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The persistent shortage of teachers in America's public schools is eclipsed only by the shortage of qualified principals. Perhaps principals leave the role quickly because of bad principal socialization experiences as they move into this important leadership role. Perhaps the socialization process for those who serve long and well in the principalship was a very positive experience. If the socialization process is more difficult for some new principals and assistant principals than it is for others, then it is important to investigate why the experience is so varied among administrators. Conducting this research and reporting the analyzed data quite possibly could have serious ramifications in addressing the administrator shortage in Wobegone County Schools as well as in other school systems.

Two variables, *principal socialization* and *teacher leadership* provide the framework for my investigation into the success or failure of the selected Wobegone County Schools principals. This study examines the unique principal socialization experiences of four different administrators as compared to my own socialization experience in this leadership role. Ann Hart describes two parts to the socialization process. These are *role taking* and *role making* (1993, pp. 221-223). Matthews and Crow examine socialization on many different levels including assistant principal socialization, socialization for first time principals,

socialization for principals changing schools, and the experiences of mid-career principals who must become socialized to new role expectations as the job of principal evolves (Matthews & Crow, 2005, pp. 259-292). My study participants represent principals in all stages of socialization as framed by Hart and Crow.

This study utilizes a combination of *autobiographical* and *biographical case study research*. Essentially my own unique story of the journey from classroom to the principal's office is compared to the experiences of other selected subjects. My goal, through the gathering of data and the analysis of it, was to search for patterns and consistencies in the stories of all study participants, including my own. I employed the *Dolbeare-Schuman-Seidman Narrative Interview Design* while collecting data from my primary subjects. This consisted of three separate interviews for each participant. In addition I observed each subject in their current settings, interviewed teachers on their staffs, and collected data from the subjects' journals and notes about their socialization experiences which I compared to the notes I made of my experience.

The most significant conclusions of my research indicate that there is a very strong correlation between the quality of principal socialization experiences as well as teacher leadership experiences and success as a principal

THE IMPACT OF THE PRINCIPAL SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCE ON THE
PROFESSIONAL LIVES OF SELECTED WOBEGONE COUNTY SCHOOLS
PRINCIPALS

by

Randall R. Shaver

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To Carolyn, Anderson, Sarah, Laine, and Robert. Thank you for walking down this long road with me; for pushing me along, for believing in me, for teaching me to believe in myself, and for helping me clear those obstacles that hoped to block my path along the way. I love you all most dearly. Your support means more than you will ever know.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Committee Chair _____
Committee Members _____

Date of Acceptance by Committee

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“We all want to know who we are and what our lives are “about” – that is our first, last, and constant concern. That is the passion of our lives and it is a deeply religious passion” (Caputo, p. 18).

Overview

Much like Socrates’ description of the unexamined life, the professional life without passion, is not much worth living. As a classroom teacher for over twenty years I encountered dozens of colleagues who, after teaching for a relatively short span of time, came to the realization that they would rather spend their lives selling insurance policies, tackling middle management problems in the “real world,” or simply raising a family. They never developed a passion for teaching. There were others though, who would have taught for free, so in love with the profession were they.

I fell into this latter category. For more than twenty years of my professional life I happily taught thousands of children and proudly proclaimed the nobility of my profession to friends and relatives who often saw my vocation as a waste of a good mind. I was a passionate teacher and maintained a high level of passion throughout that entire period of my professional life. Late in my classroom teaching experience, however, I made the decision to pursue an

administrative career in hopes that I could have a broad, meaningful impact on more students than I could reach within the walls of my classroom.

The transition from teacher to principal can be a difficult process. Within my own experience I have encountered the twin challenges of transferring my intense passion for teaching to the principalship as well as the universal process of principal socialization experienced by all new principals. These inherently interrelated areas of principal development are of particular interest to me due to my own personal move from teacher to administrator. Though my transition from teaching to administration certainly was not seamless, it was in many ways less difficult than I anticipated. I believe that a connection exists between my passion for teaching and my transition to school leadership. This dissertation explores that connection within the experiences of my colleagues as well as within my own service as a Wobegone County Schools principal. Additionally, assistant principal socialization and principal socialization are important considerations for any teacher moving from the classroom to the school office and therefore are worthy of rigorous examination which might benefit others.

Rationale for Studying the Problem Area

This country is experiencing a tremendous shortage of teachers. The last school that I led as a principal started the year with five substitute teachers. Qualified, licensed teachers simply were not available. An even greater teacher

shortage looms just over the horizon as college students eschew teaching for careers offering higher starting pay and long term financial security.

The shortage of teachers is eclipsed only by the shortage of qualified principals and assistant principals. A contributing factor to this shortage is the length of service by school based administrators. Their tenure is short, their numbers are low. Perhaps principals do not last very long due to the socialization process they experience as they move into this important leadership role. Perhaps the socialization process for those who serve long and well in the principalship was a very positive experience. Strong leadership is essential to the improvement and success of our schools. If the socialization process is more difficult for some new principals and assistant principals than it is for others, then it is important to investigate why the experience is so varied. Conducting this research and reporting the analyzed data provides important insight into the problems of principal socialization and retention.

Overview of the Area of Investigation and Subjects

During my first year as an assistant principal, a colleague, also a first year administrator was promoted to the principalship of one of the larger high schools in our district. This school was performing poorly on student achievement assessments and was in the midst of a far reaching cultural shift as the demographics of the community were changing rapidly. "Bob" (pseudonym) did not have a lengthy classroom teaching experience. In fact, he had taught for only

two years as a lateral entry teacher in a smaller school system in the eastern Piedmont region of our state. We met as we both completed our Master's in School Administration programs at the University of North Carolina Somewhere in the late nineties. It was obvious that Bob had been passionate about his students. In graduate seminars he often referred to his students as his reason for sticking with education, even though his contract was not renewed after only two years teaching. He attributed his non-renewal to strong disagreements about pedagogy with his principal. Bob also blamed the educational bureaucracy of his local school system which he felt undermined the real purpose of teaching, to develop every child as an independent learner. "My intention," Bob once told us in a seminar setting, "is to change the bureaucracy from within as an administrator, since I had very little success doing what I felt was right for students as a teacher" (Purpel, Spring1999).

Bob's initial appointment as principal was challenged in almost every corner of the school community. Other, more experienced assistant principals complained that he was given preferential treatment because he was a favorite of the superintendent. Teachers on his staff had seen his three predecessors, all seasoned high school principals, last for less than two years each. They had little confidence in the abilities of a mid-twenties assistant principal with only two years of teaching experience in a very different setting. Parents argued that he was not ready to resolve the unique difficulties this school faced due to his inexperience,

and a small weekly newspaper ran article after article, week after week, denouncing his leadership style.

Even facing such enormous odds, Bob took his passion for children with him to the new job. He related how he spent every lunch period, every day with different student groups, how he was taking conversational Spanish as well as Hmong so he could better communicate with them and learn their cultures. From time to time, he told us, he gave them rides on his motorcycle as a way of building rapport. Approximately eighteen months into his two year contract, the superintendent, bowing to pressure from various groups of stakeholders, moved Bob to the co-principalship of the alternative high school in our system. At the end of his initial two year administrative contract, Bob was informed he would not be renewed. Though he maintained his passion for educating children, Bob quickly derailed as he went through the process of principal socialization. Brubaker and Coble defined derailment in their 2007 book, *Staying on Track*.

Understanding derailment is a way to keep you, the individual on track with your career path goals. An educator wants what he or she considers a better position, but is not assigned the position by the powers that be. Or an educator wants to retain his or her present position and is demoted or dismissed. (viii)

This seems to indicate that the socialization experience is a key factor in whether or not one is successful in the principalship. The major purpose of this study will be to investigate unique principal socialization experiences in order to determine

what specific factors may have an impact on the success or failure of new principals.

In contrast to Bob's experience, several of my other colleagues have been tremendously successful as they moved from teaching to administration.

"Antonio" (pseudonym) taught for 17 years in other states before coming to our school system. After two years as an athletic director he was recruited as an assistant principal candidate by the school system. He since has gone on to lead three other high schools, each time increasing student achievement and improving the overall morale of staff and community. He is now seen as something of a turnaround specialist for floundering schools in our system.

Another colleague, "Nora" (pseudonym), like Antonio, had twelve years of teaching experience in Indiana before moving to Wobegone County Schools where she added five more years of experience to her resume' before completing her Masters in School Administration. Nora moved through the ranks of assistant principals over a four year period and is now leading her second middle school.

She too is seen as something of a turnaround specialist for struggling middle schools. Both Antonio and Nora seem to have successfully translated their successes as classroom teachers into success as school based leaders. They also had significantly more classroom teaching experience than Bob and have completed the principal socialization process successfully with each new school leadership assignment they have accepted. Just as Bob's initial principal socialization experience has haunted him, the successful transition to

administration experienced by Antonio and Nora seems to have provided them both with a solid foundation upon which to build successful administrative careers.

“Yolanda” (pseudonym), is a first year high school principal in Wobegone County Schools. She was assigned to this position after serving only nineteen months as a high school assistant principal and three years as a middle school English teacher. As a middle school teacher Yolanda exhibited outstanding leadership skills. She was recruited by two different principals to fill various teacher leadership roles including leading the school based leadership team, directing summer school, and designing the after school tutorial program. Yolanda’s first principalship is at what most observers would agree is the most challenging high school in Wobegone County Schools. This school has experienced student redistricting, four changes in principals, academic decline resulting in placement of a state appointed School Improvement Team, and a tremendous amount of negative media coverage due to frequent serious fights between different student factions over the past four years. The superintendent’s decision to place a young, inexperienced minority woman in this highly visible position was widely criticized by the media, the community, and some members of the Board of Education. In spite of these challenges, Yolanda’s first year in this setting has met with apparent success. First semester test scores were significantly improved over past years, very few fights have occurred on campus, the media has reported positive changes, and Yolanda seems to have won over

the community, the Board of Education, the students, and the staff at this school. Yolanda's perspective is important to this study not only because of the uniqueness of the challenges she has faced, but also because she is still experiencing her first year of principal socialization.

Void in the Research Literature

Ann Weaver Hart has written extensively about principal socialization, but has produced no research on this topic more recent than the late 1990s. While her early research into this topic in the 1980s laid the foundation for subsequent discussions of principal socialization, including work by L. Joseph Matthews and Gary M. Crow in 2003, little if any of the current literature addresses the connections between classroom teaching experience, principal socialization, and success in the principalship.

The research and writings of Hart, Matthews, Crow, and others is not based upon the perspective of new administrators as they go through assistant principal and principal socialization. Very little research exists which relies upon the perspective of the principal going through the socialization experience. Additional qualitative research, conducted from the principal's point of view, is necessary if we are to connect the dots to find the common thread of successful transition and principal socialization.

Investigating Unique Socialization Experiences

This study investigates the unique principal socialization experiences of these four different administrators. In addition, the study investigates my own socialization experience in this leadership role. The existing body of literature refers to the process of acclimation to the new role of principal as *principal socialization*. Generally this period of acclimation covers approximately the first year in the new role and though it may be one's initial experience as the building level leader, there is also a period of socialization that occurs as experienced principals move from one school to another. Ann Hart describes two parts to the socialization process. These are *role taking* and *role making*. In the simplest terms she defines role taking as assuming the institutional duties assigned principals by their superintendents, by Board of Education policy, and by state laws. Completing these duties is dependent upon the institutional power that is given principals by the governing agencies involved. New principals "take on" the role of principal by completing such tasks as assigning teachers and students to classes for example. Hart explains that role making is dependent upon the new principal's development of relationships with members of the school community. For example, the school may not have a specific vision and there is no institutional requirement to develop one. The new principal, who articulates a new vision for the school and develops a plan to implement that vision, becomes the school's visionary leader. Such leadership is dependent on the moral authority given to the new principal by those whom he or she leads. Thus, the

new principal takes on the role of instructional leader by assigning classes and makes the role of educational visionary by articulating his or her vision for the school (1993, pp. 42-49). Matthews and Crow (2005) examine socialization on many different levels including assistant principal socialization as well as socialization for first time principals, socialization for principals changing schools, and the experiences of mid-career principals who must become socialized to new role expectations as the job of principal evolves. This qualitative inquiry is based on the unique experiences of *Bob, Antonio, Nora, and Yolanda* and my own experiences with transition from classroom to office and the inherent principal socialization that is a part of that transition. Analysis of the collected data focuses upon any common threads leading to success or failure during the principal socialization experience for all study participants.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Socialization and Transition Studies

The body of literature concerning the socialization of principals is sparse. Ronald Thorpe edited *The First Year as Principal* published by Heinemann in 1995 which is more a collection of anecdotal sketches by first year principals than a quantitative or qualitative study of the socialization process. Thorpe relies on journaling by first year principals to gather information about their experiences. The book is composed of thirty such accounts and does provide the reader with some useful insights into transitioning into the principalship during the first year of one's appointment. For example, on pp. 38-41, Ira Bogotch not only relates his own first year story, but also advises that there are six lessons to be learned during the first year as a principal. In general, these sketches are not only entertaining, but also provide some practical approaches to role acclimation.

Ward Sybouts and Frederick C. Wendel wrote *The Training and Development of School Principals: A Handbook* (1994) thirteen years ago. Its focus is on the development of technical skills required for school based administrators, yet it does dedicate part of one chapter to career and professional development for aspiring principals. In some ways this may be construed to address the issue of principal socialization. Michael Fullan in *The Moral*

Imperative of School Leadership, written in 2003, brushes by the topic, touching on it briefly towards the end of chapter one. Fullan suggests that there are five levels of leadership and that most classroom teachers fall somewhere along this continuum. He concludes that those who are “Level 5: Executive” leaders have what it takes to transition into the principalship (Fullan, 2003, pp.10-11). He is no more specific than this in any discussion of socialization of principals, and thus this specific research provides little new knowledge about this topic.

Forrest W. Parkay, Gaylon D. Currie, and John W. Rhodes published an article, *Professional Socialization: A Longitudinal Study of First-Time High School Principals* in *Educational Administration Quarterly* in February of 1992. This study employed a multiple case-study design to document the professional socialization of 12 first-time high school principals during the first three years of their tenure in the position. While the study essentially ignores the concept of transition from classroom teaching to administration after a long classroom career, it does provide a sound qualitative examination of the professional and organizational socialization of new administrators. In addition, the researchers discuss the unique challenges that confront rookie administrators in dealing with issues related to administrator succession and following one’s predecessor. Parkay, Currie, and Rhodes rely heavily on these two bodies of literature. The first focuses on professional and organizational socialization, while the second focuses on administrator succession as the foundation upon which their study is designed. Though, by their description there is a “dearth of socialization studies”

(p. 44), regarding public school administrators in general and high school principals specifically, what does exist provides a framework for additional research and writing.

Kenneth A. Sirotnik and Kathy Kimball examine the idea of transition from classroom teaching to administration quite specifically in their article, *Preparing Educators for Leadership: In Praise of Experience*¹ in the March, 1996 edition of the *Journal of School Leadership*. This article suggests that curricula for formal principalship programs are interchangeable with curricula for teacher leadership initiatives. They suggest that more and more teachers may have to “come out” of the classroom (p.181) to participate in serious curriculum deliberations and school improvement dialogue. Sirotnik and Kimball suggest that once “outed,” teacher leaders provide the most promising reservoir of potential school level administrators. This article looks closely at six formal approaches to educational leadership as compared to the professional development approach. The authors rely heavily on an emergent research base that includes Bolman and Deal in their 1994 study, Gullan in 1991, Hall and Hord in 1997, and McLaughlin in 1993 among many others to verify their thesis that the best principals come from the ranks of teacher leaders.

Ellen Goldring and Michael Chen also write about the transition from classroom to school leadership in a 1992 article for the journal, *Planning and Changing*. Their work, *Preparing Empowered Teachers for Educational Leadership Positions in Post-Reformed Schools* posits that all candidates for

educational leadership positions ultimately come from the ranks of classroom teachers who have been acculturated to a rather standard view of the socialization processes of prospective administrators as classroom teachers (3). Their study and their writing is limited to empowered teachers in “post-reform” schools, which they define as schools which have empowered teachers through a change in their governance structures. Normally, restructured schools feature some derivation of a site based decision making team that is comprised primarily if not exclusively of teachers. Service in this capacity, they argue, results in true teacher leadership and provides a ready resource of future principals and other administrators. They conclude that the empowerment process teacher leaders experience as decision-makers at the site based management team level prepares them for the socialization they will endure as first-year principals as well as formal educational leadership programs (p.11).

One interesting perspective on the concept of principal role socialization is articulated by Ira E. Bogotch and Brian Riedlinger in the September, 1993 edition of the *Journal of School Leadership*. In *A Comparative Study of New and Experienced Principals within an Urban School System*, these two researchers thoroughly examined the twin challenges of administrative stress and role socialization that are faced by new principals in large urban school settings. The article compares this situation to that of experienced principals in the same settings. The study was commissioned by a large metropolitan school district that was experiencing difficulty in finding ways to make the principalship less

stressful for both sets of administrators. Just as Parkay and his co-authors found the lack of research on new principal socialization lamentable, so do Bogotch and Riedlinger (1998). This article provides sound definitions as well as an explanation of the research design. Their major conclusion is that central office staffs can help to relieve the stress created by new principal role socialization by focusing very specifically on district-centered induction and professional development programs (p. 494).

Kermit G. Buckner and James O. McDowell support the notion that the best decisions are made by empowered teachers, yet they indict the current models of teacher empowerment as “a limited success” (p. 35). Their article, *Developing Teacher Leaders: Providing Encouragement, Opportunities, and Support*, in the May, 2000 *NASSP Bulletin* pulls up short of endorsing the idea that the best path to principal socialization is through teacher empowerment. In fact, this short article provides only a brief, five-step process for empowering teachers to become decision-makers in the school (pp. 36-37). Its scope does not extend to the transition from classroom to the principalship and for that reason is not particularly useful for this topic.

Dollie Cottrill in *Internships: Learning the Most from the Best in the Least Amount of Time* suggests that the internship is a key tool for successful socialization to the role of principal. Her very brief article which appeared in the *NASSP Bulletin* (1994) advocates a practice-based, rather than a theory-founded, approach to principal socialization. Her conclusion is simple as she

suggests that the best possible principalship preparation is an internship in which the new principal learns from the experienced mentor. This, she concludes, is most effective because each individual new leader is unique and only an internship experience can address those unique areas of need that make principal socialization traumatic for so many new principals.

One important work on leadership in any setting that must be included in this discussion is Warren Bennis's *On Becoming A Leader*, published in 1989, revised in 2003. Though Bennis does not specifically address principal socialization or the transition from the classroom to the school office, he does nonetheless write extensively about socialization to leadership in general. Many of the specific episodes in this popular work on leadership can be directly transferred to the educational setting.

Ann Weaver Hart is one educational researcher who has dedicated a large amount of time, and writing to the ideas of principal succession, principal socialization, and transition from teacher leadership to administrator. Her 1993 book, *Principal Succession: Establishing Leadership in Schools* is an extensive and well-researched treatise on the unique socialization challenges faced by principals in the first months and years of succession to the position. Two other works by this same author, *Leadership Succession: Reflections of a New Principal* published in the *Journal of Research and Development in Education* in 1987 and *Attribution as Effect: An Outsider Principal's Succession*, published in the *Journal of Educational Administration* in 1986 is foundational to my research

and writing on transition to educational administration after time as a classroom teacher. Hart may be considered by most researchers to be the leading expert on principal socialization. Her works are foundational to my own research because they provide the framework for my study. Hart looks closely at principals who move into the role after experience as classroom teachers, both short and long numbers of years, and also considers the relationships between the new principal and mentor, as well as the new principals personal and educational backgrounds as they connect to the socialization experience. My study looks at all of these variables and limits them to the selected principals from Wobegone County Schools.

From Teaching to Administration: A Preparation Institute, written by Gary M. Crow of Louisiana State University with Bernard Mecklowitz and Y. Nona Weekes, both of the Bank Street College of Education in the April, 1992 issue of the *Journal of School Leadership* offers one of the most direct examinations of my area of interest. The authors propose a Principals Institute whose primary purpose is to identify and prepare excellent teachers for administrative positions. Their model has since been implemented successfully and is currently replicated in many large school systems throughout the United States. They provide some perspective on the socialization challenges faced by those who do make the move from the classroom to an administrative position (pp. 189-190).

Conclusion

What have we learned from the literature on principal socialization? The answer is simple; we have learned that socialization of new principals, whether veterans of teaching or not, creates organizational, professional, and personal challenges that can be very stressful to the new principal. Without adequately researching and writing about ways to address these challenges, principal and administrator burnout will become an increasing problem in our schools and the shortage will loom even larger. A small body of research exists on this subject. Much more remains to be done. Still, the amount of literature available on role socialization is increasing and the prospect of contributing a unique set of data on those who move to the principalship after service as classroom teachers is especially intriguing to me.

Teacher Leaders Becoming Principals

Currently, the literature about those who make such a transition to the principalship after spending time as classroom teachers is sparse at best. We can however look to the body of literature that does exist on principal socialization in general, teacher leadership, and socialization of new leaders in general as the foundation for creating this new knowledge. Ann Hart has written extensively about principal succession and the accompanying challenges of socialization when a new leader follows an established one within an educational setting. She teaches us that the individual principal as well as the organization, or

the school, undergoes tremendous pressure in adapting to this leadership change. Organizations, in this case, schools, are, according to Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline* (1990), more than organized groups of people. Instead organizations are organisms as well, each with a life and goal of its own. We know that the leader functions as the brain of that organism and any change to such an essential organ is always traumatic. Hart teaches us that if the new leader is able to successfully negotiate principal socialization challenges, then the school is likely to benefit as well.

A handful of other writers and researchers have also addressed principal socialization issues, yet not in the context of veteran teachers with lengthy teaching experience who move to administrative posts. What we have learned and what we can learn about principal socialization must be mined from the small body of research that exists about teacher leadership, principal succession, and new leader socialization.

If we define “transition” and “socialization” of new principals as non-synonymous terms, then we may find slightly more literature is available. Transition can be defined as *a change in physical location within the school and a change in one’s status in its hierarchal structure*. Principals transition physically, from the classroom to the principal’s office. This move signals a change in location and in status along the hierarchal ranks and establishes the new principal as the chief officer of the organization. Several researchers have written extensively about the transition into the principalship from the classroom.

Others have written about the transition into the principalship from formal educational leadership programs. We can learn from this that the challenges of transition are many. Transition may be seen as a physical change in location and a change in hierarchal position, while principal socialization may be seen as the adjustment to these changes. Transition is the term that denotes change, while socialization is the term that denotes the adjustment and adaptation to that change. Normally these authors conclude that transition is less of a burden than the challenge of socialization. Transition may include such issues as physical change, occupational status, adjustment to empowerment, and the use of authority with those who were formerly one's professional peers. Still, most of this information must come from mining the existing works on teacher leadership and principal socialization, but there is much to learn about these important leadership issues.

Most of the research that I have found available on principal socialization is qualitative. The types of qualitative inquiry used include personal anecdote, autobiography, case study analysis, and multiple case study analysis. The inherent nature of education is subjective. It is difficult to quantify a "good teacher," a "good student," or bad teachers and students for that matter. Though our current culture of accountability and its requisite testing programs tries desperately to objectify an innately subjective discipline, it is still very difficult indeed to "measure" what it means to be a good student, a good teacher, or a good principal. For that reason, qualitative research is better suited to this

investigation of principal socialization. Without doubt, this is the reason for the qualitative approach taken by those who have researched principal socialization. The most prolific writer and researcher on the topics of principal socialization and principal succession appears to be Ann Hart. In her book, *Principal Succession: Establishing Leadership in Schools* (1993), she uses many different case studies to fill her chapters on an outsider's view of principal succession or on faculties' perceptions to principal successions. She writes extensively about her research model in chapter two and indicates that this research emerged into four distinct branches. She suggests:

Leadership succession research developed into four branches: (1) the search for succession effects, isolated from general leadership effects, and for the individual, social, and environmental factors that affect it; (2) the use of succession to define the tenure of different managers in order to isolate the impact of their leadership on organizational performance; (3) the study of personal, social, and organizational variables interacting during succession and their relevance in revealing a general leadership factor in formal organizational roles; and (4) the delineation of the stages through which the process of succession take place across time. (p. 43)

Dr. Hart interviewed and recorded the stories of hundreds of principals, administrators, teachers, and parents in gathering her data to write about the four branches of leadership succession. Their stories are retold in her book as she uses them to demonstrate the validity of her four branches of leadership succession. In the last chapter of her book she writes about the implications of principal socialization and concludes that "Socialization occurs with or without

planning” (p. 290). She indicates that further research should be done on the planning for socialization and concludes that planned socialization combined with district support for new educational administrators will lead to their eventual success and in turn to the success of the school (pp. 292-301).

The most interesting methodology I encountered was in the article by Forrest W. Parkay, Gaylon D. Currie, and John W. Rhodes. These authors used a multiple-case study design in *Professional Socialization: A Longitudinal Study of First-Time High School Principals* (1992). The design they followed was proposed by R.K. Yin in his 1984 book, *Case Study Research: Design and Method* (56). After defining their theory that first-time principals navigate a five-step socialization hierarchy, the authors selected their cases which included twelve different first time high school principals. Their data collection protocol including conducting individual interviews, recording the data from observations, and gathering information from documents such as journals kept by principals, teachers, and other school community members. After all data was collected and all case studies completed single-case data analysis was completed and the individual case reports were written. Two of the cases were selected for the purpose of triangulating the research as they moved to the final phase. This consisted of a cross-case analysis which indicated that the patterns of observations matched from two selected case studies were essentially the same and that a majority of the remaining ten cases drew the same conclusions and

suggested the same policy implications. All twelve principals were studied for a period of three years (54-56).

In his foreword to Susan Villani's book, *Are You Sure You're the Principal?: On Being an Authentic Leader* (1999), Roland Barth introduces a different term to the methodologies I encountered. He states:

There is another knowledge base of inestimable value to the improvement of public schools. This "literature" is much less evident than formal research in discussions about school reform. Craft knowledge is the massive collection of experiences and learnings that those who live and work under the roof of the schoolhouse inevitably amass during their careers. These are the insights garnered by teachers, principals, guidance counselors, librarians, school secretaries, and parents about important matters such as parent involvement, staff development, curriculum development, discipline, teaching, leadership, and school improvement. (p. vii.)

Thus, Barth introduces the term, *craft knowledge* to describe the type of research that Villani does in her book. A reading of her book indicates that most of her research is a combination of case studies, dependent on interviews, author observations, and autobiographical accounts of her experiences as a principal. I found no discernible difference in craft knowledge and the data that is normally collected in a qualitative case study analysis. This does not make Villani's research less credible. It does seem that Barth's foreword is an attempt at a new play on an old trick.

Just as many others, who have joined the ranks of principals in America's public schools, I too first developed the desire to move into the school

principalship after having served for several years as a teacher-leader. Over the course of my career, my progression from neophyte teacher to effective teacher, from effective teacher to teacher-leader, and from teacher-leader to administrator has seemed a logical progression in my own leadership history. As I have completed the degree requirements along the way while traveling this career path, I have found that many of my principal colleagues have come to their leadership positions in much the same way. This question addresses the notion that the skill sets necessary to the role of effective teacher-leader are similar to the skill sets necessary to become an effective school principal.

While the number of studies completed on teacher leadership has increased over the past decade, few studies have focused on the common skill sets of effective teacher-leaders. In her 2003 dissertation, Cinde Rinn completed a year-long study of nine teachers whom she categorizes as leading from within the classroom. Rinn defines her strands of teacher leadership as either inside perspective or outside perspective. Teacher leaders who fall into the inside perspective remain in the classroom and influence students, colleagues, and administrators through collegiality, collaboration, and by building relationships. Those who are considered in the outside perspective are at most part-time instructors who spend at least some of their time on a regular schedule in a formal supervisory role. They lead through a more formal process and emphasize a systems focus.

In her own review of the literature, Rinn cites seven germane studies, each of which makes some mention of the skills necessary to successful teacher leadership. I have researched those studies in an effort to discover the shared skills of teacher-leaders and principals. In the first study, Wasley (1993) suggests that the ability to foster collegial relationships is the key skill requisite to effective teacher leadership. In addition she cites reflective practice as essential to building capacity in the school (p. 26).

Rinn also cites a study by Bascia (1999) on the teacher leadership of a male immigrant minority teacher, who is referred to as “Edgar.” Bascia concludes that Edgar’s purpose is to help his colleagues understand language and literacy issues as they relate to the minority classroom and to the frustrations experienced by minority teachers. Edgar is portrayed as one who takes care to always portray himself as an equal with his non-minority teacher colleagues. This, he does, in order to validate his voice. In so doing he exercises a unique type of leadership that might encourage leadership by other minority, and lower-status teachers (p. 26).

Another study cited by Rinn is LeBlanc and Shelton’s 1997 research on five classroom teachers and their motivation to meet the basic needs of affiliation and achievement as a form of teacher leadership. LeBlanc and Shelton suggest that certain skills, including interpersonal skills, and the ability to communicate so that all participants can interact, share ideas, and ask questions, are critical to

leadership. They conclude that these skills are best manifested by teacher leaders in committee settings and working on school projects.

A study by Stone, Horejs, and Lomas (1997) examined the characteristics of eighteen elementary, middle and high school teacher leaders. Their primary conclusion, as cited by Rinn, is that collegiality and the ability to foster it is the key characteristic of teacher leadership. It is essential to teacher learning and site-based decision making. This study also concludes that effective teacher leaders usually have more experience and higher levels of formal education than those teachers whom they lead.

A 1999 study by Conley and Muncey investigates how four teachers integrate teaming and leadership into their practice. Two of the subjects are classroom teachers while the other two serve in quasi-administrative roles at their respective schools. The classroom-based teacher leaders define themselves as teachers with other responsibilities. They value the collaborative aspects of teaming over any positional authority granted them in their teacher-leader roles. The two quasi-administrative teacher leaders defined their roles more as decision-makers, policy implementers, and organizers than as team members. Conley and Muncey conclude that collaboration and collegiality are essential characteristics of excellent leadership.

A sixth study cited by Cinde Rinn was the research conducted by Silva, Gimbert, and Noran in 2000. Their study of three teacher leaders asserts that leadership is a part of the inherent work of any classroom teacher. They

conclude that teachers who learn to lead from within grow the ability to effectively perform five essential leadership functions. First, they learn to navigate the politics and systems of the school. Second, they learn to nurture relationships through development of collegiality. Third, they model professional development and its worth by consistently engaging in it. Fourth, they support the change process, and fifth, they challenge the present system and encourage change in order to do what is best for children.

The final study of teacher leadership cited by Rinn is the 2001 work done by Gonzales and Lambert. Their research into the work of twelve teacher leaders concludes several different characteristics common to effective teacher leaders. These include the ability to exert influence beyond the classroom walls, effective classroom management, and the willingness to spend time attending workshops and other forms of professional development. They also conclude that effective leaders focus on shared goals, ethical behavior, collaboration, and reflective practice.

Some characteristics of effective teacher leadership found in all of the seven studies include the ability to foster a collegial environment, collaboration, effective communication skills, ethical behavior, professional development, and organizational ability. What seems to distinguish teacher leaders from other classroom teachers is a sense of mission and vision and the ability to influence others to embrace both. Such characteristics are also essential to effective school based administrators.

Jennifer York-Barr and Karen Duke (2002) summarized and compared the findings of forty different studies on teacher leadership for the *Review of Educational Research*. In Volume 74, Edition 3 of that publication, they summarized the key findings about teacher leaders in each of these forty studies. In this annotated summary, they provide research questions, research design and methods, definitions of teacher leadership, and key findings of the different studies. Several of these studies compare the shared traits common to effective teacher leadership and effective principal leadership. Most of the studies defined teacher leaders as teachers who also assume some level of administrative responsibility during the school day. This includes membership on school based leadership teams, service as department or grade level chair, team leader, mentor to younger teachers, elected representative to various parent or community organizations, teacher union representatives, and members of principals' teacher advisory boards. "Teacher leader" is most often defined as "a teacher who participates in shared decision-making with the administration, and who exemplifies school improvement through collegial interactions with his or her peers" (p. 316).

One characteristic shared by both effective teacher-leaders and effective principals is the ability to focus on the purpose of one's role in specific contexts. In a 1991 study, York-Barr and Duke report that Conley found that:

Teacher leaders did not sense a contradiction in teaming and leadership roles. Each teacher preferred one role over the other. Preferences aligned

with teachers' role emphasis. Those who preferred teaming emphasized the collegiality aspect of the teacher-leader role while those who preferred leadership emphasized decision-making and administrative aspects. This is reflective of good principal practice since principals spend so much of their time switching roles between leadership and management. (298-299)

Effective teacher-leaders were those who were able to express a preference for one aspect of their jobs as leaders without losing enthusiasm for the other aspects.

One common non-quantitative characteristic of effective teacher-leaders as well as effective principals was cited by Dierks, et al. in a 1988 report summarized by York-Barr and Duke. This early teacher leadership study sought to answer the research questions:

- What is teacher leadership?
- What characteristics define teachers in leadership positions?
- What responsibilities do teacher-leaders have?
- How are they compensated?
- What are needed directions for change?

York-Barr and Duke report that Dierks interviewed 87 teachers, each of whom had been nominated from 14 consortium school districts. Dierks cited no literature in the qualitative study, but asked sixteen open-ended questions of each of the teachers. Three categories of teacher-leaders emerged including classroom teachers with additional responsibilities, leaders in local teacher associations, and teachers who led staff development efforts in their schools. Their levels of compensation varied from non-munificent financial compensation to additional planning time in exchange for time spent on leadership matters.

The Dierks study concludes that:

Teacher leaders spent significant time in committee meetings and less time working with other teachers on instructional issues. Sixty-two percent of the respondents reported getting some reward, intrinsic or extrinsic, for their leadership roles. Ninety-eight percent reported that the intrinsic reward of being recognized as a leader by their peers and the community was a larger factor in motivating them to leadership than either tangible financial rewards, or results in school improvement. (p. 300)

Teacher-leaders accept their roles based on intrinsic values more so than on extrinsic rewards.

A 1995 study by Griffin, also summarized by York-Barr and Duke, concludes that not only do teacher-leaders work harder for the intrinsic value of leadership responsibilities, but so do principals. This qualitative study was based on information received from interviews of five different teachers in five different restructuring elementary schools. The design was longitudinal with the same teachers completing interviews once a year for three years (pp. 300-301). The teachers each defined their roles as participants in shared decision making on school based leadership teams for which they received little compensation. The principals of each of these restructuring schools were also interviewed once a year for three years. All study participants were asked to describe the rewards and the disadvantages of their leadership roles. Each of the five principals responded that the intrinsic rewards of school based leadership were far more important to them than tangible rewards, thus mirroring the responses of their teachers (301). Conclusively then, one shared characteristic of teacher-leaders

and effective principals is the need to have one's values of leadership intrinsically gratified through service.

In both the Dierks (1988) and the Griffin (1995) studies, as well as in a study by Little in 1988, York-Barr and Dukes report one significant difference in the rewards of leadership. Principals cited overall school improvement and student achievement as an important reward for the time and effort put into the decision-making process whereas the teachers surveyed in the same studies rated school improvement as one of the least important criteria for serving as a leader. One clear contrast then in the elements of leadership styles for teacher leaders and effective principals is an emphasis on student achievement and overall school improvement.

Most of the literature on teacher leadership as well as most of the studies summarized by York-Barr and Duke indicate that teacher leaders are more concerned with the influence their decisions will have on instructional practices and pedagogy, than are effective principals. These conclusions do not indicate, however that effective principals are not concerned with instructional practice just as the results of the studies do not indicate that teacher-leaders are not concerned with overall school improvement. The literature simply indicates that teacher-leaders are more concerned with instructional issues than they are with student learning while effective principals are more concerned with student learning than they are with instructional practice. Since instructional practice and student learning are inherently interrelated, it would be impossible to quantify one

as more important than the other. If we were to try, our research questions would probably be:

Can student achievement improve without effective teaching?
Can effective teaching occur without an increase in student learning and achievement?

It would no doubt be a daunting, if not impossible task to quantify the answer to either question.

What the available literature and the studies can tell us is the preference that each group has for pedagogy and achievement. Clearly, teachers prefer to impact pedagogy within their schools while principals prefer to impact student learning and overall school improvement. York-Barr and Duke report that in 1997, Marks and Louis addressed a least one aspect of this phenomenon when they posed the research questions:

To what extent does teacher empowerment influence the school's instructional context?
How and to what extent does teacher empowerment enhance authentic pedagogy and student academic performance? (p. 305)

Theirs was a qualitative and quantitative study based on twenty-four case studies of eight restructured elementary schools, eight restructured middle schools, and eight restructured high schools. The research collected data from interviews, observations, and assessment results of 910 teachers. The data were collected from observations by 144 core teachers as well as sampling of student work

products. In this study “teacher leadership” was simply defined as “decentralized school-based management” (p. 305). Marks and Louis concluded that:

Strong links between teacher empowerment and professional community and collective responsibility were revealed. There was an indirect effect of teacher empowerment on pedagogy by how schools were organized for instruction. Teacher empowerment plays a role in teachers’ efforts to improve and their belief that their own learning will enhance their students’ achievement. (p. 305)

This study stops short though of concluding a causative relationship between teacher empowerment and student achievement. The authors instead conclude that, “Teacher empowerment does not directly cause increased achievement.” (305). Teacher leaders prefer to impact pedagogical decisions. Effective principals prefer to impact student learning and achievement. While one does impact the other, there is no causative relationship.

