoupled from core leadership and instructional practices. Symbolic accommodation generally occurred when principals supported change to some degree, but were unwilling to sacrifice higher values and salient identities. When symbolic accommodation occurred, principals created the illusion of change through rhetoric or surface-level change. When principals did not experience significant dissonance between external demands and their values, they rarely expressed dissent.

Accommodation processes tended to be conciliatory if demands were not in flagrant conflict with the principal's values or school vision. In such cases,

compromise served as collaborative problem solving and a means to understanding others' perspectives. Compromise involved acceptance of new practices, restructuring of underlying assumptions, and unlearning past practices. Principals were more willing to compromise when they had autonomy to select practices that supported the school's vision, in addition to determining how the practices would be implemented, assessed and reported. Also, principals accommodated others' preferences to prevent conflict or to comply with mandated directives. Principals were usually assertive and cooperative when they responded through compromise based on mutual concession.

When unwilling to cooperate with or conform to external pressures, principals resisted through evidence-based argument, avoidance, or opposition. Evidence to inform decisions about which demands to select or resist were garnered from many sources, including practical experience, participation in graduate studies, and dialogic interactions. Principals sought out and analyzed evidence to inform meaning making and to influence others regarding alternate courses of action. Although a degree of reciprocity existed between principals' experiences and beliefs and data collection and analysis, most principals identified crucial from non-crucial perspectives based on what they or like-minded colleagues already valued.

Often, the perceived degree of voluntariness influenced principals' responses to external demands. Resistance took many forms and did not always entail active opposition or reaction. When principals were unwilling to compromise salient identities and values, they periodically avoided demands and developed a rationale to defend their lack of compliance.

As principals shared examples of resistance, the identity of protector tended to be most salient. Principals continuously protected the school vision and remind others of what values they personally and professionally stood for. When the

dislocation between external demands and the fuller sense of meaning that principals' placed on their identities was experienced as disruptive, depersonalized and dehumanized, principals demonstrated high degrees of uncooperativeness and assertiveness as they resisted changes or new messages. Opposition often took the form of knowledge mobilization and lobbying (i.e., persuading others through evidence and argument). Although individual principals had positional power to enact smaller changes within their schools, they lacked the power and political prowess to institute significant changes that broke from dominant practices or prevailing ideologies.

Principals' strategic responses shaped, and were shaped by, interactions with others within an expansive social network. Principals attempted to "fit" the identity standards held by others while protecting what they saw as a private, more authentic identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Tooms et al., 2010). When others' expectations thoroughly conflicted with the identities principals lived or the higher-level values they aspired to, principals resisted by distancing themselves from their role (i.e., in an extreme case, Karen resigned).

Thus, organizational politics and power (manifested through the concepts of cooperation, collaboration, influence, and control) accounted for principals' leadership approaches and strategic responses to change. Principals consciously and unconsciously dominated decision making – positional power was exercised when principals used evidence to justify a change in practice, controlled or steered staff discussions, or buffered others from certain information. Even inaction or avoidance was a strategic choice that principals alone could make. Hence, the identities of the individual principals influenced responses to change and subsequently impacted how other school members experienced change and formulated their own identities.

Principals espoused the importance of reflecting on proposed changes. However, principals rarely appeared to engage in reflexive practices to interrogate how their own identities and subsequent responses to the demands of various individuals and groups might impact educational change. Although principals often felt at odds with the prevailing discourses of educational change, they inadvertently reinforced dominant ideologies and the goals of the organization. Expectations for legitimacy, conformity, and cohesion preoccupied principals' thinking and influenced identity salience. Expected to efficiently and effectively address problems within their local contexts, principals' leadership responses tended to align with the prevailing expectations and long-standing norms of the system.

What is the relationship between principal identity and educational change?

Identity as Wayfinding

This winter, I presented preliminary interpretations from this study at the Hawaii International Conference on Education. As I prepared my presentation, I sought out a metaphor to illustrate theoretical and practical learnings from this study. Initially, I could not find one.

After my presentation, I meandered to Waikiki beach to meet my family. As I waited, I took in the slow start of a glorious Hawaiian sunset – staring at the blackened silhouette of a sailboat weaving back to shore. The principal*ship* is, perhaps, the metaphor that could illustrate the nuances of the relationship between principal identity and educational change.

Being in Polynesia, I kept bumping into the notion of a "wayfinding." As we visited the many historical attractions, I learned about Polynesian methods of navigation that were virtually lost after contact with and colonization by Europeans.

To travel between the nearly 1000 small islands between the Hawaiian Islands, Easter Island and New Zealand, Polynesian navigators used only their senses and the knowledge passed down by oral tradition (often songs) from an experienced navigator to an apprentice. Navigators located directions for different times and days of the year by memorizing important facts related to weather, colour of the sea and sky, cloud formations near the islands, ocean current and wave patterns between chains of islands, the motion of certain stars, and wildlife migration and congregation patterns.

These mysterious Polynesian wayfinding techniques were guild secrets. Each island typically maintained a guild of expert navigators who had a high degree of status, controlled access to exploration techniques and technologies (e.g., outrigger canoe construction methods), and oversaw associations of workers who built or assisted in the sailing of the ships. Guild secrets were closely guarded because in times of famine or inclement weather, navigators made important trades with neighbouring islands to provide aid or means of evacuation.

Many historical attractions depict romanticized pictures of Polynesian navigation – portraying wayfinding as intuitive and collaborative. Long voyages across thousands of miles of open and rough ocean waters depended upon seamanship, teamwork, and navigational expertise. Yet, I was skeptical – wondering how maritime expertise and the settlement of Polynesian might be a result of good luck, drifting aimlessly, and randomly sighting neighbouring islands.

European navigation, in contrast, was portrayed as technical. Sailors relied on specialized knowledge to perform navigational tasks and to precisely chart their course – watching for shorelines during daylight, relying on compasses, sextants and

clocks, and recording directions and timing to account for the location of isolated islands scattered across the Pacific.

I readily admit I am not an expert on maritime navigational methods, nor is my intent to compare and cast judgment on various historical and modern perspectives related to the discovery of Polynesia. Rather, the image of a sailing ship – navigating choppy and changing waters toward an identified or unknown location – has resonated with my experiences and understandings of the relationship between principal identity and educational change.

Whereas contemporary scholarly (Foster et al., 2008; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Spillane, 2006) and professional literature (Eaker et al., 2002; Fullan, 2007 & 2005; Hargreaves et al., 2009; Marzano, 2003) has downplayed the principalship and placed greater emphasis on grassroots or bottom-up efforts as a means to creating and sustaining educational change, the findings from this study suggest that to ignore or minimize the influence of the principal on educational change is problematic. These identities of the principals in this study did, in fact, impact how and to what extent change was fostered or constrained. Principals often assumed identities that allowed them to convince others, at the grassroots level, that there were compelling reasons to pursue a particular vision of school life.