In a 1995 study, Pounder asked the question, “What are the relationships between leaders in a school community including the principal, teacher-leaders, secretaries, and parents, and how do these relationships impact school effectiveness do?” (York-Barr & Duke, 2002, p. 306). Pounder conducted a quantitative study by surveying the principal, one counselor, twenty teachers, two secretaries, and one custodian in each of fifty-seven schools. In this study, Pounder defined teacher leadership in terms of social influence. No specific roles or duties for anyone other than the principal were delineated. He concluded that one common characteristic shared by effective teacher-leaders and effective principals is commitment, which, according to the study results had a positive

impact on school effectiveness and a negative skew for teacher turnover, both highly desirable outcomes. Commitment then, is prerequisite to effective leadership either as a teacher or as a principal. We can conclude that effective teacher leaders might become effective principals if commitment is the key to school improvement.

One important work on the characteristics of effective principals is *Principal Leadership: Applying the new Educational Leadership Constituent Council Standards*, written by Elaine Laurin and published by Corwin Press in 2002. This work examines the values and practices of effective principals who demonstrate consistent compliance with these standards. She writes about the necessity for vision, collaboration, and political acumen if one is to meet the Council's standards and perform as an effective principal. In the introduction to her book, Laurin describes the changing role of principal:

In past generations the primary function of the principal evolved from principal teacher, as a master teacher who also tended to the limited duties required to keep the school organized and operating efficiently to the principal as chief executive officer of the campus. The primary emphasis shifted from one in which the principal truly was a master teacher, a recognized leader in instruction, to one in which the principal was a manager of the school facility. Bureaucracy grew. Policies, rules, and paperwork flourished. Societal problems evolved. The seesaw of responsibility shifted from curriculum and instruction to management and operations. A transition took place in which the principal became responsible for holding together the walls of the school and ensuring that it runs smoothly. The principal teacher thus became the school's organizational manager. (p. 4)

Laurin continues on page 5 as she details the further transition of the position from organizational manager to catalyst for success for all stakeholders. She writes:

With this increased focus on accountability and student success, another transition has occurred in school leadership. The role of the principal has transitioned again from school manager to the school catalyst for success for all stakeholders. When looking at the campus as a single element rather than the only element within the community, the role of the principal becomes that of school liaison for all community resources including parents and other caregivers, neighbors, businesses, churches, civic clubs, and other community service agencies. The role of the principal becomes the primary voice of the school, the champion of free and appropriate education for all students, and the chief proponent of the value of education in a democratic society. (p. 5)

Effective principals then, must embrace the role of voice and liaison and must accept the responsibility for the education of all students and the perpetuation of democracy. That is a very tall order, and not one that is quite as characteristic of effective teacher leaders.

Laurin posits that this is best done by establishing a strong vision. Both effective teacher-leaders and effective principals need to be able to establish, articulate, and implement a strong vision for success. Laurin suggests that principals must operate efficiently in the philosophical realm in order to develop a vision for the entire community. She then clarifies the need to articulate this vision effectively. She writes:

Articulation of the vision is when we begin to communicate it. Articulation is vital; without it, the rest of the school community has no idea what the

vision is. It is critically important that everyone be a part of the plan. Everyone must take part in developing it, in order to be able to articulate it effectively. We need everyone in the community to help us achieve our vision. (p. 21)

At the end of the chapter Laurin provides some useful exercises designed to help principals design a plan for development, articulation, and implementation of the school's vision. She concludes:

To achieve the vision demands more than articulation. We need everyone involved to be empowered. People support what they help to build. Nothing in life is successful if multiple stakeholders do not share and support it. There is no such thing as blind luck. (21)

Not only does she suggest that effective principals empower the community to help implement the vision, she also establishes a four-step plan for implementation and then writes about stewardship of the vision once it has been implemented. Laurin provides similar practical advice on establishing a collaborative environment as well as operating efficiently in the political realm as effective principals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, effective teacher-leaders and effective principals share many personal and professional characteristics. They are energetic, articulate, collaborative, and service oriented. They can identify problems, propose solutions, and work effectively in the political realm in order to gain acceptance of

their vision and plans. By contrast, principals are more concerned with student achievement and overall school improvement while teacher-leaders are more concerned with having an impact on pedagogy and instructional methods. Both are important to the successful school, indicating that the leap from teacher leadership to the principalship may not be as far as some imagine

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Type of Qualitative Study

This study was conducted by utilizing a combination of *autobiographical* and *biographical case study research*. The research compares my own experiences, my own unique story of the journey from classroom to the principal's office, to the experiences of other selected subjects. My goal, through the gathering of data and the analysis of it, was to search for patterns and consistencies in the stories of all study participants, including my own. This approach to educational research results in experiential understanding. Robert Stake suggests that by providing thick description for the reader of the research, that empathy is established by the researcher between the subjects of the case study and the reader. He writes:

Von Wright also spoke of empathy, the knowledge of the plight of another by experiencing it yourself. Qualitative research tries to establish an empathetic understanding for the reader, through description, sometimes *thick description*, conveying to the reader what experience itself would convey. (p. 39)

Stake continues his explanation of experiential understanding as important to case study research by offering several dissimilarities between quantitative and

qualitative researchers. For example, he concludes that quantitative researchers try to nullify context and uniqueness of particular cases in order to find the most generalized and pervasive cases as the norm for studied relationships.

Quantitative researchers treat the uniqueness of a case or conclusion as an error, outside the explained science of the research methods (p. 39). Qualitative researchers, he finds, embrace uniqueness as essential to reader understanding. Again, Stake writes, "Qualitative researchers treat the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts as important to understanding. Particularization is an important aim, coming to know the particularity of the case" (p. 39).

The orientation of quantitative research is one of cause and effect; an attempt to map and conquer the world, according to Stake (p. 43). Quantitative researchers use carefully selected survey items and then weigh respondents results for each item in an attempt to create total objectivity. This study sought the subjective lens of the study participants in order to find the necessary thick description required to provide readers with experiential understanding. Stake suggests that embracing such subjectivity is prominent in case study research and that it is preferable to objectively interpretable checklists or survey items (p. 43) for case study learning. He goes on to conclude, "The intent of qualitative researchers to promote a subjective research paradigm is a given. Subjectivity is not seen as a failing, needing to be eliminated, but as an essential element of understanding" (p. 45).

Not only does qualitative subjectivity allow researchers to include unique findings as part of larger patterns and consistencies, it embraces them as a method of drawing the researcher's readers towards the same sense of uniqueness. Stake writes:

Thus the case, the activity the event, is seen as unique as well as common. Understanding each one requires an understanding of other cases, activities, and events but also an understanding of each one's uniqueness. Uniqueness is established not particularly by comparing it on a number of variables – there may be few ways in which one strays from the norm – but the case is seen by people close at hand to be, in many ways, unprecedented and important, in other words, a critical uniqueness. Readers are drawn to this sense of uniqueness as they read narratives, events, and experiential accounts. The collection of features, the sequence of happenings, is felt to be different. The uniquenesses are expected to be the critical understanding of the particular case. (p. 44)

This research comprised of biographical case studies compared to my own autobiographical case sought to highlight patterns and consistencies by establishing the critical understanding of the uniqueness of each individual case. By closely examining the unique challenges that each participant experienced in his or her setting while experiencing principal socialization, I was better able to validate the recurrent patterns, similarities, and consistencies that did emerge during data analysis.

In 2002, Lyons and LaBoskey suggested that this type of research lays the foundation for making personal meaning of a situation or life experience. Robert Stake in *The Art of Case Study Research* corroborates that claim:

All research is a search for patterns, for consistencies. What I call correlation or covariation in quantitative study, I call pattern in qualitative study. When I think of an important issue, I try to think of patterns to help my reader understand the case better. (p. 45)

Stake also concludes that in case study research, the case sometimes is a person and that persons are described in depth, therefore requiring the researcher to become something of a biographer (p. 96). Narrative biographies and autobiographies are cases written to read something like a story. Stake explains in *The Art of Case Study Research*. He writes:

We use ordinary language and narratives to describe the case. We seek to portray the case comprehensively, using ample, but non-technical description and narrative. The report may read something like a story. Our observations cannot help but be interpretive, and our descriptive report is laced with and followed by interpretation. We offer opportunity for readers to make their own interpretations of the case, but we offer ours too. (p. 134)

Narrative case study and autobiographical reflection and reporting are quite appropriate for qualitative research in general and for this study specifically. In *Let My Spirit Soar! Narratives of Diverse Women in School Leadership* (1998), Ah Nee-Benham and Cooper (1998) conclude that meaningful talk about how one's life experiences shape one's work as a school leader requires a storied approach that is descriptive, personal, and concrete. Thomas and Brubaker (2000) conclude that biographical and autobiographical inquiries are essential elements of qualitative research in the mildly postmodern world. They suggest

that this type of research involves collecting, organizing, and reporting the linguistic reactions of study participants to experiences in the world which are in turn reported by the researcher as narratives, tales, and stories.

In my study I researched the unique experiences of other principals, who like me, spent ten or more years in the classroom before pursuing an administrative career. In addition, I also researched the experiences of two much younger principals who spent only 2-3 years in the classroom before becoming school level administrators. The purpose of my study is to determine the common threads that weave our unique and individual experiences together so that others may learn from us as they begin the principal socialization process. Research into life experiences is innately subjective; therefore a qualitative study is far more appropriate than quantitative research for these purposes. Since I researched their life experiences and compared them to my own within the context of our careers, biographical and autobiographical case study narratives prove to be the best method of reporting the data collected.

Key Terms and Concepts

This study isolated and explored several different ideas and concepts in an attempt to discover the common factors of the subjects' unique experiences in coming to and navigating the first year of the principalship or in the first year of the principalship in a new setting. The major terms, defined here and operationally in the text of the dissertation itself include:

Influence: the ability to severely and profoundly impact one's career progress

Unique Teacher Leadership Experiences: leadership experiences as a teacher that may be shared by study participants, but which are rarely shared with most other teachers such as coaching the debate and speech team, serving as the school based leadership chair, coaching a sport, or serving as the yearbook advisor

Principal Socialization: learning and adapting to the role of principal and/or assistant principal in a new position, in a new setting, or with new expectations at mid-career

Principal Transition: movement from the classroom to the office, from instructor to instructional leader, and from a non-supervisory position in the school's hierarchy to the top supervisory position.

Study participants were made aware of these operational definitions of key terms and concepts.

Research Setting and Participants

The primary goal of my study was to gain personal meaning from my own experiences involving transition from the classroom to the office as I have negotiated the pathways of principal socialization. In order to better understand my own experience, I asked other principals to share their stories about teaching, transition to an administrative career, and principal socialization. I included three other practicing principals in the Wobegone County Schools in this study as well as one participant who is no longer serving as a principal. I intentionally chose some whose teaching experiences and tenure were very similar to my own in

order to seek the common threads that brought us to where we are and have helped us to avoid derailment.

It was important to include these participants, *Bob, Nora, Antonio, and Yolanda* (pseudonyms) this study because their experiences, with the exception of *Bob*, most closely approximate my own. For example, Antonio's background includes having been on his school's debate team while an undergraduate in college and having served as a sports coach during the first years of his high school teaching career. These are two experiences which I have also had and which may yield some of the common threads we share relevant to successful principal socialization. *Nora* and I also share some unique experiences. We both coached debate and speech at the high school level for a number of years before pursuing administrative degrees. Additionally, we both served as high school English teachers, were the new teacher induction coordinators for our schools, served as department chair and school based leadership chair, and moved into administration after a similar length of service as classroom teachers. *Nora* and I also both began our principalship careers as middle school principals in Wobegone County Schools. *Yolanda* and I share a background as secondary English teachers, service as chair of our school's site based leadership teams, department chair, and were both graduated from the Masters in School Administration program at the University of North Carolina Somewhere. It was important to include *Bob's* story in this study because he shares little in common with either me or the other proposed study participants. *Bob's* classroom

teaching experience was limited to two years and he was a lateral entry teacher. His teaching experience included no time in teacher leadership roles and his extracurricular duties were limited to service as a club advisor. Finally, *Bob's* principal socialization experience was unsuccessful and he became derailed. By including *Bob* in the study, I was better compare successful experiences during principal socialization with unsuccessful experiences and to draw some conclusions about failure during the principal socialization experience. For that reason it was important to examine at least one example of the negative case in this study.

Peter Clough in *Narratives and Fictions in Educational Research* writes in 2002 that:

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting attempting to make sense of, or interpret the phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. Qualitative practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations including memos to the self. (p. 43)

With Clough's prescription for successful qualitative research in mind, I conducted interviews and observations of my subjects in their natural settings; their schools. The exception to this was Bob who no longer works as a principal. I interviewed this subject at his home in Virginia where he now works in a private setting.

Data Collection

Since I conducted a qualitative inquiry into the unique experiences of specific study subjects whose career histories are somewhat similar to my own, I had to rely upon the interview as my primary method of data collection to compile their biographical narratives. In addition to interviewing the subjects, I asked them to provide me with access to current and former members of their faculties in order to interview them about each subject's performance as principal during the socialization period. Additionally, I collected data from subjects' notes, journals, memos, and other forms of print material that was produced during the socialization phase of their appointments as principals.

For my own autobiographical narrative I collected data from several sources including my memory, extensive journal notes compiled over the past three decades as a teacher and administrator, from performance evaluations, and from anecdotal archives including such evidences as notes from parents, students, teachers, and colleagues.

Narrative Interview Design

For the other participants in this study, I utilized the *Dolbeare-Schuman-Seidman Narrative Interview Design*. The protocol included requesting their participation and gaining their permission to be included in my study as required by the Institutional Review Board for human study research. I then scheduled initial, primary, and follow-up interviews with each participant. Data was gathered

during the interviews by use of a digital audio recorder and a digital videotape recorder to record participants' responses. In addition I took field notes during the interviews which were later transcribed for use during the data analysis phase of my research. Digital audio files, as well as digital video files of the interviews are secure and will be retained for a period of at least one year from the date of the interviews as required by the Institutional Review Board. The same procedure was followed for collecting data from the faculties of the schools served by the different subjects in the study.

The *Dolbeare-Schuman-Seidman Narrative Interview Design* has been widely used by human subject researchers and is effective for qualitative biographical research. This three-interview mode of in-depth phenomenological interviewing consists of an initial interview focusing on the subject's life history as it pertains to the study questions, a second interview, which asks for a reconstruction of the details of life experiences germane to the study's focus, and finally, a third interview which asks the participant to reflect on the meaning of the experiences. Each interview lasts approximately 90 minutes and all three interviews are conducted within a 3-7 day time span (Wengraf, 2001). Upon completion of each individual interview I carefully reviewed the interview tapes and compiled concise written synopses of each participant's responses in preparation for my analysis of the collected data.

Research Questions

This dissertation sought to answer the primary research question, *what experiences either before your appointment as principal or during your first year as principal, helped to shape the principal socialization process for you?* This primary question provided the framework to guide the research necessary to determine the common threads of successful or unsuccessful principal socialization experiences. Within the framework of this guiding question are several specific areas which were explored during the three interviews prescribed by the Dolbeare-Schuman-Seidman Narrative-Interview Design. These were framed by the following set of secondary questions which allowed composition of a narrative biography for each participant. Composing these narrative biographies for each of the study participants allowed the researcher to frame their individual answers to the primary research question.

The research questions for the first interview, which according to Wengraf should result in the participant's sharing of a *focused life history*, include the following:

1. *What was your early life like? Would you mind sharing some experiences you had with your family?*
2. *What was your life like as an elementary or secondary school student? Could you share some of those experiences?*
3. *How did you come to be a principal? Did anything in your family, school, work, or college experiences influence your decision to pursue this professional choice?*

According to Wengraf's examination of the Dolbeare-Schuman-Seidman Narrative Interview Design, the questions for the second interview should help the interviewee focus on a *reconstruction of the concrete details of the experience*. Seidman, the primary architect of this interview protocol, suggests that:

The purpose of the second interview is to concentrate upon the concrete details of the participants' experiences in the topic area of study. We ask for stories about their experiences in school as a way of eliciting details. Ask: 'What is your job? What is like for you to do what you do?' (p. 147).

With that design in mind, the research questions for the second interview included the following:

1. *What is your job as principal? What is like for you to do what you do?*
2. *Would you reconstruct a day in your life as principal, now, in the present? Would you reconstruct a day in your life as principal during your first year or so in this position?*
3. *Would you share some of the details of your relationships with others in your current setting and position? For example, what is your relationship like with students? With parents? With your teachers? With your principal colleagues? With the central administration?*

Seidman indicates that the questions for the third interview in the data gathering process should help participants reflect on the meanings of their current and past experiences and might also help them focus on a future orientation. This process of helping participants explore the past to clarify where they are now (in the principal socialization experience), and to describe the

concrete details of their present experience can help them establish conditions to reflect upon where they are now and where they may be in the future (Wengraf 2001). The research questions I used are closely aligned to those suggested by Seidman as reported by Wengraf and included the following:

1. *Given what you have said about your life before you became principal, and what you have said about your present experiences, how do you understand the principalship in your professional life? In your personal life?*
2. *What sense does this make to you now?*
3. *Given what you have reconstructed in these interviews, where do you see yourself going in the future? Is there any advice you would offer to other new principals or other principals in a new setting?*

These three groups of open-ended questions were essential to the framing of my data collection. They are not predisposed to a foregone conclusion about any specific patterns or consistencies, yet they provide structure for the study by directing participants' responses towards a thorough examination of their specific and unique experiences in a career that is common to them all. During the interviews I supplemented my open-ended questions with follow-up questions used to probe my subjects for clarity or thick description when needed.

Collecting primary responses on digital audio and video recorders and then transcribing them to my own notes prior to analysis of the data provided a sound foundation for writing the thick descriptions, experiential understandings,

and multiple realities that are required in qualitative research (Stake, p.43). This transcription also began the process of data interpretation, which in qualitative research is far more important than assigning a numerical value to data in order to objectify it. As I listened and transcribed, I began the process of reporting the biographical and autobiographical narratives of my subjects.

Data Analysis Design

Collecting data from three or more people and then adding it to my own experiences resulted in more information than I could possibly process for purposes of this study. This situation is not uncommon among researchers and may be especially true in biographical and autobiographical qualitative research. However, my purpose was not to amass great volumes of data in order to make quantitative comparisons. My purpose was to search for patterns and consistencies in my subjects' stories which created greater understanding of my own principal socialization experience and which may be useful to future principals experiencing principal socialization. Robert Stake suggests that this is not unusual. He writes *that according to Harry Wolcott* it is almost a certainty in qualitative research that much more data will be gathered than can be analyzed. The researcher's job as data analyst in that situation is to discover the essences and then to reveal them in sufficient context to elucidate commonalities. This requires an intense focus on deciding which data is more important to the key issues of the case as the data analysis is completed (pp. 84-85).

Wolcott also suggests three parts to data analysis in qualitative research. First, he suggests that *description* is necessary in qualitative reporting of research findings. I described, relying heavily upon *thick description*, the individual cases of each of my study participants as I wrote their biographical case studies from the data gathered during my phenomenological interviews of each of them. This is consistent with the protocol for analysis that Wolcott advocates in his 2001 revised guide to writing up qualitative research.

Second, Wolcott contends that there is a distinct difference between *analysis*, of data and *interpretation* of data. He states:

Data analysis follows standard procedures for observing, measuring, and communicating with others about the nature of what is *'there,'* the reality of the everyday world as we experience it. Virtually all data amenable to statistical treatment or that can be plugged into a software package fall under the rubric of analysis in this definition of the term. (p. 119)

Wolcott suggests that to *analyze for learning* should be the goal of the qualitative researcher. He defines this as comparing the similarities in the data gathered from different study participants in order to learn things about them that they share or about which they differ that are germane to the focus of the study (p.185). I listed such differences and common experiences as I analyzed the data and I have reported what I learned from this approach in the context of the individual case studies.

Finally, Wolcott states that *interpretation* is more akin to what qualitative researchers do with data. He states:

Interpretation invites the examination, the “pondering” of data in terms of what people make of it. The basis of symbols and meanings upon which anthropologists derive patterns of cultural behavior, for example, can be described and examined analytically, but discerning the patterns themselves is a matter of interpretation. (p.188)

I used both categorical aggregation and direct interpretation of my subjects’ stories as I completed the interpretation phase of this study. Stake suggests that both are necessary to qualitative research. In order to identify connections, themes, relationships, and overlaps, I focused on finding correspondence and patterns from which I was able to make generalizations as I interpreted the data. This is highly subjective, as Stake suggests (p. 78), but entirely valid as I do not claim that my interpretation is uniquely definitive as a quantitative researcher might do.

Researcher Subjectivity and Trustworthiness

Quite the opposite of quantitative research, qualitative research relies on researcher subjectivity to make meaning of various cases, stories, or other data. Stake writes that, “The intent of qualitative researchers is to promote a subjective research paradigm is a given. Subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated, but as an essential element of the understanding” (p. 45). Still, it is important for the researcher to monitor his or her own subjectivity in order to ensure that the data analysis and reporting of it are not slanted towards the

researcher's disposition. I relied primarily upon *methodological triangulation* in order to ensure researcher subjectivity. I triangulated my conclusions in several ways. First, I analyzed subjects' responses to my interview questions and identified my own interpretations of patterns, common experiences, themes, and overlapping commonalities. I also did this for my own responses to the questions based on my principal socialization experience since this is at least partially an autobiographical narrative. Second, during the secondary interview of my subjects I asked them to review the data collected for other subjects and to share with me their interpretations regarding patterns and common themes. I also reviewed my own journals, calendars, and daily activity logs during the time of my transition from teacher to principal in order to compare my thoughts at that time with my recalled autobiographical narrative which I wrote during the data analysis phase of this study. Additionally, I collected any similar data from the study participants that they may have retained from their own unique transitional periods for comparison to the interpretations I made about the collected data. I asked each study participant to review my write-ups of each of their case studies so that I would be certain that I my interpretation of their experiences was accurate. I employed member-checking to compare my interpretations of their journals and logs to their own interpretations. I also compared my own experiences in my case study with what the other participants reported. By employing these methods, I was able to triangulate my findings and thus ensure accuracy in my reporting. Ultimately, each interpretation was unique, yet there

were many similarities in each participant's interpretation of the case studies when compared with my own interpretations.

In order to enhance my method of establishing researcher trustworthiness I also have retained all raw data in the form of written questions, taped interviews, videotaped interviews, journals, logs, calendars, and notes I collected during the data collection and data analysis processes. This archived documentation provides a paper trail for review by other qualitative researchers who may wish to corroborate the veracity of my study. Additionally, digital video and audio recordings were made of each narrative interview and are also archived for further study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that peer debriefing is an excellent method of establishing trustworthiness. Two of my principal colleagues, not participating in my study, participated in the peer debriefing process with me. This process established external validity for my interpretations. Finally I used *thick description* of settings, people, and circumstances in order to assist readers as they move from the settings of study subjects during principal socialization to their own unique interpretations of the data.

Benefits and Risks of the Study

Benefits to Study Participants

All study participants, including myself benefited from this research because it is based upon an exploration of our stories of career development,

progress, and obstacles. By participating, all subjects learned more about themselves as principals and how they responded to transition from one level of responsibility to another. Making meaning for our own stories was a lofty goal and all study subjects increased self-understanding through their participation.

Benefits to Others

Additionally, individuals who may be considering a career in the principalship can also benefit from this study. It provides the unique experiences of those who have engaged in this professional practice and may help others in their principal socialization experiences. This is especially true for individuals who may seek to become principals.

Finally, there is very little research that currently exists about principal socialization that is gathered from the perspective of those experiencing principal socialization. This study benefits the body of literature in the area of principal socialization by providing this much needed data.

Risks to Study Participants

The risk to study participants seemed very low; however, some risk had to be considered. Because my research focuses on personal biography as retold in my own narrative voice, participants were at risk of having their stories told by someone whose interpretation of those stories may be inconsistent with their own. This could have caused some degree of discomfort for participants. Additionally, I did ask participants to share potentially sensitive personal

information. As with all such research, they were at risk for a breach of confidentiality.

In order to protect my study participants and their confidentiality, I utilized an “informed consent for human subjects” form which stipulated their permission to conduct the research, how it was gathered and used, and the researcher’s responsibility to maintain confidentiality. All names of persons, schools, school systems, governments, cities, and counties that are germane to study data gathering are pseudonyms. The only exception is the use of my own actual name. Additionally, I received approval for the study from the Institutional Review Board for Human Study Research at UNCG. The study was not started until IRB approval was obtained.

CHAPTER IV

EARLY BIOGRAPHIES OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

This chapter serves as an introduction to the study participants themselves so that the reader can become acquainted with them as individuals and as practicing educational leaders. Understanding something of their unique backgrounds allows the reader an informed perspective in the later discussion of each participant's principal socialization experience. The data presented for this part of the study was gathered during the initial narrative interview. My focus during this phase of data gathering was to answer the primary research question, *What experiences either before your appointment as principal or during your first year as principal, helped to shape the principal socialization process for you?* In order to establish the particularization that Stake suggests is crucial to understanding each participant in a biographical case study design (p. 39), I asked each of the participants the following questions in our initial interview:

What was your early life like? Would you mind sharing some experiences you had with your family?

What was your life like as an elementary or secondary school student? Could you share some of those experiences?

How did you come to be a principal? Did anything in your family, school, work, or college experiences influence your decision to pursue this professional choice?

By using these questions, I was able to guide my participants to a discussion of their early lives including unique experiences and events that impacted their decisions to pursue careers as principals.

Biography of Bob Perthlander

Bob Perthlander is a tall, thin, African-American man with a wide variety of experiences as a school leader for one so young. Bob is 36 years old and has been an educator in some capacity since graduating from college. Bob did not major in education, nor did he intend to become a teacher, let alone a principal during his undergraduate studies. "I loved science in high school," said Bob, "and so, my plan was to go to college, major in a biological science, graduate and go to medical school. I thought I would become a medical doctor." As it turned out, it was not so much a love of teaching that prompted Bob to turn to education rather than medicine as a vocation, as it was a love for athletics. Bob explained during my initial interview with him:

I ran track in high school. It was my specialty sport. I had tried football, but was too thin and clumsy to be a wide receiver. I played basketball through the ninth grade, mostly because I liked the coach and he needed a tall shooting guard or a small forward. Physically, I fit the bill and so I tried it for him. But, honestly, my heart just wasn't in team sports. What I enjoyed was track and I did that more at the AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) level, though I was on the high school track team every year. I excelled at that. Eventually I moved towards trying out for the USA Olympic Team in the 4x4 and 4x8 relays. My favorite event was the mile. I ended up in college on an athletic scholarship, but still had not made the Olympic team. I focused more and more of my time on perfecting my mile which took time away from pre-med studies.

The best way for me to focus on track and not flunk out was to work with high school athletics, so I volunteered at one of the local high schools. That gave me access to a good track facility to practice on my own when I wasn't practicing with my college team. I really enjoyed working with the high school kids, both boys and girls, and found I sort of had a knack for that.

There simply wasn't enough time to study at the level required for med school and try to be an Olympic qualifier at the same time, so I followed my heart and gave up the notion of medicine. By the time I graduated from college, I had a degree in biology without any of the teaching credentials to go with it. My options were grad school, retail management, or fast food management. I wasn't thrilled with any of those choices. My mother was a teacher and she encouraged me to apply at her high school as a lateral entry candidate so I could teach until I decided what I wanted to do with my life. I took her advice and applied with the new principal there. He hired me more on the strength of my transcript and my mother's reputation than on anything I could bring to the table as a teacher.

Life is short. There is so much I want to try that I am still not sure what I want to be when I grow up, but that is the path that took me to teaching and I have been an educator ever since. I don't regret it; not at all. I have the privilege and honor of working with young men and women everyday who haven't quite decided what life means to them. I get to help with that process and that has as much value for me as a physician's salary.

Bob was hired by the new principal at Another County High School near Stillborough, North Carolina. It was the same school where his mother had spent the majority of her teaching career and was in the same school system as the school from which Bob himself had graduated four years earlier. Bob reflected:

It wasn't the same though. I knew this school was a little nicer, a little newer, and a lot whiter than my old high school had been. The principal was brand new to the county and was about ten years younger than my mother, but ten years older than me. He was totally focused on test scores and had no patience at all with my ideas of developing the whole child. He thought I was crazy to spend any of my instructional time on

enrichment activities, especially for my students of color. This man believed that the only way to teach was by drill and kill and when he saw me conducting discussions about racism in my biology class, he was not a happy camper. I was called into the principal's office far more often as a teacher than I had ever been as a student. He had a single focus and that was the state accountability program. When I shared my thoughts about my moral obligation to educate students of color to the inherent racism that existed in their school system, he decided not to invite me back for a third year. He seemed to think that 'moral obligation' and 'teacher' were mutually exclusive terms.

Bob described his early life with his family as somewhat idyllic. He states:

I was fortunate to have both parents living in the home with me. Many of my friends could not say that. My parents were both educated as were my grandparents on both sides. I had no siblings so on one side of my extended family, I was not just an only child, I was an only grandchild as well. I guess you could say I was a little bit spoiled. My father was a mid-level manager in a company near Durham. He made a very good living for us. My mother was a teacher so we had some standing in both the African American community and the community at large. It was a good life. We were at peace with one another. I can never remember any fighting among any of our family members, just a lot of love. Family was, and is, everything. Our extended family got together just about every weekend and both of my parents spoke with their parents everyday. I just had a great sense of security and belonging. I live in another state now so I miss those Sunday get-togethers, but every time my wife and I go home to visit, it is like we pick up where we left off the last time.

Bob also spoke of the racism that both of his parents experienced in their professional lives and felt that this helped to shape his own views of what equity in schools should be. He shared that:

My father always was bitter that he never made quite the same amount as his white colleagues at the same level and that he was never considered for advancement before they were. He didn't shield me from this, nor did he try to make me bitter, but he certainly felt obligated to keep me

informed about it. He wanted me to go through life recognizing and fighting the racism he dealt with on a daily basis in the corporate world.

Some of my earliest memories of my mother as a teacher were during the height of the racial tensions that came about because of busing to force desegregation in the early 70's. Mom was one of the first African American teachers in her school and I remember her coming home in tears one time because white students on a bus had spat on her as she stood at her duty station in the bus parking lot. As if that wasn't bad enough the principal refused to discipline them even though she followed his procedures and wrote the proper referral forms. He told her he was afraid it might start a race riot if he followed up on it. So, those kids spat on my mother just for being Black and got away with it. Something like that never leaves you. It has certainly never left me. I feel a real obligation to rid our world of racism during my lifetime. If I have to do it one student at a time, then I will.

Bob Perthlander remembered vacations spent with his family, sometimes at the beach, but more often than not, at some spot of historical significance. He recounted one trip they had taken during the summer after his fifth grade year to the Gettysburg Battlefield in Pennsylvania. This trip was combined with a stop at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. and visits to the National Gallery of Art, the National Zoo, and the National Archives. "My father couldn't finish reading the displayed copy of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation at the National Archives," Bob told me. "He choked up and couldn't finish." He went on to describe his mother's reaction to standing at the base of the Lincoln Memorial, right in front of the reflecting pool where Martin Luther King, Jr. had stood during the March on Washington to deliver his "I Have a Dream" speech:

She literally couldn't breathe when she was telling me about it. She looked as if something had sucked all the air right out of her lungs. She got weak in the knees and pale. Dad came over and put his arm around her to

support her. They stood there together weeping at the immensity of it, trying to grasp for themselves what had happened on that piece of the Mall. I knew all the history already because they taught it to me constantly and though I couldn't feel what they were feeling then, I certainly can now. I guess all those years of hearing my mother tell me that education is the only tool available to us to end racism made an impression. It left a mark and made me the educator that I am today.

My parents are still happy people. Full of love for each other, for me, and for all of our family, yet when I look at them, I can still see the incredible sense of loss they feel because of the racism they have had to endure.

Bob had a tremendously supportive family. His parents exposed him to art, culture, and social opportunities including summer camps and dance classes that many African American children of his age were denied. He was, in his own words, "programmed for success."

I had two very successful parents. My grandparents were successful. We were a close family. The understanding was that I would follow suit. I had all the advantages that many kids my age did not. They sent me to space camp, art camp, track camp, and some others. I learned about music and fine art. We always had enough to eat and they bought my clothes at the best department stores. I didn't have to suffer, but they taught me what suffering had meant to our people.

Though I have had some extremely difficult challenges in my career, I still count myself as successful. Most of the difficulties I have had are because my parents also taught me the sin of moral ambivalence. I was never allowed to tolerate discrimination at any level. I was taught by their example that not asking questions about injustice was sinful. Not reacting to injustice was disgraceful. Not intervening to stop oppression was repugnant. They would not tolerate any such moral ambivalence in me and today, I won't tolerate it in myself. It has gotten me into trouble with a couple of my bosses who would prefer I remain silent and politically correct. I simply can not do that. I am not wired that way.

This study participant was also asked to talk about his early school life and what impact that may have had on his decision to become a principal. Bob pointed out several experiences that helped to shape his passion for erasing moral ambivalence in his role as a school based leader. He remembered:

First, let me be clear that I did not set out to become a principal...it just sort of happened. I think, to some extent, it probably happened because I believed, and I still believe what my mother told me, that education is the greatest tool we have to wipe out racism. As a young undergraduate I understood that, but I thought she meant it only for me. I thought she meant that if I was educated enough, at a certain level, that racism would never be able to touch me. So, I attempted to be just like the most educated people I could think of and they were doctors. As I said earlier, my heart was in a lot of other places as well, including sports. When I helped out with high school track so I could have access to their facility for my own practice is when I first started remembering those early lessons. Those lessons, no doubt, shaped me into the person I am today, including being a principal.

When I probed Bob on this area of his early development and consequent career choice, he shared some memories from his own public school experience. He recalled:

Okay, I'm not as old as you (laughs), and I don't ever remember going to a segregated school or anything, but when I look back on it, I do remember the curriculum of race. You know, as David Purpel says, there is always a curriculum. It may not be the written curriculum provided by the state, or what is tested at the end of the year, but it is what is taught, directly and not-so-directly that is the most important curriculum; the *hidden curriculum*.

I asked him to give me an example of this "hidden curriculum" from his own public school childhood. He shared the following with me:

There was a time, in the fourth grade, when I got really bugged because the teacher wouldn't let me help the other kids with long division. It was about September and we were reviewing what we had learned in the third grade. I had always loved math and really enjoyed the challenge of four-place or even five-place long division problems. I will always remember her asking for volunteers to stay in at recess to help the kids who hadn't quite mastered it the year before. She would stay in the classroom to supervise those who were working on long division, or whatever it happened to be at the time, while an assistant took the rest of the class to recess. I remember that as much as I loved to run, that I loved numbers more. Besides, I liked showing off and teaching other kids how to do something they couldn't do was the ultimate high for a precocious fourth grader. Anyway, I volunteered about ten days in a row and she would never pick me. She picked some kid who could hardly do two-place problems over me and it really hurt. It made me angry and I told my mother about it before bed one night. Mom was an advocate for me; always was; still is. She called my school the next day and made an appointment for a conference after school. I sat in the room quietly while Mom and my teacher talked.

I asked Bob if he could recall the conversation. He shared:

Can I recall it? I could never forget it. It was life changing for me on so many different levels. Mrs. Johnson (pseudonym), my teacher was very nervous at first. She told Mom that she didn't call on me because I didn't have enough expertise in long division to teach other kids and that as soon as I had improved my skills some, that she would let me do some recess tutoring. When Mom pulled out the work that had been sent home and showed her my long division grades, Mrs. Johnson squirmed a little more. She told Mom that she understood my grades were good and although I understood it very well, she did not think I could explain it to other children. Mom asked why and Mrs. Johnson didn't really have an answer.

I asked Bob, "What did your mother do then?" He replied:

Her voice got a little higher, a little squeakier, and her face wrinkled up a bit. I knew what that meant because that's the way she looked at me, and

still looks at me, when I have messed up. She put the cards right out on the table and told Mrs. Johnson she thought it was because she didn't think a little Black kid could be smarter than little white kids and that she didn't want me tutoring them because she was a racist. Mom just went off on Mrs. Johnson.

"What did you do then?" I probed. Bob answered:

I just about started to cry because I thought that Mrs. Johnson would hold it against me forever and because I was a little bit embarrassed by what my Mom was doing. Mrs. Johnson told me to go out and wait in the hall while she and my mother finished talking, but my mother said no. She told me to sit right there and listen and then she explained to my teacher that she wanted me to hear what this was really all about because she knew I would deal with similar situations all my life. I wasn't sure who I should listen to, but I guess I knew that Mom would punish me if I disobeyed her and I sensed that there was some great truth in this conversation she wanted me to learn so I sat there until they were through.

"Did your mother make any progress? Did Mrs. Johnson capitulate?"

She did to an extent. She agreed to let me tutor kids during recess starting the next day, but she was clear that it would only be voluntary. She told Mom that she would not force any child to work with me who did not want to, because she was afraid of how their parents might complain. I remember very clearly when Mom asked her if they might complain because I was Black, that Mrs. Johnson just sort of looked down. I actually felt sorry for her because she couldn't defend it, couldn't explain it, and was too timid to fix it. I wanted Mom to let up, but she wouldn't. She dressed Mrs. Johnson down, way down right in front of me. When we left I asked her why she was so mad at Mrs. Johnson even after she agreed to let me help the other kids learn long division. Mom told me that accepting racism was as bad as defending it or participating in it. She told me that she wanted me to learn that we all have an obligation to confront it.

I asked Bob to explain why this one episode of racism stood out so prominently in his memories of school and childhood. He responded:

Well, it was traumatizing for one thing. I mean here were two of the most important adults in my life and I was seriously afraid that they might actually physically fight. The other thing is that it showed me very early on that the truth was not very important to a lot of folks. What was important was keeping things the way they were regardless of the rightness or wrongness of it. I also saw my mother's courage and the results of being courageous in such a situation. I learned that courage is a powerful, powerful weapon against hatred and racism.

I asked Bob to explain the connection of this incident to his career choice. He replied:

Well, I didn't immediately say to myself as a ten year old, 'I'm going to become a school principal and make sure this type of injustice never happens again.' It shaped me though and it did lead me on a path to reveal the truth about racism and injustice. Dr. Shapiro (Svi Shapiro, UNCG College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations) was on my dissertation committee. Early in that process he helped me define myself as a school leader and it was clear to both of us that I became a principal more because of hermeneutics than because of any burning desire to impact pedagogy. I believe he is right; the truth is more important to me than student achievement levels on standardized tests, though that is important too. I think watching my parents endure racism and having them share their stories of it while I was growing up started me on the journey to find, and share, and insist on the truth. Being a principal is just a tool that helps me do that for others.

Bob and I continued to discuss events in his public school experience that may have led him to a career as a principal. Bob consistently said that he never consciously pursued the principalship as a career goal, but that it was more of an unexpected destination at which he had arrived on his journey to hold racism in check while searching for the truth. When I asked him to expound on his secondary public school experiences he spoke in more general terms about his

penchant for challenging teachers and their methodologies. He often found himself in trouble for asking “Why do we have to learn this?” and “Why do we have to learn it this way? Why can’t we try learning another way?” The results of his constant challenging of authority filled a mixed bag of praise and criticism. He made many friends because, he felt, he spoke for lots of students, Black and white, who also questioned why teachers used certain methodologies to teach specific content. They were glad, Bob indicated, that someone had the courage to be so challenging and to ask the questions that they themselves were too timid to ask. Bob elaborated:

Yeah, by the time we got to high school I had lots of friends. I was pretty popular and my parents went crazy that I dated white girls as well as Black girls until I pointed out the hypocrisy that was their own racism. They slowly came around to accept it when I told them it was because of their own teaching that I felt obligated to look beyond color in all of my relationships. I did challenge my teachers a lot. Most of them hated that, but a few appreciated it and actually changed the way they delivered our instruction. I just didn’t see that teaching everyone the same content in the same manner, every day of every school year for decades was very effective. I asked for the students to be given a voice in how we were taught and how we learned. The principal didn’t always appreciate that, but he did appreciate that I was never disrespectful, just challenging. That had a lot to do with my evolution as an educator I think. As a student, especially as a Black student, I felt like I had little voice in the teaching and learning process and I wanted to change that. I still feel very strongly that we should rely more on the students themselves to determine how we teach them.

This view of teaching and learning is similar to that of Suzanne SooHoo in *Teacher Researcher: Emerging Change Agent*. She writes:

Historically, educators have viewed the process of learning as a transmission process in which teachers transmit their knowledge into the empty minds of learners. Teachers make decisions about curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and governance. Students are passive recipients of knowledge who dutifully memorize facts and fill in the blanks. Standardized expectations and accountability are manifestations of the prevailing ideology. Compliance and obedience are valued over independence and critical thinking, because learners are shaped and molded by caretakers. The value for humanity takes second place to efficiency and uniformity. (1989, p.101)

SooHoo goes on to suggest that, “Within this view, educators systematically deny and devalue student voices. Teachers make unilateral decisions on what constitutes worthwhile knowledge because they lack faith and trust in students’ capabilities” (1989). Bob indicated that he agreed with this view. He further indicated that he felt his highest calling as an educator is to unleash students’ capabilities to become independent learners. “In our system,” he said, “we have very little success in creating independent learners because we don’t trust that students can be effective, independent learners. We ignore their input in the process.”

I understood, very clearly, at the conclusion of this initial interview with Bob Perthlander that school administration is far more than a vocation for him. It is a calling to use the tools available to him to promote truth and justice and to foster independent learning.

Biography of Yolanda Reid

Yolanda Reid is a young, African American woman in her mid-thirties. She is currently in her first principalship at S.E. Burford High School in Westwaters, North Carolina. Unlike Bob Perthlander, Ms. Reid indicated that she always planned on being an educator and that it was a goal that developed during her childhood years as a student in Miami, Florida and later in Sometowne when she attended college at North Carolina A&T State University. She taught school for four years at the middle school level before becoming an assistant principal at a high school. After nearly two years as a high school assistant principal, she was promoted to the principalship at S.E. Burford High, one of the most impacted and challenging high schools in the Wobegone County Schools district. I asked her to speak to me about her early life. She told me that:

I grew up in a middle class African-American family in Miami, Florida. There were two children, my brother, who is three years younger than me and me. I grew up in a middle class neighborhood and attended neighborhood schools. My elementary school was just down the block from where I lived. I attended there for all of my elementary years, K-6. We were a very close-knit family even to our extended family. We have relatives in the Caribbean and visited there often. My mother was an elementary teacher at a different school and kept about the same hours we did so she was not available to attend conferences or other activities at school unless they were held at night. And so, my father was the one who kept up with our education. He was the one who was involved in the school, attending PTA meetings, book fairs, spelling bees while we were in elementary school.

She went on to tell me about many out-of-school educational opportunities that her parents provided for her and her brother, Corey Perry. She said:

We had lots of other opportunities for education outside the school. My parents really wanted to expose us to a lot of other educational opportunities and so we traveled a lot. I have been to all fifty states and to most all of the Caribbean islands.

Mrs. Reid felt that travel had been an integral part of her development as a child and that it helped her to see other cultures in a more objective light. This, she concluded, is an important characteristic for any educator and especially for principals.

As we continued the interview, I asked her to share more about her parents' backgrounds and some of the experiences she had with them as a child.

She told me first about her father. She stated:

My dad is currently retired, but he worked for the juvenile justice system while we were growing up. He always worked for them. As I said, he retired from the Juvenile Justice Department in Miami. His schedule was extremely flexible so he had the time to come to the school, check on our progress, get report cards, and attend conferences. My mother came to our pivotal conferences, the ones held at night, but because Dad's schedule was so flexible, he was the one who really checked up on us and held us accountable for our school work. He was the parent who took care of our schooling.

When I asked her to share some experiences from her early childhood and adolescence she told me about family traditions:

Traditions were important and they included going to both sets of grandparents' houses for Christmas. After Christmas we traditionally went to the Bahamas to visit cousins, aunts, uncles, other family members. Another tradition was summer vacations. We always loaded up the car and traveled to a relative's house that lived far, far away. That is how I got

to visit all fifty states. We have a large extended family that is really spread out, yet we have always remained close. I loved traveling to the Bahamas in winter and to all the states in the summer. Those were some great traditions. I really enjoyed going and experiencing different people and different cultures. I believe that is what has helped me now, understanding different cultures and different people; that and growing up Miami which is a cultural melting pot. I believe it really serves me well as a principal in a very diverse school now because I have experience dealing with so many different cultures and so many different types of people. Wobegone County is just becoming very diverse, but it hasn't been like that long. My background in Miami and traveling has really helped me deal with diversity.

I asked her to share more about what her life was like while growing up. She said:

Seeing how my parents interacted together was nice. Their relationship had a big impact on me. Also, one of the things I did a lot growing up was to go to my mother's school to help her on teacher work days. I ran copies for her on those old, what do you call them, mimeograph machines. I put up bulletin boards, stapled handouts, washed blackboards and desks and just about anything else that a teacher has to have done. I've been in schools all my life and seeing my mother as a teacher gave me a perspective that my friends didn't get to see.

When I probed her to elaborate on any connections to her current career she continued:

My mother would bring girls home with her who were very poor and I became friends with the girls. The school my mother taught in was in a very impoverished neighborhood. It wasn't like the school we attended. My mother, for as long as I could remember, would take some of those girls under her wing and bring them home with her on some holidays. This gave me my first glimpse of life for most African-American children and I could see it wasn't very pretty. My mother tried to take care of them and it impacted me. To this day that is why I am very likely to show up at my

own home with a student in tow who needs more help than I can give them at school. My mother's caring as a teacher helped me to see a side of life that is so important to me now. I am thankful for it now.

I asked her to elaborate a little more on the impact of her mother's career on her as a child. Mrs. Reid continued:

My mother was always in a K-6 school out towards Homestead in the Everglades. She had a lot of Seminole Indian and Hispanic students in addition to African-American and white students. That was my first introduction to Hispanic culture. She brought them home and also took us to many of their events, ball games, dances, festivals and all sorts of things like that. Their school events were a lot different than ours even though they were really just a few miles from my own school. That was really my first introduction to other cultures and diversity. I saw firsthand how the so-to-speak "other half" lives. It made quite an impression on me as did my mother's empathy towards them.

Mrs. Reid went on to tell me about her parents' backgrounds and educations:

My mother was always a teacher, for as long as I can remember. She grew up in Miami and attended the University of Miami or "The U" as she calls it. My father grew up in South Georgia, but he attended UCLA in Los Angeles. I think he went there mostly because he had a friend there. Obviously education was very important to both of them.

She told me something of her life growing up as a big sister as well:

Growing up with my brother was interesting. Being three years older than he was, I always made sure that he was the one who got in trouble growing up. We got along fine. I guess that he looked up to me, but we also had lots of cousins who were in our house all the time. We had a lot of family company every day and he bonded with the male cousins while I bonded with the female cousins. I think he really did look up to me even though we went through that typical teenage period when siblings do more

fighting than bonding. Oddly enough he too majored in education and is a middle school health and physical education teacher now. He gives me, not our mother, the credit for that. I guess I had a bigger influence on him than I realized.

She paused, and then took the opportunity to modify her statement:

Well, I guess I better tell the whole truth here (laughs). He does give me most of the credit for getting him into education, but he gives our mother some credit too. He saw how she really cared about the girls she brought home with her and he somehow wanted to be like that too. He thought that by being a teacher he could help kids in a different generation as my mother had helped some of our own.

Mrs. Reid went on to point out that it was the combination of her parents who inspired her to become an educator. She credited her mother's example of truly caring for children as a teacher and her father's example of how important positive adult role models are, especially in the lives of impoverished children, for helping her to decide to enter the field. "But really, it was more my father who encouraged me to look at administration. My mother never encouraged that. She still has difficulty with me in my position," she told me. When I asked why her mother had been hesitant for her to pursue administration she responded:

Well, I think it is a lot of things. For one, she never aspired to be an administrator herself. She was just never interested in doing anything beyond the classroom and you know I admire that. We need dedicated, career teachers such as my mother. She is not a particularly ambitious person. She felt the classroom was her calling and she can't really

understand why I have wanted to move beyond that. I tell her that I want to have a bigger impact on students than I can have in the classroom and she just doesn't understand. She thinks the most important role in education is teaching and she really doesn't care much for administrators. It has strained our relationship somewhat from time-to-time.

I probed her on this subject a little more deeply and asked if her mother might be jealous of her success at a relatively young age. She replied:

I don't exactly think it is jealousy. It is more like a lack of confidence in me and that is where it strains our relationship. I was promoted to assistant principal just about 12 hours into my MSA (Master of School Administration degree) and she didn't congratulate me at all. She told me I wasn't ready, that I didn't have enough experience as a teacher to be an administrator with authority over teachers yet. She was afraid I was being set up for failure by the white principal who recommended me. I was very hurt and turned to my father for support. He told me to go for it and told me he knew I could do any job I set my mind to. I told my mother that it didn't make any sense at all for the principal to request me as his assistant if he just wanted me to fail. I reminded her that if I failed in my job, it would reflect on him. Besides, he had never given me anything but high praise and compliments and I had no reason not to believe that he genuinely valued my leadership qualities. She got over it after a while, but then it was the same thing when I got my principalship.

"Why?" I asked, "What did she say then?" Mrs. Reid recalled the conversation:

It was about three months after I finished my MSA. The principal at S.E. Burford had really been forced out after only about seven months on the job. He was a very nice man, but he simply did not have the background to administer a very troubled, failing, inner city, minority school. When he left, the superintendent called my principal and asked him about me. My principal told him that I would need a lot of support, but that he felt I could do the job of regaining the confidence of the community and the respect of students and teachers at that school. I accepted the offer and found myself in the principal's office at S. E. Burford High School just a few weeks later. I called my parents to tell them, along with my little brother who was at the house. Corey, my brother was kidding me about being on

the fast track and everything and asked how much money I would be making. When I told him my mother also heard and asked to speak to me. She told me I had only about six years of total experience and there was no way I deserved that kind of money. It really hurt and I didn't talk to her again for several weeks. I know she still resents my salary and feels like administrators don't deserve such a higher level of pay than teachers get. I just refuse to discuss it with her in order for us to get along.

I asked if she felt that, coming from a family of educators, she would retire as one. She responded:

My mother just retired from the classroom this past spring. She had 30 or 31 years of experience. My brother has taught for only four years, but he is already looking at real estate as a career in order to make more money. He is not interested in becoming an administrator either. I don't think he will retire from education; he will retire from business. I will retire from education. It is what I know and love. It is who I am and what I am supposed to be.

Mrs. Reid's ambition was evident in her response to my follow-up question. I asked if she expected to retire as a principal. She told me:

As a principal, no, but I will retire as an administrator. I would like to continue to move up the ladder. If I get derailed here at S. E. Burford High School, which is a real distinct possibility given the demographics, the challenges, and the bureaucracy, which should be in place to help, but often hinders our work, then I will move to another system. I have the credentials and I am marketable as an articulate, knowledgeable, African American woman. I don't want to sound boastful, but there aren't an awful lot of us out there right now. I would like to retire as a superintendent. That is my goal for myself and the children I will serve. I think I could do so much with that position.

I asked about her relationship with her brother growing up. She indicated that it went as most sibling rivalries go, but also intimated that it continues to affect her relationship with her mother. Mrs. Reid intimated that:

Corey, my brother and I, had a very good relationship when we were much younger. He really looked up to me as his big sister and I loved having a little brother, but then you know as we got into our teens we had the typical fights and disagreements. He wanted all the privileges I had even though I was three years older. He would whine to our mother until he got his way and then when she gave him that level of freedom at a much younger age, I would get very angry. It really hurt my relationship with my mother quite a bit.

I sensed the remnants of a strained relationship and probed a little deeper. “Does it still impact your relationship with your mother? How do you and your brother get along now?” I asked. She answered:

Well, Corey and I get along fine now. I named my son for him. We got along fine back then, I just felt that my mother always took his side when we argued and it hurt. It still hurts my relationship with my mother. I never felt like she was there for me when I needed her the most, especially when I was nineteen and twenty and having a baby. She left me to deal with all that on my own and so I did. I got married, moved from Jacksonville State University to North Carolina A&T State University, finished my degree and started teaching. I am very goals-oriented and so I have always set goals for myself and worked to make them a reality, without my mother’s support or help. It’s almost like I need to do it so I can say to my mother, ‘See, I told you I am as good as Corey.’

I concluded this line of questioning by asking if she felt this relationship had affected her career in any way. She replied:

Oh yes, I'm sure it has. It has made me stronger so that I can face adversity on the job a lot more confidently than some of my principal colleagues. I truly believe that what doesn't kill us makes us stronger and that relationship with my mother has made me much stronger as a person, a mother, a sister, a daughter, and as a principal. You can't completely separate the personal from the professional and this experience has shown me that I have the strength from within to do a lot of very hard work. That allows me to get over the emotional part of that relationship and just accept it for what it is. I'm not close to my mother and probably never will be, but I don't love her any less and I appreciate the example she lived for me. She is a great woman.

I was very curious about the role that her elementary and secondary school experiences had played in her decision to become a principal. I asked her to recall teachers and events that might have helped form her role as an administrator. She elaborated for me:

Oh my, let me see. I'll talk about some of the elementary teachers first. I remember Mrs. Melendez; our Spanish teacher in elementary school. We took Spanish every year and we gave (laughs), we gave that woman hell. I can't explain it, we just all cut up and she could not control us. I was normally a very good student and a good child. I never got into trouble and neither did my friends, but that woman could not control a class and we just sort of went into mob mentality with her every day. I didn't learn much Spanish, but I did learn something about poor teaching. If our parents had ever found out, they would have killed us, but I guess that's why we behaved like that; we knew she wasn't going to do anything about it. She was afraid of us even when we were first graders. Then I remember Mrs. Cruise. I had her in the first and second grade. She really loved us and we went back to visit her all during elementary and middle school. She held us accountable though and even after some of us had gotten up into the fifth or sixth grade, if we did something bad she would send for us and paddle us. We loved her though, because she loved us enough to care about how we behaved and were developing. I learned the value of accountability from Mrs. Cruise and that is something that I apply to my professional life as a principal every day. In the sixth grade I had Mrs. Panteras. She was a no-nonsense-we-are-here-to-learn type of teacher. She didn't demand respect from us, she commanded it and there is quite

a bit of difference. We gave it to her because of that and she gave us respect in return. I never felt belittled in Mrs. Panteras' class. She treated us with respect almost as if we were adults too. That has taught me a lot about respect for and from students. I know that as a principal with a difficult faculty and student body, it is far better to command than demand respect. That has had a lot to do with any success I have had.

I then asked Mrs. Reid to share any unique memories from her public school experience that might have had some impact on her current career as a principal on her decision to become one. She shared the following story about her sixth grade dance:

I remember my sixth grade dance. It was the first time I had ever gone to a somewhat formal function at school and I think it was for sixth grade graduation. It was a big to-do and all of us pre-pubescent girls giggled about what we would do if some boy actually asked us to dance. We looked forward to it and dreaded it for weeks before it happened. I remember on the night of the dance I got there and found that I was the only girl wearing what I called a "little girl dress." All the other girls had on something that looked a lot more mature than what I was wearing. It just about killed me. Even my friends made fun of me and I spent most of the time sitting behind the refreshment stand crying. Then I remember that the DJ came on the loudspeaker and said that our principal, Mr. Bee, was going to dance a very special dance with one very special girl at the school and then he called my name out. I went from wallflower to belle of the ball in zero seconds flat. I tell you I will never forget what Mr. Bee did for me that night. He was so much like a father to us that he knew I was hurting and how to fix it. I still have a snapshot that someone took of me dancing with him that night and I will always cherish it. That's how I want my students to think of me; not just as the boss of them during the school day, but as an adult who truly cares about their lives. Mr. Bee had the relationship piece down way before it was popular to coin phrases such as "Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships." He was a great principal. I hope I can be that good some day.

I asked about any other incidents that may have colored her career based on her elementary school experiences. She responded:

Yes, but none as important as what Mr. Bee did for me at the sixth grade dance. You know twelve-year olds can be cruel and he handled that for me without punishing anyone, without yelling at anyone, but at the same time teaching them all a lesson about what really matters most. He will always be my hero for that. Let me see, anything else? Well, Mrs. Melendez (the Spanish teacher), taught me how not to handle people. She was the opposite of Mrs. Panteras who taught me so much about commanding respect and how important it is to exchange that with students.

This interview was held during the school day and at this point in the digitally recorded interview as if on cue, a loud noise interrupted us from the hallway. There was some sort of student disturbance and Mrs. Reid asked if I would excuse her for a moment. I told her I would and watched as she walked to her office door, opened it and stood in the hallway surveying the situation. She said hello to a couple of students, calling them by name and fixing them with a look that said, "Straighten up." I heard several students apologize for disturbing her and then I heard only silence as they made their way to class. When she returned to finish the interview I remarked that she appeared to have learned Mrs. Panteras' technique for commanding respect very well. She smiled and told me that I could not have paid her any higher compliment.

The initial interview then moved to a discussion of Ms. Reid's secondary school experiences and how those experiences may have helped to shape her

as an educator and principal. She shared some insights into friendships and activities that had a profound effect on her.

My middle and high school years were very good. I enjoyed them tremendously. We grew up together back then and generally went through all of our school years with the same sets of friends. Miami was not such a transient place back in the late eighties as it is today. My three best friends were Tanya, Miriam, and Shontae and we did just about everything together. Our parents knew each other well and we all lived in the same neighborhood. Their parents, like mine, were college graduates and upper middle class so they shared the same values and concerns. It was not unusual for all of us to have dinner or spend the night at one girl's house. All of our parents parented all of us.

She went on to share that she stood out from this collection of friends for two reasons:

First, I was tall and skinny. My daddy used to call me Olive Oil like the Popeye character and it always got away with me. Second, I was smart, but didn't really pay much attention to that until the eighth grade when I was moved into a program for gifted and talented students. That separated me from my girlfriends during school hours, but not in any other way. We remained close, but I missed them during the school day.

I asked her about middle or high school teachers who had an impact on her. She responded:

I think coaches had the greatest impact on me and that is really strange since I am not and never have been athletic at all. I had a coach for health and physical education in middle school who was like a father to me in school. He gave me lunch money when I forgot mine and held me

accountable. Anytime I got into any trouble he came to find me. Not to get me out of trouble, but to remind me of who I was. I later had him and another coach for driver's education during high school. They were just really great people who obviously cared for students. They certainly made me feel special.

I asked her if any one teacher in high school had a bigger impact than others.

Yes, there was Mr. Michael Brock. He was my health teacher in the ninth grade and he was a tall, white-Hispanic male. Mr. Brock didn't see color; he just accepted and loved us all. He was very tough, like Mrs. Panteras in elementary school, but also very nurturing. He often told me that I would make a great teacher or principal someday. I could go to him with any problem and I became very close to him and his wife, who was also a teacher there. Mr. Brock was a little closer to me than she was, but he is deceased now. Yes, he had the biggest influence on my decision to become a teacher of all the teachers I had in high school.

I asked Yolanda to tell me about the most outstanding experience she had in high school. Her story explained her ability to stick to a goal, once she had identified it. She began:

Well, that is easy. About halfway through my senior year there was a college fair in the convention center in downtown Miami. At my high school almost everybody went to college and was expected to go. Most of my friends and I had decided on Florida A&M University and so we wanted to go to the convention center to talk to them about applications and all. Of course Shontae, Tanya, Miriam, and I had all forgotten our permission slips and so we weren't supposed to go, but we borrowed a car from one of the basketball players, cut class, and went anyway. On the way we had a terrible accident and I was badly injured. Long story short, I spent the rest of my senior year in the hospital and being home schooled. I very nearly died.

I asked her to elaborate on why this event influenced her so much. She

continued:

Well, anytime you have an event that almost takes your life, I think you are bound to examine your priorities. After I got over the shock of the accident and the fear that I might die, for a while there, I was sorry that I hadn't. Once I knew I would recover, when my liver and spleen lacerations were healed, I was afraid of how my teachers and especially my parents would treat me. I knew how much that impulsive act of mine had disappointed them. I wasn't sure whether or not my parents were going to finish the job and kill me anyway. I was afraid that I would be so far behind in school that I would not graduate, would not get accepted to college, and generally that my life was not going to turn out as planned. Thankfully, my parents understood the folly of youth. I think they were so glad I lived that they didn't plan any other punishments for me after my recovery. They knew I had learned my lesson. I fully expected the school to tell me to come back the next year to finish my senior year, but instead, all of my teachers and the principal worked hard to make sure I stayed academically on track towards graduation and college. That had a huge influence on me. They helped me so much to keep my life together at a time when it could have all fallen apart that I knew this event was revealing my life's purpose to me. I was supposed to do the same for other students that had been done for me. I knew I would be a teacher then and at the same time, I admired my principal so much for his personal involvement in my situation that I wanted to be like him and make a difference in kids' lives too.

When I asked her to conclude this initial interview with some information on activities or organizations she may have participated in that could have helped to shape her career choice, Yolanda provided a brief answer:

There wasn't much really. I was in Spanish club and a few other organizations, but I didn't play sports. I was a cheerleader for a while and I was in student government. I was more of a participant than a leader back then, except with my friends. I think my admiration of Mr. Bee and my high school principal combined with the leadership opportunities that the

principal that I had as a first year teacher gave me led me to pursue this career path.

Yolanda Reid's early childhood and secondary school experiences, not unlike the other participants in this study, had an impact on her decision to become first, a teacher, and later, a school principal. I left this initial interview feeling that her path to the principalship was as much a product of destiny as it was a product of design. She was the daughter of an educator whom she respected very much, she was influenced early in life by teachers and a caring sensitive principal, and later was influenced even more by her high school teachers and principal who provided what she needed in a time of crisis. All these various ingredients from Yolanda Reid's background certainly played a role in ultimate career choice.

Biography of Nora Thayer

Nora Thayer is a tall, soft-spoken woman in her mid to late forties. She is experiencing her second episode of principal socialization as she recently assumed the leadership of Wintergreen Middle School, historically a high performing middle school which, in recent years, has experienced some changes in its demographics. Additionally, the teacher turnover rate has increased during each of the past three years. As a consequence of these and other factors the school has recently reported sharply declining student achievement scores. Nora was placed there by Superintendent George Towery because of her strong

record of increasing student achievement and establishing a stable environment at one of Wobegone County's most impacted middle schools, Laurin Middle School in Westwaters. This was Nora's first principalship and she served Laurin Middle successfully for nearly three years before her transfer to Wintergreen. Her soft spoken approach and even demeanor belie the strength of her leadership skills which were apparent over the course of our interviews.

Mrs. Thayer's accent is decidedly non-Southern, yet it is difficult to place it geographically. She speaks with the precise pronunciations and deliberate cadence that are indicative of those who live in the American mid-West. Our initial interview confirmed that she was a product of a small town in Indiana. When I asked her to share details of her early background she told me that she was from Hailey, Indiana a small town roughly equidistant between Louisville, Kentucky and Bloomington, Indiana. She told me that Hailey had about 3500 residents during her childhood and that the population is roughly the same today. She lived there all of her life in the same house and on the same street until she left home to go to college. She was raised by both parents and had one sibling, a younger sister, who also became a teacher. I asked her to describe Hailey and her memories of family as a child. She responded:

Hailey is this tiny little town in Indiana where everybody knows everyone else. It really is like that. It is about halfway between Louisville, Kentucky and Bloomington, Indiana where you still have to go to do any serious shopping, or go to the movies or anything else much. It is typical small town America. Neither of my parents went to college. My father went to college, but my mother dropped out of high school and got married. It just wasn't considered necessary for women to finish high school when she

came along. Both of my parents worked when we were growing up, but babysitting, we didn't call it 'daycare' back then, wasn't really a problem for us because so much of our family lived there as well. I walked home from school to my grandmother's house everyday and my grandmother babysat my little sister before she was old enough to go to school. Most of my friends had mothers who stayed at home, but because we could go to my grandmother's house it wasn't very different. My mother had a variety of jobs, but the one she had the longest was serving as a clerical assistant in an optometrist's office. I really can't remember the other jobs she held. She was there for a long time.

Nora went on to share that her father and his brother co-owned an automobile body shop for as long as she could remember and although they certainly were not rich, that he provided a good middle class lifestyle for them with his business. Her mother worked primarily to save enough money to put her daughters through college. She indicated that her father really never had an opinion about the education of his daughters and that he left such details up to their mother. Nora recalled that:

He didn't really ever have much to say to us. My father really saw his job, I guess as most men did back then, to provide for us. The rest he left up to mother. He never asked to see report cards or how we were doing in school. He didn't care if we went to college or not. Those things just were not important to him. My mother was the one who expected us to do well in school and to go on to college.

"Expected?" I asked.

Yes, expected. There was never really any question about whether or not we would go. My mother made it very clear that it was expected and though my father didn't really express an opinion, I guess he supported my mother's position on that. It was my mother who held us accountable for grades and I mean she held us accountable. I was expected to make A's and if I made A-'s, then I really got chewed out. I don't really remember either of them going (to) parent-teacher conferences or PTA

except for when we were in school plays, then they both went. We really were a blue-collar type of family.

I asked if her mother held her sister as accountable as she did Nora. Nora's reply indicated that she did.

Oh, yes, Sissy (I still call her that) had to perform too. My mother was a disciplinarian with very high expectations. We did not grow up in a democratic household. When she said she expected something, we knew it had better be done. My sister went to college too. She always wanted to be a horse trainer, I guess because we lived in horse country. She went to Horse College, seriously, Horse College, and became a certified trainer, but found that women weren't really welcomed into that profession. Later she went back to college and completed her teaching degree. She taught for a while, got married, had kids, and now is a stay-at-home mother. She lives in the same area where we grew up.

Nora shared that her parents seemed proud of her accomplishments and that they respected her position as a principal. "My father even told me he was proud, once," she said. "That was a big accomplishment for him. He has never been affectionate or flattering. I guess he believes that praise isn't necessarily required when we do what is expected."

When I asked Nora to share some family experiences that may have led to her career choice she indicated that she could not. "We were expected to make good grades and go to college. Beyond that, it was up to us. I can't think of anything besides that expectation that prompted me to go to college and certainly nothing ever happened in the family that moved me towards the principalship," she said.

The initial interview moved towards Nora's memories of elementary and secondary school and how that experience may have shaped her career choices.

I can't really remember a whole lot of experiences in elementary school. Our school system was really very small. We had only three schools, an elementary school, a junior high, and a high school. Everyone went to school together for all twelve years and it was all on one campus, though there were different buildings. I don't really remember any of the teachers except my first grade teacher, perhaps because they were all so unremarkable. I remember her because we share the same birthday. Her name was Mrs. Siskin, but she really didn't do anything spectacular that helped me determine who I wanted to become.

I asked Mrs. Thayer if she had any good memories of Troupe Elementary School. She replied that she did not when she stated:

I think we were all pretty miserable. I just remember that it was very old-school oriented. We had to be absolutely silent for most of the day. We sat in rows in every classroom and most of us were just doing our time until we could go to junior high school. Elementary school wasn't fun, but we did, here is that word again, what was 'expected' of us because that was the culture of our school, our families, and our town. We weren't really allowed to complain about it either.

I asked if she could make any connections between her own elementary school experience and her current practice as a principal. She replied:

Hmmm, let me see. Not really, unless of course it is my emphasis on active learning. So, yes, I guess really I have connected that to my own experience as a student. I just hate to see totally silent classrooms and kids who are really afraid to be engaged in learning. I encourage active teaching and learning practices in my teachers and I become a little wary of those teachers whose classrooms are always quiet. I guess maybe that does go back to the six years of compliant boredom that I experienced as

an elementary school student, so, yes, it has impacted my practice as both teacher and principal.

Nora told me about both the best and worst teachers that she had as a public school student in Hailey, Indiana:

There was Mrs. Ugsli, my junior English teacher. She was the best that I remember and that is probably because of the relationship piece. She was terrific in the classroom, but she also got to know us personally and engaged us in learning every day. I got into trouble from time to time when I was bored, but I never got into trouble in her class. She was just tremendous. I remember Mrs. Ugsli married the first man released from the internment camps in California when the government finally stopped its Japanese-American internment program during World War II. She wrote a book about her husband's experiences and we were all very impressed. She was also my drama director and my speech coach. I competed on the speech team which was very big in Indiana. I didn't do the original events because I was afraid to speak extemporaneously. I still am. I did the drama interpretation events and I gained a lot of self-confidence from that. Mrs. Ugsli was also the sponsor for our literary magazine and I was on that staff as well. She just really knew how to get us involved in learning and I think that is because she cared so much.

She went on to describe the worst teacher of her public school experience, Miss Johnson:

Miss Johnson was the worst teacher I have ever had anywhere including college and graduate school. She never engaged us. In fact, she just basically ignored us and of course that led to a lot of us getting into trouble. I had her for senior English and she would just come in every day, sit at her desk and read a book or magazine. She didn't even pretend she was teaching and so a lot of us did what all kids do when they are ignored – we acted out. That landed us in the principal's office. After a while he caught on and understood that the problem was with the teacher, not with us. She was dismissed about mid-year. I guess she did teach me a lot about bad teachers that I transfer to my daily practice as a principal.

Nora Thayer shared some of her memories of her principal in high school:

Mr. Babcock was the principal at Paoli High School for as long as I could remember. He was the principal there when I was a little girl and he still was for a couple of decades after I left Indiana. The remarkable thing about him was his ability to forge close relationships with his students. He even had a pretty good relationship with the kids who stayed in trouble. I got into a little trouble my senior year, mostly because I was unchallenged and bored, but it only took a scolding from him to set me straight. I remember once I was called to the office with the other pep squad (cheerleaders) girls because we did an 'inappropriate cheer' at a basketball game. He only talked to us for about a minute, but he had us all in tears, not because of any consequences he gave us, but because he let us know we had disappointed him. That's how powerful his relationships were. He is still that way. My grandmother passed away just a few years ago and when I went back to Indiana for the funeral, he was there. He had read it in the paper and felt compelled to come visit my sister and me. He was a really good man. If I can do the relationship piece as well as Mr. Babcock, then I will feel successful, but I don't know if I can ever do it as well.

I asked if Mr. Thayer's example had inspired her to become a principal. She responded:

No, not really. His example has certainly inspired me to improve my relationship-building skills, but he did not inspire me to become a principal. Remember, I am very shy and the Myers-Briggs (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality assessment instrument) always indicates that I am well on the introvert side. I think to be an effective principal you have to be something of an extrovert so that is not something I was inspired to do. Once I became one I developed the skill of interaction and the skill of extraversion, if you will, but I am so shy I never really thought I would be in such a public career.

When I asked what, if any connection existed between her childhood school experience and her current position as principal, she told me:

I don't think there is anything that inspired me to do this. There is however something that gave me confidence, and to a large degree, the skill to be an effective principal and that is debate and drama. I told you earlier that it was very big in Indiana when I was a student. I was on the competitive traveling team and that taught me the skill of being an extrovert, the skill of being an effective, articulate communicator, it improved my skills of writing, and it forced me to be organized. I also taught and coached debate and speech during the twelve years I spent in the classroom. That experience further honed those skills. I found that the administrative duties associated with coaching a debate team that travels all over the state on weekends, and the degree of organization required to do that successfully helped prepare me for the challenges of multi-tasking as a principal. So, while nothing inspired me, really, to become a principal, debate and speech certainly prepared me for it.

I asked Nora just how big debate and drama was in Indiana when she competed there. She said:

Well, it wasn't exactly basketball, but we Hoosiers are competitive in whatever it is. Basketball was, and still is king in Indiana. I remember Bobby Knight recruiting one kid for all four of his high school years. Ticket sales went up so much during those four years that the school was able to build a big, new gym. I was surprised to find high school gyms so small when we moved to North Carolina. Debate and speech wasn't far behind though. It is still viewed as the most prestigious academic competition in Indiana and really, I think in the country. Indiana has had several national champions in one or more of the debate and speech events. Paoli High School has won several state championships. And in a small town like Hailey, every state championship becomes historic.

"So debate and speech helped shape your current career?" I asked. She replied:

It certainly did. As a competitor when I was a student it forced me to develop the style and articulation I would need to be able to speak in front of faculty members, parent groups, student assemblies, colleagues, you name it. As a teacher and coach, it helped me to develop the

administrative skills that have certainly transferred to the principal's office. I used to schedule tournaments; that helped me learn to make a master schedule for my school. I used to develop annual travel budgets for debate trips; that helped me develop budgets for my school. As a coach I had to be honest with my team about their strengths and weaknesses and help them to improve. That skill transfers directly to how I deal with my teachers on a daily basis. It really is an excellent coaching model.

Nora Thayer's practice as a successful middle school principal has certainly been impacted by events in her own public school experiences. Her memories of an outstanding high school English teacher/speech coach/drama director have influenced her own style as both a teacher and an administrator. Her interactions with a high school principal who cared enough about relationships with his students to attend the funeral of her grandmother decades after her matriculation from his school has framed her own approach to creating and sustaining positive relationships with her students and teachers. Finally, her experience as a speech team member and later as a debate and speech coach afforded her the communication and administrative skills she did not naturally possess. These skills are, in her estimation, essential to success in the principalship.

Biography of Antonio Childs

Antonio Childs is a seasoned administrative veteran who was recently appointed to the principalship of the largest high school in the school system. This latest appointment came after service as a principal at the smallest high

school in the system for four years and another four years at a mid-sized rural high school of approximately 1100 students. Antonio's new school has more than 2300 students enrolled. He is a short man in his mid-fifties who laughingly admits that, "I used to be taller than I was round, now it's just the opposite."