The principal of a school can be likened, in many ways, to the captain of a ship. Both principals and captains hold formal roles that entail specific rights, pre-determined duties, and rules that guide their behaviour. Both have specialized expertise in their respective fields. Held accountable to achieve certain ends, principals are granted legal authority that uniquely positions them to influence which changes are selected or rejected and to determine who is involved in or excluded from decision making related to educational innovation. Even when participatory

leadership approaches are leveraged, the principal ultimately holds the power to determine what leadership is distributed, to whom, and when.

At times, a ship will sail through crystal clear, calm waters to reach its destination. More often than not, the waters are dark, murky, deep, and tumultuous. In a similar vein, the real changes, the changes that may potentially improve educational opportunities for all children, are not simple, clear-cut, and replicable. The real work of the principalship is murky – addressing controversy, interrogating value-laden issues, and thinking imaginatively. Such work is hard, messy, abstract, emotional, and undeniably risky.

Schools, like ships, exist in perpetual motion. Although often depicted as static and resistant to reform, schools and jurisdictions are in a constant state of assimilating, accommodating and resisting new ideas and approaches intent on improving schools. Moreover, principals navigate ever-changing stakeholder interests and expectations. As principals struggle to find their way through the complex, shifting context of school improvement, they essentially engage in wayfinding or what Weick (1994) refers to as “identity construction” (p. 18).

My Revised Conceptual Framework

Educational scholars (Coburn, 2004, 2001; Evans, 2007; Spillane et al., 2002a) are beginning to explore sense making by considering the varying contexts and meanings that educators must frame and interpret to craft their behaviour and practice. My revised understanding of principal identity and educational change is depicted in Figure 5.

Principals enact distinct and overlapping identities to construct meaning of and act upon changes emerging in surrounding environments. Subsequently, the

identity of the principal may influence the school's vision and determined actions (i.e., behaviours of principals and others) taken goal attainment. Principals hold considerable power as new ideas are filtered through the meanings they hold for their roles. Such filtering occurs from the top-down as well as from the bottom-up. The positional power of the principal is particularly evident when innovative ideas brought forth by students, teachers, or parents are either promoted or squashed by the principal who ultimately controls resources and decision making at the school level.

Principals' identities are activated through change, dilemmas, or crises that challenge salient values or identities.Identity construction, for principals, involves making sense of the changes, framing information, and conceptualizing the school's vision through dialogic interactions (see Figure 5). The infinity symbol conceptualizes wayfinding as unbounded complexity and never-ending identity construction. Identity is manifested in the words, behaviours, and actions that shed light on the meaning principals make (Weick, 1995).

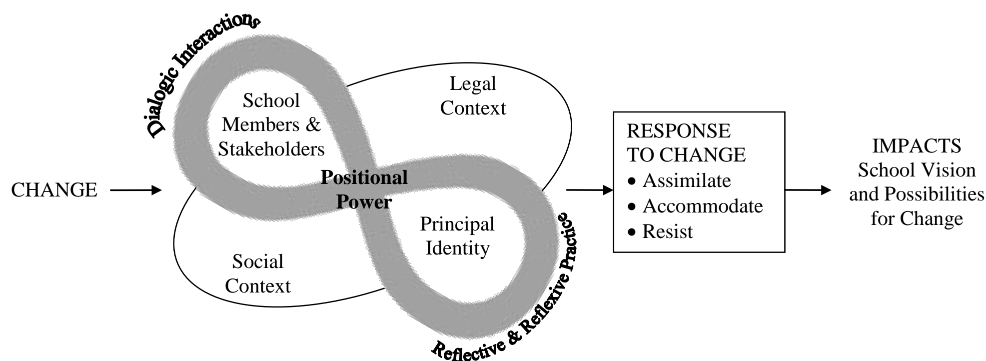

Figure 5. The situated nature and complexity of wayfinding.

Initially, principals interpret the meaning of change for themselves (Spillane et al., 2002a). As principals engage in the process of wayfinding, they enact identities as they interact with others in legal (i.e., legislation and policies which define the principal's role as well as legal responsibilities and liabilities) and social (i.e., the local and organizational culture, social roles, and group affiliations) contexts. Interactions within these contexts allow principals to read meaning into changes. Engagement with others is negotiated through the positional power afforded to principals through the legal-definition of their role, as well as internalized meanings of their role (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

As principals consider new ideas, they determine what to select, emphasize, downplay, or reject in their decision making, communications, and leadership practice. In each situation, principals' assumed identities illuminate certain knowledge and aspects of experience, while down playing or omitting other knowledge and experience from principals' stories of self. Decisions about what to down play or play up (including drawing on research or data to support a particular perspective) are affected by the principal's values, and beliefs stemming from those values. Thus, the salience of the principal's identities figure prominently in the framing and interpretation of change and the construction of leadership practice (see Figure 5). When a degree of consonance exists between a principal's values and external demands, principals are more likely to assimilate or accommodate change. When tension exists between values and organizational ideologies, principals experience dissonance and are more likely to symbolically accommodate or resist change. Coming to terms with change is wayfinding.

Wayfinding integrates both intuitive and technical forms of knowing. Like Polynesian navigators, principals pay close attention to natural signs in the local

environment (e.g., apprenticeship of observation, situational awareness, and knowledge gained from experience). However, similar to modern navigators who use a global positioning system (formerly a sextant) to determine exact latitude measurements, principals also rely on technical knowledge to inform their understanding (e.g., local or externally-generated data, and educational research). But despite all the technology at modern navigators' disposal, they still have to make decisions about routes and whether to challenge the weather on the basis of understanding the limits of the ship and weather patterns (including air and ocean currents). This requires general and localized contextual knowledge. A bad decision can lead to disaster, whereas overly cautious decisions lead to never being able to travel (no risk-taking or innovation). Similarly, principals draw upon technical and intuitive knowledge to inform decision making.

Most captains are surrounded by crew members with varied experiences, expertise, and backgrounds. The synchronous actions of each crew member, as they carry out their specialized tasks, are crucial to moving the ship toward the given location. Principals come to understand what it means *to be a principal* through dialogic relations with others in multiple communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Principals collaborate with educational stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, parents, government officials, senior administrators, community agencies, and business partners) who contribute to school improvement in different ways depending on their needs, expertise and interests. Wayfinding involves identification of available identity potentials within this web of interactions and an ongoing quest to meet the identity standards held by others. When an established identity standard conflicts with a principal's desired identity, wayfinding becomes a reconciliatory process of

creating new stories which allow the principal to come to terms with the dissonance between others' perceptions and his or her own values.