Antonio's principal socialization experience is unlike that of Bob Perthlander, Yolanda Reid, or Nora Thayer. While Bob and Yolanda provided data for this study about their initial principal socialization experiences, Nora and Antonio had both served as principals before. Nora moved from one turnaround situation to another after just two years in her first school, but Bob moved from a school that struggled to increase student achievement to a school that was not only the largest in the school system, but also the highest performing. This required a new leadership paradigm for Antonio as well as a new skill-set if he were to become successful in his new setting. Joseph Matthews and Gary Crow refer to this type of principal socialization as *mid-career socialization*. They write:

Mid-career is a confusing concept because it does not necessarily mean the same as midlife. A more useful definition of mid-career is the period occurring during one's work in an occupational (career) role after one feels established and has achieved perceived mastery and prior to the commencement of the disengagement process. For principals this can occur any time after the major tasks of the role are mastered; there is no set time. (p. 290)

These two educational authors go on to explain that mid-career principal socialization also can involve a change of schools or districts. They continue:

The most obvious mid-career inter-role transitions for principals involve changing schools or districts. The most obvious intra-role transitions involve changing role conceptions, adding an additional role, or moving to a new stage of career or life. (pp. 290-291)

Antonio's reassignment to Directional High School came after he had experienced a degree of success in transforming two schools that were below district, state, and national averages in almost all student assessments to a school that consistently posted a performance composite in the high ninety percent range. Additionally, his previous schools were no demographic match for Directional High. Both of his former high schools had minority populations exceeding 30 %, ESL populations of more than 20%, EC (Exceptional Children) populations of more than 15%, and ED (Economically Disadvantaged/Free-and-Reduced Lunch eligible) populations over 50%. Antonio's new school is composed of very few sub-groups as defined by Title II (No Child Left Behind) legislation and has an ED population of less than 2%. Only 6% of the 2300 students are identified as Exceptional Children. Clearly this situation meets the parameters of mid-career socialization as defined by Matthews and Crow.

During my initial interview of Antonio Childs, I asked him about his early life and family. He shared that his family was of Italian-American descent and that he grew up in the greater Cincinnati, Ohio area where his father worked in the foundries. He told me that:

I grew up in Cincinnati just as poor as a church mouse. My father worked in the foundries making steel and my mother usually stayed home, though she worked from time-to-time outside the home doing the odd domestic job here and there. Education was never really all that important to them. My father did not finish the third grade and my mother dropped out of school before the end of her seventh grade year when she became pregnant with my older sister. Dad's employment depended on the demand for steel and so he was laid off fairly often. We never owned a home and where we rented depended on whether or not Dad was working. When he wasn't working we lived in the Ina Spence Homes, which was government subsidized project housing in the fifth school district of Cincinnati. We were poor and we knew it. People, who say they were poor and never knew it, weren't really poor.

I asked Antonio to elaborate a bit about the most outstanding experiences from his public school education in the Greater Cincinnati Schools. He shared one very interesting story about two different teachers in two different schools when he was in the third grade. He said:

When my third grade year started Dad was working at one of the foundries and we lived in a fairly nice rental neighborhood. My teacher was Miss Butler and she was wonderful. She was a powerfully engaging teacher at the 3rd District Elementary School. She expected a lot from me and I delivered just as I had the first two years in that school. I was a very good student to that point. To tell you the truth, Miss Butler was my first crush and I got into trouble one day when she bent over and you could see her panties. The boy beside me started giggling and I just chewed him out. I was ready to fight for Miss Butler's honor and we both got into a little bit of trouble over it. She broke my heart right a month or so later when she walked us to the park next door and introduced the whole class to her fiancée.

I probed him to tell how she influenced him as an educator. He responded:

Miss Butler showed me what good teaching could be and I think I never really lost touch with that. In fact, I resented most of the rest of my public

school teachers because they were never as good as her. I look for all the Miss Butler's I can find now when I am interviewing teachers for positions because I know that they are the ones who will make a difference for our students.

I followed with a question about the teacher who most influenced his career choice. I assumed it would be Miss Butler, but his answer surprised me, mostly because I found so many parallels to my own background and public school experiences. Antonio told me about the most influential teacher he ever had:

This will surprise you, but Miss Butler was not the most influential teacher I ever had. The one who influenced me most and continues to influence my practice as a principal was the teacher I had right after Miss Butler. Her name was Mrs. Dudley and she taught at the 5th District Elementary School where we moved mid-way through my third grade year. Dad was laid off from the foundry again and so we had to go back to the housing project, Ina Spence Homes, which sat on the crest of a hill just up from the bridge between Covington and Cincinnati. When Mom took my sister and me there to enroll, the teaching assistant took me down to Mrs. Dudley's room and announced that I was another one from "the Hill" which is what people disparagingly called the housing project. Now even though I was making excellent grades at 3rd District Elementary School, Mrs. Dudley put me in the group of "Sparrows" at the back of the room instead of with the "Cardinals" whom she called her high-flyers by the window. I recognized the other kids in the Sparrows and realized we all lived on the Hill. I told her I made better grades than those kids and should be with the Cardinals but she told me to shut up and sit with the other Hill kids. My mother wrote her a note saying the same thing and she promptly tore it up in front of the whole class and asked me who I thought I was and told me to get back there with the rest of the Hill kids.

I indicated that she seemed very prejudiced against poor children and that I had a similar experience also in the third grade. I then asked him to tell me why she was the teacher who influenced him the most. Antonio answered:

Because she was the best example I ever had of just how great an impact a bad teacher can have on a child's education. A couple of weeks after I got there one of the girls from the Cardinals group passed by my desk and asked me a question. I couldn't hear her so I leaned forward and asked her to repeat it. Well, Mrs. Dudley saw me do this and came back and slapped me on my face so hard that my ears rang. She told me that she would not tolerate that behavior from anybody and especially not from some poor Hill kid. That left an impression on me.

Did that influence your practice as a teacher and principal?

Yes, more profoundly than anything else ever has. After that embarrassment I knew she didn't think I was capable of being a good student just because I was poor. As a teacher I sort of gravitated to the poor kids in my classes and tried to always make sure that I gave them extra attention. As a principal I have always been sensitive to the needs of students who are economically disadvantaged. I do whatever I can to make sure they are being challenged and that our expectations for them are as high as they are for other students. I do that because I knew she expected nothing from me and so I gave her nothing. I failed almost everything that year, but she passed me anyway because they didn't want to keep Hill kids in the school any longer than necessary. Those of us who lived on the Hill never had to worry about failing our grades. They didn't want us there. We knew that and we knew they would do whatever they could to get us out as quickly as possible. In my opinion, that was as criminal an act as there is. It did teach me the most important guiding philosophy of my career and for that, I am thankful for the experience. That philosophy is that all children will perform according to our expectations.

I directed the interview to the next topic which focused on how Antonio came to be a principal. I asked him to share any experiences he had in elementary or secondary school, experiences with his family, or anything that may have happened in college that may have prompted him to pursue this career

path. Some of his responses indicated once again, the he and I share several commonalities in our backgrounds, school experiences, and our career paths.

He began:

I can't really think of anything in my background or public school experience that prompted me to become a principal. I think I had always thought of maybe becoming a teacher and really, I wanted to coach men's basketball. I thought that, and English Literature was my strength and that is where I focused when I started planning my life.

"Why English Literature?" I asked, and "why basketball?" He told me that:

I grew up in the greater Cincinnati area. The University of Cincinnati was a national basketball powerhouse and even won a national title when I was growing up. Every boy in school wanted to play basketball and coach it at the college level. Remember too that I was just across the river from Kentucky and ninety miles from Adolph Rupp and the University of Kentucky which is still the winningest college basketball program ever. Then, also very close by was Indiana with its basketball culture. I just wanted to coach basketball. I tried to play it and was a pretty fair point guard for a while, but I'm too short. I realized I would have to coach if I was going to stay in the game.

"What about English Literature?" I asked him. Antonio continued:

I think English Literature and teaching because of the man that we all thought was the coolest teacher we had ever experienced. His name was Mr. Lambert and he spent all day, every day telling us about the lives of the poets. He would lean back on his stool, put his glasses in his mouth to chew on the shank, and hold forth about Byron, Keats, Shelley and all the other great British poets. He was something of a beatnik, it was the sixties and we all just thought that was cool. The class wasn't hard and he held our attention simply because of his ability to tell a story. Of course when I got to college and decided to major in English Literature, I realized he was one of the worst teachers I had ever had. We didn't learn form, or

figurative language, or literary terms or any of those things; we just watched him be cool everyday. Still, he exposed me to poetry and just hearing about the lives of the poets attracted my attention enough that I wanted to teach. I guess I wanted to be as good a coach as Adolph Rupp and as cool as Mr. Lambert so that's how I got there.

I asked him if there were any principals or teachers in his public school experience that maybe helped him decide to become a principal. He answered:

Nope. I didn't really ever think about becoming a principal until years after I was a classroom teacher. I didn't focus on that as a child or as a college student. I do think that Mrs. Dudley provided some motivation for how I conduct my daily practice. I mean if I had not been poor and if she had not hated poor kids so much, I might pay much less attention to those kids now. I guess too that I saw so many things like that happen in my schools while I was growing up that once I decided to become a principal, I realized that my principals could have done a much better job of holding their teachers accountable for teaching all students, not just the bright and white kids. I do that every day now. I make sure that our teachers value every child. But no, there wasn't anything in my background or experience that made me focus on this as a career goal. I always wanted to be a teacher and a coach. This came much, much later.

I probed him to tell me the process he went through in finally making the decision to become a principal. He shared the story with me:

Okay, let me start with my college days. I knew early on that I did not want to work in the foundry, or the automobile or soap plants in Cincinnati. I wasn't interested in farming in Indiana or mining coal in Kentucky. I wanted to have a career that allowed me to participate in basketball and English Literature as I said earlier. The only way I knew to do that was to become a teacher and believe me that was a long shot. My grades never turned around after third grade. I always struggled because I knew that not very much was expected of me. I got into trouble a lot; not bad trouble, just mischievous stuff. The point is I never studied. I never tried to make good grades and suddenly I was ready to get out of high school and didn't

have the grade point average or the ACT score to get into college so I could teach. I wasn't sure what to do and my guidance counselors spent their time with the bright white kids so I had to do it on my own. I found this tiny little college in Williamsburg, Kentucky that really focused on providing a higher education to students from low-income backgrounds. That really described me perfectly. They didn't focus so much on GPA or ACT scores because their mission was to educate students who had been neglected and maybe had not been expected to achieve very much. So, I took my anemic GPA and the 12 I scored on the ACT (honestly, I scored a 12) and they took me anyway. I really did not expect to get accepted and had pretty much resigned myself to working in the factories the rest of my life. I was shocked to find that I could be going to college.

I asked him if his parents played any role in his decision to attend college, to become a teacher, or eventually to become a principal. Antonio shared his memories:

Oh absolutely not. My dad's rule, for me at least, was once I turned eighteen, I had to be out of the house. He couldn't afford to support me longer than that and he just expected me to be on my own by then. He didn't care if it was college, the military, or working in the factories. He made it very clear that there was no money for college and I knew that anyway. I knew that if I went, I had to be the one to make it happen. I got no help from my high school or from my parents in making college plans. I think that is when I began to get a little more responsible. So no, they didn't encourage me to become a teacher or a principal. I think they were always amazed that I could achieve what I did.

I directed the interview back towards college and the decision to go into education. Antonio continued:

Well, as I was saying, just getting to college was a challenge and so I found Cumberland College. I worked the summer after I graduated from high school and saved enough money to go for one semester, but I had no idea what would happen after that. I went sort of hoping for a miracle, but fully expecting to be back in Cincinnati by January. When I got there I was

pleased to find that it really was a college for poor kids. It was fairly isolated so we didn't have all the temptations that other kids had at bigger schools and besides no one had any money to get into trouble anyway. The tuition and fees were very reasonable and all 1000 students were on some form of work-study program, but it still wasn't enough to pay for my second semester. I saw a notice about debate team tryouts and went. Turns out I was pretty good and Cumberland College actually had an excellent, nationally recognized debate team that competed on the NDT (National Debate Tournament) circuit with schools like Wake Forest, University of Kentucky, Harvard, USC, and some other big names. I think we went to three tournaments during the first semester and I did well in all three of them. The debate coach sent me over to the financial aid officer who patched together a financial aid package for me so I could come back the next semester. I kept that package and kept debating for four years.

"So, you went to college on a debate scholarship, then?" I asked. Antonio replied that he did not get a debate scholarship, but that the financial aid package, which was an assortment of grants, work-study, scholarships, and loans, was offered to him because of debate. I asked him to tell me the story of his journey to the principalship and he was pleased to comply.

As I said earlier, it just sort of happened. The primary motivation was money. I don't mean that I focused on that to make more money, but when certain opportunities came, I took them and they always paid more. For example, I got my first job in Indiana after graduation from Cumberland College. They hired me as a social studies and English Literature teacher and also let me be an assistant basketball coach. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. In Indiana they still require all teachers to acquire a master's degree within five years so I started on mine immediately. When I finished that, I found that Indiana would pay a lot more if I added 15 hours to my certification and so I did. A few years later they offered to pay a lot more money to anyone who had a masters in school leadership and I knew I could get that with about an extra 30 hours of course work so I did it. It didn't matter whether you worked as an administrator or not, you still got the extra money. I had no desire to be an administrator at that time, but I did want to make the money. Growing up poor can do that for you. I think I completed my administrative degree in 1976. Later that year I got

an invitation to move to Texas where I would teach AP (Advanced Placement) English Literature and also be the head basketball coach at a school with a seven-footer. That, for me, was the best of both worlds. I really, really enjoyed that and stayed there until 1990. That year my principal was moving to North Carolina to take one of the high schools here in our county and she wanted to take me with her as her AD. I came, but found that I would not get paid for my administrative degree unless I was an assistant principal, so the next year she offered me that job and I took it. I had the degree for 14 years before I used it and I was a classroom teacher for 21 years before I ever went into administration.

I asked him to tell me about why he moved from being an assistant principal to being a principal. His answer did not surprise me:

Money and control. As an assistant principal in Wobegone County I did pretty well, but I really wanted more control and besides, being the principal paid a lot more so I made it known that I wanted a school of my own. Susanne, my principal, sponsored me in that. This is the same principal I had in Texas who brought me here. I was her assistant principal in two different schools and then, when the opportunity arose, she really advocated for me with the superintendent and with personnel. I'm just being honest when I tell you that I did it for money and control. Of course I care about kids and every time I have a poor kid who graduates or does something great, I just take great pride in that. Growing up poor made me very aware of the power of money and I am not ashamed to say that the higher salary has been part of my motivation. Poor people have very little control over their lives and I get nervous when I am not in control of my situation or when I feel that I may not have enough money. We are all products of our former lives.

Because I realized the common background in debate between Antonio, Nora Thayer, and myself, I asked him to elaborate on how participation in debate may have helped him decide to become a principal. Antonio responded:

To begin with, it is what kept me in college. Without debate I would never have received the financial package that allowed me to stay. It also forced me to be articulate and to become a good public speaker. Debate taught

me organization, team-building, research skills, and logical advocacy. I think all of those are essential characteristics of effective principals. I was fortunate enough to be a part of something that taught me, through active learning, the skills that would serve me best in this job. Debate didn't really help me decide to become a principal, but because of the skills I developed in that activity, I knew I could do those parts of the job when the opportunity came.

The experiences that Antonio Childs shared about growing up poor in a large urban center offer insight into his development as an educator and eventual role as a principal. His background story is somewhat unique because the most influential person in his life was Mrs. Dudley, who, by Antonio's thick description, was a very negative person. His struggles with poverty shaped his career through both circumstance and design and led him to develop a value system based on an absolute dedication to serve all students. His honesty in identifying money and power as incentives for his personal success by no means indict his character as an educational leader. On the contrary, this admission solidifies it because his mission is to use the power he wields as principal to ensure that all children, especially children of poverty, receive the education they will need to manufacture their own wealth. Antonio's description of his experiences with debate as an activity that has had a profound effect on his career as a principal resonated personally with me as I compared his story to my own experiences.

CHAPTER V

EARLY AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS A STUDY PARTICIPANT

Autobiography of Randy Shaver

As I completed the interviews of my principal colleagues for this study I found that some of the data they shared about their backgrounds and early childhood experiences were similar to my own. Just as each of them, however, I have my own unique story which has served to shape me as a person and as an educator. I reviewed personal journals, daily activity logs, calendars with notations, papers I wrote during completion of my master's and doctoral programs of study, as well as my memory to answer the same questions I asked of the other four study participants. I have provided a biographical account of their answers in this chapter to this point. The following construct provides an autobiographical account of my own early background, childhood and family life that helped to shape me as a principal. Additionally, my autobiographical account provides data on my elementary and secondary school experiences focusing on those incidents and individuals that most contributed to the shaping of my career.

Early Childhood and Background

My earliest memories are of a happy life tucked safely away as the next youngest child in an almost typical nuclear family of the 1950s. During my pre-

school years in Thomasville, NC we lived a somewhat privileged life in a middle class section of town just across the street from the school system's newest school, Liberty Drive Elementary. My father had invested his GI Bill money at the end of World War II in two different ventures. The first was job training. He was raised in an orphanage in Thomasville, but ran away at the age of fourteen dropping out of the ninth grade at the same time. He worked as a cowboy on a ranch in west Texas near El Paso until he was drafted into the Army at the age of 21. When the war was over he returned to his hometown, married my mother, and immediately started a family. My mother had three children within five years. Since my father had no education and only the skills he had learned on the ranch, he was wise to invest in job training and landed a lucrative position first as the shipping manager for a bakery in Winston-Salem and later as the shipping manager for a dairy in Westwaters. He invested his remaining loan in a small neighborhood grocery store and formed a partnership with my maternal grandfather who operated the business. My mother worked outside the home as a lower level insurance manager, a job in which she quickly found quite a bit of success. The combination of my parents' jobs and the income produced by the store provided us with an upper middle class lifestyle during this period of my life.

The fall of 1958 was for me, one of those times which can best be described as life-altering, and consequently, life-defining. I entered the first grade on the first Tuesday in September, for in those days we did not start school until after the Labor Day break. With an older sister entering her sixth grade year

and an older brother entering his fourth, this was a day I had long anticipated. For as long as I could remember, they had come home every afternoon, brightly colored art projects in hand, regaling me with tales of playground adventures and classroom challenges. My older sister, nurturing by nature, shared her reading assignments with me, allowing me to turn the pages of her primer as part of an evening ritual in which I learned all about Dick and Jane, Sally and Spot, and Mother and Father. My older brother detailed the games played at recess, lunch in the cafeteria and the special way he felt whenever he was called upon to answer a question in class. I was, I suppose, a student even before I was enrolled in first grade.

Liberty Drive Elementary School stood directly across the street from our house. It was the newest facility in the Thomasville City Schools at the time and was outfitted with the latest in playground equipment. Families in our neighborhood would often take their children there to play early in the evenings and it seemed that there was a perpetual softball game being contested on the school's athletic field. Neighbors got to know one another at Liberty Drive. The school became the focus for our middle class community and it was during these informal playground gatherings that many important issues were discussed and decisions made. Liberty Drive was the embodiment of the community school.

In October of my first grade year, less than six weeks after school started, my life was altered forever. My parents separated, with my father leaving the state never to return during my childhood. My mother descended into alcoholism

and unemployment. My grandparents moved in with us after my grandfather suffered a disabling heart attack, cramping four children and three adults into a small two-bedroom house. Finally, near the end of the month, our family-owned grocery business was lost to foreclosure. Within the space of two months, I went from being a happily adjusted, middle-class first grader to being an impoverished, confused and hurt little boy. There was little nurturing at home and no affirmation of any of the children from the adults who raised us. My grandfather was a strict disciplinarian who served as a deacon and lay minister in the fundamentalist independent Baptist church that he helped to found. He believed in the inerrancy of Scripture and very often focused on the verses requiring parents to use the rod with frequency rather than to spoil children. My mother, unable to assume any sort of parental responsibility at that time, abdicated all authority and responsibility for our rearing to her parents. Affirmation was simply not considered essential to the development of children and so we did as we were told, took quiet, internal pride in any thing we might have accomplished, and never, ever complained. We kept any feelings of pride completely to ourselves for that too was considered a grievous sin.

The Institutions of School and Family

In my hurt and confusion, I turned from the broken institution of my family to the stable institution of school for refuge, support, and affirmation. While ultimately school had a tremendous impact on the shaping of my life, the journey

was not always easy. I learned quickly that poverty carries with it a stigma that often results in socioeconomic discrimination. During all of my preschool years, my family was respected in the community, my parents were invited to all of "the" social functions in town, and we children were often asked to other children's homes to play in the afternoon. All of that stopped, however when poverty and alcoholism overtook our lives. While several teachers and administrators encouraged me throughout my twelve years in the Thomasville City Schools system to pull myself out of this situation, many others looked down on me, my two brothers and our sister as less than equal to our more affluent peers. This section of my autobiographical case study will detail my twelve year struggle against the socioeconomic discrimination I suffered as a child and the battle I fought to be free from the grip of poverty. It will also examine the relationships I established with several key educators who were instrumental in showing me the way out of the cycle of poverty, thus providing me with the building blocks of my foundation as a professional educator.

Elementary School Experiences

The remainder of my first grade year was not particularly pleasant. My teacher was Lucy Smith (pseudonym), a neighbor of ours who was young, married to an also young furniture manufacturing manager, and upwardly mobile. While she was friendly with us during my preschool years, once she learned of my family's situation, she maintained her distance from me in the classroom. I had always called her "Miss Lucy" and whenever my siblings and I would walk

past her house on the way to our grandparents' home or the family grocery just up the street, she would often come out with cookies or candy and always a hug. She did not hesitate to hug me during the first six weeks of that school year, however, once she heard of my parents' break-up, and saw that the new school clothes I quickly outgrew had been replaced by donated hand-me-downs from the Salvation Army, the hugs, the nurturing, and the affirmation ceased. Before I started school she would often tousle my hair, give me a hug and say, "This is the smartest little Shaver! I can't wait to have him in my room at school." Once we had lost everything though, she kept her distance, basically ignoring me.

I was a child who craved affirmation and positive strokes. In order for me to achieve, I needed to experience regular successes. Mrs. Smith did not recognize my positive achievements, but did not miss an opportunity to point out my failures. My first public embarrassment in a classroom came on the Monday morning after my parents had separated on Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Smith already knew about the break-up; gossip was at a premium in our neighborhood and word had traveled quickly that Daddy had pulled out that afternoon in his pick-up loaded with clothes and furniture while Mama lay on the front steps, intoxicated to the point of unconsciousness. During a reading lesson, Mrs. Smith held each of our names up, one-by-one, in our reading circles and asked us to raise our hands when we recognized our own names. The name she had printed on the placard for me was *Randall Ray*. While I knew how to spell the name *Randy* because my older sister had taken great pains and pride in teaching it to

me before I started school and what it looked like written on paper, the name *Randall Ray* was as foreign to me as an ancient tongue. Mrs. Smith chastised me front of the entire class, telling me that "smart children" already knew how to recognize their own names, and that she was moving me from the top reading circle to the bottom one which was, in her words, for the "slow children" in her classroom. I am sure that my face remained as red as my hair for the remainder of the day and I did not want to go to school for weeks after that experience. I spent the rest of my first grade year with Mrs. Smith's "slow children," frustrated, unchallenged, ignored and embarrassed.

Though our family continued to disintegrate, the summer did offer respite from the social tortures of school. As September rolled around the next year, I found myself dreading the start of the academic year. It came though, and I dolefully crossed the street to find out the name of my second grade teacher. With our older sister departing for junior high school, it was my older brother who helped me find the list to discover that I had been assigned to Miss Angel Halston "She's that old teacher," he told me, "the one who looks like a witch!" I was the only child in my classroom that day without a parent present to enroll me, and of course I had no money for the mandatory textbook or instructional fees. I entered her room with dread where she asked my name, then gave me a long look. I was sure she had heard the story of my family's demise and that she did not like poor children. When the bell rang, she assigned each child a number, which would be our number for the entire year, and a seat. "I do not do

well remembering names," she said, "but I do fine with numbers. Each of you will be called by your number during this school year." I was Boy 14 and my best friend, Steve Myers was Boy 15. She assigned us to sit next to one another, which we thought was a stroke of mere luck.

As class began that day, the first assignment was oral reading of our Weekly Reader, the newspaper styled periodical that has helped millions of children learn to read. I recoiled in horror when she called on me to read first. The other children giggled that she had chosen me, one of the "slow kids" from first grade, but then something I had never before experienced in the classroom happened; she gave me a reassuring nod. I read the entire article flawlessly, and when I was finished, she made the class applaud for my performance. I had found the affirmation I so desperately needed. This one tiny success sent me on a search for more successes and as she affirmed each one, I began to move to the top of the class. The first day of school that year, gave me hope.

Race was not an issue in our school, for we were still part of a segregated society in those times. I am sure though, that if she had taught during the first days of desegregation, that Miss Angel Halston would have embraced, affirmed, and academically developed every child assigned to her. I know this because she did not discriminate against me because of my socioeconomic status. Instead, she took every opportunity to affirm me through small successes and to nurture me in any way possible. Miss Halston praised me once for an original little poem I wrote to her as part of a class assignment. It was no better than

anyone else's poem, but she saw the need for me to be successful and so affirmed my efforts. Another time she praised me for volunteering to stay after school to clean her boards, and so I did it every day for the rest of the school year, simply to hear her tell me I had done a good job with it. Once she even praised me when I missed a spelling word in the classroom spelling bee, telling me how wonderful it was that I tried to sound out the word phonetically even if I did miss it. I became a madman for spelling success after her praise.

Her affirmation of my academic efforts provided me with one of the most important principles upon which I have built my personal philosophy of education and principal administration; *every child should experience success in every classroom everyday*. Without affirmation, children wither academically, socially, and spiritually. Everyone needs to be told that he or she is successful, regardless of how minute the success. Sometimes we even need to invent successes for children, as Miss Halston did so many times for me. As a former teacher and as an administrator, I have tried to affirm each of my students in at least some small way every day. Certainly there have been times during my career that I have not been able to do this, but I can resoundingly say that affirmation is a much stronger motivator of student participation and achievement than punishment. As an administrator, I encourage the teachers on my faculty to seek out successes for every student on a daily basis.

There was no free and reduced lunch program when I was in the second grade, and so I was one of a handful of children who brought their lunch and

morning snack to school each day. We could not afford nice luncheon meats or even peanut butter, so my snack and lunch were always the same standard fare; a mayonnaise sandwich for morning snack, and scrambled egg sandwich for lunch. We could not even afford to buy the little half-pint cartons of milk, so my grandfather packed a little cup in my bag so I could drink water. Miss Halston always checked to make sure her students were eating their lunch and most days, when she got to my assigned table, she would bring her dessert and milk with her, telling me it was something her doctor would not allow her to have, or that she just did not like it and would I mind eating it for her. This was always done in a way that was not embarrassing to me.

One day, when one of the more affluent children discovered that I ate mayonnaise sandwiches for break, rather than the required fruit that other children bought, she announced to the entire cafeteria that I was too poor to buy my food. Miss Angel Halston instantly became an "angel" enraged and descended upon my tormentor with the full fury of hell. No student dared mention my poverty again in the presence of Miss Halston. With that incident I realized how much this angel of a teacher truly cared for me I and I worked even harder for her in the classroom.

Miss Halston interceded for me in my home as well as at school. Because she knew the condition of my family and the violent nature of my mother when she was intoxicated, she made regular home visits to our house. She came about once a month, I believe to simply make sure that I was not being physically

abused. Whenever she came, my mother would sober up and clean the house. I was always thrilled that Miss Halston had scheduled a home visit because I knew it would give us at least a day or two of respite from my mother's alcoholic lifestyle. I am sure that Miss Halston also realized this. She would chastise my mother for not helping with my homework, until finally Mama did begin to pay a little more attention. Miss Halston also gave me books to read, took me to the public library to get my first library card after one of her home visits, and discovered that I was blind in one eye and severely nearsighted in the other. It was during a home visit that she made sure my mother scheduled an appointment for me with the ophthalmologist, and later, it was Miss Halston who came by the house to tell me I looked fine in my first pair of heavy, black, horn-rimmed glasses.

Miss Halston became my intercessor with other students, with other teachers, with the principal, who simply could not understand why I could not buy the fruit at school, but brought mayonnaise sandwiches instead, and with my family. A very interesting thing happened as a result of Miss Halston's home visits. She and my mother became friends. As a result, my mother took a much greater interest in my education and even came to a few PTA meetings. Though it was years before she finally became a recovering alcoholic, Miss Halston's intercessory efforts had a tremendously positive impact on my mother's life as well as my own. It almost seemed that my mother wanted to please this wonderful lady as much as I did.

Miss Halston's intercessory advocacy on my behalf is the basis for another principle upon which I have built my educational career; *we can not educate only part of the child, instead, we must seek to educate the whole child.* Only when educators truly understand each individual student, can we hope to increase the achievement and therefore the chance for future success for that child. As a teacher and principal I have fashioned my daily practice on the intercessory model that my second grade teacher taught me. Though I am sure I could never match the mark set by Miss Halston for student advocacy, I have enjoyed knowing that my intercessory approach to education has made a difference in the lives of some students. Throughout my career, I have visited in several homes of students I considered at risk. These visits have given me the opportunity to assess the student's family situation, and quite often, to intervene on a particular student's behalf. I have never been made to feel unwelcome in any home where the parents or guardians truly realized that my first concern was the academic, physical, and emotional welfare of their child. As a principal, I have constantly reminded my teachers that we must feed the body and nourish the soul before we can effectively expand the mind of any student.

Because Miss Halston took the time to become aware of my family situation, she was in a position to intervene when necessary. While home visits may not be as practical in today's society as they were in the society of my childhood, it is not impossible to maintain close contact between families and schools. J.H. Johnston suggests that communication between the school and

the home, parent-teacher conferences, and parent participation in all phases of school life are essential to academic achievement and student success. He suggests specific strategies for achieving close contact between the family and the school in all three of these areas (Johnston, 1988). As a principal I have embraced those strategies whenever possible as a salute to my second grade benefactor, Miss Halston.

The third thing that Miss Halston did that I have adopted as a guiding practice was to honor my mother's involvement, no matter how small in my school life. On one of her many home visits, Miss Halston explained to my mother that I was an avid reader and told her that she might continue to pique my interest in reading by doing some family reading at meal times. On her next visit, Miss Halston stayed for a very modest dinner of homemade biscuits and potatoes boiled in tomato sauce. Afterwards, my mother read a chapter from the book *Miss Minerva*, which she had been reading to us on those nights when she was sober. Miss Halston took a tremendous chance and invited my mother to school to read for my class after lunch one day. I was both horrified and astounded. I felt sure she would show up intoxicated, but at the same time, was astounded that Miss Halston would allow my mother to read to her class of second graders. Mama did come on the appointed day, sober and dressed as professionally as she had been before she lost her position in insurance management. Miss Halston treated her as she did all parents; with

honor and respect. I was never prouder of my mother than at that moment, and I knew that her uncharacteristically responsible behavior was due to the fact that Miss Halston had honored her attempts to interest me in reading at home. And Miss Halston was right; I became an incessant reader, completing every biography in the Liberty Drive Elementary School library before I departed its doors for junior high. As part of my daily practice as a principal, I have sought to honor the involvement of all parents in the education of their children.

Antonio Childs shared his stories of Mrs. Dudley, the third grade teacher who traumatized him more because of his poverty than anything else. This resonated with me on a personal level because I too had a third grade teacher, Mrs. Wiggly, who discriminated against the poor. Antonio shared a disturbing tale about an incident in which Mrs. Dudley slapped him so hard that his face was red and his ears rang. During the interview in which Antonio shared this story, I felt myself slipping back into my own third grade classroom and remembered the ostracism and acidic criticism with which my own teacher had once attacked me.

When I was an 8-year old third grader I was assigned to Mrs. Wiggly's class. She was in her first year at our school, though she looked as if she had taught for many, many years. Her hair was red, both natural and dyed, and was extremely wiry. I remember that she always wore extremely heavy make-up, especially around her eyes, loose fitting dresses, though she was of medium build, and gold and diamond jewelry. Her countenance was not the normal expression most students could expect from a nurturing elementary school

teacher. I certainly never read the kindness in her eyes that had read in Miss Halston's. In reality, Mrs. Wiggly was very nurturing, but only to those students whom she ordained as worthy of her attention. She had grown up wealthy in our little town, but had married late. Her husband, as she enjoyed telling us, owned the three largest textile mills within our city limits and employed over five hundred workers. She only worked to keep busy she claimed, because she could not find a bridge club for every day of the week. She often smelled of cigarettes and whisky, but no one, not even the principal, dared challenge her right to stand before us in the classroom.

Mrs. Wiggly made no attempt to hide her dislike for the poor. She was fond of telling us, in our pre-integration school, that she "...would just as soon be Black as to be poor." She segregated us by socioeconomic status. The children of the managers of her husband's factories all sat in the prime seats, across the front row of the classroom. I was assigned to the back row; just two seats to the left of the only other two boys whom I suspected might just be poorer than me.

One day in early February, Mrs. Wiggly passed out our Weekly Readers. We were all engaged in silent reading and I was lost in a world of current events. Reading was my salvation, and I relished every opportunity to escape the realities of my own poverty by reading about the harshness of life somewhere else. As I read, I suddenly felt a cold, bony hand clasped around the back of my neck. "Come up here in front of the class with me!" she demanded as she literally pulled me up out of my chair. I can still recall my feet dangling inches above the

floor as she carried me to the front of the room for public display. Once at the front of the classroom she demanded that a girl on the front row loan her a barrette. With it, she pinned the lock of hair that kept falling into my right eye. I felt totally humiliated, began to sweat, felt a bolt of heat rush from the pit of my stomach to my head like a lightning bolt and immediately became dizzy. “What’s wrong with you?” She demanded. “You let your hair fall in your face like a girl. Are you going to cry like one too?” I struggled with my stomach, urging it to resist the nausea I felt and to keep the egg sandwich I had for lunch where it belonged. For at least three minutes she went on a tirade about how poor people always looked so shabby, and wondered aloud to the class if my mother could not at least afford a seventy-five cent haircut. With that she took me from one classroom to the next and repeated the tirade in each one, ostensibly to teach me to keep my hair out of my eyes while reading. When we went into my best friend, Steve Myers’ classroom, I was soaked with sweat and shaking from anger and humiliation. When we went into the sixth grade classroom where my older brother was a student, I could feel his embarrassment and empathy as sharply as I could my own.

This whole traumatic episode lasted no more than ten minutes, yet it made an indelible stamp on my self-esteem that has lasted a lifetime. Talking about it is still embarrassing and still, I wish I could have summoned the courage to say to Mrs. Wiggly what I have imagined myself having said a million times since; “Mrs. Wiggly, I didn’t know the hair was hanging in front of my right eye. That’s the eye

I'm blind in." I am not sure it would have made a difference to Mrs. Wiggly, but because I was not in a position to speak up for myself then, I am certain to defend impoverished children as an administrator whenever I have the cause to do so.

Secondary School Experiences

By the time I was in high school, I bore a great resentment towards my parents for what I perceived as both physical and economic abandonment of their children. I was, by then, a good student and had achieved a great deal of academic success during my public school career. This is no doubt due to the nurturing and affirmation of Miss Angel Halston and the others like her including Miss Pauline Michaels, my fifth grade teacher, and Miss Dorothy Salmons, the teacher who guided me through the seventh grade.

While teachers no longer seemed to discount my academic potential based on my family's socioeconomic status, my peers refused to include me in their social plans. Because of my socioeconomic status, I was never in one of the cliques of kids who were at the top of the social food chain. Though I masked this very well with a dry sense of self-denigrating humor and classroom wit, I secretly resented them. My high school debate coach, Mrs. Kate T. Allmond, seemed to sense the anger inside me during my junior year in high school. "What is it you want? What are you angry about all the time?" she once asked me. Stunned by her perception of my true feelings, it took me a few days

to formulate an answer which I shared with her while staying late after school one day to complete some research into a new debate brief I had been composing in class. "I want," I said, "to be free of this image that I am too poor to do anything, to be worth anything, to make anything of myself. I feel like I'm saddled with this image, this family 'history' forever and it will follow me around like a cloud over my head."

Mrs. Allmond walked over to a bookshelf she kept in her room and gave me a volume of *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. "Read *The American Scholar*," she said, "and then we'll talk again." I remember being frustrated by her response and wondering how a book such as that could help me get over the animosity I felt towards my peers, my friends and particularly towards my parents. I put off reading the article for weeks until she shamed me into it by telling me that it did not appear that I cared enough about my anger to do anything to help myself. So, I pulled the book from my locker that afternoon, took it home and read Emerson's famous essay, *The American Scholar*, that night. I was immediately startled when I read the line, "Only the educated are truly free" (Emerson, 1966). I knew at once it was why she had asked me to read it.

I had told Mrs. Allmond that I wanted to be free of the stigma of my family name and history in my small hometown of Thomasville, yet at the same time was contemplating not going to college because I felt somewhat socially ostracized by my peers. And, there it was, in black and white, in the words of one

of America's greatest social philosophers; education is freedom from suppression, stigma, poverty, ignorance and all the other shameful conditions of man. No one is truly free minus an education. Her sage advice, through the words of Emerson, encouraged me to continue to pursue college acceptance and ultimately led me to a career in this profession.

What impact does this part of my personal history have on my daily practice as a principal and administrator? I have always tried to teach my students as well as the teachers that I lead the same valuable lesson that Mrs. Allmond taught me through the words of our foremost nineteenth century essayist; the key to true freedom of thought and deed is education. Freedom is the value of an education, not merely a better job with more pay and greater responsibility, but freedom. Only those who are educated are free to articulate their unique ideas and perspectives on life and the world in which we live, without the fear that what they say will be dismissed as inconsequential. This is a value I have always held and one which helps to guide my professional practice. A primary role of the principal is to articulate the values of the school to the community. True freedom is certainly a value which I uphold above all others. It is therefore, a value I have worked to instill in any school community I have led, and most especially in the lives of my impoverished students.

Conclusions about My Background and Public School Experiences

My twelve years in the public schools taught me that every student must experience success on a regular basis. It also taught me that students need to

be nurtured as much emotionally as they need to be challenged and nurtured academically. It taught me that all children can learn, whether rich or poor, Black or white, gifted or exceptional, and for that reason, our expectations for student performance should be established at a very high standard. Finally, it taught me that the real worth of education is that it can imbue us with the true value of freedom. As an assistant principal, principal, and associate superintendent, I have tried to use my experiences in a positive way, I have done this in order to create strong, inviting schools in which expectations are high for all students, all parents are welcomed and involved, and all students feel self worth. If, as an administrator I have been able to accomplish these things, then the journey has been well worth the walk.

How I Came to Be a Principal

The third question that I asked the other four participants in this study during the initial narrative interview focused on what, if anything, led them to pursue a career as a public school principal. I can not point to any specific event or series of events in my childhood, elementary school experiences, secondary school experiences, or even my college years that led me to the decision to become a school principal. I can, however, elaborate on some experiences during my early years as a classroom teacher that helped me decide to become a principal. This provides my own autobiographical answer to the question:

How did you come to be a principal? Did anything in your family, school, work, or college experiences influence your decision to pursue this professional choice?

Debate and Speech Connections

As I indicated earlier, I share several things in common with some of the other study participants. I grew up very poor as did Antonio Childs. I participated in debate and speech in high school as did both Antonio and Nora Thayer and like Antonio, I was able to parlay my competitive debate expertise into a college education. Bob, Antonio, and I all suffered from discrimination; Bob because of the color of his skin; Antonio and I because of the poverty we knew as children. Antonio, Nora, and I all experienced one outstanding bad teacher during our public school experiences. Two of us could recall vividly a frighteningly bad experience that we suffered in the third grade at the hands of teachers who had no love for children of poverty. All of us, including Yolanda, could recall at least one non-related adult who had an impact on our decisions to pursue education as a career and who had some input into our subsequent decisions to become principals. Antonio, Nora, and I can all relate to the experience of competitive speech and debate on both the high school and college level as excellent preparation for school level leadership. It is that debate experience that I must discuss at this point in my own background story.

Like Antonio Childs, I am a white male in my mid-fifties. I attended segregated public schools until my junior year in high school when the

Thomasville City Schools system closed all of the Black schools and divided their children and teachers up among the white schools in town. Antonio and I are both short, and like Antonio, I too grew up with a love of sports and dreamed it might be my ticket out of an impoverished lifestyle. Baseball was my first love, but I could never make even the little league teams. While I could field anything to my left side and could switch hit, I had no power from the left and struck out very often from the right side of the plate; my blind side. I excelled in football where I played defensive end and safety, but by the time I entered the ninth grade it was obvious that I would be too short and too light to play at the high school level. Basketball was something I played every day of my life for years, but the demand was not high for a short, right-handed and left-eyed shooting guard. My ninth grade coach tried moving me to the point, but of course it was so easy for anyone to pick the ball from me on the right side that he finally sat me down one day and told me he just could not think of a sport in which I was not either too short, too light, or too blind to play effectively. I was heartbroken, but understood. This very kind man then recommended that I try out for the high school debate and speech team in order to exercise my competitive instincts. He recognized that I was articulate, academically capable, and competitive.

My high school debate coach, Mrs. Kate T. Allmond, nurtured my urge to excel and a few months later I was named to the varsity team of the defending state championship program. Over the course of my high school career my debate partner and I won over twenty major tournaments, several state

championships, and qualified to participate in the national debate tournament. Along the way I attracted the attention of the nationally powerful programs at Wake Forest University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Both programs recruited throughout the spring of my junior year and the fall of my senior year, but full scholarships in debate and speech are still not a reality and I realized that whatever amount of money they could give me, it still would not be enough to attend their institutions. As a result, Appalachian State University, a fledgling division one debate school recruited not only me, but my partner as well.

While that program could not give me a full debate scholarship, much like Antonio Child's financial package they arranged full funding for three years of my college experience. I worked in the summers and during my college years to pay the fourth year myself. My financial aid package consisted of a debate scholarship, a guaranteed work-study program, and a generous grant-in-aid from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. I was only eligible for the Vocational Rehabilitation grant because the blindness in my right eye and the extreme nearsightedness in my left eye were the result of a congenital condition apparently caused by my mother's use of alcohol and tobacco during her pregnancy with me. How ironic that the very thing that plagued my childhood with poverty also provided a way for me to attend college.

In addition to providing a way for me to find the necessary funding to attend college, debate did something else for me. It gave me the confidence I

needed to become a classroom teacher. As a junior in college, when I declared a major, I did not hesitate to declare as a Speech and Theatre major with a concentration in Secondary Education and Public Address. After speaking competitively weekend-after-weekend throughout my high school and college careers, I knew that I could handle speaking to a classroom of students every day of my life. I became a certified teacher with the intention of coaching high school debate and speech. High school and college forensics competition had opened doors which would have remained closed to me and I decided I wanted to spend my career giving some of that back to other impoverished students.

In addition to honing my own public speaking abilities, debating competitively and later coaching speech and debate also provided me with a rich background of administrative experience. I found later, when I decided to pursue administrative certification and the principalship, that this experience gave me a skill-set that was immediately transferable to the principal's office. When the opportunity arose to make that transition, like Antonio and Nora, I felt well-prepared because of this unique competitive and professional experience.

Classroom Teaching Connections

I spent twenty-one years as a classroom teacher at the high school level. Nearly every day of that career experience was spiritually and professionally rewarding for me. For twenty-one years, my joy and my calling was to help my students learn the reasons for the rules of grammar, how to find the inner

meanings in various pieces of literature, or how to choose their own voices as writers. I also reveled in my role as the debate and speech coach and was always thrilled when one of my young charges would press me to explain the nuances of the art of public speaking and discourse. Unlike most of my colleagues who approximated my age and experience, I still brimmed with the fire and enthusiasm of a brand new teacher, fresh from the ranks of some College of Education and ready to change the world by educating its children. I took pride in my profession and was always quick to refer to it as *the highest possible calling that any individual could choose to accept*. In short, I loved teaching.

At some point early in my career, in fact my second year as a teacher, I was given my own classroom in a brand new building. On the first day of teacher workdays that year, my principal handed me the keys, slapped me on the back, and told me not to let my students trash it. I clearly remember walking into Room 111 for the very first time. I entered quietly, expectantly, reverently. It came fully equipped with bright new desks, an overhead projector and screen, an executive looking teacher's desk, and even its own filmstrip projector. I was humbled by the generosity of the Board of Education in showering me with such gifts. Of all the new things though, one object commanded my attention above all others. A new, gunmetal gray steel podium was placed in the middle of the front of the classroom. It stood there beckoning me, illuminated by the soft glow of a shaft of a sunbeam that shone through the skylight above as if it were the altar of some

great church or cathedral. I remember humbly walking up to it and taking a seat on the teacher's stool placed behind it. For that brief moment in time I felt that I was the lord of all that I surveyed. Too soon, though, a nagging doubt washed over my soul. As I sat there, staring over a sea of empty desks in neat, straight rows I thought to myself, "I wonder if this is the altar where I will save my kids, or will it be where I sacrifice them to the system?" It was the first time I ever consciously understood the spiritual connection between my career and my soul. Like an epiphany, I understood the importance of my journey in that first visit to my very first classroom. I unlocked the door and crossed the threshold from *self* to *service*.

As a teacher of literature, I would have described this memory to my students as an example of an *epiphany*. I would have called it my "Road to Damascus moment" in reference to the Biblical story of Saul, the persecutor of all things Jewish. When Saul confronted his own unbelief he emerged from his experience completely changed and with a new name. He had become the Apostle Paul and began persecuting all things not Christian. John D. Caputo approximates this moment in a description of his own. He writes:

Something stronger and larger than us comes along and bowls us over and dispossesses us. Something overpowers our powers, potencies, and possibilities, and exposes us to something impossible. Something makes a demand upon us and shakes us loose from the circle of self-love, drawing us out of our selves and into the service of others and of something to come. The religious sense of life kicks in when I am rigorously loyal, "religiously" faithful to the service of something other than myself, more important than myself, to which I swear an oath, which has me more than I have it. (2001, p. 113)

For twenty-one years I maintained that focus on my mission to serve my students. Teaching had me more than I had it.

During the last week of my first year in Room 111, I was straightening my desks in preparation for the start of final exams the next day when I noticed that someone had written, in permanent black marker on the top of my precious podium. My first and immediate reaction was furor. My second thought was, “what can I use to get this stuff off?” When I read the writing closely though, I knew I would not remove it. It read, “Thanks for making me my best. Your fav student, TB.” “TB” was the initials of Teresa Bottoms, a senior whom I had taught for two years. She had been with me through two years of English as well as two years of debate. I had watched her blossom from a shy, introverted, gangly little girl into a self assured, articulate, state and regional debate and speech champion. At this ending of her senior year, instead of a clumsy child, I saw a young woman who was confident that she would contribute to the infinite process of making our world a better place in which to live. That she would give me credit for this touched me in a spiritual way and validated for me my own place in the world. For the twenty years following that first inscription on my precious podium, I watched as students came and went, into and out of my life, many of them adding their own names to my podium and all of us better people for having shared the intimacy of a classroom.

How then, after so long a time and so intense a sense of dedication, can a career classroom teacher decide to transition into educational leadership? What

motivates one to move from the behind the podium, to behind the desk?

Through the years, as the podium began to fill with the names of students, I became increasingly aware of an underlying, but growing feeling of frustration. It was difficult for me to accept that the transfer of knowledge at levels high enough to boost the school's SAT average or to meet state testing standards was the ultimate purpose of teaching. I felt hemmed in by the system and bureaucracy and powerless to correct it. Heubner refers to this bureaucratic system of frustration as the principalities and powers of redemptive violence. He writes:

References to "education as liberation" or "education as self realization" acknowledge and seek to overcome these principalities and powers in the ordinary structures of education. The idea of liberal education, which frees one from the limits of a particular culture and society in order to take on the awesome responsibility of freedom, also acknowledges and seeks to overcome the restrictions of the principalities and powers. However, the articulation of these ideas is often merely another political claim, albeit liberal or progressive, rather than a religious claim, and hence often another effort to restrict the journey. (1991, p. 323)

So when teaching primarily for test results became a cause for self-examination, I began to reassess my identity as a teacher.

Zygmunt Bauman in his book, *Life in Fragments*, (2004) describes the search for identity in his post-modern response to modernity and its orderly framework for life. In chapter 3 he argues that the Middle represents the orderly progression of our existential existence from Beginning to End. He suggests that

it is only the Middle in which we can reside and compares the Middle to a single cell of a prison in which we are condemned to live the life of self-critique (p. 75). As each year of my classroom teaching career passed, I found myself still validated, but also still seeking the essence of my own Identity; still in the Middle, but guessing about the End.

Bauman uses two metaphors to examine the search for identity that he posits defines life in the Middle for us all. His first metaphor is *Life as a Pilgrimage*. In this metaphor he writes that we spend the Middle looking for an identity in order to be assured of a spot in the eternal End. Ultimately he rejects this metaphor comparing it to the pilgrims who made their marks quite easily in the desert, only to see them covered over just as easily by the sandy winds (p. 87). An identity built upon such a journey might result in some revelation, but hardly provides us with an eternal Identity. The whole notion of education as a journey is far too temporal to help us find any thing of eternal value. It can only result in a non-attachment to other people, and by extension, creates in us no sense of responsibility for the Other (pp. 89-90). As a classroom teacher I felt a huge responsibility for the Other, yet I also felt incapable of doing all I needed to do to honor that responsibility.

A second metaphor Bauman uses to describe this construction of Identity is summarized in his description of the pilgrim's successors. He suggests that there are four such successors including *the stroller*, whom he fashions after Baudelaire's painting, which gave rise to the flaneur style of viewing the world.

This, he concludes is akin to viewing life while on a stroll through a shopping mall. We see parts of an identity that are attractive to us, and scrape them from the surface of the Middle to use as a label. Bauman also describes *the vagabond* type of successor and charges that it produces more order because of the random wandering through Anarchy and the all too evident disregard for the Other. Governments, he writes, provide Order in response to the vagabond in hopes of controlling his/her choice of which way to turn at the crossroads. Though the spirit of the vagabond may be free, the search for Identity as a vagabond usually results in whatever those in authority prescribe. Bauman labels his third successor to the pilgrim as *the tourist*, who, like the vagabond is constantly on the move, but who is more interested in escape activities than in gut-wrenching self-definition. The tourist wants to see as much of the Middle as possible from an aesthetic perspective (p.96), but feels more compelled to look than to act. High on the tourist's list of priorities is seeing more than doing and getting out of home to the End without much disruption. Bauman's fourth successor to the pilgrim is *the player* whose search for an Identity is based upon a series of life games. In this paradigm, those individuals or cultures seeking Identity are players in a succession of games complete with skill, luck, and misfortune. The world plays the player and in turn the player plays the world. Each of us as adults seeking Identity in a post-modern world, embrace the game as wholeheartedly as children do (p. 99) and walk away from the game as winner or loser, but with our Identity intact because we have behaved as responsible

adults. Alas, the game is over. We have won or we have lost, but we can shake hands with our adversaries and move on to the next game while in the Middle. This, Bauman suggests, provides absolution of the conscience for all sorts of games, including war. Each of these four types are ambivalent and a bit schizophrenic in each postmodern personality and point to the brokenness of practiced life strategies, a haunting indictment of the postmodern search for Identity in the Middle (pp. 92-99).

Bauman concludes that all four types of postmodern life strategies ultimately lead to disengagement from the Other and therefore a rejection of Commitment. Because of this, the Middle becomes a lonelier place with no one committed to anyone else, with no moral choice to be made, and no Identity found (p. 99). As for me, I would prefer being a pilgrim viewing life through the lens of a journey. Though I might never find Identity on my trip towards the End, I would at least have a goal upon which to focus. My classroom teaching career was part of my pilgrimage, but did not provide me with an absolute definition of Self.

I suppose that as I noticed the inscriptions beginning to cover up the entire surface of my precious gunmetal gray podium, I became increasingly appalled at my lack of power to help these students become real learners, rather than mere receptacles for the transfer of whatever knowledge I had been directed to share with them. At the same time, the very fact that they inscribed the podium accorded to me, their teacher, a unique status among the faculty. I seemed to

wield a sort of power over them that engaged them in all the things I hold dear as an educator; discovery learning, higher level thinking, and synthesis of knowledge and skill in an articulate manner. Yet, still, in weekly faculty and departmental meetings, the emphasis was always on the *results* of the ever-looming standardized tests to come at the end of the year. It seemed to me, that the only indicator of good or bad teaching, good or bad learning, or of a good or bad school was the measure of our students at the end of the year on the criterion-referenced tests required by the state. While I knew that as a teacher I could help my students learn to learn, I felt tied to an increasingly immoral frame that was systemically poisoning the institution of public secondary education. I felt powerless to impact the system in such a way that I could help to move it from standards based teaching to the true education of children. I began to spend much of my time pondering how I might reverse this trend or even if I should.

The last fifteen years of my career as a classroom teacher were spent at a school that underwent tremendous demographic change during my tenure there. In my first years, the majority of the students were white, upper-middle class, and college bound. Most went on to a college or university experience. Some went to a technical institute or to a community college. Those who did neither worked in the textile mills, the furniture factories, or joined the military. All were served in a school that was well equipped, clean, and staffed with very qualified teachers.

During the last five years of my experience there, the majority of students

were Black and the school was poorly equipped, dirty, and staffed with a rapidly increasing number of lateral entry teachers. More than 40% of our students dropped out altogether and of those who were graduated, fewer and fewer attended a college or university. The number of fights every year increased as did the number of pregnancies among our students. Achievement levels dropped while the local gangs seemed to be increasing their enrollments. Still, names were added to my podium every year. Still, my students expressed a deep desire to learn more so that they could live better lives and break the cycles of dependency, addiction, and abuse that riddled their family lives. The more they needed, the less they were given.

On the last day of exams during one of my last years as a classroom teacher, a student to whom I was particularly close stopped by sign my podium. He had been a top member of my debate team for four years, had earned a near perfect score on the dreaded term paper, and made more than 1500 on his SATs. He had earned the right to sign his name on the best remaining space that year. He was poor, Black, from a home led by a single mother, and was a budding intellectual. After numerous letters of recommendation, interviews, and essays, he had amassed close to one million dollars in scholarship offers and had his pick of Harvard, Duke or, Georgetown. He signed his name boldly in a bright red ink and attached a favorite quotation from Emerson that we had discussed many times during his junior year. As we hugged goodbye as teacher and student for the last time, I read what he had inscribed on what remained of

the gunmetal gray color, “Remember, Mr. Shaver, only the educated are truly free. Thanks for helping me find my freedom. Do the same for all who follow me.” It was the second time in my life that someone had used that same quotation to help me find myself and my unique place in the world. I was intensely moved by his inscription and read it often in the few workdays that remained of that school year. Each time I read it, I felt a surge of moral obligation to an unfinished spiritual task.

On the last day of the year I acknowledged my obligation to do all within my ability to help every student “find his or her freedom.” I also realized that I could no longer do it from the confines of my classroom and so made the decision to pursue an administrative career in the hopes of having a wider influence on the decisions that so impact all of our children everyday. When I left that school two years later after receiving my MSA and my first administrative post, I also left the podium. I passed it on to a young teacher, whom I had mentored. I believe he realized the moral and spiritual obligation that came with it. This is how I came to be a principal; a voice from my past ran into a voice from my present and they combined to help me see that my future was as a servant leader to students for whom I could do so much more from behind the principal’s desk than from in front of the teacher’s podium.

CHAPTER VI

BIOGRAPHICAL PRINCIPAL SOCIALIZATION CASE STUDIES

This chapter explores the actual process of principal socialization as experienced by the study participants. Crow and Matthews define socialization as “a reciprocal process in which both organization and individual are active participants in professional learning” (p. 263). They further conclude that the principal socialization process involves three elements; development of work knowledge and skills, adjusting to the work environment, and learning new values (p. 263). Kermit G. Buckner, in an article written for the *NASSP Bulletin*, in December of 1999 suggests that the first year in a new position can be traumatizing and then suggests some very necessary skills which are essential to surviving the socialization process. He writes:

The first year in a new position is always challenging. Some beginners find the challenge is so great they forego opportunities for advancement and endure stagnation to avoid the uncertainty that accompanies advancement. Lists of life’s most traumatic experiences rank changing jobs and moving to a new community only slightly below dealing with the death of a loved one and public speaking. The challenge a new position presents is amplified greatly when one moves into a leadership position in a new school. (1999, p. 203)

Buckner goes on to conclude that if new leaders have the correct “keys” that they may not only survive the principal socialization process, they may actually flourish in it. He continues:

Communicate. Communicate. Communicate. Communication allows school leaders to set expectations, motivate others, share their vision, and help the school community engage in a dialogue that can create a vision all can share. Second, seek feedback. New leaders need to know how they are doing. The way to find out is through clear, specific feedback. Feedback should be broad and include information about how the leader is excelling as well as the leader’s weaknesses. Give feedback. No feedback network can be complete if all the feedback goes one way. New leaders should be willing and eager to give feedback to everyone in the organization. Third, what gets measured gets done. Things new leaders choose to measure formally and informally will be the things that will get done in the school. Fourth, teach them to fish. New school leaders want to make a favorable impression. One method of making favorable impressions is to be a problem solver...but doing so enriches no one and will soon bring more people with more problems to be solved. Through clear communication and the feedback process, new leaders can help others learn to solve their own problems. This approach to problem solving enriches all and is the essence of good leadership. Finally, add balance. Those who are successful learn how to balance their lives so they can be consistently effective. It seems obvious that new leaders should spend time analyzing and reflecting, but at the end of a difficult day, reflection is the last thing a leader may want to do. Yet, taking time to learn daily from their experiences may be the most critical factor in the ultimate success of a new school leader. (1999, p. 205)

Dr. Buckner’s keys to success for new principals were used as a guide to many of the follow-up questions that were asked of study participants in the second and third interviews.

During the second narrative interview my purpose was to ask the participants to reconstruct an event in their lives (the principal socialization experience) which is consistent with the research protocol prescribed by the *Dolbeare-Schuman-Seidman Narrative Interview Design*. The focus of the second interview was on the professional learning that occurred during the principal socialization process. I asked each participant to answer the following questions:

1. *What is your job as principal? What is like for you to do what you do?*
2. *Would you reconstruct a day in your life as principal, now, in the present? Would you reconstruct a day in your life as principal during your first year or so in this position?*
3. *Would you share some of the details of your relationships with others in your current setting and position? For example, what is your relationship like with students? With parents? With your teachers? With your principal colleagues? With the central administration?*

The third narrative interview is designed to cause participants to reflect on their past and present principal socialization experiences as a basis for projecting where they might go in their future professional lives. It is important to discover what current principals project about their futures due to the current and looming administrator shortage. In some localities the shortage is one of quantity; there simply are not enough candidates in the pool to fill available positions. In other

places, such as California, the problem is not one of quantity, but of quality.

Stephen Davis, et al, writes in *The School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals* in 2005 that:

A shortage of highly qualified principal candidates has been reported by school administrators across the nation. In some parts of the country nearly sixty percent of principals will retire, resign, or otherwise leave their positions over the next five years. In other parts of the country the issue has less to do with dwindling supply than with the inequitable distribution of qualified candidates in suburban and affluent communities. In California, for example, the problem is not a shortage of certified administrators, but a shortage of highly qualified administrators with a commitment to working in underserved communities and schools. (p. 5)

Because of this looming dearth of qualified school level administrators, it is important to examine the socialization experience as a factor in principal retention. During the third interview I asked each of the participants in this study the following questions about their understanding of their present careers and about their plans for the future:

1. *Given what you have said about your life before you became principal, and what you have said about your present experiences, how do you understand the principalship in your professional life? In your personal life?*
2. *What sense does this make to you now?*

3. Given what you have reconstructed in these interviews, where do you see yourself going in the future? Is there any advice you would offer to other new principals or other principals in a new setting?

The answers to these two sets of questions posed during the second and third interviews, as well as personal observation and review of their journal entries provided the framework for writing their biographical case studies, presented in this chapter. The case studies are focused on professional learning during the principal socialization process and its impact on their present and future professional lives.

Setting and Background for Bob Perthlander

Bob shared the unique experiences in his early life that led to his decision to become first an educator and then a principal in the initial interview conducted during the research phase of this study. Prior to the second interview I asked Bob, as well as the other participants, to review journals, notes, diaries, calendars, and their memories to recall specific incidents during their principal socialization experiences that impacted their professional learning. Bob, who practices reflective teaching and reflective leadership, was well prepared as he produced almost daily journal entries of his first year in the principalship. He continues his reflective journaling in his current position as principal of a health

careers academy in the Fulton County Schools in suburban Atlanta, Georgia where I traveled to conduct each of his interviews.

Of all the participants in this study, Bob Perthlander had the least experience as a classroom teacher. In the initial interview for this study Bob related that he had taught only two years prior to enrolling full time in the graduate program at University of North Carolina Somewhere to pursue his Master of School Administration degree. He revealed that he had been a lateral entry teacher at Another County High School near the Research Triangle Park area of North Carolina. Bob was not recommended for renewal as a teacher after his initial contract expired, a situation which he blamed on personal differences between himself and his principal. Towards the end of his first year as an assistant principal at one of the most successful high schools in Wobegone County, Bob was approached by the superintendent of schools and asked to serve as a principal for the following year at Urban High School. Bob protested that he had too little experience, but the superintendent expressed confidence in his ability to learn, reminded him of the urgency to place a strong, articulate African American in charge of the school. He insisted that Bob take the position. Feeling both flattered and terrified, Bob accepted.

At the time of Bob's appointment, Urban High School was a school in serious trouble. Test scores had plummeted under the previous two principals, both of whom had long records of experience both as classroom teachers and principals in other settings. The last principal had been dismissed at the end of

the first semester of the previous year amid charges of financial impropriety and incompetence. The teaching staff was demoralized and reeling from the lack of leadership and had depended on two relatively inexperienced assistant principals for guidance during the second semester of the previous year. The school's population of 1200 students consisted of 61% African American, 19% white, 6% Hispanic, 11% Asian, 2% American Indian, and 1% other. The population included students who spoke 42 different languages. The attendance, graduation, and dropout rates were the worst in the county. Urban High counted 77% of its students on Free-and-Reduced Lunch status and 21% were identified as Students With Disabilities. The majority of teachers had less than five years experience, while the second largest teacher group recorded less than ten years of classroom teaching experience. The turnover rate was the highest in the county for three consecutive years preceding Bob's appointment as principal there. Urban High students averaged only 811 points on the SAT , the second lowest average in the county and expected to be assigned a state assistance team since the school had been designated as "low performing" based on the ABCs of Public Education in North Carolina Schools for three consecutive years (*School Improvement Plan*, 1999). By all estimations, Urban High School was a school in crisis. Urban High needed a strong, competent, confident, and experienced leader. It got Bob Perthlander.

Narrative Case of Bob Perthlander

Bob Perthlander's first principalship was not successful. In fact, Bob describes it as a "pretty significant failure." During the second interview Bob shared a response to my request that he reconstruct a day in the life of a new high school principal. He stated:

I didn't have a clue what I would be getting into. I had been a successful assistant principal for exactly eight months when I was asked to become a high school principal at the most challenging high school in Wobegone County. Students there spoke many different languages, gangs were prevalent, and the faculty was demoralized and falling apart. I tried to force the community to do it my way because I was told that change needed to come quickly at that school. The only thing that got changed quickly was me. I stayed there less than two years and was then moved to an alternative school to finish my two-year contract. I was not renewed after two years. I would classify that as a pretty significant failure.

I prodded Bob to continue with a more general reconstruction of his first year at Urban High School and asked him to share his perception of what went wrong.

He continued:

It was a matter of experience and maturity. I was only 28 years old when I was asked to take this job. I really didn't feel like I could say no to the superintendent when he called and to be honest, I never considered saying no. I was brash enough and naive enough to believe I could quickly turnaround the worst school in the system. So my first mistake was in not recognizing that I simply wasn't ready. At that point in my career I had been a lateral entry teacher for exactly two years and an assistant principal for one year. I had so little knowledge of instructional leadership that I really didn't know just how much I had to learn before I could be a successful school leader. My second mistake was probably big enough to be fatal in and of itself. When I left my position as an assistant principal to take the Urban High principalship committed a cardinal sin in Wobegone

County Schools; I recruited the best and brightest teachers and staff members at my current school to go with me. The principal I had worked for as an assistant principal was widely considered to be the best and toughest principal in our system. She had taught me a lot, expressed faith in my ability to learn and advised me that I wasn't ready for a principalship when the superintendent called. Still, when I accepted the position she told me she would support me and do all that she could to help me succeed. That attitude lasted less than a week when she heard that her lead guidance counselor, her curriculum facilitator, and the chair of her math department had all asked to be transferred with me to Urban High. I had openly recruited them and had the paperwork completed before she even found out. At that point I became her enemy and she did all she could to hinder my success. She screamed at the superintendent, at me, at the HR department and throughout the first year of my principalship she took extra pains to make sure that everyone downtown knew every small mistake I made. I found out that I should have communicated with her before I tried to recruit her people and I also found out just how rough working in the political domain can be for a brand new principal. So, from the very start I got little support from the central office because Cindy (my former principal) was using her political influence to make sure that I failed. If I could take back any of the mistakes I have made as a principal in three different schools now, that one would be at the top of my list.

I contacted and interviewed "Cindy," Bob's supervisor when he was an assistant principal and asked her to comment on this mistake from her perspective. Her response indicated that she is still angry with Bob. She said:

Bob Perthlander was not ready to be a principal. I told the superintendent that, but he would not listen. Bob did not have enough experience with instruction or with leadership to go to the worst school in our system. He was very immature and taking my people with him was the best evidence of that. That simply is not done in Wobegone County Schools. Bob knew that because he had assisted me for a year and knew he should never have done this. He took away the key members of my team and I won't ever get over that completely. That was the team that I had built, not Bob. I am still angry with him and with all of them for their disloyalty to me. I haven't spoken to any of them since they left.

I followed up by asking Cindy to comment on Bob's perception that she had used her considerable political power to derail him in his first year as a principal. She replied, "Let's just say that he made some really big mistakes and I felt that for the good of the children at his school, the superintendent and his staff needed to know about those things."

I asked Bob to place this early mistake in one of Buckner's skill categories.

He responded:

I imagine it could fit in almost any of them. I did not communicate very well with Cindy about my plans. If I had I would have realized that it was political suicide to take her people with me. All who went with me had problems with Cindy so I guess you could say that I tried to solve their problems for them by taking them out of that school. Buckner would have said I should have taught them to solve their own problems. I also did not reflect very well on that decision before I made it. All I could think of was something Ron Lawless told me in one of my master's level courses and that was to do whatever it took to get the best possible people working in my school. I think I took his advice a little too literally. If I had taken some time to reflect on the long-term consequences, I think I could have figured out that this was a very bad decision before I made it.

Bob continued the story of his first principal socialization experience by reconstructing a composite day in the life he led then. He was well aware of the mistakes he had made and was not shy about sharing them with me. He continued:

On a typical day, I usually got to school much later than my teachers did. I thought, hey, I'm the boss, what's the rush? I know they resented that. The same week they promoted me, I went out to buy a new motorcycle. It

was one of those Japanese “crotch rockets” and I just loved it. As a reward to some kids who had improved grades or behavior, I would take them for rides in the morning before school started. I shudder now to think of the liability I was risking. I rarely wore a tie to school and I dressed a lot like some of the kids. I realize now that at 28 I had more in common with the students than I did with the staff. This led to a lot of natural resentment from the teachers. Rather than try to correct that, I flaunted it. I was determined to be a “student centered” principal and at that age and time in my life, I thought that meant always taking the students’ side against the faculty, bonding with the students more than with the staff, and cultivating this “principal-as-rock-star” image that I wanted them to have of me. I honestly thought that if the students liked me and related to me, that they would reward me for being cool with really high achievement on their end-of-year tests. You see, I really was immature. Morning was usually the time that parents came in for conferences and I delegated as many of those as I could to a far more veteran assistant principal. I felt uneasy dealing with parents in confrontational situations. Instead of handling those I would always go to the cafeteria or out in the courtyard to hang with the students. They called me “Mr. P.” and I guess I really did feel like a rock star when I was with them. I was an easy mark for most of them. If an assistant principal assigned them to detention or ISS, they could normally count on me to override it. Again, I thought that if they liked me, they would improve their behavior. Once the bell rang I would camp out in my office and do the massive paperwork required in a big bureaucracy. If I ever went to classrooms it was because a student asked me to come see them do something or because I was required to do an observation of a new teacher. I never went unless I had to. The teachers didn’t feel supported in this, but I didn’t care. I really thought if I could change the culture of the school to “cool” that our performance would go up. I thought it was my mission to take all of the pressure off of kids. The result was that all of that pressure was transferred to my teachers and administrative staff. It started falling apart pretty quickly.

I asked Bob to comment on when he first realized that he was struggling and whether or not he turned to an assigned mentor for advice and help. He told me:

I started anticipating problems in August, before school even started. I called the School Improvement Team together for a two-day retreat and

shared many of my “student centered” ideas with them. Needless to say, those ideas didn’t float. I wanted to do some really radical things like allow kids to cut class without consequences. My reasoning was that if we treated them like adults with adult responsibilities that they would respond as adults. I also wanted to eliminate out-of-school suspensions and to change the grading system so that no child could receive less than a 60 on any assignment. Of course the teachers were not happy with this and I didn’t know how to win them over. That was the first time I had ever worked with any of the teachers at this school and they immediately went out and told all their friends on the faculty that I had no idea what I was doing and that I didn’t care about teachers. This all happened before teachers even reported for work that year so I was in the hole before the game even started.

I reminded Bob to comment on any help that his assigned mentor might have given him. He laughed and responded:

My assigned mentor was Cindy. I had already burned that bridge behind me even though I had not intended to. I couldn’t call her for anything. She wouldn’t even speak to me. I asked the central office to assign another mentor, but Cindy’s political weight was so strong that it just didn’t happen, not even when the superintendent told human resources to find someone else to help me. No one would step up because they were all afraid of Cindy. That was also the first year of the “new principal induction program.” A really nice retired principal ran it part time for the county, but we only met once a month and the topics at the meeting were very broad. I needed some specific help, but we just didn’t have it available. I turned to my peers for feedback and help, but the more experienced principals kept their distance as I self-destructed and all my other peers were either teachers or assistant principals. I saw my decisions through the wrong lenses. One of my friends, an assistant principal, advised me to change everyone on the entire School Improvement Team and start with a group that would be loyal to me so that’s what I did. Not only did this poison the well against me with the staff, but it also ruined the credibility of the leadership team. I didn’t keep anyone on it who didn’t agree with me on key issues. The result was a pretty unrealistic view of what was best for the overall school.

I asked Bob to reflect on the highest and lowest points of his socialization experience at Urban High and recommended that he use excerpts from his journal to recall that time of his life. He obliged:

I've always reflected; always been a writer and I have kept journals all my life. It is how I learn about me. The low point is easy to find. In February of my first year at Urban a student was stabbed in the boys' bathroom just down the hall from the office. It was gang related and I don't care what anybody says, controlling gangs is an impossible task in any school. Anyway, I got the blame for that incident from the press, the community, even the superintendent's office. Two days after the stabbing I wrote, "This young man is going to survive, but I may not. Not only was he badly stabbed, but badly beaten too and it appears he has suffered some traumatic brain injury. I expected the Rhino Times to blame me for this, but not my teachers and the letters they wrote to the editor. 'PD' wrote that 'Urban High is falling apart while the principal scoots around on his motorcycle.'" I can't believe she signed her name. Not sure how to handle this. There were more than 30 calls to the Rhino blaming me and there have been numerous letters and articles in the News and Record that imply the environment here is all my fault. Maybe I'm not ready for this job. Even Dr. G (George Towery) told me I have to get control over here in a hurry. They hate me because I'm young. What if they're right? That was the low point, without a doubt. A really violent incident occurred on my campus and the perception was that I allowed it to happen because I had no control. I really questioned my own ability with that incident and thought I maybe just needed to quit."

While the stabbing was the low point of Bob's socialization experience, he felt that the Westwaters came when he felt affirmed by his students and a small cadre of his staff during a spring awards banquet. He again turned to his journal to recount the details of this incident. He wrote:

April 23 – There's light at the end of the tunnel. Not long until we get into the whole end-of-the-year routine and I can hardly wait. This year has

been pure hell. I feel elated tonight though because I have just left the spring honors banquet and a group of my lunch buddies – the kids I hang out with during lunch- gave me a plaque that said ‘We love you, Mr. P!’ Then they told me that I have made a difference this year for a lot of students and that they appreciate how I try to relate to them on their level. They and some of my teachers (yes, my teachers) told the group that my goal is to get kids to feel good about themselves and then they will want to learn. They went on to tell all the parents there that I have shown them that students do matter to adults and that I have made them feel cared for like never before. I’m still beaming and it’s well after midnight.

Clearly the spring honors assembly was the only time that Bob felt validated as a person, as an educator, and as a principal during his initial socialization experience. I moved the interview towards a discussion of his adjustment to his current assignment as principal of a medical careers academy in the Atlanta area. He was very candid in discussing the difference in the two socialization experiences. Bob began:

Well the two experiences are nothing alike, but then I am certainly not the person or the administrator that I was a few years back at Urban. For one thing, I have made two stops in between. I was principal of an alternative school in Sometowne for a half year when they moved me from Urban. Then for the next few years I was a principal at a small school academy in the Virginia Beach schools. Each experience has taught me a little more about how to get acclimated to a new role, a new school, a new system. I am older and yes, wiser now. I sold the motorcycle and in Virginia Beach I learned that I have to run schools for all the stakeholders, not just the students. I think my big mistake at Urban was that I had never gotten over my own experiences as a high school student and later as a high school teacher. I was trying to right those wrongs at Urban and that setting had nothing to do with my own school experiences. I came out of my MSA program as a dreamer. I am much more of a realist now. I am in my second year at this school in Fulton County. I got to be a part of the design team for the academies here. What we did was to break up one large, low performing high school into four small academies. Each academy has its own part of the building and its own administration. We all have autonomy to run our schools as we see fit. I understood from my

disaster at Urban what it would take to fit in here. Also, there is much more support for new principals in Fulton County than there ever was in Wobegone County when I came along. I believe now that they are fixing that, but then, I felt very alone as a young, new, arrogant principal. When I started to make a mistake back at Urban, there was no one to stop me. When I fell on my face there was no one to catch me. Here it is much different. We have a formal induction program that starts before you ever actually take the position of principal. You have to report a month early just to do the types of things that help you learn this school system. Then, once you start the job there are regular meetings with active administrators whose only focus is to make sure that new principals are successful and are supported in the right ways. I know that Wobegone County was trying to do this way back during my first year as a principal, but they just missed the mark. Here, if a new principal fails it is because he or she chooses to ignore all of the support this system gives you.