Steering a ship, like moving a school in a particular direction, requires specialized language and practices. It is challenging when crew members misinterpret each other or inadvertently or consciously force the boat off course by shifting their positions or paddling differently. Resistance slows down the progress of the ship. Moreover, the captain who loses the confidence of his or her crew or is unable to maintain their trust in his or her abilities could find himself or herself in the middle of a mutiny. Similarly, if a principal encounters resistance from stakeholders, or if the stakeholders hold greater influence and authority than the principal (e.g., Minister of Education or Superintendent), the principal's influence over change efforts may diminish. In contrast, positional power is reinforced and strengthened and the change process is smoother and expedited, if principals garner stakeholder support toward common goals (akin to the crew and captain sailing in a common direction). Without social trust and a shared vision between principals and stakeholders, change is unlikely to occur and be sustained.

Thus, wayfinding is complex, political work. The myriad of stakeholder interests and organizational contexts surrounding schools provide principals with social, cultural, ideological, and political cues that signify patterns of meaning. As principals encounter and engage with these cues, information about stakeholder interests and experiences with change are interpreted and self-verified (through reflective and reflexive practice) to guide actions and behaviour. As Anderson (1990) argued, mediation of multiple cues and change messages, often in conflict and competition with one another, is a significant challenge for school leaders.

Although identity impacts any leader's sense-making, identity is of particular significance for principals whose professional actions and the consequences of these actions fall under the scrutiny and accountability of senior administrators, government, and the general public. Principals pay close attention to changes that put their own, the school's, or the organizational identity at risk. This concurs with Weick's (1995) premise that "meaning that is actually sustained socially from among alternatives tends to be the one that reflects favorably on the organization and one that also promotes self-enhancement, efficacy, and consistence" (p. 21).

Just as a captain is expected to follow a pre-determined course to arrive at a specific destination in an allotted period of time, expectations for consensus, "fit," and legitimacy limit and even disregard the role that a principal's leadership *can* and *should have* towards improving schools. As principals assume a protector identity, they may unconsciously make sense of change in ways that support and reflect long-standing organizational values, ideologies, or other key features of the local environment (e.g., stakeholder expectations). Socialization practices (e.g., preparation programming, professional development, and mentoring) that focus on pre-established practices, policies, legislation, and local norms potentially confine the degree that principals are able to take risks and seek new possibilities for change.

The salience of the organizational culture to perpetuate or limit change also influences how principals construct meaning and respond to change. As principals conform to external pressures, they may inadvertently perpetuate and legitimize existing organizational activities and visions of schooling by gravitating to long-standing practices over those that might provoke new perspectives, conflict, or increased surveillance (Anderson, 1990; Ball, 1987; Ryan, 207).

Despite the great influence organizational contexts have on those who work in them, Greenfield's (1991) claim that organizations are created through human intention and decision-making reflects how principals' identities also shape the organizational context. Wayfinding reflects Stryker and Burke's (2000) explanation of how "the relation of social structures to identities influences the process of self-verification, while the process of self-verification creates and sustains social structures" (p. 284). Thus, wayfinding, as a process of identity construction, has important consequences for educational change.

Wayfinding involves sensemaking through intentional and purposeful reflective and reflexive thinking that may occur or be provoked in the context of daily practice and interactions, within principal preparation and professional development, and through onsite action research or graduate coursework. Through these different interactions and activities, principals discover, improvise, and adapt who they are as principals. Interpretations of change are formulated and nuanced understandings of self are nurtured as principals listen attentively, are open to diverse perspectives, welcome conflict, ask questions (see Table 4), and take risks.

Table 4. Sample reflective and reflexive questions for principals' consideration.

Reflective and Reflexive Questions for Principals Concerned with the Relationship between Their Identities and Educational Change
• How is my leadership behaviour motivated or interpreted by my identity? How do my values shape how I view change? • Which identity is most salient in this situation and why? How does my emotional reaction yield insight into the salience of identity in this situation? How does the salience of my identity support or limit change? • How does my response to change (i.e., assimilation, accommodation, and resistance) preserve or challenge status quo practices? • Who benefits or loses when I assume certain identities? • Are my espoused theories aligned with theories-in-use? • Have I interpreted a given change as intended by policy makers or senior administrators? Why or why not?

- Whose identity "fits" or conflicts with my own? How do I respond to the diverse identities I encounter?
- What pressures do I put on others to align with new organizational identities?
- How and when do I exercise positional power? How does my positional power impact how others experience change?
- How do I negotiate tension, contradiction, and ambiguity?
- How do I address role conflict and discontinuity?
- What theoretical frameworks inform my understanding of this situation? What other lenses might be used to gain more nuanced understanding of this situation?
- How do my leadership practices and processes enable others to contribute fully within school decision-making processes? Which practices exclude others from decisions about change?

Having a futuristic orientation is essential to wayfinding. Moving towards a vision for the future is like tacking. A sailboat can't move towards its destination when facing the wind directly. However, with careful observation and teamwork, the boat can be navigated to jog back and forth using the "head-on" wind to provide power to a desired location. Wayfinding is like using tacking to reach a goal. The process of coming to understand *who one is as a principal* and *who one should be as a principal* is not straightforward – rather, learning with and from others and engaging in reflective and reflexive practice helps principals to find their way in the principalship. Through wayfinding, principals engage in the personal knowing, political activism, and sustainability practices necessary for school improvement.

Researcher's Reflections – Returning to the Principalship

Four years ago, I returned to academia and readily identified with being a student and researcher. Whether attending my own classes, teaching undergraduate students, or presenting at academic conferences, I still saw and introduced myself as a teacher and principal. Assuming both student and researcher identities built on my existing identities and construction of myself as a human being, teacher, and school leader. However, during my leave, I received a letter from my school district

confirming that in seeking an additional year of leave, I had to forfeit my designation as "Principal" within our jurisdiction. The letter indicated that I could return to the district, in 2010, as "Teacher."

Over the last year, I realized that losing the designation of "Principal" was merely the removal of a positional title from my employee file. Even though my designated role and title ceased to exist on paper, my identity as a principal remained. In assuming the new identities of student and researcher, I did not relinquish who I was. I came to understand how identity is not bestowed upon me – rather, my identity is built like wayfinding – that is, derived from my values, beliefs, learning experiences, and reflective and reflexive thinking. Next fall, I will enact and live a new story as a teacher and school leader. But for now, I choose to render myself vulnerable to share my final reflections about how I have changed as a result of this research.

Finding my Way to Where I Began

For months now, I have contemplated what this study means for me as I find my way back to the principalship. Initially, I feared that I had lost my way. My understanding of what it means to be a principal was disrupted. Extensive reading, dialogue, and research has challenged my understanding of what it means to be a "good" principal. Despite priding myself in being a reflective school leader, the learning from my Doctoral studies opened my eyes to facets of the principalship that I had never recognized or considered before. This learning left me questioning if I even had the necessary skills and courage to be the kind of principal I aspired to be.