Bob went on to describe the informal induction support that he received in Fulton County as well:

As I said before, in Wobegone County, I was assigned Cindy as my mentor who would have been fine except she hated me, still hates me I guess, for a very rookie type of error in judgment. They never gave me anyone else though I asked repeatedly. I needed someone to help me learn the job and how to do the job. The closest I got was Barbara Harvey (pseudonym) who had been a middle school principal for two years and was in her first year as a high school principal. Even though she was new to the high school level, she was a very good principal and had the type of wisdom that I was missing. I called on her a lot and she sort of took over as my surrogate mentor. Still, I didn't have enough time with her that was structured into my induction as a principal. I had never worked with an organization on that level before and so I did not have the management or leadership skills that Barbara had. She helped as much as she could, but then, she was new to her job too. In Fulton County, the veteran principals in the system take responsibility for bringing the new principals along and getting them up to speed on the culture of the school system. They understand the importance of every principal's success and they make an effort to be available to us. Even though I am an "experienced" principal now, I am still new to this culture and it is extremely important that I have that kind of support. I really appreciate all the guys here who are willing to help on that informal level. It is not at all unusual for one of them to show up on work days just to take me to lunch.

That gives me the kinds of opportunities to bounce ideas off of them that I never had in Wobegone County. Every week I hear from two or three of my veteran colleagues here. They are all just calling to check on me, make sure I stay in the loop on system issues, and to find out if I need any help or direction. The informal support is probably even better than the formal induction program.

Earlier in the interview Bob had elaborated on his relationships with teachers, parents, students, and colleagues during his initial principal socialization experience at Urban High School. I asked him to share his perception of his relationships with all of those stakeholder groups in his current position. His response indicated that this socialization experience is quite different than the one he had at Urban High School. He told me:

(Laughs) There really is no comparison. I am like a totally different person now. I don't think my core values have changed very much, but the way I manifest them in my approach to the principalship certainly has. At Urban I was too young, very immature, single, and confused. I thought "student-centered" meant that I should bond more with students than any other stakeholder group. I kept my staff, even my assistant principals, at arms length, but I always had time for students. I know that many of my teachers resented that. I really wanted to be that principal-as-rock-star character that I told you about earlier. Now, I am different. I guess the biggest difference is the wisdom that comes with age and experience. If socialization is defined as professional learning, then I learned a lot in my year-and-a-half at Urban. The only trouble is I learned everything the hard way. I'm very different now. For one, I am older; that makes a difference in how I make and frame my decisions. I sold the motorcycle and shudder to think what might have been if I had wrecked that thing with a Urban student on board. I am married, very happily, so my personal life is much more settled and I can focus on work and family. I know now that student-centered sometimes means making decisions that students don't like. It doesn't mean catering to their every whim. It means valuing the ideas and the experience of my teachers, because, you know they really are very student-centered too. I try to value everyone now and to make sure that I

have time for all the stakeholders. My heart is still with students and it always will be, but the veteran principals here have helped me to learn how to advocate for my students without alienating my faculty at the same time. This has been a much smoother ride.

I asked Bob to elaborate on his relationships with the superintendent and central office staff in Fulton County. He was happy to share:

This has been the best transition I have ever made in my career. I know the superintendent very well. He was very involved in the break-up of the old high school into these four new academies. He has been very supportive and so has the entire office staff. They are expected to support principals who are new to the system and those who are doing the job for the very first time and that shows. I am not afraid to ask for help here. In fact, most of the time I don't have to ask; someone shows up with an answer before I get a chance to ask the question. Central office staff, my staff, students, parents, the superintendent; it's just all roses and candy here in comparison to my first year at Urban High.

While I was at his school, I decided to ask several of his staff members what their impressions were of Mr. Perthlander's first year of leadership at the academy. They were happy to participate. The first person I spoke with was Sherry Fox (pseudonym), the team leader for one of the teaching-and-learning teams that deliver instruction to students. I asked her to describe Mr. Perthlander's leadership and decision-making skills. She told me:

Mr. Perthlander is great. This is a new small school academy, but I have worked and taught for many years. He is the best principal I have ever had. He makes decisions by consulting everyone first. He really wants to include us all. We appreciate that approach. He can be directive, but that is rare and when he has to be "the boss" it is usually because someone has backed him into a corner. We are a happy bunch of teachers here

and we not only respect Mr. Perthlander's leadership, we respect him as a person too. We know that he cares about us as people. He loves students and cares about them as people too. He never harps on test scores or anything like that. He just wants to help us do the best job we can do for these kids and we all appreciate that.

The next person I interviewed in order to triangulate the research I was collecting on Bob was a math teacher, Mr. Goines (pseudonym). He seemed to echo the sentiments expressed by Ms. Fox. He said:

Bob Perthlander is an outstanding principal and an outstanding human being. He honestly cares about these kids and he honestly cares about us too. He has a really clear vision about what he wants for this school and we are all excited about making sure that vision becomes real. I know he values me, not just because he tells me that all the time, anybody can say that, but because he shows it all the time. He has earned my trust and respect. I would like to work for him until I retire.

I felt it was important to compare the perceptions of the teachers at Urban High in Wobegone County with the perceptions of the teachers at the Medical Careers Academy in Fulton County on Bob Perthlander's socialization period with both staffs. This proved difficult as many teachers who were at Urban High School when Bob was the new principal there have moved on and very few of those who remain were willing to discuss Bob's performance with me. After repeated attempts to get someone to share their memories of Bob with me, I finally found one staff member, Mr. Brad Smith (pseudonym), who was willing to share his memories with me. We met in the coffee shop at a Borders Bookstore just one block from Urban High School on May 21 of 2006. I explained the study

to Brad, obtained his permission to serve as a study participant, and conducted a brief open-ended interview with him. I asked Brad to share any pertinent recollections and to specifically address whether or not he felt that Bob had been supported by the school system in his transition to the principalship. Brad spoke candidly about his memories:

Mr. Perthlander was here for about a year-and-a-half. He followed a man who was okay, Mr. Biggins (pseudonym), and who was liked by the staff. But in December of the year before Mr. Perthlander became our principal the next July, Mr. Biggins was fired by the central office. We never were told why exactly, and I guess I can understand that for personnel reasons and all, but we were just completely in the dark as to why he lost his job. I believe most of the rumors were focused on some inappropriate use of school funds. Anyway, for the rest of that year we had no one. We had two assistant principals, one with one year of experience and one who started less than a month before Mr. Biggins left who ran the school for the rest of the year. The place became chaotic. Students and staff all pretty much did what they pleased. Mr. Biggins had never held staff very accountable anyway so it was going to be a tough assignment for anyone the central office decided to send us.

“So,” I asked Brad, “it was in pretty bad shape even before Bob became the principal at Urban?”

It was, but the day-to-day things got done at least. I mean we had a schedule, we knew when and where we were supposed to do duty, and kids were assigned to classes. Mr. Biggins had taken care of those types of things, but he just allowed the teachers to do whatever they pleased. Still the school operated pretty smoothly, but when he was fired we just sort of sailed on without a rudder for a while.

“Did Bob Perthlander bring any sort of organizational skills with him? Were the day-to-day operations of the school better or worse after he came to Urban?”

Brad responded:

Oh, they definitely got worse, I mean Mr. Perthlander didn't have a clue about how to manage a school the size of Urban or especially how to manage a school with the problems we had. We still have students who speak over 40 different languages. They are all poor for the most part, gangs are prevalent, and very few of them have parents who will support them or the school. Mr. Perthlander was just overwhelmed with operations, but he wanted to spend all of his time cultivating this image or vision that he had of how the school should really be run by the students. He didn't want students to be punished for cutting class. He wanted them to decide on their own whether or not to attend. That made him very unpopular with the faculty and it made it impossible to keep tabs on students who were basically allowed to just roam the campus all day long. We had a huge increase in fights and one student was nearly killed when he was stabbed and had his head kicked in one day. After that, Mr. Perthlander tried to do a little more to control students. He started trying to manage the school a little better with scheduling, duty assignments, that sort of thing. We saw him working a little harder and it was apparent he was stressed out so we assumed that all of the negative media attention had gotten him into trouble with the central office.

“So he tried to turn it around after the stabbing incident?” Bob replied:

He did, but it was too late. He had been here too long and made too many enemies too quickly. The faculty, for the most part, just hated him. He was very immature and made bad decisions. After he made them he couldn't take them back and that got him into a lot of trouble. We had no respect for him because we felt like he did not respect us. He seemed to be playing principal instead of actually doing the job. The general consensus was that no one was helping him and everyone from the superintendent on down had just sort of written our school off when they sent this kid over to be our leader. It seemed like he didn't really know how to be a principal. He didn't know what the job was. On a personal level, I thought he was a pretty nice person, but professionally I just could not agree with how he ran the school. Someone should have trained him in school operations.

I asked Brad to explain what he meant in a little more detail. He said:

Well, for example, he didn't know how to frame the master schedule. We didn't expect the principal to put it in the computer or anything, but we did expect him to make class assignments to teachers and to have some philosophical basis for how he did that. Mr. Perthlander wouldn't even touch the schedule. That frustrated a lot of us during the summer months because we wanted to know what we were teaching so we could prepare for the school year. I had no idea what I was teaching until the last teacher work day before the kids came that year. He also didn't understand school finance and budgeting. In our school system each school is given all of its money and allotments and the leadership team, with the principal, decides how it is spent. Mr. Perthlander would not follow that process. We never did a budget. He depended on the treasurer to make purchasing decisions, but then he would do crazy things like decide at the last minute to eliminate the ISS teacher's position and use that money to buy new computers or something. He made random decisions like that and I am afraid some folks on our staff saw that weakness in him and manipulated him into making decision that only benefited them. Mr. Perthlander never attended ballgames or other after school functions and we were not used to that. It was rare to even see him at a PTA meeting. He told us he was working on his doctorate, trying out for the US Olympic Team in track, and going to medical school at the same time and didn't have time to work after hours. Most of our teachers didn't believe he was doing all of those things and it just hurt his credibility not to be there. He didn't know how to work with the leadership team, probably because he had only taught for two years and had never served on one. He did a terrible job with teacher evaluations. They were always late, no post-conferences ever occurred as far as I know, and he was inconsistent in his expectations about teacher performance. I know he spent a lot of time during his time here defending his observations with teachers and the NCAE representative. There was so much he did not know how to do that it ruined our school, which was already struggling before he even came here. He didn't know the difference between instructional leadership and cultural leadership. He focused only on changing the culture and never paid much attention to student achievement.

"It sounds as if Bob did not know the role at all," I said. "How could that have been avoided?" I asked. Brad was clear in his answer:

He didn't know the role. At first, I am sure he was confused by all of the hats he was supposed to wear; you know, instructional leader, building manager, disciplinarian, cultural change leader, scheduler, and finance officer. Someone in the central office should have cleared up all the confusion for him before he came. Better yet, they should have left him as an assistant principal for a few more years before giving him a school. I mean he had only three total years in education before he was given the job of being principal. He didn't know much at all about instruction or management. He was certainly not aware of how to change an organization as complex as Urban High School. Later, after he had learned a few things, I think he was so down that he just became ambivalent. He knew he was on the way out and he just didn't care if we succeeded or failed. He definitely needed more support when he was becoming acclimated to the role.

During my third interview with Bob Perthlander I shared Mr. Smith's assessment of Bob's leadership at Urban High School and asked him to comment. Bob replied:

Brad Smith is a good man. I never counted him as an enemy or someone who hated me on a personal level. I think most of what he shared is completely accurate. I was too young, too immature, and too ill-informed to lead that school. My mistake was in accepting that assignment before I was ready, but I think the school system made a much bigger mistake in sending me there before I was ready. Once I was there, they abandoned me. There was no real structure for support of a new, inexperienced principal. The immaturity and poor decisions were my fault. The lack of support that allowed me to make those bad decisions was the superintendent's fault. They should have at least replaced my mentor, Cindy, with someone who cared enough about me as a leader and about the kids and staff at Urban High, to give me some real support. That just didn't happen there. I'm amazed that I decided to stay in education at all.

The focus of my final interview with Bob Perthlander was on the future and on his impressions of what the principalship means to him now. I asked Bob to comment on these things in light of the experiences he had at Urban High as well as at the medical careers academy he currently serves as principal. He told me:

Well, it has been a challenge to say the least. After the Urban debacle I am amazed that I stayed in education at all let alone in the principalship. I know much more about the job now. For example, I know that my focus has to be on instructional leadership and not administrivia. I can delegate a lot, not all, but a lot of the bureaucratic stuff to other people so my time can be better spent on teaching and learning issues. I know that our society depends on the success of our public schools and I really believe that. It is my job to make my school successful and that is measured by the level of learning that occurs there. That takes everyone's commitment including parents, teachers, students, administrators, the central office, the community, and the school board. I know that being principal of a school carries an awful lot of power and with that comes responsibility. I guess if I had to reduce the principalship to one phrase it would be, helping every stakeholder become the best that he or she can be. If I can bring out the best in everyone everyday then the school will improve and students will learn. The principalship means a lot to me in my personal life too. I know some feel that we should never define ourselves by the jobs we hold, but I guess that I do. I love being a principal now and I am proud of it. High school is my niche and I think I have a lot to contribute. I recognize that I can't allow the job to consume my personal life. My wife and family come first and I need them to balance me. They keep me centered and I am so very thankful for that. As to the future, I don't know if I see myself retiring from the principalship or not. I know that I want to stay in public education. I no longer care to become a medical doctor and I'm too old to run competitively anymore. Maybe I will spend the last ten years of my career working exclusively with new, young principals and developing some sort of support program that would guarantee their success. I don't ever want anyone else to have to go through the painful learning that I experienced at Urban High School. Yeah, that is the future for me as I see it.

Case Summary and Conclusions

Bob Perthlander's principal socialization experience at Urban High School can not be described in completely negative terms. Though his tenure there, by his own estimation as well as that of most Urban High stakeholders, was a failure, the socialization experience itself manifests some elements of success. Crow and Matthews have defined principal socialization as "professional learning" (2003). To that extent, the socialization that Bob Perthlander experienced in his first principalship taught him much about the position, about the culture of schools, the nature of people, and about himself.

Matthews and Crow refer to *Van Maanen and Schein's identification of organizational socialization methods* in their explanation of various methods of principal socialization. These methods include *collective versus individual* which focuses on whether or not leadership is learned as part of a cohort group as in university training or as an individual without colleagues entering the organization at the same level and at the same time. A second socialization method is *formal versus informal* which relates to whether or not professional learning is offered in segregation from the work setting according to a formalized structure. Many school districts, including Wobegone County Schools, offer some type of formal socialization as professional staff development. A third type of socialization on the Van Maanen and Schein classification list is *sequential versus random*. This refers to the type of professional learning that doctors might encounter. When learning to become physicians they take courses, complete an internship, and

then become a resident, in that sequence. Principals however, take courses, serve an internship, and then are subjected to role immersion when they are appointed as principals. *Fixed versus variable* socialization involves whether or not the professional learning is defined in terms of a timetable. The pursuit of a specific degree, for example is learning based on a formal timetable. When one becomes a principal however, no other timetable is apparent for professional learning. Most principal socialization is variable. Another type of professional socialization on the Van Maanen and Schein list is *serial versus disjunctive*. This refers to whether or not veterans are available to guide and initiate the newcomers to the position. Principals may have formal, veteran principals assigned to them as mentors during their socialization period which is an example of serial socialization. In some cases, though, no mentor is assigned which typifies disjunctive socialization. Finally there is *divestiture versus investiture*. If new members to the organization are encouraged to discount their previous experiences as basic to the new role, then divestiture occurs. If, however, this previous experience is valued and the new principal is encouraged to use it as a foundation for learning in the new administrative role, then investiture has occurred (2003).

Bob Perthlander's principal socialization experience at Urban High School best exemplifies disjunctive professional learning. Though Bob was assigned a mentor, the relationship between him and his mentor, Cindy, was broken almost from the moment he accepted his appointment to Urban High School. According

to Bob and members of his staff, no one else came forward to mentor him. One exception to this is the case of Barbara Harvey, who offered what help she could, but who herself was experiencing principal socialization as a new high school principal. The time she could devote to Bob's socialization as a first-time principal was extremely limited. Without a strong, supportive mentor, Bob had no one to help him learn the tasks, the relationships, and the values inherent to the role of a successful principal.

Bob has indicated that he felt abandoned by the Wobegone County Schools system during his first year as a principal. Though he repeatedly asked that a new mentor be assigned to him, that request was ignored. This is a testament to the political power that Cindy wielded in the school system. The formal principal induction program that was sponsored by the school system offered little more than a monthly meeting that addressed only the perfunctory nature of the job and addressed neither the larger issues of cultural change nor the essential skills needed to master the day-to-day operations of a large urban high school. Bob was forced to rely upon his scant experience as an assistant principal and two years of teaching in order to fulfill the superintendent's mandate that he "fix" Urban High School. All parties interviewed for this study agreed that Bob was neither prepared for the role, nor supported in it. Conversely, Bob accepted responsibility for his failure at Urban High School. To a large degree he blamed his poor performance on his personal and professional immaturity as well

as on his failure to include all stakeholders, especially his teachers, in the decision-making process.

By contrast, Bob's socialization experience at the medical careers academy he now leads for Fulton County Schools in suburban Atlanta, Georgia has been a tremendous success. Bob acknowledges that part of this success is based on learning that he acquired from his negative experience at Urban High. He learned there, what not to do in any future settings. Additionally he attributes his successful transition into his current position to the highly structured formal induction process that his school system has in place for new principals and to the strong support he continually receives from the seasoned veteran principals in the Fulton County Schools. It is also apparent that Bob Perthlander is now older, wiser, more mature, and has a personal life that has brought stability to his professional life. All of these things in combination project a bright future for this dedicated educator.

Though Bob Perthlander's principalship at Urban High School was a failure, the principal socialization experience there was not. Bob took valuable, albeit painful, learning with him when he left Urban High School. He learned to heed Buckner's advice to communicate, communicate, communicate with all stakeholders. To that extent, Bob Perthlander's principal socialization at Urban High School can be counted as a success.

Setting and Background for Yolanda Reid

During the first narrative interview of Yolanda Reid she intimated that she was ambitious and aggressive, yet just as Bob had been, was somewhat terrified by the offer of a principalship so soon into her career. Yolanda had taught successfully for a total of four years prior to her first administrative assignment as assistant principal at West Pointe High School in Wobegone County. There, she explained, she was given the opportunity to develop as a school administrator through a series of carefully constructed assignments that were given to her by her principal who also served as her unofficial mentor. She indicated during the second narrative interview that:

Wobegone County Schools had a professional induction program for new assistant principals and it was pretty good. We met monthly and covered a lot of different topics such as budgeting, discipline, and data disaggregation. Each of us was assigned an official mentor who was supposed to meet with us monthly to see how we were doing, but I never saw mine. She called once, but never followed up. I did not feel that I could call on her for advice so I turned to my unofficial mentor, my principal. I had taught for him the year before I became his assistant principal and trusted his leadership and advice. So, when I had a question about how I should do things, or how I was developing as a leader, I always went to him. It was a very non-threatening relationship and I learned a lot from him. I learned much, much more from my unofficial mentor than I did through the induction program.

Yolanda went on to point out that when she was approached about serving as a principal at a very low performing school that she had the same reservations that her principal had:

I think he felt the same way about it that I did. He thought I was going to make a good principal some day, we just both thought that it was too soon to send me to the most difficult school in the system at the time. I had performed well on the Haberman Interview (a principalship interviewing instrument) and the results indicated that I would be a good match for a minority, low performing, and urban school. The superintendent saw my results and called my principal for his recommendation. He told the superintendent that I was ready for a principalship, but tried to convince him to send me somewhere less challenging my first year. The superintendent wasn't persuaded by my principal's concern that I needed a little more time before going to such a challenging environment as the leader. He relied solely on the Haberman results and called to offer me the position. My principal told me of his concerns, but we both felt that if I did not accept the offer, that I might get passed over for any future principalship, so I accepted it. That was just 18 months after I had become an assistant principal. I had just completed my MSA degree and was stunned that the offer came so quickly. I accepted, but it was with a lot of hesitation. My principal agreed to help out and advised me to request him as my official mentor.

Just as I had done with Bob Perthlander, I asked Yolanda Reid to come prepared for the second and third narrative interviews with whatever data she might have available on her principal socialization experience. Because she had served as my assistant principal, I knew that she would have extensive notes and journal entries since reflective journaling was a requirement I had for all brand new administrators who served in schools that I led. Yolanda brought those materials as well as a wealth of anecdotal data with her to the two interviews.

At the time of her appointment as principal of S. E. Burford High School, Yolanda Reid had a total of five-and-a-half years of experience as an educator. Four years of that time had been spent as a middle school language arts teacher at two different middle schools in Wobegone County. For the year-and-a-half preceding her appointment as principal at Burford High, Mrs. Reid served as one

of three assistant principals at West Pointe High School in Sometowne, North Carolina. Her primary assignment was to serve as the lead administrator for ninth graders. In addition, she had assumed the leadership for the formulation of a new ninth grade academy at West Pointe which was to be implemented the following year. West Pointe could best be described as a suburban, upper-middle class school of approximately 1500 students. The school regularly ranked among the top three in academic performance in Wobegone County and had a strong history of participation in Advanced Placement classes.

By contrast, S. E. Burford High School was a school in chaos at the time of Yolanda's appointment. The superintendent asked her to "be on site there" by March 1, but indicated that she would share the responsibilities of the principalship for the remainder of the year with an interim principal, Mr. Benton. Mr. Benton was coaxed out of retirement when the most recent principal, Mr. Weldon, resigned under pressure at the end of the first semester. In the two years preceding Yolanda's assignment to Burford High, the school had gone through two principals and two additional interim principals. She became the third "permanent" principal assigned there in just 20 months, and with interim principals thrown into the mix, became the fifth principal in less than two years.

Burford High School was reeling from the lack of permanent leadership. The school's biggest problem, as related to Yolanda Reid by the superintendent, was public perception. There was no consistent discipline plan in place and the result was frequent fights, many of them serious. In addition, during the year of

her assignment, Burford was under a new student assignment plan which brought together students from all three of the largest housing projects in Westwaters, North Carolina. Different gangs ruled the different projects and so, the students who were members of those gangs brought their territorial disputes with them to school. This caused frequent gang clashes at school and each time the police were called to quell the disturbances, the media followed to report the story. The public perception of Burford at that time was that it was a violent school full of poor, inner city students, who were served by teachers who were disinterested, disenfranchised, and afraid. The superintendent's charge to Yolanda was to decrease the number of fights there, keep the school out of the media, and to increase student achievement during her first year.

In 2005, the year of Yolanda Reid's appointment as principal there, Burford High had 1101 students in grades 9-12. The daily attendance rate, at 89%, was the lowest among all high schools in the system and was second lowest among all schools in Wobegone County. Burford had the highest dropout rate, the second-lowest graduation rate, and the highest rate of teacher turnover of all secondary schools in the county. More than two-thirds of the teachers had less than five years of total experience and 76% of the teachers had less than three years of experience at Burford High School. Only five teachers had been at Burford for longer than ten years and two of the five were scheduled to retire at year's end. The composite for student performance was 46.3% on all End-of-Course tests as administered by the ABCs of Public Education in North Carolina.

Scores on EOCs had been low for the preceding two years as well. As a result, Burford High was assigned a state assistance team which was to guide the redesign of the school beginning the following summer after Mrs. Reid's appointment as principal in March. The SAT average for Burford High was 803 and had declined for each of the past four years. Composite scores on the tenth grade writing test had decreased in a similar fashion and stood at less than 40% proficiency. Burford High School recorded more than three violent incidents per 100 students in 2004 which led to its designation as a persistently dangerous school by the Department of Public Instruction (*School Improvement Plan, 2004*).

Yolanda Reid faced numerous obstacles during her socialization period both as a first time principal and as a principal new to a struggling high school. Her case history indicates the need for a tightly structured formal socialization and principal induction program.

Narrative Case of Yolanda Reid

To say the least, Yolanda Reid's socialization experience at Burford High School was challenging. Not only was Burford the lowest performing high school in the system, but it faced myriad other problems as well. Each problem posed a significant challenge for Yolanda. She knew she had to meet each challenge head on in order to bring stability to the school and to retain the confidence of the superintendent.

The largest of these challenges was to regain the trust and confidence of the community that the school served. In the months of the school year prior to her appointment as principal in March, there had been numerous negative media reports on conditions at the school. These reports ranged from coverage of the constant fights to a report on the delay in opening a new technology academy as a small learning community on Burford's campus. I asked Mrs. Reid to comment on the public's perception of the school when she first reported for duty there.

She said:

How many different words are there for "negative?" It would be impossible to overstate how grave the situation was. The superintendent knew he had to sell me to the community as the best possible match for Burford High School so during my first two weeks there I spent most of my time with him and the three Board of Education members from Westwaters. He took me to meetings of the Rotary Club, the String and Splinter Club, the Chamber of Commerce, community forums, the Educational Foundation of Wobegone County, and some others I can't even remember. The communications department of the school system made sure that the press was at every meeting so for a few weeks my face and name were constantly in the news with the superintendent right beside me. He called it my "coming out party." Every group we met with expressed disappointment in his selection of me to be the principal. They felt that I was too young and too inexperienced to lead a failing school back to excellence. At every meeting he reassured them that he had hand-picked me, that I was highly recommended by my current principal, and that he knew I could turn the school around. At the end of that three to four week media blitz he told me that I had one year to get things straight and that he had staked his professional reputation on my success by supporting me so strongly. I felt just a little pressure to succeed. The public didn't think it could be done. Many folks were calling for the school to be closed or broken up into several smaller schools. No one seemed to have any confidence in me and even the local newspaper said it gave me less than a year before I would be gone. I have no idea why I didn't just turn and run.

I asked Mrs. Reid to consult her journal for reflections on her perceptions when she first reported to Burford. She shared some things she had written which indicated that the first immediate challenge was to establish herself as the leader. Her immediate supervisor, Mrs. Deborah Buxton, was her Instructional Improvement Officer, one of the many layers of supervisory bureaucracy in such a large school system. Mrs. Reid told me that in her first conversation with Mrs. Buxton, it was made very clear that she had not supported her appointment as principal. Mrs. Reid told me:

When I look back in my journal now I remember how alienated I felt that first day. Mrs. Buxton immediately told me that she did not think I would make it because of my youth and inexperience. She told me that she supported Mr. Benton for the position and was quite upset that the superintendent had decided against her choice for principal. She told me that Mr. Benton would finish the year as principal and that my job would be to follow him around and learn how to manage the position. That was not quite the understanding I had gotten from the superintendent, but I did not buck her. Mr. Benton was still in the principal's office and I was given no office space to work from so I set up shop in a corner of the media center. I was not introduced to the faculty as their new principal, nor was I introduced to the students. I felt like a fifth wheel for most of my first two weeks there. Whenever I asked Mr. Benton to share plans for the next year with me, he would put me off. It was obvious he resented my presence. By the end of the second week he told me he did not think it was going to work out for me to finish the year on campus. I could not believe his attitude towards me.

Mrs. Reid said an early low point during her socialization came at the end of her second week there, ostensibly sharing the principalship with Mr. Benton. Her Instructional Improvement Officer (IIO), Mrs. Buxton came to tell her that she

would be housed on the campus of Laurin Middle School next door for the remainder of the school year and that she should “just do paper work” from the office she would have there. She was advised against spending time on the Burford campus because it might offend the interim principal, Mr. Benton. She shared:

I was crushed. I could not believe that Mr. Benton and Mrs. Buxton did not even want me on the high school campus, but I was brand new and still afraid of her authority so I did as I was told. A week or so later I shared this with my mentor, the principal at West Pointe High School, who could not believe how badly I had been treated. He told me to insert myself into the daily life of Burford High regardless of the cool reception I had gotten from Benton and Buxton. I asked him how and he told me to simply go and observe classes, set up informal meetings with teachers during planning periods to hear their concerns for the following year, to call some key stakeholders from the community in to a “Meet the New Principal” session, and to have focus meetings with as many students as possible so I could identify the major concerns of all of the people in that failing school. He told me that the community needed to see me as the new leader and that leadership required courage so I had to challenge Benton and Buxton. He also pointed out that those were all things that the superintendent would want done and would support me if Mrs. Buxton complained about my presence on campus to him.

I asked Mrs. Reid what the tone was during the rest of the year after she had taken this advice. She indicated that Mrs. Buxton was not happy, but that she really could not say anything because the superintendent had directed her to be on the Burford campus. Mr. Benton came to school less and less frequently, using sick days and personal leave more and more often. As Mrs. Reid cautiously established herself as the new principal, Mr. Benton quietly faded

away, choosing not even to attend either the prom or graduation. Those duties then fell to Mrs. Reid and so the community began to see her as the new principal.

Because of Mrs. Buxton's loyalty to her friend and colleague, Mr. Benton, the relationship she had with Mrs. Reid became even more strained. I asked Mrs. Reid to comment:

It got pretty bad once Mr. Benton decided he was not going to really finish the year. Mrs. Buxton told me that I had pushed him out and in a way, she was right, but I felt that I had to do as the superintendent told me. It was important to me that the staff and students get to know me as the principal during the last two months of that school year. That would never have happened if I had just "done paper work" in that office over at the middle school. The teachers were very aware that Mrs. Buxton thought I was too young and too inexperienced to do the job and they began to use that against me. If principal socialization is professional learning, then I learned a lot about the people in our profession during my first three months at Burford. They resented my authority and whenever I made a decision about the next school year, they would often run to Mrs. Buxton to overturn it. She did that for a while with things like the master schedule and teaching assignments. It took me a while to realize that those were my decisions, not hers. When I did make that connection she was not happy, but she soon learned that I would advocate for myself and my authority. There were little things she did for the rest of that year and then during my first full year at Burford that I felt were very personal and unprofessional.

I asked Mrs. Reid to share some examples of the "little things" and she said:

Well, for example, at the end of the first year when all of the testing was complete we had to go downtown and sign for the verified copy of test records. This is just a statement that goes to the Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh that verifies that the tests were given to our students in accordance with all testing policies and procedures. I went with Mrs. Buxton and she told me to sign as the "principal of record." Two weeks later, at the first of July, she showed up at Burford and gave me a copy of

an action plan she was putting me on because the test scores were so low and I was the principal of record. I protested that the former principal and Mr. Benton had been there and that I could not be held responsible for the test scores since I had only been there for two months of the year. She reviewed it with me and made me sign anyway. It said that if our composite scores did not improve to 70% by the end of the next year, my first full year as principal, that I would be reassigned to another position. I was devastated, but didn't know what to do so I called my real mentor, the principal at West Pointe High School.

Mrs. Reid went on to tell me that her mentor apparently made some contact with either the superintendent or the assistant superintendent for human resources because a week later Mrs. Buxton came to her school and told her she had second thoughts about the action plan and had just torn it up.

Mrs. Reid shared many significant insights into the struggles with principal socialization of a young, relatively inexperienced first year principal. She told me about how her leadership team met with her during a summer retreat and expressed their disappointment that a more seasoned veteran was not sent to them as principal. They were extremely negative about her leadership, the students at the school, and about most of their teaching colleagues.

The coaching staff opposed her on every decision she made relevant to the sports program because they perceived that she knew nothing about sports. One serious disagreement she had with the head football and basketball coaches concerned her policy on player suspensions. Because so many fights had occurred at the school during the previous year she called all coaches and the athletic director to a meeting and informed them that any player involved in a

disciplinary action at school, regardless of how minor, would sit out a minimum of seven days. They were furious and told her she did not have the authority to make such a ruling since sports were governed by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association and by their conference which had no such rule. I asked her how she resolved the issue:

I excused myself from the meeting and called my mentor – my unofficial mentor and confidant - who told me I had every right to hold athletes who would represent the school and me in competition to a higher standard of participation. He told me he thought it was a brilliant move on my part and that it would definitely cut down on the number of fights on my campus. I went back to the meeting and told my coaching staff that I had the authority as principal to decide who plays and who doesn't and that no one under any type of disciplinary action was going to put on a Burford uniform and represent our school. They didn't like it, but they stopped challenging my authority and knowledge after that. It did cut down on the number of fights too.

During the data collection phase of this study, I spent several days on the campus of S. E. Burford High School interviewing teachers who were on staff during Mrs. Reid's initial transition into the principalship. I asked them to share their impressions with me. Most were very candid in their recollections. One teacher, Mr. Stith, told me that the staff was adamantly opposed to the appointment of a young, relatively inexperienced African American female as the principal of the toughest school in Wobegone County. He intimated that as a staff several teachers formed a coalition to stop her appointment after it was made public. He told me:

We panicked. After all, we had just endured the worst year of my tenure here and I have been here for 19 years. The school was going to hell in a hand-basket and it seemed like the superintendent was just setting us up for another year of failure. There were all sorts of rumors floating around that the central office was trying to make sure that Burford would fail again so they could dissolve the school and send the students to surrounding schools in the county. We organized a petition to keep her from coming here. We just had no confidence in someone so young. Just about everyone signed it, especially the 20-25 teachers who had already resigned. They had nothing to lose. When it was ready we called the High Point members of the Board of Education and asked them to meet with us. Two of them came; the newest one would not attend. The two who came listened and accepted our petition, but they told us there was nothing that could be done and urged us to give Mrs. Reid our cooperation and support. About a week after that the superintendent came over. We thought he would yell at us for contacting the Board, but instead he told us he knew how we felt and that he would take responsibility for Mrs. Reid's failure if her leadership did not work out. We were not happy about it, but we knew we might as well accept it then.

I asked another teacher, Mrs. Alston, to share any particular concerns or responses that the staff had to Mrs. Reid during her first year at Burford. Her response was somewhat similar to Mr. Stith's. She shared:

We were not at all happy about having a young principal with no experience as a principal coming to lead us. We all wanted a veteran principal who used to teach here. We all had a lot of confidence in him and we were extremely disappointed that the superintendent did not send him so we had just sort of given up before she even took over. It was obvious too that there was a lot of tension between her and Mr. Benton. He did not want to leave and he blamed her for him not getting the job permanently. I think he went out of his way to make her transition here more difficult, but she handled it with class. He talked openly about how inexperienced she was, but she never had anything negative to say about him to any teacher or student. When school started the following August, during teacher work days, we had our first staff meeting. She told us that it was going to be a great year and did all of the cheerleader types of things that all new principals always do. Then she told us that she had some expectations and we all resented that. The idea of someone so young having

expectations of veteran teachers did not sit well with us so we protested in little irritating ways.

When I asked Mrs. Alston to tell me about some of the ways in which they protested she recalled that Mrs. Reid required them to sign in and out every day, something they were not used to doing. They signed their times in Roman numerals for an entire month in protest of this policy. She also enforced the district mandate to wear staff identification badges at all times, so for a month they wore them backwards. At the next staff meeting Mrs. Reid passed out the calendar of upcoming monthly events. All dates and times were listed in Roman numerals and she had her own identification badge enlarged to huge proportions and laminated. On the bottom she had written, "Proud to be a Burford Staff Member – Burford Pride!" Mrs. Alston told me that the message was clear and that Mrs. Reid gained the respect of every staff member that day:

We expected her to come in and yell at us about our two protests that day. Instead, she showed us what she was made of. She winked at our use of Roman numerals to sign-in each day and then she embarrassed us at our own lack of pride in the school we all claimed to be so concerned about. For every staff meeting the rest of the year she put all of the event calendars in Roman numerals and made a contest of it. The team of teachers who could translate it to Arabic numerals first would win something each month like movie tickets or ice cream sundaes. She made us realize we were part of the problem, but that we could be part of the solution if we chose to be. After that meeting we all wore our badges the correct way and we all handwrote "Burford Pride!" at the bottom of them. She had a lot of rough spots after that too, but that one meeting set the tone for her leadership and our acceptance of her as our leader. This "child" they had sent to lead us had done just that and we were amazed by her maturity.

Throughout Yolanda Reid's first full year as the principal at S. E. Burford High School in Westwaters, she faced challenge after challenge as she sought to turn around a struggling, low performing school. I asked her what drove her to continue when the odds seemed so much against her. Her response surprised me somewhat. She told me that she based every decision she made on her unflinching belief that schools exist for students and that they should be administered in the best interest of students. She said she also had a pretty good understanding of herself as a person and as a leader and she knew what she was and was not capable of doing. She shared:

I knew this wasn't going to be any cakewalk, but then I have dealt with my share of personal adversity. For example, I got pregnant and married when I was a freshman in college. My family practically disowned me and stopped paying for my education. I was too stubborn to give up so I transferred from a university in Florida to A&T State University in Sometowne because I knew I could get the financial aid to attend school there. I did it on my own. I also separated from my husband just two weeks before reporting to Burford. That marriage was dissolving and my son was approaching middle school. I knew the marriage could not last so I did what was best for my son and best for my transition – I made the decision to leave my husband before my principalship started. Also, when I was in high school I was very nearly killed in an automobile accident, but I survived. When you look at the problems that Burford had when I went there against the greater backdrop of life, then you understand the context of the situation. I knew I was capable of turning that school around. I may not have many leadership gifts, but I do know that I have self-awareness and self-confidence. I believe they have served me well in this position.

Yolanda Reid's socialization experience at Burford High School was made even more difficult by the challenges she faced from her administrative staff. Of

her three assistant principals, two had never before served as administrators.

“They were as green as I was,” she told me.