Little did I know, this was a journey of self-discovery. I was not travelling to a distant land. Rather, my learning was leading me back to where I had started – a

place that had once called for me. A place where I could make a genuine and positive difference in the lives of others. Ironically, four years later, I am arriving back where I began. But I return differently.

As I head to a new school, I do not have a sure-fire plan for what I want to do and achieve. I anticipate doing a lot of tacking in the upcoming months. I imagine myself in a process of constant reinterpretation as I work with school members to formulate a vision for the future. Change, I now understand, is a journey of improvisation that depends on the interactions between my identity and the identities of others within varying contexts. Change, I think, becomes more poignant when discovered between the waves.

Supporting Change through "I Will" Commitments and Reflective and Reflexive Practice

As I return to the principalship, I aspire to many "*I will*" commitments that represent my new-found appreciation for the potentiality obscured by murky, wavy waters.

So…*I will* spend less time with paper and more time building relationships characterized by mutual respect and trust. *I will* listen attentively to others' stories and lived experiences. *I will* harness conflict to garner new and diverse perspectives and as a means of sparking creativity and innovation. *I will* strive for an expansive and participatory practice of leadership that ensures that all school members contribute to the school's vision and goals. *I will* engage in purposeful, reflexive practice to interrogate how the identities I assume are derived from and further strengthened by the legal definition and positional power I hold as a formal school leader. *I will* not strive for perfection – learning to accept ambiguity and refraining

from unrealistic binary thinking (e.g., local and global, right and wrong, theory and practice, and self and other). *I will* allocate resources and seek processes that support a culture that encourages learning, research, and risk taking. *I will* slow down to better understand the local and organizational contexts and processes by which change is accomplished. *I will* elevate the importance of individual and collective reflection, reflexivity, and learning as a means to developing practice and sustaining change. But most importantly, *I will* lead with integrity, courage, tenacity, and hope – upholding my responsibility to serve in the best interests of children.

In articulating what *I will* do, I aim to integrate the theoretical learning gleaned from this study into my practice. Murkiness will be unavoidable. Wayfinding, therefore, will require an openness to learning what the murky waters are about to teach me[13].

Implications and Compelling Questions

Despite decades of research within the field of educational administration and leadership, there is still much to learn and understand about the principalship. In addition to practicing principals charged with school improvement, there are many others who are concerned, in one way or another, with leadership for educational change (including those who select and prepare principals, professional development designers and facilitators, policy makers, senior administrators, and educational scholars). Here, I offer a sampling of possible implications and compelling questions for the reader's consideration.

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[13] After writing this section of about the notion of "way finding," I came across Wade Davis' (2009) book, "The Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World." Davis describes how a number of Indigenous cultures and worldviews are in threat of extinction.

For school principals, other school leaders, and aspirant principals

School principals, aspirant principals, and others (e.g., assistant principals, curriculum coordinators, and department heads) engaged in the practice of school leadership are urged to:

1. Critically appraise research or professional books that promote "recipes" for effective leadership practice. As suggested by Leithwood and Duke (1999), principals enact different leadership approaches, or combinations of approaches, when confronted with external demands for change. These principals continually considered and adjusted their identities, and subsequently their leadership practice, according to their values and specific contextual circumstances. Hence, one-size-fits-all approaches to leadership fail to consider the highly personal nature of wayfinding.
2. Take time to understand the identities of others within and beyond the school. In this study, the preoccupation with increasing efficiency sometimes resulted in the articulation of a vision for the future that did not fully account for the values, experiences, and understandings of others. Subsequently, educational change was limited without consideration of how diverse identities within localized contexts might spark creativity, innovation, and an alternate view for the future. Ask: What processes or practices allow me to understand the identities and values of others? Whose identity "fits" or conflicts with my own? What pressures do I put on others to align with new organizational identities and a pre-established vision? How do I respond to (and how comfortable am I with) alternate perspectives or "out-of-the-box" ideas? How might the differing identities of other school members be leveraged to garner alternate perspectives or new questions?

3. Seek out alternate perspectives to guide problem solving and decision making processes related to school improvement. Because many principals view problems of practice as idiosyncratic, they tend to rely on intuition to make decisions. However, findings from this study suggested that indifference toward educational research and locally-generated data did not support innovative improvement processes. Ask: What theoretical frameworks inform my understanding of this situation? What other lenses might be used to gain new and more nuanced understanding of this situation?
4. Consider how one's identity and subsequent leadership practice supports or inhibits social trust among school members and other educational stakeholders. These principals' identities were derived from access to sources of organizational power (Ball, 1987) and determined how principals framed and interpreted messages for themselves and others. Findings suggested that change was unlikely to occur and be sustained without social trust and a shared vision between principals and stakeholders. Ask: How and when do I exercise positional power? What impact does this have on social trust? Which leadership practices and processes enable others to contribute fully within school decision making processes? Which practices exclude others from decision making related to change?
5. Engage in ongoing reflective and reflexive practice. Principals continuously discovered, improvised, and adapted who they were as school leaders. Wayfinding involved sensemaking through reflective thinking that occurred in or was provoked in the context of daily practice and through professional learning. Because the process of coming to understand *who one is* or *should be as a principal* was not straightforward, reflective practice helped principals gain more

nuanced understanding of themselves (e.g., the salience of identity in a particular situation), others, and educational change. Ask: What is the underlying nature of this change or demand? How does my identity and accompanying values shape how I view this change? Which identity is most salient in this situation and why? How is my leadership behaviour motivated by my identity? How do my responses (i.e., assimilation, accommodation, and resistance) promote change or preserve dominant institutional narratives?

6. Develop a theory of action that increases principal visibility and participation in educational debate and policy making. Although the principals in this study conveyed awareness of the moral responsibilities inherent in the principalship, they did not assertively take advantage of opportunities to favorably influence the political and moral will to bring change about. Principals were highly aware of the ramifications they might face if they openly resisted prevailing institutional discourses. Although change appeared to be incumbent on principals assuming new identities predicated on influencing political agendas, findings suggested that collective forms of resistance show greater promise as a means for principals to recreate structures and governance models and to purposefully advocate for new conceptualizations of schooling. Ask: As I fully enter public debates regarding education, what are the political skills that I need to develop in order to influence policy outcomes? How might I align myself with others to advocate on behalf of children and school needs?