I had to find time to help them learn to be assistant principals while I was still learning to be a principal myself. We all recognized one another's strengths and weaknesses though, and in the end, it all worked out pretty well. The only exception to this was Lauren who had been an assistant principal there for two years. She had gone to high school at Burford, had taught at Dudley for a while and then came back home to serve her old high school. Although I am not sure she was ever a serious candidate for the principalship here, her perception was that I had taken it away from her. She aligned herself with Mr. Benton when I first arrived and was not happy when he left. She spent most of my first year undermining my authority and my plans for the school. I often heard from loyal staff members that she was questioning my decisions and my ability. It finally came to a head about midway through the year. I called her in and gave her a directive to either be supportive or turn in her resignation. She told me she would be leaving at the end of the year. When I informed the superintendent, he moved her to another school to finish the year. The following year he made her a middle school principal. I'm glad he did because she really was the glue that held this place together for a couple of years, but there can only be one principal and that was me. She works across the parking lot at the middle school now and we have a pretty cordial, professional relationship. She really is a smart administrator. I just hate that it became personal between us.

When I reviewed Yolanda's journal for her first year of the principalship, I found some interesting entries. On March 1, 2005 at 11:00 AM she wrote:

Today is my first day as a principal at a really, really bad high school. This morning when I got here no one knew me, the interim principal made me wait to meet him while he talked with the custodian, I had no office and no place to park, and I heard a lot of the staff members whispering about how young the new principal was. I did not feel welcomed and wanted to run back to West Pointe where I am known and valued. There are students coming in late and cursing in the halls and no adults to confront them. The guidance counselors told me they weren't quite ready to give

me next year's master schedule yet and seemed pretty perturbed when I told them that I wanted to have a great deal of input into the schedule. I think they may be just a little bit territorial about it. Lauren, one of the assistant principals that I know from my master's classes acted cold and aloof. I guess she is upset that I got the job and not her. Oh well, I see a lot of opportunities here. I will remain positive. I will remain positive. I will remain positive.

On May 9, 2005 she wrote:

I took my 13 year-old middle school son to the prom with me last night. Mr. Benton bailed out at the last minute and I had to go. I had no one to watch Corey since it is not Casey's weekend to have him. I felt terrible about it at first because he did not want to go, but I did not want him at home alone in this new apartment so I made him go with me. He fussed all the way to the Market Showplace where we had the prom, but he is growing up and looked handsome in his suit. We had our pictures taken together and all of the girls at the prom made him dance with them. At first he was embarrassed, but then I think he enjoyed all the attention he was getting from these much older high school girls. When we got home he said he thought it was 'alright.' At least the staff and my students saw me in a slightly different context. They saw that I wanted them all to have a good time and that there is a human side to me too. But they also saw that I will hold them accountable for personal as well as academic behavior. Maybe I can do this job.

There was further evidence of the toll that Yolanda's principal socialization experience took on her personal life. In late December of that year she wrote:

It is nearly 10:00 PM and I have just gotten home from school today. Corey had microwave spaghetti for dinner again. I feel so guilty. On top of that I haven't even started Christmas shopping for my child. What good does this great salary do me if I can't even enjoy it with my child? He wants to spend most of Christmas in Miami with my parents and since I have to work some of the time I will probably let him. I guess he needs their stability right now. I mean in the last six months I have left Casey, the only man he has ever known as a father, we have moved out of the house into an apartment, I have a new job, he has a new school, and he is usually getting ready for bed by the time I get home at night. Thank God

he is a good kid or he could really go off the deep end right now. I doubt myself too. Can I really do this job, be a mother, and make a life for myself too? I'm not sure I can. There are days, like today, that I know I can't.

In an entry dated February 14, 2006, Yolanda wrote about her professional and her personal loneliness. She wrote:

Lauren was very snide towards me again today. She took every opportunity to tell me what a great guy her boyfriend is and how they are going to spend the weekend skiing as part of her Valentine's Day present while I will be at the Valentine's Day Dance. If I was really mean I would assign her to cover it, but I won't. I wanted to take Corey with me again, but he told me he is taking a little girl (young lady) to the middle school dance the same night. He is growing up so quickly and I am missing a lot of it. I guess I really am jealous of Lauren. I have no one and though Valentine's is a really stupid holiday, I wish I had someone. I know I never will because with this job and being a mother, I won't ever have the time. I am just so lonely. People at school still hate me too. Maybe it is the winter doldrums, but I get the sense that these teachers will always resent me. Still, I have to do it the way I think it should be done. First semester test scores were very improved over last year so I think I must be doing something right.

There was evidence of Yolanda's frustration with her inexperienced assistant principals as well. She wrote in March of 2006 that:

Fred and Jim drive me crazy sometimes. Today they handled a discipline incident all wrong. The parent came in crazy yelling at them because Fred had suspended a student for letting his pants hang down below his butt even though his teacher had warned him several times to pull them up. He cursed the teacher and Fred sent him home. Then the mom comes to the school acting all crazy and talking loud about how we ought to focus on learning more and clothing less. Fred called Jim in and together they decided to let the boy come back to school tomorrow. Now the teacher is mad because they did not support her. They have got to learn to step up even when people are angry with them. Right now, I am angry with them for being so stupid! No, I take that back, I am NOT ANGRY! I am mad and that is worse!

A journal entry in January of 2006 tells about Yolanda's dependence on her unofficial mentor and her fear that he will withdraw his support of her. She writes:

I don't know why Mrs. Buxton insisted that Abe Barker be my "official" mentor. He only has two years of experience as a high school principal himself and has never, not even once called to ask if I need help or advice. He is aloof and cocky at meetings, but does nothing as my mentor. I asked her to give me Mr. S from Western, but she refused. She told me that I could not depend on him forever and that I needed to 'cut the cord.' No way, Lady! He cares about me and will always take time for me. He is about the only administrator in this county that I trust completely. I'm afraid lately though that I have irritated him. I seem to call all the time for advice and for the last two days he hasn't returned my calls. I hope I haven't worn too thin on him. What will I do if I have?

Two days later, in January of 2006, Yolanda writes that her fear of alienating her unofficial mentor was unfounded:

Whew! Mr. S called me today. Turns out he was gone to a conference. He won the trip for being a Principal of the Year Finalist. He got to choose a conference to attend as his award and went to the NASSP Conference in Reno. I told him not to leave town without telling me again! He is such a great mentor (unofficial of course) and a good friend too. He has told me all the little ins and outs of the job this year and that has saved me many times. I need to buy him a gift card to Starbucks or something.

As the school year drew to a close, Yolanda's journal entries became at first sporadic, and then almost non-existent. When I asked her why, she indicated that she was simply too busy closing her first school year to take much

time to reflect. Her personal life also required much of her time as she met with her attorney often in what had become an extremely messy divorce. She indicated that she felt that her professional ambitions had somehow gotten into the way of her marriage and she wondered if she had made the right choices.

She shared:

Casey has his own business. He and a very small crew clean offices in Sometowne at night. He is a glorified custodian and he is happy with that, but as I got advanced degrees and promotions while he never went to college, the gap between us just got wider and wider. He was good to me and for me at a very difficult time in my life. No other man would have accepted me with a child the way he did, but I think I outgrew him. We never really had much of a romantic love. It was always more platonic and more of a friendship. So, when I started having some success, he got very jealous. I could not compromise what I wanted out of life to protect his fragile male ego, so here we are. I hope I have made the right choices though because I can tell you that being a single mom with a new, very stressful job, is tough stuff.

I asked Yolanda to share her thoughts about where she is now in her career and where she projects herself to be in the future as we finished the third narrative interview. She shared that she felt her socialization experience was a success. "The good Lord knows I learned enough and if socialization is professional learning, then I was very successful in my first year-and-a-half as a principal," she laughed. She went on to tell me that towards the end of her first full year at Burford that she realized she was going to accomplish her major goals. Attendance was way up, the test scores looked as though there would be some improvement, and the school had not been in the newspaper a single time

all year long for a negative story. Fights had dwindled to near zero and she felt strongly that her school would come off the list of “persistently dangerous” schools. She commented:

You know, at the end of our awards day that first year, Mr. Stith came to me with a grin on his face and told me he had a confession. He told me that he organized the Roman Numeral Protest which is apparently something that will live on as one of the myths and legends of Burford High School. He told me that the way I responded to it in the next faculty meeting greatly increased my ethos and moral capital with the whole staff and that he realized then that I was going to be a good principal. He is my biggest fan now and told me that I am the best principal he has had in the twenty years he has been at Burford. That means a lot.

When I asked her what made the socialization process easier in terms of her transition into the role of instructional leader, she was quick to give credit to the state assistance team that had been assigned to her school based on poor performance from previous years. Yolanda indicated that because that whole team was with her all year that she had a ready resource when it came time to bounce new ideas off of someone with extensive instructional leadership experience. “I have to be honest,” she told me, “without the assistance team I probably would have made some really bad instructional decisions. They were sort of like a safety net for me and I appreciated that!”

Yolanda Reid surmised that her principal socialization experience, although certainly not without its challenges, was a success. She indicated that the learning curve for her was steep, but that she had identified the valuable resources to help her through the transition and that had been essential. “Most

of all,” she told me, “I knew myself as a person, as an administrator, and as an advocate for all children. That kind of knowledge of myself kept me centered.” Mrs. Reid predicts that she will remain in the principalship for a few more years while she finishes her doctoral degree. “Then,” she told me, “the sky will be the limit. I want to lead on a larger level; at the system level. Someday I will be a superintendent and I am looking forward to that experience too.”

Case Summary and Conclusions

Yolanda Reid’s principal socialization experience can best be categorized as *formal versus informal socialization* on Van Maanen and Schein’s continuum for professional socialization. They describe formal socialization as learning which occurs in a formal setting away from or in addition to the organizational setting and informal socialization as whatever learning occurs in the organizational setting or in addition to the formally structured socialization (Matthews & Crow, 1999). To that extent, Mrs. Reid’s principal socialization experience contains elements of both formal and informal learning. She was assigned an “official mentor” by Wobegone County Schools and participated in the New Principals Induction Program provided by the school system. However, Reid clearly indicates that she had little contact with her official mentor who took no interest or ownership in her development as a principal. Additionally, though she learned policies, procedures, and processes in her formal induction program meetings, she clearly indicates that she learned more about becoming a principal by interacting with the state assigned assistance team at Burford High School

and by frequently talking with her unofficial mentor, the principal at West Pointe High School.

Hausenson, Crow, and Sperry write in *Portrait of the Principal: Context and Self* in the *NASSP Bulletin* in 2000 that for successful transition into a new principalship and for successful transition into a first principalship that school administrators must possess three key characteristics. First, they must understand the context of the setting. Yolanda Reid clearly understood the context of Burford High School. She indicated in all three interviews, as well as in numerous entries in her reflective journals that she understood the urgency of the situation at the school. She was clear that the school had suffered tremendous decline in student achievement, self perception, and community perception due to a quick succession of several incompetent principals. She demonstrated a clear understanding of the demoralized spirit of students, staff, and community upon her arrival at Burford and clearly understood that she had to improve the school's confidence in itself before she could make any gains in student achievement.

The second key characteristic that successful principals must possess is a clear understanding of self. Throughout the data gathering process it was obvious that Yolanda Reid had a healthy and realistic understanding of herself as a person, as a leader, as a wife, and as a mother. She talked openly about her strengths and weaknesses in all those dimensions of her life and understood how to use the available resources to make her a better person, mother, or principal.

When she came to the realization that she could no longer participate in a failed marriage, she accepted responsibility, made a decision to act, and left the marriage. When Mrs. Reid perceived weaknesses in her leadership abilities he called on others for help including the school assistance team, members of her staff, and her unofficial mentor.

The third characteristic essential to successful principal socialization according to Hausenson, Crow, and Sperry is a clear focus on what is best for students. This characteristic is repeatedly demonstrated throughout Reid's socialization experience. For example, though teachers were very opposed to a sign-in, sign-out policy at the beginning and end of the school day, Reid understood that it was in the best interest of her students to have teachers in place and available to students prior to and immediately after the school day. Her tough decision to require the sign-in, sign-out policy was an action on behalf of her students that was subsequently accepted, if not embraced by the teachers at S. E. Burford High School.

In conclusion, Yolanda Reid's principal socialization experience was fraught with challenges including an unsupportive supervisor, an oppositional interim principal, a disloyal assistant principal, two inexperienced assistant principals, and a difficult transition in her personal life. However, because she had the support of others including an unofficial mentor and the state assistance team, she was able to persevere and excel. Undoubtedly, Yolanda Reid will

realize her ambition to serve as a school system superintendent in the not too distant future.

Setting and Background for Nora Thayer

Nora Thayer indicated in her initial interview responses that she decided to pursue the principalship for several reasons. Not the least among these was economic security in the event of a divorce from her husband. She clarified that many of her friends at that time were going through rough divorces and as females who had long been dependent on their husbands for financial security, were struggling to make ends meet. Nora shared:

I didn't really think I would end up divorced. My husband and I had a pretty good marriage, but I saw it happening to a lot of my friends and I saw how financially devastating it could be. I am a planner and should have been a Boy Scout too because I have always believed in being prepared for whatever might happen. So, even though my marriage was strong, I decided to go into administration 'just in case.' My children were very young then, still in elementary school, and I knew that if it did happen, I would have to contribute a lot to their support. So, I went back, got the degree and certification, and became an assistant principal. That is how I got started in administration.

Nora waited several years before she was given the opportunity to become a principal. She remembered:

I waited a long time to get my own school. I think it was seven years. The year before I finally became a principal they assigned a new principal to the high school I was working in. It was Antonio Childs [pseudonym], a very veteran principal with a reputation for top-down management. The other assistant principal left with the previous principal and so the Executive Director of Human Resources asked me to stay one year with

Antonio since I was the only one left who knew the school. She promised that if I stayed as an assistant one more year that I would get a school the following year. It was a tough year with Antonio. His style is totally different from mine and I was often frustrated. I don't think I could have taken a second year with him and was afraid that the folks in HR might conveniently forget their promise to me, so in March of that year, I reminded them that they had promised me a school. True to their word I was soon named the principal of Laurin Middle School. I have never been more elated or more terrified in my life!

Nora Thayer served as principal at Laurin Middle School in Westwaters for three years. Most recently she was named the principal of Wintergreen Middle School in Sometowne and has just completed her first semester there. This case study examines her original principal socialization experience at Laurin Middle School, but does reference some comparisons to her experience at Wintergreen as well.

Laurin Middle School in Westwaters, North Carolina is the major feeder school for S.E. Burford High School which is located just across the staff parking lot. At the time of Nora's appointment as principal there, Laurin Middle had just completed its third straight year of sharply declining test scores, sharply increasing discipline problems, and a greatly increased student body. The year prior to Nora's appointment, Laurin Middle was a school of just over 500 students. With redistricting however, the student population there ballooned to just over 850 students when Nora Thayer took over as principal. Of that number, 77% were identified as eligible for free-and-reduced lunches. 68% of the students were African American and the vast majority of them lived in one of

three housing projects spread across the city of Westwaters. Of the remaining students, 21% were white, 2% were Hispanic, 2% were Asian, and 6% were of Arab origin, and the remaining 1% were of other ethnicities. Most of the students at Laurin were from single parent homes with only 21 % indicating that both of their parents resided with them. Laurin's students had the next to lowest per capita income of any middle school population in the district and the third lowest percentage of parents who had finished high school. More than 20% of the students were identified as Students With Disabilities (SWD) while 6% were identified as English Language Learners (ELL). The school had one of the highest rates of violent incidents per 100 students with an average of 2 for the preceding year. 61% of the students had been suspended out of school for at least one day the year prior to Nora's arrival and 79% had spent at least one day assigned to in school suspension. The teacher turnover rate was at 24% and the former principal, who had been at Laurin for the past seven years had resigned rather than accept a reassignment to S. E. Burford as its principal. Morale among the staff, the students, and the community was low. Laurin Middle was on warning status with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and had failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress for the prior year based on the requirements of No Child Left Behind legislation (*School Improvement Plan*, 2003). In short, Laurin Middle School was a school in crisis.

Narrative Case of Nora Thayer

Nora Thayer's principal socialization experience at Laurin Middle School in Westwaters, North Carolina is described as a success by everyone involved in the collection of this data. When I asked Nora to tell me her own views of how the socialization process had gone, she was very positive. "Yes," she said during our second interview, "I believe that it was successful, but that is due to the situation I went into more than it could ever be because of anything I did." When I asked her to explain this self evaluation of her first year at Laurin Middle School she told me:

Jeff Turman had been the principal at Laurin for years before I was appointed. For a long time he wanted to become the principal at Burford High School and when the principal there retired, Jeff was assigned. There was some problem though that developed between Jeff and the superintendent right after that announcement and Jeff asked to stay at Laurin. The superintendent refused and so Jeff resigned and went to work for the Comer/Yale School Development Project. That was when they asked me to take over. Jeff was a no-nonsense, very hands-on principal who had the place organized and structured. It was really a smooth transition for me to continue the procedures, programs, and practices that Jeff had implemented so successfully. It wasn't like I had to clean up a mess or anything. So, yes, even though the school was changing demographically with redistricting, the culture of the school was such that I had a fairly easy time of it with the transition.

When I asked what she liked most and least about moving from the classroom to the office, she responded that what she liked most was also the thing she liked least, the pace of the day. She said:

As a classroom teacher for more than 12 years, and then as a grade level assistant principal, I had gotten used to letting bells rule my life. I do not

do well without structure, but I love to change up the pace. I remember my first day on the job, in the summer with no students or staff there, still just flew by. I arrived at 7:00 AM, blinked my eyes and it was 7:00 PM. Really, that's the way it was for about the first month. We had to put together the master schedule, complete hiring, finish the staff and student handbooks, schedule work days and staff development, and a million other things. I didn't take time for lunch or breaks or anything and I was constantly in hurry up mode. At the end of the day I was exhausted, but content. As you have always told me, it is better to be busy than bored and that's what the pace is like to a brand new principal; very busy.

Nora went on to tell me that she still spends her days at Wintergreen much the same way as she did after that first school year started at Laurin Middle. She still arrives by 7:00 AM and starts her day with essential communications. "I check email, voicemail, my mailbox, all of those things. I also take the time to write staff memos or respond to the central office during that part of my day." Before students arrive each day Nora still walks her building, checking to make sure that the night time custodians have appropriately cleaned the classrooms, halls, and bathrooms. "My students deserve a clean school," she told me as I made the early morning rounds with her one day in May of 2006. As teachers come in she stops by their classrooms to say good morning, then heads back to her office to make sure that all substitutes are in place for the day. By 7:30 she is in the bus parking lot greeting each student as buses unload, most of them by name. When I asked if she had learned this practice as a principal, she indicated that she was advised to do it by a friend and unofficial mentor, Susan James, herself a veteran middle school principal in the Wobegone County

Schools system. That allowed me to probe her about the principal induction program and her relationship with her “official” mentor.

As we discussed the induction program, Nora was very candid. “It was a waste of time for me as a first year principal,” she told me. “We met once a month and talked about procedures in the auxiliary services manual. It was strictly survival skills that we learned. No one taught us about how to lead.” I asked her about her relationship with her assigned mentor and shared some of my own experiences in the induction program. Nora indicated that her “official mentor” during her first year at Laurin Middle School never called, emailed, or visited her. “I hope they don’t get paid for that, because mine would owe me money if they did,” she laughed. Her assigned mentor was the most senior middle school principal in the school system. In addition, he was also the highest paid principal in Wobegone County Schools. Nora told me that she only saw him at principals’ meetings and that he never made an effort to help her transition into the role at all. “Thank goodness that Jeff had left the place in good shape, otherwise I would have been lost!” she exclaimed to me.

Nora talked briefly about the important collegial relationships that did help her to not only survive, but to thrive in her first year as a principal.

There was Lillie, who was brand new at William Penn Middle School about two miles from Laurin. We were already friendly and then as we became principals together, we became very close. Sherry has done very well for herself over the past four years. She became a high school principal, then a director and executive director. She is really ambitious, but we started out as principals together and we are still close friends. We talked almost daily, sometimes several times a day for the first year. We leaned on

each other and ran ideas past one another. We used to joke that if one of us drowned in this position that the other would drown trying to pull her out. Sherry was brand new, just like me and her official mentor was just as absent as mine was. We depend on each other and figured the role out together.

Nora went on to share her relationship with Susan, her unofficial mentor. She told me that Susan, who was very near retirement, hosted a “girls’ night out” every two weeks or so for four brand new female principals, all at the middle school level. She described their socializing as essential to her success and pointed out that when she and Sherry could not solve a problem on their own, they knew they could always call on Susan for help. “Susan was such a successful principal that she just oozed confidence. We knew that if she told us how to handle something that it had to be right. She was a great safety net for me the first year at Laurin.”

She described some of the other relationships she established during her first year as a principal. “Without some of these folks, I would have been back in the classroom in record time!” she told me. Nora talked about Dave Dejardi, her assistant principal who had been in his role for more than a dozen years. She described Dave as “a little bit obsessive-compulsive.” Dave, according to Nora, had once been an unsuccessful high school principal, but served for less than a year before being demoted back to an assistant’s position. Nora surmised that his abrasiveness towards staff was probably what had kept him from being successful as a principal, and she learned from that. “I learned to deal with the mistakes that teachers make, but to never confuse their behavior with the

person. Dave can't do that, but he is a great taskmaster," she told me. Nora gave Dave credit for teaching her the tasks associated with the principalship and how to complete them. Because he was so good at that role, she was free to function as an instructional leader. "Dave counted books, unloaded the buses, and filled out all of the paperwork while I visited classrooms. The teachers understood that my role was to be the instructional leader. That helped a lot."

Nora did share some of the more trying times of her principal socialization experience. She told me that:

When I showed up at Laurin as principal, so did an additional 275 kids. Redistricting had changed everything. The building was expanded and remodeled to accommodate the extra students, more staff was hired, the principal was new; it was a real challenge for the veteran teachers. Someone once told me that 'demography is destiny' and I found that to be true my first year at Laurin. The school went from being a middle class, average performing school to a low wealth, low performing school overnight. The students we got from the poorer parts of our new district brought their problems and low achievement with them to Laurin. During that first year, it was rare to complete a day without a fight on campus. We led the district in middle school suspensions and to make it worse, the day before school started, they cut one of the two assistant principal positions. It was just Dave and me to start the year. For a while there, I knew what people meant when they talked about a living hell. I was pretty sure I had died and gone there.

When I asked how she managed to survive that first year, she again cited the importance of establishing key relationships. "Make friends quickly with the treasurer, the data manager, the lead counselor, and your secretary. Those people will make you or they will break you," she told me. When I probed she told me that she had "happened upon" those relationships during her first year at

Laurin Middle School. “When they sent me to Wintergreen, though, I immediately sought those stakeholders out; it was ‘bonding by design!’”

When I asked Nora about her impressions of how she had performed her first year, her response was mixed. She told me:

I think I did okay. I don’t think that the staff or students ever had the impression that I didn’t know what I was doing, even though I was scared to death. On the inside I felt like it was a living hell. There were fights every day, I had a large number of pregnant eighth graders, benchmark scores were always low and I was scared to death that our achievement would be terrible. I only had one assistant principal so I did more discipline than I intended to do. I bitched at the central office during the day because I felt as if they needed to give our school more support, such as a second assistant principal. At night I went home and bitched to my husband who was a patient, gracious listener. But, I never bitched at school. To everyone there I just sort of exuded this, “it’s a great day and life is getting better” attitude. By the end of that first year, they seemed to actually believe that Laurin Middle really was a pretty good place. I really had a great staff. They didn’t complain either and the thing I admired about them most was that as bad as things got, they never blamed the kids. The community was poor, but very supportive. Laurin Middle School taught me that poor parents love and care for their children absolutely as much as rich parents care for theirs. It was a tough situation, but we did all we could to make it better.

I asked several teachers who were on staff at Laurin Middle during Nora’s first year to assess her performance as a first year principal. One of them responded, “Well, it wasn’t her first year as a principal, it was just her first year here.” When I corrected him he was astounded. “That is unbelievable. She was so good, so confident that first year. Most of us just assumed she was a veteran principal!” Another of Nora’s teachers during her socialization experience at Laurin Middle School corroborated this account. “First year? I don’t believe it.

She performed like a veteran. We were used to Jeff and his structure, but she seemed even more organized than he had been. She was a pro already.” When I approached one of the younger male guidance counselors who had been there during Nora’s initial principal socialization he gushed her praises. He shared that:

Mrs. Thayer was tremendous! She was professional; very structured, but also very caring. She knew curriculum and good teaching. She emphasized good instruction and had high expectations for staff and students. Besides all that, she was extremely pretty too. Most of us male teachers had crushes, but please don’t tell her I said that.

When I shared his assessment of her performance and personality with her, Nora blushed. “I guess we’re rarely aware of the impression that we are making, but at least he thought I was very professional too,” she laughed.

Nora and I discussed what the principalship means to her now and what it meant then. She was very candid.

Back then, during my first year at Laurin, it meant survival. I reasoned that if I could survive that year, I could survive anything. By nature, I am a pretty quiet person. I am not an extrovert. I have to force myself to do extroverted things when the job calls for it so being that assertive my first year was just survival mode. I made meaning of the principalship then, pretty much the same way I do now. I think it is the key position in education. The principal sets the tone for the school environment. Ultimately, whether or not children are successful in life is due in large part to how the principal approaches the job. I’ve always believed that principals and schools should be student centered. As long as I keep that as my compass, then this position is the only one that I want because I know that I have a direct impact on how young lives will turn out. The

principalship means a lot of other things too. That first year I rarely saw my children. They were in middle school and high school then so generally they were in the bed when I left for work and out with friends or already in the bed when I came home. They and my husband were extremely supportive and rarely made me feel guilty, but the principalship means you give up some of your personal life. You sacrifice that for the kids you serve at school. My own children used to call it "Mom's missionary work." In a way, they were right. It does require dedication, sacrifice and service to others. No one will get rich being the principal so it must be the service that drives us to continue.

Nora went on to tell me that she did think she made a positive impact on children and teachers during her first year at Laurin Middle School and to that extent she thought the principalship was well worthwhile. "If I can help make a child a better person, or if I can help make a teacher a better person, then the principalship is worth it. I see its value in the impact that principals have on peoples' lives," Nora told me. It was obvious that Nora had struggled, as all new principals do, during her first year at Laurin Middle School. However, it was just as obvious that her principal socialization experience was a success. The faculty, students, community, and her principal colleagues, accepted her leadership and supported her in the new role. I asked her share whether or not the principalship still made sense to her as a veteran at her second school. She responded:

Oh yes, more than ever! The role of the principal as instructional leader is increasing every day while the expectation that we will only serve as building managers is fading away. With increased accountability for student achievement because of No Child Left Behind, that is a good thing. I welcome it. I have long thought that the principal should be just that; the principal teacher in the building. Now I have the opportunity to teach my teachers how to get these kids ready for the 21st century. We

have to recognize that we can no longer teach content, even though that's what we are tested on every year. Our bigger role is to teach learning. If we teach children to become better, lifelong learners, then they truly will be successful.

I concluded the last interview with a question about what the future holds for Nora Thayer as principal and for her personal life. She replied:

I'm not sure. I don't have time to ponder today let alone the future (laughs). I would have to say though that I am content to be a principal. I believe in "the calling" and this is mine. It is where I am most comfortable. It is where I can serve best. I have no desire to go to the central office. Unlike you and Lillie, I never want to be a superintendent (laughs). There are about ten good years left in me I think, and then maybe I will teach principalship courses at UNCG or one of the other schools. I will always feel an obligation to touch the lives of children and that may be the best outlet for me. Personally, after I am done with this, I want to cut back, take time to be a mother, or grandmother by then I guess (laughs) and a wife. My husband has been extremely patient with my career. I'd like to give him some of my time after retirement. Until then, though, I will always be a principal.

Case Summary and Conclusions

Nora Thayer's principal socialization experience at Laurin Middle School was by all accounts, a success. Her teachers in that setting spoke highly of her leadership. Some did not even realize that it was her rookie year as a building level leader. Her colleagues supported her with professional advice and personal comfort when she needed it. She had the support of her husband and children and her efforts to build a student centered school were applauded by her superiors, parents, colleagues, and her teachers. Nora's efforts at Laurin Middle School were rewarded with increased student achievement, the admiration of her

teachers, and the praise of her immediate supervisor who told me, “I wish all new principals were as professional and as dedicated as Nora was. What a pleasure to work with her!”

One striking commonality that Nora shared with the other participants in this study was the ineffectiveness of an “official mentor.” Though one was assigned to her when she was appointed principal, she never had any interaction with him. He never offered any form of support for learning the role, nor did he ever inquire as to how she was adjusting to the role. Like the other study participants, Nora had to develop and rely upon an informal network of colleagues and mentors to sustain her through her year of learning the principalship. She expressed gratitude to those people, and especially to Susan, her unofficial mentor who went out of her way to ensure Nora’s successful transition.

Just as Yolanda Reid had done, Nora too exhibited the three key characteristics described by Hausenson, Crow, and Sperry. She understood the context of the situation, she understood her self and her role, and she made her decisions within the framework of student-centeredness (*NASSP Bulletin*, 2000). Laurin Middle was actually a “new school” with a redesigned physical plant, and a larger and more diverse student population than it had been in previous years. Nora understood this and administered her school according to that knowledge. She recognized that her “calling” was to the school principalship and she continues to be the best possible principal she can be in order to honor that

calling. Finally, Nora understood very clearly that within the context of poverty, that all decisions must be student-centered. Not only did she define this context for all stakeholders in her school community, she also modeled it daily. She continues this practice at her new assignment, Wintergreen Middle School. If the case of Bob Perthlander is the “negative case” of principal socialization, then the case of Nora Thayer is the model case.

Setting and Background for Antonio Childs

The decision to include the case study of Antonio Childs in this qualitative research dissertation was made one evening in late December of 2005. Antonio and I were the first two principals to arrive at a going away dinner for Barbara Harvey, a friend, colleague, and mentor to several of the participants in this research. As we waited for the rest of the party to arrive, Antonio shared with me that Superintendent George Towery had just asked him to move from his post as principal at Northeast Directional High School to the largest high school in Wobegone County . I was not surprised. The rumor mill had been circulating for weeks that Antonio would be given what was considered the best principalship in the county. Not only was Directional High the highest performing school in the system, it was also less than 6% free-and-reduced lunch, and had an exceptional children’s population of less than 4%. I was envious and Antonio knew it. “Hey, I deserve this,” he said to me as we ordered drinks before the meal. Antonio continued:

I taught for twenty years. I was an assistant principal for another five. And I have been a principal for the last seven years at two of the lowest performing schools in Wobegone County. I have turned them both around and I only have a few years left before I call it a career. I have earned this position. Besides, under Janis (the former principal) the place has been going to hell in a hand basket. Dr. Towery wants me to get it back on track.

I nodded my agreement because I knew that what Antonio was saying was true. He had a reputation among his colleagues and among teachers in the system that his style of management was a top-down, take-no-prisoners, my-way-or-the-highway approach. Although it seemed to have served him well in terms of increasing student achievement, he had made more enemies than allies in his previous principalships. Still, in each of his last two schools student achievement had increased, dropouts were down, and discipline problems were rare. I was intrigued by the dichotomy drawn between his approach to leadership and the impact that it had on the faculties who had served him. I saw an opportunity to study a late career veteran principal in a unique socialization experience. After dinner I informally explained the project to Antonio and asked him if he would mind keeping a daily or weekly journal as he made the post-Christmas transition to his new school. He agreed and I told him I would contact him in the spring after the project had received approval from my committee and the university. I was excited that I had access to a real-time socialization experience.

This case study of Antonio Childs is unique from the other case studies. In those cases the socialization occurred when participants became new principals.

The stages of socialization and outcomes of socialization for new principals are decidedly different than for mid-career principals. Often new principals expend much energy during the socialization process just trying to survive as they learn the role. Such is not the case for mid-career socialization experiences.

Matthews and Crow speak to the differences in these two distinct types of socialization:

Mid-career is a confusing concept because it does not necessarily mean the same as midlife. A more useful definition of mid-career is the period occurring during one's work in an occupational (career) role after one feels established and has achieved perceived mastery and prior to the commencement of the disengagement process. For principals, this can occur any time after the major tasks of the role are mastered; there is no set time according to the findings of Parkay and Hall in 1992. (2003)

In the case of Antonio Childs, the principal had obviously mastered the major tasks of the role, even to the extent that he was recognized by the superintendent as the best high school principal to assume the leadership of the largest high school in the county.

Matthews and Crow continue their explanation of mid-career principal socialization on page 290. They write:

Mid-career also involves a variety of different types of changes. One way to categorize these changes is in terms of inter-role and intra-role career transitions. Inter-role transitions involve such changes as entry/reentry to a job or organization or department, movement to a new profession, or exit. Intra-role transitions include changes in role conception by remaining in the same role, expanding to additional roles, and responding to changes in role, career, and life stage. The most obvious inter-role transitions for principals involve changing schools or districts. (2003)

Antonio Childs presents an excellent opportunity to study the mid-career socialization of a principal experiencing an inter-role transition. This is the major reason that I chose to include this case study in the research presented here.

Prior to assuming the principalship at Directional High School in January of 2006, Antonio Childs had already successfully served as the principal of the smallest high school in the district, Southern Directional High School, and at one of the lower performing schools, Northeastern Directional High School. Both schools were rural with a strong emphasis on curricula which best served the needs of a rural population. Course offerings at both schools heavily emphasized agriculture, horticulture, and automobile mechanics classes. In both settings, Antonio Childs had been quite successful in increasing the academic achievement in the core curricula including math, science, English, and social studies. Free-and-reduced-lunch populations at both of his previous high schools made up a large percentage of the student body. Volunteerism at both of the schools was low and college acceptance averaged from 45%-55% for the graduating seniors at both schools (*School Improvement Plan, 2004*).

Directional High School was very different from Antonio's previous leadership posts. In 2006 Directional High School in Wobegone County had 2204 students in grades 9-12. The faculty stood at 154 excluding assistants and support positions. The administrative staff included four full time assistant principals in addition to the principal. College acceptance for the graduating

class averaged 93% and less than 6% of the students received free-and-reduced-lunch. Even fewer students, 4%, were identified as students with disabilities. The racial and ethnic composition of the student body included 88% white students, 11% African American students, and 1% were categorized as Asian, Indian, or Hispanic. The per capita income for families of Directional High students was the highest in the county and among the highest in the entire state. Volunteerism at Directional High was the highest in the county for the five years preceding Antonio's appointment there as principal. The SAT average for the school was the second highest in the county, exceeded only by the Early College High School at Wobegone College, and the composite of student achievement was the highest among all high schools in the system. Directional High led the school system in performance on the tenth grade writing test, in attendance, dropout rate, graduation rate, and rate of turnover (*School Improvement Plan*, 2004). In short, Directional High could perhaps be best described as rich, non-diverse, and suburban. The vast majority of its students could be described as the children of privilege.

Narrative Case of Antonio Childs

With his appointment to lead the largest, richest high school in Wobegone County Schools, Antonio Childs felt that his life had come full circle. Antonio's life started out in relative poverty. His father, a foundry worker and the breadwinner in the family, was often out of work due to the instability in the steel

market. From time to time they lived in regular rental housing, but most often had to live in the government subsidized project housing that was available in the greater Cincinnati area. Antonio often felt the painful bite of his poverty at the hands of teachers who discriminated against him and other poor children in the classrooms of the elementary schools he attended. Throughout the data gathering interviews I conducted with Antonio Childs for this study, he often referred to his poverty as the defining factor in his life. He told me:

Without the experience of growing up poor, I doubt seriously that I would ever have been as motivated as I am to succeed. Poverty was a slap in the face of my childhood. There were adults in my life, teachers as well as others, who obviously discriminated against me simply because I was poor. Adults often counseled me to set my sights lower than other children. They did not expect much of me and so I did not deliver much in return. In high school however, I did become motivated to be the best that I could be, to succeed in life, to come back home and say to them, 'Hey look, little poor Antonio has done pretty good in his life.' That poverty experience still drives me to be the absolute best that I can be because that is what success is for me. If I die having done more things better than the teachers who discouraged me because I was poor, then that will be the best revenge for their discrimination against me as a child.

Obviously Antonio Childs still harbors some bitterness towards the adults responsible for the scars of his childhood.

Antonio had long sought the principalship of Directional High School in Wobegone County. "I wanted it a long time ago," he told me. Antonio continued:

The superintendent told me before that he liked the match he had there and since she was my sponsor to come to Wobegone County in the first place, I respected that. I did not want her to be moved before she was ready, but I was salivating for the chance to lead the largest high school in our system long before he sent me to Directional High.

Directional High School was the object of Antonio's professional ambitions from the time of his first appointment as a school leader:

Everything I did at the first two schools was so I could eventually take over at Directional High. I have thought of it as my destiny for a long time. Of course he put Janis there for a little over a year before me.

Antonio's determination to lead what he perceived to be the best high school in the county had driven him to the point of obsession with creating success wherever he went. At his two previous high schools he successfully implemented strong shifts in the instructional programs that almost immediately led to increases in student achievement. Dropouts fell and the graduation rates rose at his two previous posts. While Antonio was generally popular with students and with most parents, the turnover rates at his schools had increased for each of his first three years on the job. I asked Antonio for an explanation and he told me that it was the "implementation dip" for all of the new programs and expectations that he had for "sorry teachers who don't care about kids."