For those who prepare aspiring school leaders or support the ongoing professional learning of practicing principals

Implications and questions are presented below for those who prepare school leaders or support the career-long learning of principals. Facilitators, presenters, and mentors are urged to:

1. Ensure that the curriculum of leadership preparation helps aspirants make deeper connections between school leadership as discussed in academe and as practiced within schools. As I interacted with these six principals, they indicated that there was a need for graduate course readings and assignments to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and practices. However, principals emphasized that such readings needed to be pragmatic and more accessible for working practitioners. Thus, findings suggested that programming should be premised on a theory-practice relationship that builds on the identities and practical experiences of school leaders. Ask: What pedagogical approaches (e.g., action research, peer-to-peer learning, guest presentations from practitioners, case study, or practice-oriented assignments) would facilitate connectivity between practice and theory? What readings or pedagogical practices will best acquaint aspiring principals with the realities of a future administrative position? How might theory be used to assist aspirants and practicing principals with exploring how identities, values, and beliefs shape leadership behaviour, as well as the social processes in which they are engaged?
2. Develop course content to enhance participants' knowledge and skills in dealing with the micropolitical reality of school life (e.g., political analysis of instructional supervision and distributed leadership). Principals stressed how they increasingly took on "political advocacy role[s]" (Neil, Interview 2) as they

"need[ed] to understand and respond to the political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts impacting the[ir] school[s]" (Alberta Education, 2009, p. 6). Hence, there is a need to develop programming and professional development that "directly promotes school improvement in an environment of compatible as well as competing interests, ideologies, strategic orientations, and outcomes" (Anderson, 1990, p. 29). Aspirants and practicing principals should have opportunities to assess the macro and micro-political nature of their school (including varying viewpoints, identities, and sources of influence) and develop strategies to foster a more positive micropolitical culture. As suggested by Wallace et al. (2007), leadership programming should provide a range of theoretical perspectives, beyond structional-funcionalism and constructivist, to understand the work of school leadership (including political-conflict, feminist, and cultural theory). Ask: How might diverse theoretical understandings of school leadership be examined through, or in response to, daily practice experiences and dilemmas?

3. Refrain from presenting "silver bullet" approaches to leadership and educational change. Each of the dynamic school contexts I visited were fraught with complexity and ambiguity –each principal responded to dilemmas, crises and change in divergent ways depending on the salience of their identities (e.g., Neil's responses were influenced greatly by his cultural and religious background and Karen's identification with being an at-risk student shaped her responses). Responses depended upon the degree of consonance and dissonance between principals' values and external demands. Understanding the relationship of principal identity and educational change as a process of wayfinding honours principals' different identities and values, as well as the uniqueness of each local

school context. Rather than serving a normalizing function, providing propositional knowledge or routinizing decision making, preparation programming or professional development should conceptualize leadership as a continuous practice of improvisation and adaptation. Consequently, recognition should be given to how complex, ever-changing contexts demand pluralistic understandings of identity that include theoretical and practical analysis of how principals' values, background experiences, internalized role expectations, gender, religion, and ethnicity may shape principals' identities, leadership practice, and responses to change.

4. Determine who is best suited to facilitate principal preparation or ongoing professional development. For the six participants in this study, much of school and organizational life was taken-for-granted. Innovation, in and of itself, challenged and undermined principals' established and salient identities as protectors of the system (Ball, 1986). Subsequently, principals often unconsciously and unquestioningly perpetuated long-standing practices. Findings suggested that reflexive thinking and critique of dominant institutional narratives was constrained when most principals were mentored by individuals (e.g., principal colleagues) who were like-minded and had been socialized to replicate and were held accountable for the values, behaviours, and choices of those who hire them. Thus, opportunities to learn about, develop, and enact a multiplicity of identities appeared limited. Ask: What are the potential consequences of district-mandated mentoring or professional development conducted by practicing or retired school principals? What is the role of the university professor in working with graduate students to develop and make explicit the multiplicity of identities?

For policy makers and senior jurisdictional administrators

Policy makers, as well as senior jurisdictional administrators who govern and develop policies that impact school life, are encouraged to:

1. Consider how specific policy actions dictate or privilege principal identities which potentially limit change or even perpetuate status quo practices. As principals engaged in wayfinding, they often spoke about the tension between their desired identity as a principal and their mandated role as an employee. As Nelle shared, "The real challenge is being who I should be, when I am held accountable for being someone else" (Interview 2). Neil further described his frustration with "being told to be a change agent, yet I'm expected to be innovative within the confines of a small box" (Interview 2). Stability was, first and foremost, perpetuated through the socialization of new principals into the status, position, and identities traditionally occupied by formal school leaders. Socialization was a continuous process in which principals' behaviour and responses to policy directives was channelled and monitored by the influence of others (e.g., social control exercised through principal appointment, evaluation, and promotion processes). Hence, principals often assumed the identity of protector. This conservative identity promoted cohesion and unity, ensured that pre-established targets were met, safeguarded respect for authority, and preserved long-standing traditions and their continuity. Policy makers and senior administrators need to be mindful of the consequences for change based on the degree that principals are asked to conform to existing or new organizational identities. Ask: To what degree do principals have the authority and autonomy to enact policy in ways that honour local contextual needs? How do policies foster or diminish principals' creativity and risk taking? What are the margins of

tolerance (and associated costs) for principals whose identities are different from dominant organizational identities? How is compliance with prevailing ideologies and organizational identities monitored and rewarded?

2. Provide ongoing opportunities for principals to participate in policy development and problem solving processes. Findings suggested that policies focusing on managerial competency organized principals' lives and the life of the school – failing to allow principals the space needed to apply their imagination to address local concerns and broader social issues. The uniqueness of each school context demanded creative and diverse approaches to foster change and school improvement. However, as James described, "Resistance, even just questioning, tends to be viewed as negative rather than an opportunity to consider a new idea" (Interview 3). Because cooperativeness toward policy implementation depended on the degree of voluntariness and ownership of new change initiatives, policy makers and senior jurisdictional administrators should seek ways to garner the perceptions of school-based principals to inform future policy directions. Ask: Do principals have opportunities to contribute, individually and collectively, to policy making? To what extent does space exist within policy-making for multiple identities and dialogue about "what might be?"
3. Use identity to inform principal recruitment, assignment, and retention. Findings suggested that school principals either perpetuated an existing vision (e.g., James worked with his "stars" to ensure continuity during his leave) or moved the vision in new and innovative ways (e.g., Wade accessed grants to create new partnerships that promoted active living). Hence, consideration needs to be given to how the "fit" between principal identity and a specific school's context may either facilitate or impede educational change. For example, senior administrators

who are concerned about the status of a school may encourage the principal to move in a new direction (e.g., Karen's board required a change in leadership approach) or may assign a new principal whose identity aligns with a new direction for the school (e.g., Carrie's superintendent placed her at Clear Water to make specific changes). Ask: How and in what ways does a principal's identity impact school assignments? In what ways do recruitment strategies take into account principals' identities in previous assignments?

For educational scholars researching the principalship, identity and educational change

Although the concept of identity shows promise in extending the boundaries of research related to the principalship, school improvement, and educational change, this study raised a number of persistent issues yielding further implications for the study of educational leadership. Hence, I urge scholars to:

1. Consider alternate participant selection processes when studying school leadership or school improvement. In the present study, my preconceived fixation of who leads educational change within a school did not allow for alternate conceptualizations of leadership (e.g., the co-principalship or distributed forms of leadership). Hence, my understanding of Nelle's identity was limited, I believe, to a great extent as she saw herself as a co-principal. Had I interviewed Nelle and her assistant principal I would have likely uncovered new or different understandings. Hence, educational scholars should ask: What methodologies transcend traditional conceptualizations of school leadership? How do mainstream leadership perspectives separate and privilege leaders over followers (Collinson, 2005)?

2. Study change efforts and school improvement longitudinally to examine the interactive and recursive impact reform efforts has on school principals' identities, and subsequently, principals' well-being, motivation, and career satisfaction. Findings suggested that when a degree of consonance was perceived, principals' identities and new approaches were experienced as constructive, creative, energizing, fulfilling, and worthwhile; however, emotional strain, exhaustion, disillusionment, and resentment was evident when principals felt that they compromised their values for demands that were incongruent with whom they were or wanted to be as school principals. Reflecting on the interview process, I realized that principals generally spoke about current or very recent changes that they had negotiated. Hence, this study provided limited understanding of long-term reform dynamics and how principals mediate policy dynamics over time. Ask: How do principals experience way finding throughout their careers? What happens to the principal when prevailing ideologies shift over time (e.g., with changes in the Superintendency or the Board of Trustees)? When, and to what extent, might principals' experiences of consonance and dissonance change over time? How might alternate research methods be used to further explore the relationship between principal identity and educational change over time? For example, Mischler (1986) argued that qualitative, open-ended interview techniques, like the ones used in this study, rarely capture the nuanced stories that participants typically offer, and in fact, self-author as they engage in wayfinding. Hence, Mischler (1986) contended that narrative accounts should be gathered as story is "one of the significant ways through which individuals make sense of and give meaning to their experiences is to organize them in a narrative form" (p. 118). Scholars should ask: How might narrative analysis and other

phenomenological approaches complement and enhance conventional and structural modes of inquiry about the relationship between principal identity and educational change?

3. Seek new and sustained opportunities to study school micropolitics or what Ball (1987) called the “organizational underworld” (p. xi). Wayfinding was often shaped by the positional power afforded to principals. Hence, principals assumed a number of identities and sub-identities which impacted how other school members experienced change. In particular, principals served as mediators who managed meaning in their schools, and therefore, structured social interactions and school life often in invisible ways (e.g., by buffering school members from certain information, by “spinning” change messages to foster buy-in, and rewarding teacher compliance). Social constructions, also derived from principals’ assumed sub-identities as visionaries, analysts, meaning-makers, disseminators, and problem solvers, were beneficial to some individuals and groups and harmful to others. Hence, there is a need to learn more about who benefits (or loses) when principals assume certain identities. As education scholars engage in further study of how positional power influences identity construction, consideration will need to be given to: What are the potential political ramifications that study participants could face as they critique the educational system? How might participants be protected from harm? What alternate research methods might be used to further explore the micropolitical context in which principals assume and enact specific identities to foster or thwart change?
4. Explore the relationship between principal identity and emotions. This present study explored the identification of school principals – specifically the identities

assumed as principals engaged in change efforts, how and why principals defined educational change in the ways that they did, as well as the actions, behaviours, and decisions principals made in response to change. One unanticipated finding suggested that emotional outbursts during social interactions and through leadership practice underscored the salience of identity within a given interaction. Although principals' emotions per se were not central to my research, I would urge scholars to study the full social and political contexts of school life to better understand the implications of principals' emotions and their expression for the identity salience, self-verification, and commitment to role relationships.

Every Ending is a New Beginning

Sailors often speak of the doldrums – an ocean region of sudden storms and shifting winds as well as periods of stillness when the winds completely disappear. With such unpredictable weather patterns, the doldrums are notorious for trapping sailing vessels for without enough wind to catch and power their sails over extended periods of time. Here, colloquial usage of "being caught in the doldrums" describes how the transition between the end of graduate studies and the beginning of a new principalship has left me feeling restless.

Although I did not find answers as I originally hoped, I finish this work and return to the principalship with deeper self-knowledge, more thoughtful questions, and a renewed sense of hope. I consider myself very fortunate. Few educators will have the time and privilege to engage in the extensive coursework, writing and research that forces such self-examination.

As this study draws to a close, I realize that wayfinding does not require strict coherence to or the forsaking of one identity over another. My identities as mother,

principal, employee, teacher, learner, researcher, colleague, friend, and so forth can come together. With this expanded view, I may harness continuity between identities even though the salience of these identities will change in response to shifting contexts. Reflective and reflexive practice facilitated through professional development, ongoing practitioner research, and dialogic interactions enables me to create a richer story of self that can accommodate identity disparities. Wayfinding allows me to learn and live a multiplicity of identities.

Now, I am finding my way back to the principalship on my own terms. I am more confident about what I value and as such have been less inclined to tell others what they want to hear. I wanted to return to a school where I could wrestle with important issues such as accessibility to programming, inclusion, parental involvement, teacher leadership, cultural diversity, and so forth.

The first year in a school is often viewed as being a time for new principals to sit back, observe, and listen. But I have already immersed myself in our new school and forced myself to stand up for what I value – making difficult decisions for the upcoming year related to staffing, budget, professional development and facilities. These decisions may not be the most popular, but they are decisions which break from established practices that have limited learning, collaboration, and capacity building.

Already, I am questioning policy and critiquing research that I confront in my work. When presented with "best practices," I am quick to ask "Who says this is a best practice?", "Why now?", "Who benefits or loses from these practices?", and "What other theory might inform our understanding of this practice?"

Also, I am awakened to a new understanding of compromise as the negotiation of the space between a desired destination and the reality of the winds.

Before this study, I saw compromise as a “win-lose game” rather than a means to redefining and reconceptualizing possibilities. In my first principalship, when I encountered resistance or problems I felt frustrated. When things were smooth sailing, I was elated and energized. This emotional rollercoaster was derived from external measures of winning and losing. Today, the in-between part, the journey, is valued and savoured as teaching me more about our school and myself.

Moreover, I have arrived at a place where I no longer feel like I have to be the “captain.” Certainly, there are circumstances under which the principal must exercise leadership, and that not doing so poses ethical, professional and organizational concerns. However, I feel more comfortable with letting others lead in the areas that they have expertise and experience. In doing so, I feel more like I am part of the team and learning from the team. In an effort to seek more authentic distribution of power, I have made a concerted effort to involve teachers and even parents in our hiring processes. As a result, we have hired new staff with identities and experiences that differ from my own. Instead of fearing alternate perspectives, I look forward to the debate and the learning that will be derived from diverse ways of knowing and being.

Undoubtedly, micropolitical analysis disrupted much of what I had previously understood about school leadership. Looking back, I would characterize myself as a “powerboat” principal who headed straightforward and efficiently towards externally-defined targets. Although I was aware that schools and the entire education system was a political arena, I failed to see how I may have used positional power to define rather than discover school and organizational reality.

With a newfound consciousness about the politics inherent in school leadership, I am committed to cultivating a culture that allows me, and other school members, to be more reflective and reflexive. Rather than insulating myself with like-minded

colleagues, I look forward to building new collegial relationships that will reinforce the values I want to uphold and strengthen. Wayfinding is about consciously identifying a real navigational team who will support as well as challenge me to be the kind of principal and person I want to be.

Prior to this study, I took comfort when Young and Levin (2002) described how “administrators see their ability to do their job as being diminished over factors which they feel that they have little or no control” (p. 319). Just as the actions of the winds, waves, tides, or even man determine where a piece of driftwood ends up, it was the actions of others, and the local and organizational context, that previously defined my work. However, I no longer accept the notion that school members (me included) have little control over school life. In accepting bureaucratic ethos and failing to question prevailing ideologies, we give up moral, political, and professional autonomy. I am finding my way back to the principalship with renewed courage and understanding of my professional obligations to those within and beyond my school.

Although I work in a policy context that is ideologically-driven, I can assume new identities predicated on actively influencing political agendas, reconceptualizing practices, structures and governance models through diverse theoretical perspectives, and purposefully advocating for changes that improve educational opportunities. I return to the schoolhouse ready to immerse myself more fully into public debates regarding education.

At the heart of wayfinding, or the continuous reinvention of one’s self, is a choice between fear and purposeful courage. I choose to be courageous. As I attempt to engage at this higher level, I hope that the identities I portray and the actions I take will in turn encourage others up, down, and across the hierarchy to do the same.

Arguably, I return to the school house knowing that I am forever changed. Although ambiguity, contradiction, and dissonance may have prompted my return to academia, I yearn for and I am called back to the real complexities of life and the uncertainty of change. Today, I see innovation, creativity, and human possibilities within wayfinding. I am now more open to the changes – the wonder, surprises, and brilliance – awaiting in my next school.

About change, I can only say for certain that it is continuous. As I close my researcher's journal, at least for now, my eyes fixate on the bookmark between the weathered pages. So I sit here, contently, reading Gandhi's words embossed on my treasured book mark – *Be the change you want to see in the world.* And so I am on the lookout for the next breeze. I am answering a call to be more than I already am.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Notification of Approval - Delegated Review

Study ID:	Pro00009981
Study Title:	How Principals Make Sense of Their Multi-Dimensional Roles
Study Investigator:	Lisa Wright

Date of Informed Consent:

Approval Date	Approved Document
28/10/2009	Principal Consent Oct 27 revised.doc
28/10/2009	School Principal consent form (also with the information letter)
28/10/2009	Written Consent Form principal revised.doc
28/10/2009	Jurisdiction consent form (also with the information letter)
28/10/2009	Written Consent Form jurisdiction revised.doc
28/10/2009	School Jurisdiction letter and consent revised.doc
28/10/2009	Jurisdiction Consent Oct 27 revised.doc

Funding/Sponsor (free text):	There are no items to display	
Funding/Sponsor (validated):	SSHRC - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council	SSHRC

Thank you for submitting the above ethics application to the Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint-Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB). Jerrold Kachur has reviewed your application and, on behalf of the EEASJ REB, approved it as of October 28, 2009. The approval will expire on October 27, 2010.

A renewal report must be submitted prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval at that time. If you do not renew before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Sincerely,

Dr Ingrid Daveston, Chair
Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint-Jean Board (EEASJ REB)

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).

Appendix B: Contact Summary Sheet

District -name -contact information	**Superintendent** -name -contact information	**Principal** (participant) -name -contact information	**School** -name -contact information	**Grade Levels**	**Consent rec'd:** -District -Principal

Date	Nature of Communication	Follow-Up

Appendix C: Detailed Interview Protocols

Interviews will be conducted in the manner described by Stake (2000) and Creswell (2008). With the permission of each of the principal, the individual interview will be tape-recorded and will last about 60-90 minutes. I will also ask permission to briefly record notes during the course of the interview. Before beginning the interview, I will make brief introductory comments thanking each principal for their involvement and reminding them about their rights as participants (comments as outlined below – to be shared, not read).

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I am interested in hearing your perceptions about how you make sense of your multi-dimensional roles within your particular school context. I am also interested in learning more about the practices, policies, and language that impacts how you see yourself as a principal, in addition to wanting to hear your perspective and examples of what happens when your values and roles are aligned versus those times when your values and roles may conflict. The questions I will ask you during this and subsequent individual interviews have been designed with these purposes in mind.

I would like to remind you that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty – you are not obligated to answer the questions. When I write my thesis, or articles for presentation and publication, every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms and the deletion of any identifying information. In writing the findings, I will not use any quotations that might identify you or your school. Today, with your permission, I will be audio-recording the interview and taking notes from our conversation. I will have our taped conversation transcribed. Later, I will synthesize my notes – summarizing my understandings or interpretations of what you have told me. I will then provide you with the interview transcript and brief summary of my emerging interpretations to review and make additions and deletions before I use the data in my research writing. Only the transcriber and I will have access to the data. Following the ethical standards of the University of Alberta, data will be kept secured in my office for 5 years and then destroyed. Do you have any questions before we begin?

These semi-structured individual interviews will be guided by the questions listed below. Although the questions are grouped thematically, each question or sub-question may not be asked of all principals depending on their unique circumstances. Despite multiple questions being grouped together, only one question will be asked at a time.

INTERVIEW 1:

(a) Life and school experiences

- *Completion of the participant's demographic profile.*
- Tell me about your educational career.
    - When did you decide to become a principal? Why are you a principal?
- Other educational experiences (e.g., in central office, with an external agency)?
- To what extent does your home or family life influence who you are as an educator?

- How do you describe yourself, as a principal, when speaking with others?

(b) What is the role of the principal?

- Tell me about a typical/atypical school day. What is the priority in your work? What roles do you assume during the day?
- How do you make sense of multiple internal/external demands?
- Tell me about the involvement and expectations of different stakeholders and how they shape your role as principal.
- Please describe the AISI school improvement initiative you are planning for Cycle 4. Has your identity as a principal remained the same or changed as you plan for this initiative?

(c) How do you construct your own "principal" identity?

- What has influenced your understanding of who you are as a principal over time? (e.g., people, policy, etc.)
- In what ways is being a principal with # years experience different from being a first-year principal?
- Tell me about a specific moment that changed how you think about the principalship.
- How do your interactions with others impact how you view yourself as a principal? Who? How?
- How is being a principal similar/dissimilar to being a teacher?
- To what extent has graduate coursework and research impacted your role/identity as a principal?

<u>**INTERVIEW 2:**</u>

Member check:

- I am going to review what I learned from you during the first interview regarding your understanding of **the role of the principal**. What have I missed? Do you have anything to add?
- I am going to review what I learned from you during the first interview regarding your **identity as a school principal**. What have I missed? Do you have anything to add?

(a) What is the role of the principal in relation to educational change?

- What changes are you seeking within your school? (Which changes are critical? Why?)
- In your school, who is it that carries out and is involved centrally in change?
- What provokes and/or influences change in your school (e.g., policies, practices, language, or expectations)?
- Tell me about an educational change that was/is fulfilling for you in your role as a principal. Why was this fulfilling?
- Tell me about an educational change that was/is frustrating or challenging for you in your role as a principal? Why was/is it frustrating?
- How do you know when change efforts have been successful? Are sustainable?

(b) How and to what extent do you accept, confront, or resist your role within educational change? How do you address consonance and dissonance between your values and multi-dimensional roles?

- Tell me about a time when you embraced or supported a change in your school. When you "accepted" the change and your role, what did "acceptance" look like?
- Tell me about a time when you confronted or questioned a change in your school. When you "confronted or questioned" the change and your role, what did "confrontation and questioning" look like?
- Tell me about a time when you resisted a change in your school. When you "resisted" the change and your role, what did "resistance" look like?
- When have you experienced tension between your values and your role as a principal? What was/are the tension(s)? Why does this tension exist? How did you respond? What do you do when your values conflict with expectations for change?
- Is there a time when you felt that you had to compromise what you believe in? Please describe.

INTERVIEW 3:
Member check:

- I am going to review what I learned during the second interview regarding your understanding of **your role in educational change**. What have I missed? Do you have anything to add?
- I am going review what I learned from you during the second interview regarding your understanding of **how and to what extent you accept, confront, or resist your role within educational change**. What have I missed? Do you have anything to add?

(a) What are your understandings of the relationship between your principal identity and educational change?

- How has the expectation for continuous change or improvement impacted how you think about yourself as a principal?
- Are there elements to educational change that you feel are different for you than for teachers? What are those elements? How do they differ?
- To what extent does your identity shape the changes that occur in your school?
- Has school improvement impacted "who you are as a principal?" Why or why not?

(b) How do principals make sense of their multi-dimensional roles in their local contexts?

- On a day to day basis, how do you deal with multiple roles and competing expectations? Ambiguity and uncertainty? Constant interruptions?
- Can you give me an example of a time when senior administrators (within central office) wanted one thing for your school while the teachers thought something else might be better? Describe this occasion. How did you deal with differing expectations?
- Who do you talk to/seek advice from in regard to your role as principal?

Other

- If you were involved in developing a leadership preparation program for aspiring school principals, what issues do you think need to be addressed to facilitate leadership intent on supporting change? How might graduate studies be helpful to principals with making sense of their multi-dimensional roles?

- Do you have any additional comments that you wish to share?

Concluding comments: *Thank you for participating in today's interview. Your time and effort is greatly appreciated and will be of significant help to me in the completion of my doctoral research. Following each interview, I will provide you with the transcript and emerging interpretations, via e-mail, for your review and comments.*

Appendix D: Proposed Interview Guide

The following interview guide was provided to participants, along with the study information letter and consent forms:

Interviews will be conducted in the manner described by Stake (2000) and Creswell (2008). With the permission of each of the principal, the individual interview will be tape-recorded and will last about 60-90 minutes. I will also ask permission to briefly record notes during the course of the interview. Before beginning the interview, I will make brief introductory comments thanking each principal for their involvement and reminding them about their rights as participants.

Each semi-structured individual interview will be guided by the main questions listed below.

a. How do principals make sense of their multi-dimensional roles?

b. What is the role of the principal in relation to educational change?

c. How do principals construct their "principal identity [ies]"?

d. What are the practices, policies, and language that inform principals' identity formation?

e. What is the relationship between personal identity and educational change?

f. How and to what extent do principals accept, confront, or resist their role within educational change?

g. How do principals address consonance and dissonance between their values and the multi-dimensional roles they perform?

Appendix E: Participant Demographic Profile

Should you consent to participating in this study, I invite you to complete this "Participant Demographic Profile" for our second scheduled interview. Your time and assistance are greatly appreciated. Thank you.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Pseudonym (choose first and last name, if you wish): ________________________

Age:

Educational background:

Degree	**Date graduated** (OR, please indicate if "not applicable" or "in progress"):	**Area of specialization** (e.g., major/minor, elementary/secondary, educational administration and leadership, etc.)	**Institution** (e.g., University of Alberta)
B. Ed.			
M. Ed.			
Ph. D.			
Other			

Total number of years as a **teacher** (prior to assuming the principalship):

____

Total number of years in the **principalship**: _____________

Number of years at **this school**, in the position of principal: _____________

Number of years at **other schools**, in the position of principal: ____________

In addition to your role as principal, are you still teaching? If so, what are you teaching? What percentage of your time is spent teaching?
____

Other educational experiences:

Career goal(s):

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Pseudonym for school (choose a school name, if you wish):

____

Current student enrolment: _________________________ **Grade levels**: -

____

Staff supervised:

Number of teachers:

Numbers of support, custodial, or other staff:

Program offerings:

Special issues or unique features of your current school context (e.g., social background of students, changing demographics, financial challenges, important changes that have occurred within the school or community, etc.):

Other comments:

Appendix F: Sample Member Check Correspondence

Good afternoon, [Participant].

Thanks again for allowing me to visit your school during our last interview. As always, I learned a great deal during the school tour and in my conversation with you.

Please find attached a copy of the final member check document based on our [three] interviews together. The document is password protected (please use the password that I provided to you over the telephone -- in lowercase).

Part 1 *is a summary of my emerging interpretations based on the [three] interviews. (I have included some sample verbatim quotes chosen to support ideas I am verifying – these quotes will be reduced for reporting purposes. Some quotes are applicable to several of the summary bullets, but for the purposes of this document, they only appear once). If I have misunderstood or simply aren't capturing your intent, I would appreciate your specific comments on how to better capture the intent of your messages.*

Part 2 *is a brief narrative that aims to honor your voice by providing background and contextual information about you as a participant and your unique school setting. My intent is to create a narrative that helps the reader to better understand some of your lived experiences.*

*Please note that I have used the pseudonym, [Name], for you. This is the name that you requested on the completed demographic form.

If necessary, please use "track changes" to make any comments or changes on the document. Or feel free to call me at 780-467-#### to discuss any changes or questions that you may have.

Thank you, [Name], for your ongoing support of my research program. I look forward to your feedback.

Take care,

Lisa