Antonio describes his style of leadership as "unabashedly autocratic." "There can only be one person in charge," he told me, "and that is the principal. I have the most to lose so I have the most to say in all situations." I asked if that approach to leadership had either engendered him or hurt him with his staff at Directional High. Again, he was very direct in his response to me:

Actually, it has done a little of both. Believe it or not, in this age of feel-good leadership, there are still people out there who want a strong leader who will tell them what to do. Schools are like most organizations, they are hierarchal. I know that top-down management is not very popular with a lot of people these days, but I simply don't have time to call half a dozen leadership team meetings and get 'buy-in' for every big decision I have to make. With accountability as it is today, my focus is on getting results now. My teachers at Directional High learned very quickly that I would make the hard choices to make sure that the school focused on student achievement. Some of those choices have not made me very popular with some of the staff, but others appreciate the leadership.

I asked Antonio to share some examples of such "hard choices" that may have caused a negative perception of him with some of his faculty members. He told me that he believes that only certified teachers should be teaching in any school and that at Directional High, one of the first things he did was to begin informing all lateral entry teachers that he would not be recommending them for contract renewal at the end of the year. In his first year there, he found that his predecessor, who served the school for less than two years, had hired more than a dozen lateral entry teachers, all of whom were still working on certification and licensure. He shared that he told them all at the beginning of the second semester that he would not be renewing their contracts. I wondered about how he would replace so many teachers during a national, as well as local, shortage of teachers. Antonio responded, "Are you kidding me? This is the best school in the county. I have ten applications for every vacancy. It wasn't a problem at all. Everybody wants to teach at Directional High."

I explained to Antonio that the principal socialization period should result in professional learning and asked him what he had learned from his socialization experience at Directional High. He felt that he had learned little more than the uniqueness of the setting and that having been an experienced principal, there was little he needed to know. Antonio told me:

Well, I guess I learned a few things, but mostly it was about the facility and some of the people in the community. I have been the new principal several times before and I learned a long time ago that the quickest way to adjust to a new setting is to have them adjust to me. Once the staff and students realize that it truly is my vision and mission that they have to understand and implement, they either get on board or they get out of the way. I value students far more than the adults in the building and I think that I have to take the shortest path to making sure that they are all getting the best possible education. The only way I know to measure that is through student achievement. That probably hasn't endeared me to a lot of people, but those who do agree with my approach are loyal to a fault. It has served me well. Every school I have ever led has improved student achievement very quickly. I'm sure I made a lot of people mad along the way, but if kids are learning, I sleep well at night anyway.

I pressed Antonio for details about his socialization experience. He responded,

I disagree with your definition of socialization. I define it as a "period of adjustment", not necessarily just as "professional learning." To that extent, it went very well at Directional High. The community adjusted to my expectations in record time.

I asked Antonio to share with me any particular successes or challenges that he faced during his socialization period at Directional High. He told me about putting his own "physical signature" on the campus as soon as possible. "New principals are all about change," he told me, "I wanted to make an obvious

change up front so I added lighting in some areas of the building and had all of the common areas painted a bright white. It looked great; better than before.”

Antonio felt that the more he could change the campus physically, the quicker he would be recognized as the authority on campus. “I moved all of the assistant principals’ offices too, and several teachers’ classrooms as well. It is a quick, effective method for setting a leadership tone.”

During my research at Directional High, I spent quite a bit of time with some of Antonio’s staff who were willing to share their thoughts about his transition to the principalship of their school. Some of the teachers were complimentary, but most felt that he brought in an unwarranted hierarchal style of leadership. I spoke first with Bonnie Kay (pseudonym), a second year assistant principal who served with Antonio for a year-and-a-half. Bonnie was recently promoted to a principalship, against Antonio’s advice and so felt free to share her experiences with me. She told me about his first weeks there:

Antonio started in January, just after the first semester was over. I knew his reputation for shaking things up and for authoritarian control. The reputation was deserved. At his very first administrative team meeting, he set the tone with us very quickly. He asked me in that meeting who my teachers were with the highest and lowest achievement scores. He also asked me to name the five lowest and highest performing students on EOCs in my grade level. Of course I couldn’t give him the exact answers so he humiliated me and embarrassed me in front of the other assistant principals. I didn’t know whether to cry or curse so I just kept silent. He then did similar things to the other assistants and at least I didn’t have to feel alone in his attack on us. It did not build morale among the administrative team, I can tell you that. It did however, set the tone. We all knew without a doubt who was in charge and that his expectations of our performance could never be met. He harangued us regularly, several times a week and, occasionally would give us a little praise when

something good had happened, but most of the time he told us that whatever we had done right was because of something he had done to help us. I went through his socialization period, which was about a year-and-a-half, just shell-shocked. I was afraid to speak up in administrative meetings and avoided him whenever I could. The other assistants did pretty much the same thing. It was very clear that we were there to serve him, whatever he needed and whenever he needed us. We were expected to drop all personal plans if he wanted us to work extra hours or cover a game for him or something. His approach to building level leadership was to intimidate those who worked for him. The only people he did not try to intentionally intimidate seemed to be the students. He got along fine with most of them.

I asked the other members of Antonio's administrative team what their impressions were of him during his socialization period. Two of them, both white males in their first years as school administrators at any level, decided not to participate in the study even though I guaranteed their anonymity. Both told me that they did not feel experienced enough to make any judgments about their new principal's socialization experience. Additionally, both of them were also experiencing assistant principal socialization for the first time and felt that their own professional learning might compromise their impressions of Antonio's transition to the position.

Antonio's fourth assistant principal, an African-American male with many years of experience at Directional High, agreed to participate in the study. Russell Stuckey (pseudonym) shared his perceptions of Antonio's socialization freely. "I'm retiring at the end of the first semester next fall, so what do I have to lose?" he told me.

I did not sense the same level of bitterness in Russell's account of Antonio's socialization experience as I had with Bonnie Kay's story. He shared that in many ways he felt that Antonio brought a level of structure and organization to the school that was missing during the eighteen month tenure of his predecessor, Janis Walter (pseudonym). According to Russell, Janis had nearly ruined a very high functioning staff. He told me that she was busy writing her dissertation for her doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill during her first year there and that it was rare to find her outside of her office. "She never left that little office back there," he told me. "She was always too busy with getting the next chapter finished to get out into the school." He insisted that of the more than 150 teachers on her staff, that probably more than half of them had never had a one-on-one conversation with her during her stint as principal. His characterization of her leadership style was that she was "very good at delegating, but pretty rotten at accountability." Russell went on to tell me that under her leadership suspensions increased, the dropout rate increased, enrollment in Advanced Placement classes fell, and the collegiality of the staff was compromised. His account continued:

Janis kept control through a few spies she had on the faculty. They kept her informed and generally, whatever they advised she agreed with. That alienated a lot of other teachers. It was obvious the school was declining under her leadership. When we heard that Antonio Childs was going to be the new principal here after she left mid-year, there were mixed reactions. I for one was very glad because I knew he had a reputation for bringing order and structure to a school. We really needed that and I was looking forward to him coming. A lot of teachers though, and Mrs. Kay, believed

all the bad things they had heard. I think they just made up their minds not to like him even before he got here.

Russell went on to point out that Antonio made some very quick changes in the physical environment at Directional High School. He told me about the new lighting and the painting that Antonio ordered because he wanted to brighten up the place. He also told me about the changes in office space and classrooms that Antonio made almost immediately upon his arrival at Directional High:

Yeah, a lot of people got mad about moving their offices and classrooms in the middle of the year and I guess I can understand that. It wasn't easy to do and they had to come in on the weekend to make sure everything got moved to the right place. Some of the other assistant principals, especially Mrs. Kay, were upset that he moved us as well and I thought one of the counselors was just going to quit. Everyone was saying he just wanted to show that he was in control and I guess there was an element of truth to that. But, with all of those kinds of moves Mr. Childs was able to explain to all of us how it had a direct impact on student achievement. He does not compromise when it comes to providing the best learning environment for students and he is not the type to wait until the end of the school year to move folks around if he thinks it is what is best for kids. I think he has a lot of courage.

I decided to share some of these findings with Antonio in order to gain his perspective on how he was received. I asked him to bring his journal entries to the second and third interviews so that he could share what his thoughts were at the time of his socialization experience. When I told him that some of his staff

had been upset at the moves he made upon his arrival he turned to those days in his journal and shared the entries with me. On January 12, 2004 Antonio wrote:

I made a lot of people mad today. I am moving the APs offices, the counselors, and several teachers. The physical layout just doesn't make sense. We have ninth graders walking back and forth across this huge campus several times per day and they are too immature to deal with such transition. I want the counselors and grade level assistant principals in the parts of the building with the students they serve so I am moving them too. Bonnie Kay is furious with me and I think she is probably talking about my decisions with some staff members. I am going to talk with her about that tomorrow. If it is true and it doesn't stop, she can kiss her sweet butt good-bye. Mrs. Catsworth (pseudonym) who just transferred here from West Pointe High is sucking up to me. She told me how much she hated her last principal and how he refused to let her teach geometry because she was only certified to teach through ninth grade. She really tried to butter me up by telling me how much she liked and trusted me. That's not going to last long because if Randy didn't let her teach upper classmen because of her certification then I'm not going to either. I already have her penciled in for tech math on next year's schedule. I really hate people who try to schmooze me. Does she think I am an idiot? Oh well, I knew that my decision would make some people mad, but it is what is best for students. Besides, it is good for me to make these moves now when I am brand new. That is the best time to implement unpopular changes. It sends a strong message to them.

One of the questions for the second narrative interview asks the participants to recreate a day in their lives as principals. In addition to Antonio's first person answer to this question, I was also able to observe him directly in the setting since I had access to him and his school during his socialization experience at Directional High School. What I found led me to conclude that Antonio Childs truly is driven to provide the best education possible to all of his students. Additionally, he has a tremendous rapport with impoverished students

and especially with those teachers willing to go the extra mile for that particular demographic.

Antonio's day starts at approximately 6:50 AM when he arrives at the school. He is not a coffee drinker, but he does have one vice that very nearly cost him his life two years earlier. He is an incessant smoker. In 2002, while still at Northeastern Directional High School, Antonio suffered a heart attack one Sunday afternoon while preparing summative conference materials for observations he had just completed on a group of his teachers. Before he would allow his wife, Linda, to drive him to the hospital, he made sure he had his briefcase with the observations inside. "I told her that it was probably just indigestion, but if it was something worse and they kept me, that I needed to get the evaluations finished so the summative conferences could be held," he told me. Antonio went on to share that as they pulled into the parking lot of Moses Cone Hospital that he quickly smoked another cigarette. "I had a feeling it would be my last for a while," he chuckled. Once inside and the tests were run, his fears were confirmed, Antonio had suffered a heart attack. His doctor made him take six weeks off, two of which were spent in the hospital, and made him swear to quit smoking. "I'm good at quitting," Antonio laughed, "it's just staying quit that is a challenge." At 7:00 AM he told me he was going to go across the street, away from the school, to have a smoke and invited me to come along. I declined and instead went to the lounge for a cup of coffee. This gave me the opportunity

to ask the custodial staff, as well as a few other early arrivals, what they thought about how Antonio's transition was going and how he spent his day.

Geoffrey (pseudonym), a custodian, spoke candidly:

That man is here from sun-up until midnight. We can't get him to go home and believe me this place better be clean all the time. He is the toughest principal I have ever worked for. He checks our areas several times per day and he has a quick temper, so I'm going to leave now and get my job done before he comes back across the street.

At about 7:15 Mrs. Catsworth, one of my own former teachers who had transferred to Directional High at the end of the previous year came into the lounge. She seemed shocked to find me there, but feigned cordiality. I asked her how she felt that Antonio was spending his first days at Directional High. She hesitated to respond, but then did give me an answer. She stated:

I can tell you this; he is never in his office. That man is in and out of my classroom several times per day, but he is pretty nice when he comes in. He seems to really like my lowest level class and they have pretty good relationship with him too. I think he likes poor kids or something. He's going to let me teach AP Statistics next year so I like him a lot.

I smiled at Mrs. Catsworth's last statement because I had read what Antonio had written in his journal about moving her to Tech Math the next year due to her lack of credentials to teach beyond the ninth grade. She was not going to like Antonio anymore than she liked me.

At around 7:45 I accompanied Antonio on his morning rounds of the building. He checked every bathroom, every classroom, the cafeteria, every

hallway, the parking lot, and the grounds for cleanliness. His walkie-talkie chirped constantly with static as he called first one custodian and then another to clean an area that he found less than acceptable. “Students deserve a clean school,” he told me. “How could anybody be expected to learn in filth?” I stayed with Antonio on his rounds as he greeted nearly all of his 154 teachers and any support staff that he happened to run into. He seemed especially close to two media specialists. I asked him about this relationship, assuming that he knew them before coming to Directional High. Antonio responded:

Nope, I had never met them, but I quickly made them my friends. It was obvious to me in the very first faculty meeting that these two women are the matriarchs of this faculty, even though one of them is not even forty years old yet. They have a lot of ethos and tons of influence with the teachers. I have to have them on my side. You see this is where being an experienced principal comes in handy when you make a move like this. I know that it is essential for me to identify the key players immediately and get them to align with my goals and vision and methods. One of these ladies chairs the leadership team. The other is the building representative for NCAE. They have a lot of power and I can either use them to my advantage or be run out by them. I choose to use them to my advantage.

In order to verify his claim that he knew immediately that these two were key players on the staff, I asked to see his journal for the first week of his principalship. There it was in his own handwriting at the end of his second day at Directional High, “Mrs. Sims (pseudonym) and Mrs. Weller (pseudonym) both media specialist and high priestesses – get them on my team pronto!” Antonio laughed when I told him what I was looking for. “You didn’t believe me, huh?” he chuckled. I asked him how he would handle the situation if they did not align with

his vision and methods. He indicated that he was sure he could keep them on his side, but that if it did not work out, he would do whatever was necessary to get them moved to another school. "It is my survival here that is in the best interest of these students," he told me with conviction. "We can always find more media specialists, but I'm hard to replace. If this school didn't need me, Dr. Towery wouldn't have sent me here."

Antonio and I spent the rest of the morning visiting classrooms. It was very obvious which teachers were comfortable with him and which were not. Generally, the newer, younger teachers seemed more at ease with him in their classrooms. The older teachers seemed stiff, uncomfortable, and sometimes resentful that he was in their rooms. For example, we visited the classroom of an Advanced Placement English teacher who has more than twenty years of experience, all spent in the same classroom at Directional High School. As we walked in and sat quietly in the back of her classroom she looked up from her desk and announced to the class, "Well, look, Mr. Childs is back with us today. Isn't it nice he comes so often? I don't know when we have had such support." Her voice fairly rang with sarcasm which was apparent not only to me as an outside observer, but also to her students who giggled cautiously at the sarcastic remark. Antonio pulled a notepad from his breast pocket and scratched out a note to her which read, "See me in my office during your planning period today. I do not appreciate the sarcastic tone you used to describe my visit." He handed it

to her as we left the classroom. Her face flushed red with either embarrassment or anger, or perhaps a touch of both.

Lunch periods lasted for more than two-and-one-half hours. “We are an isolated school with no place for seniors to go to lunch off campus. All 2300 of them eat here and it takes a long time,” he informed me. During each lunch period Antonio made the rounds of the cafeteria greeting students, teachers, and cafeteria workers. I heard him compliment the cafeteria staff several times on the quality of their food and service. Several times he singled out students for a private conversation and then handed them lunch money very discreetly. “It doesn’t take long to see who the poor kids are, does it?” he asked me. One group of seniors protested fairly loudly when he took up his position near their table at the end fourth lunch. “I can’t believe he is going to be in here everyday watching us like babies!” one of them said. Antonio did not ignore the comment. He approached the student and reprimanded him firmly. “That table is notorious for leaving their trays and expecting our cafeteria workers to clean up after them,” he told me. “Most principals would probably just ignore that young man’s comment,” he shared, “but I believe that every time I let something like that go, that it hurts the principalship: the office of the principal. That can’t happen.”

Antonio spent the rest of the afternoon in classrooms and in conferences with teachers and his assistant principals. I observed each conference. In most cases he was reprimanding his staff members, professionally, yet firmly, for one indiscretion or another. Most of those conversations were about pedagogical

issues. Antonio believes very strongly in managed instruction as a key to improving student achievement. “If all of my teachers are doing what I want them to be doing, then our test scores will go up,” he told me. It was obvious that most of these staff members were not used to having such a hands-on principal, yet they both respected his knowledge and feared his presence in their school. “I was afraid he was going to fire me today,” one young teacher whispered to me as she left the office just after Antonio had “stepped across the street” for an afternoon cigarette.

At the end of the school day Antonio met with several different parents, all concerned about his announced plans to increase the enrollment of low performing students in Advanced Placement classes. Their complaints were all the same, “if you allow these slower kids in my child’s class, then my child’s learning will be slowed down.” Antonio seemed to enjoy the skirmishes with them. When those conferences ended he told me, “You use AP to increase rigor too, so you know what I am talking about. These rich, yuppie parents up here just don’t want their privileged kids to have to sit in class with poor kids.” His sense of calling to serve impoverished children was obvious.

Our third narrative interview occurred approximately six months after Antonio Childs had assumed the office of principal at Directional High School. I asked him to tell me what his greatest challenges and successes had been to that point and I asked him to share anything he had learned. Antonio told me

that his greatest challenge in adapting to the school was in accepting the community. Antonio told me:

I think they have been quicker to accept me, than I have been to accept them. I spend a lot of my time with the rich wives of rich husbands whose rich children are somehow being mistreated here. I resent that. You would not believe how many conferences I have had with yuppie parents in the last six months over what lunch period their children have been assigned. I have to keep reminding myself that rich kids deserve my attention too. I can't resent them for their privileged status anymore than I was resented because I was poor. That is tough learning for me. I have never been in a rich school before and it is really difficult for me to have patience with the pervasive sense of entitlement in this community. Still, they seem to trust my leadership and I am learning that it is my job to advocate for all of them, not just the poor kids that I identify with so strongly. I think I have to admit to myself that I am guilty of some reverse discrimination here. I'm still working on that.

I asked if he had written anything in his journal about this type of personal learning. He retrieved the journal, turned to the entry for October 6, 2005 and handed it to me. He had written on that date:

I talked with Jimmy Conyers (pseudonym) today. He was agitated with me. Nope, more than agitated, he was depressed and I sensed that I was responsible. I asked him to come to my office and he protested that he had not done anything wrong. I tried to tell him that I wasn't demanding that he come in to talk, that I was inviting him because I sensed some tension between us. He told me that he didn't want to talk to me because he knows how much I hate rich kids. He told me he couldn't help he was rich anymore than I could help that I was poor when I was a child. It wasn't anger that I noticed, it was sadness. He was right and it hurt me to learn that about myself. In trying to somehow right the wrongs done to me by teachers and principals as a child in Cincinnati, I was now holding the vast majority of rich, white kids at this school I am leading responsible for the injuries I endured as a poor kid growing up. I am discriminating against them by holding them more accountable for their behavior and performance than I do poor kids. That isn't justice and it is wrong. I am

going to build a relationship with Jimmy. I am going to show him that I do care about him as a person and that I don't hate him because he is rich.

Antonio shared that this had become his greatest personal and professional challenge in many years, to learn how to respect the rich children in his school.

When I asked him what he was learning he shared several things.

I know that rich parents actually do love their children just as much as poor parents do; sometimes more. I know that rich kids have problems too. Those problems are different from the problems that poor children have, but underneath the economic skin, they are all pretty much the same. They are all struggling with adolescence, their futures, relationships, finding their identities, peer pressure, academics. Yeah, underneath, they are all pretty much alike and I have to be a strong leader for all of them, not just my chosen few.

Antonio went on to tell me that this had been his greatest challenge and that once he was aware of it that he began to accept the community. He understood, he said, the tremendous political pressure that a privileged community can bring to bear on the principalship and on the person who holds the office. "I laugh them all off to anyone who asks," he told me, "but all those calls to the superintendent about my ignoring rich kids can take a toll. They haven't broken me with that pressure, but they certainly have taught me to bend."

Another important characteristic of Antonio Childs' socialization experience at Directional High School was his ability to gather support by speaking to groups of parents, teachers, and students. Whenever he made a controversial decision, such as the one that changed the school's dress code, he seemed always able to rally the support he needed for his leadership through his

talent for public speaking. He indicated that he feels this is a necessary attribute for any successful principal in today's environment of high stakes accountability. "When the results are in, or when you have made everyone mad, you better be able to clearly and persuasively articulate your position. I could not do that without the experiences I had as a college debater and as a coach. That ability has served me well as a principal," he told me.

I concluded my interviews of Antonio Childs by asking him what sense his socialization experience made to him now and how it impacted his plans for the future. He replied:

You know Randy, when you started this thing and I was just being appointed to Directional High, I told you that I had already been through this type of transition and I think I may have told you that there wasn't much for me to learn from my socialization experience here. I even told you that socialization was more about the school adjusting to me than me adjusting to it. I just want you to know that when I am wrong, I can admit it (laughs). I have never been more wrong about anything in my life. This school is a huge challenge. It isn't easier because the kids are richer. It is tremendously difficult to find any way for them to improve achievement because they were already high performing. I have learned that it isn't always better at the "best" schools in the system. I can tell you that I have learned a lot about myself and about all students too. I think one reason I wanted this job so badly was to exact a little revenge on the rich kids of the world because of the poverty I grew up in. You know what I am talking about because you grew up poor too. I've learned that they are people too and that it isn't my job to make them ashamed of being rich. It's just as okay to be rich as it is to be poor. Tough, tough lessons for me, but I have learned them. I think this school and this community have taught me some things about the principalship that I never knew before. My autocratic style of leadership isn't quite as effective here as it was at the other schools I have led. I have had to learn compromise and real empowerment of teachers and parents. It is tough for an old guy like me to learn, but I am trying and I will continue to try until I have it right. I think I have turned the corner now. The school knows what to expect from me,

and I know what to expect from the school. That's a pretty good partnership.

I probed Antonio about his future plans, both personally and professionally. He shared:

Well, (laughs) I am older than dirt so retirement does come into play pretty soon now. My wife Linda is just getting into administration. She wants to be an assistant principal for a few more years and then call it quits. I think I will be here for four or five more years and then retire. If my heart holds out I would like to move back to Cincinnati when we are done here and maybe do a little part time teaching and some cooking. I love to cook. We are thinking about maybe running a little part time catering business after we retire. In all honesty though, I am not sure I can ever leave the schoolhouse completely. It is all I have ever wanted to do and it is the one thing I do well. Probably I'll make one too many trips across the street and this old ticker will stop someday, probably while I am chewing someone out.

Case Summary and Conclusions

Antonio Childs' principal socialization experience at Directional High School in Wobegone County Schools is unique among the cases presented in this study. Childs' socialization was a mid-career, inter-role transition from one school to another. While the other participants in this study were all first time principals, Antonio Childs was a seasoned veteran with several years of leadership in three different schools. Though all participants viewed their appointments to the principalships studied here as promotions and as good for their careers, Antonio's promotion to Directional High was viewed as an endorsement of his expertise in the position. He viewed it as the "crown jewel of my career; my crowning achievement."

Other differences in addition to level of experience include Antonio's attitude towards the socialization process itself. The other participants all seemed aware that their transitional periods would be full of opportunities to learn about the principalship, about leadership, about their schools and communities, and about themselves as professionals. Antonio Childs' attitude towards his socialization at Directional High was antithetical to this perspective. He indicated that he had already experienced principal socialization three times in his career and felt there was little more that he could expect to learn by beginning a stint as principal at a new school. While Bob, Yolanda, and Nora all indicated that they began learning immediately, Antonio concluded that only after six months at Directional High School.

The teachers and staff at Directional High were integrally involved in Antonio's socialization experience there. Though many feared him because of his harsh reputation for top-down management, they helped him to learn the value of empowering teachers and staff. Antonio came to the realization of their value deep into the socialization experience and eventually honored the contributions that they made to his own professional learning. By his own admission the staff and parents of the Directional High community helped Antonio to understand the context of the situation, an essential characteristic for principal leadership. Prior to his socialization experience and during his first days at Directional High, Antonio had little understanding of the context of the situation in this unique community. He had never served as principal at a predominantly

rich, white, suburban, and high performing high school. With no experience in this type of community, he had no basis for understanding its context. It took the combined efforts of all stakeholders to bring him to a basic knowledge of the context of Directional High School.

Antonio Childs has always made decisions from the frame of student-centeredness, another important characteristic for successful principal socialization according to Hausenson, Crow, and Sperry (2003). His rabid-like focus on helping impoverished students overcome the deficits of their demography had served him well in his previous school leadership posts. At Directional High however, he found that he had to frame his decisions in the best interests of all students, not just the impoverished. This presented a steep learning curve for Antonio, but one that he continues to negotiate successfully.

Perhaps the most important thing that Antonio Childs learned during his principal socialization experience at Directional High was a better sense of self in the role of principal. A strong sense of self is another essential characteristic for successful socialization according to Hausenson, Crow and Sperry (2003). Antonio shared what he had written in his journal about the personal epiphany he experienced after being challenged by a rich student about his discrimination against children of privilege. While it was difficult for him to accept, Antonio did conclude that this young man was right and that he had not acted in the best interest of all students in his early months at Directional High. He told me:

I discriminated against rich kids. That student was absolutely right and as hard as it was to admit that I would discriminate against anyone, it opened my eyes to a part of my self that I had blocked out. I am a better principal now because of it.

In conclusion, the principal socialization experience of Antonio Childs at Directional High School must be seen as a successful one. Through this sometimes difficult mid-career, inter-role transition, Antonio Childs developed a realistic concept of self in the role of principal. In addition, he refined his student-centered approach to leadership by understanding that rich students deserved equal consideration in his decisions, something he had neglected prior to his service at Directional High. While teachers at the school still somewhat fear him, they have developed a deep respect for his instructional leadership and for his institutional, if not his moral authority to serve the school as principal.

CHAPTER VII

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CASE: SELF AS LEADER AND LEARNER

A comparison of my own initial principal socialization experience with that of the other participants allows me to more closely examine those elements which led most directly to the essential things that I learned as a new principal. Additionally, this comparison adds value to the study for other readers who may learn from my successes and failures as a first year principal.

Just as all of the other participants in this study whose biographical case studies have already been presented, I confronted two distinct issues with my initial appointment as a principal; principal succession and principal socialization. Ann Hart contextually defines “principal succession” as filling the role of the leader of the school immediately upon the departure of the preceding leader (1993). While principal socialization in new roles or new settings is the focus of this study, it is almost always complicated by the phenomenon of principal succession. Perhaps the only exception to this complication would be the appointment of a first-time principal to a newly created school. Andy Hargreaves discusses the impact of leadership succession on a school in the Winter, 2005 edition of *The Educational Forum*. He writes that:

One of the most significant events in the life of a school is a change in its leadership. Yet few things in education succeed less than leadership

succession. Failure to care for leadership succession is sometimes a result of manipulation or self-centeredness; but more often it is oversight, neglect, or the pressure of crisis management that are to blame. (p. 42)

In my principal socialization experience, as in the cases already studied, I succeeded a leader who was liked by some, disliked by others, effective in some areas of school management and ineffective in others, and who had profoundly, for good or bad, changed the culture of the school. Following anyone as the leader of an organization is always challenging, yet succeeding an experienced school principal is especially difficult for novice principals. Wobegone County Schools implemented a new principal induction program during the year that I began as a principal. While this program assisted me to some extent in learning some specifics about the job in Wobegone County, it did nothing to manage the process of principal succession. Hargreaves writes about the importance of a managed principal succession approach:

Succession is often mismanaged because basic assumptions about leadership are flawed. People tend to equate leadership with administratively senior individuals. Heroic leaders who turn around failing schools tend to stand out. Transformational leaders, rather than transformational leadership, get the greatest attention in leadership research. Principals' impact on their schools is often influenced greatly by their predecessors and successors. Whether or not they are aware of it, principals stand on the shoulders of those who went before them and lay the foundation for those who will follow. Sustainable, significant improvement depends on understanding and managing this process over time. Sustainable improvement and the contribution principals make must be measured over many years and several principals, not just one or two. What legacy do principals leave on their departure? What capacities have they created among students, community, and staff? How should others build on what has been achieved? These are the big questions of succession. (p.43)

Principal succession provides a real challenge for the new, uninitiated principal, yet it does not have to be quite so intimidating. School systems that plan for changes in leadership in a proactive way rather than merely reacting when principals leave, stand a far better chance of building capacity for all learners in their schools. Hargreaves continues:

One of the most significant factors affecting the life of a school and the sustainability of its improvement efforts, we discovered, is leadership succession. Our results showed that successful succession depends on sound planning, successful employment of outbound and inbound leadership knowledge, limiting the frequency of succession events, and preserving leadership in the face of movements toward more engagement. A central issue in leadership succession is whether a transition in leadership establishes continuity or provokes discontinuity – and to what extent this is deliberately planned. The intersection of these possibilities creates distinct types of leadership succession. Planned continuity occurs when the assignment of a new principal reflects a well-thought-out succession plan meant to sustain and build on the goals of a predecessor. Sustained school improvement over long periods and across multiple leaders requires carefully planned continuity. The most successful instances of planned continuity were found in three purpose-built innovative schools, where insiders were groomed to follow their leaders' footsteps. (p.45)

In my case, I learned very quickly about the challenges of following one's predecessor without planned continuity. As a newcomer to the ranks of Wobegone County Schools principals, and as a leader following someone who had served for only one year, my socialization experience provided a rich opportunity for personal and professional learning. Matthews and Crow indicate

that this a natural part of the socialization experience as a part of adult learning.

They identify this as “praxis” when they write:

Although the components of constructivism that we identified in the last section apply to all learning, there are some major differences between adult learning and child learning that are important to identify. One major difference that is especially relevant to our discussion of adult learning in schools is that adults are able to combine reflection and action, what Freire called *praxis*. They are able to consider the assumptions and values behind their actions and evaluate those actions. This quality is critical for building learning communities, such as schools, in which teachers and administrators reflect on their practice in ways to improve it. (2003, p. 46)

Reflective practice was something that I had done as an assistant principal so continuing that style of learning upon being named a principal was a natural assumption for me. I have kept journals and logs of my practice every day of my entire administrative career. This material has provided depth and breadth to the examination of my own case study and has greatly enhanced my learning as an administrator. My first year as a principal proved to be the most challenging time of my entire educational career. The incidents from that experience described in this autobiographical case study serve as anecdotal evidence to the various challenges and successes that I experienced during my principal socialization experience.

Setting and Background: Sharpe Pointe Middle School

Sharpe Pointe Middle School was, in July of 2002, the largest middle school in Wobegone County serving 1163 students. The student body was

composed of 81% white students, 18% African American students, and 1% of all other races. The school had 17 subgroups for purposes of determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the requirements of No Child Left Behind legislation. 21% of the student population was eligible for free-and-reduced lunch prices, and 11% were identified as Students With Disabilities (SWD). The most common exceptionality noted for this demographic was “Other Health Impaired – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.” The school was and still is the only feeder middle school for Sharpe Pointe High School which is physically located across a shared parking lot. Sharpe Pointe Middle School received students from three elementary schools serving grades K-5 and was built in 1975 when it opened as Sharpe Point Directional Junior High School. The county embraced the move to the middle school concept in the late 1970s and Sharpe Point became a middle school in 1979 (*School Improvement Plan*, 2002 p. 12).

The school is located in a suburban/rural community approximately six miles south of Sometowne. There is a small brick company and a foam manufacturer in the community, but no other industrial or retail business is located there. A small portion of the population continues to be involved in dairy farming and tobacco farming though their numbers are continually declining. The per capita income of this section of the county is the third highest among all school populations. Most families are supported by two incomes with their jobs based inside the Sometowne city limits. The community can best be described as upper-middle class and white collar (*School Improvement Plan*, 2002, p. 6).

Academically, Sharpe Pointe Middle School was performing well below its potential during the two years prior to my appointment as principal there. The school failed to make Expected Growth on the ABCs state accountability model for either year and had fallen over 7% in the same time period in its composite performance on all End-of-Grade (EOG) tests. Performance on the NC Writing Competency for 7th grade had fallen by more than 14% during the same two-year period and 6th grade reading scores were the fourth lowest among all Wobegone County middle schools. There were 90 teachers on staff and the turnover rate was at approximately 4% with 3-4 teachers leaving each year. Out-of-School Suspensions (OSS) were at 0% for the year prior to my appointment reflecting the previous principal's rejection of OSS as an effective disciplinary tool. The total number of referrals to the In-School-Suspension (ISS) program was the third highest among all Wobegone County Schools middle schools. Volunteerism had fallen to the lowest average number of volunteer hours per student for any middle school in the district, reflecting the disapproval of parents and the community of the administration of the school (*School Improvement Plan, 2002, p. 42*). In short, Sharpe Pointe Middle School was a school in rapid decline in the summer of 2002. The challenge of serving as its next principal was enormous.

Narrative Autobiographical Case for Randy Shaver

Early in the spring of 2002 I began to aggressively pursue principal vacancies throughout North Carolina. I was completing my third year as an

assistant principal at Sharpe Pointe High School in Wobegone County and had grown frustrated with the hiring and promotion practices of our school system. My principal, Barbara Harvey, had strongly encouraged me to seek a principalship and had endorsed my candidacy in letters she had sent to the superintendent and to the assistant superintendent for human resources. Although I had interviewed with the Wobegone County Schools human resources department, I had not been offered a principal's position and was discouraged about my chances of receiving a school leadership post inside the county. Though my principal, my instructional improvement officer, and the Executive Director of Human Resources had all praised my performance as an assistant principal, I still had not received any indication that I was a candidate for a position inside the school system. In early March I interviewed with the Pitt County Schools System and was offered the principalship of their largest high school. I informed my principal and the Wobegone County Schools Human Resources Department of my intention to accept this position and move to Greenville. They all indicated that they were sad to see me go, but wished me luck in my new position.

On the day that I was supposed to notify Pitt County Schools that I intended to accept their offer, I was attending a professional staff development session for assistant principals in Wobegone County Schools. The subject was "project charter leadership" and the instructor was our superintendent, Dr. George Towery. During the first hour of the session Dr. Towery made a

statement with which I disagreed openly. At the break, he called me over and I assumed, as did my colleagues, that he was going to chastise me for disagreeing with him. I approached him with a bit of trepidation, yet secure in the knowledge that Pitt County Schools had already offered me a principalship. To my great surprise Dr. Towery did not chastise me at all. On the contrary, he applauded my courage, my conviction, and my articulation of my argument. He then offered me a principalship in Wobegone County Schools telling me that he needed a strong, courageous principal for a particularly challenging school. I asked him to give me a couple of days to consider this since I already had been offered a high school in another county. He agreed and two days later I called him to happily accept whatever school he had in mind for me to lead. It was several weeks before I learned that my appointment would be to lead the middle school directly across the parking lot from the high school that I was presently serving. I was overjoyed at this announcement and eager to begin my career as a school principal.

The First Challenge: Breaking the News

Because Dr. Towery had directed me to report to Sharpe Pointe Middle School on June 1st, rather than on July 1st, the traditional date for beginning new assignments, I was anxious to inform the community and staff of my appointment. The superintendent was anxious for me to begin early because the principal I was replacing had accepted a position with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh in early March. After accepting that

position she began using annual leave days, sick days, and unpaid personal leave days in order to spend time in Raleigh on her own transition. Sharpe Pointe Middle School was left without a leader for the last three months of the school year and a bad situation was getting worse. I had been directed by the human resources department to keep my appointment confidential until after the Board of Education meeting in May during which my new assignment would be approved and announced. As anxious as I was to begin the transition to my new post, I had to remain patient.

Speculation about the identity of the new principal at the middle school was rampant in the community. Rumors abounded that a decision had been made and that the new principal would be either someone from outside the school system or one of the two current assistant principals at the school. The two assistants were Judith Ryals, a seasoned veteran with more than twenty years experience as an assistant principal, and Michael Whitman, a man who had served as a high school and middle school principal in other systems before joining Wobegone County Schools in the 2000-2001 school year. During that year Michael had served as the principal of Northwest Directional Middle School, but had been reassigned as an assistant principal at the end of his first year in that school. He was bitter about the demotion and had insisted to all who would listen that he had never been given an explanation as to why he was removed from the leadership of Northwest Directional Middle School. Michael had quickly ingratiated himself to the faculty of Sharpe Pointe Middle School and many of the

teachers there were confident that he would become their next principal. His leadership style was teacher-centered, rather than student-centered which made him immensely popular with the Sharpe Point Directional faculty.

Earlier in the year Michael and I had discussed student discipline as we both did bus duty one winter afternoon in our shared bus parking lot. He told me that he had proposed a “boot camp style” program for students sent to in-school suspension, but that he had gotten no support for it. “I would have them here at 5:00 AM and run their little asses until they dropped. I’d make them do push-ups until they puked!” he told me. “I’ll bet they would listen to their teachers then!” he exclaimed to me. I remember thinking at the time that his approach to discipline was probably the reason why he had been moved out of the principal’s office and demoted to assistant principal. Michael was in his early forties, was a good dresser with an athletic build and sported a full head of silver-black hair. The women on the staff at Sharpe Pointe Middle School were smitten with him and he was by far their favorite candidate for the post of principal. I knew I would have a difficult time winning their support since Michael and I shared neither physical nor philosophical characteristics.

As an assistant principal at Sharpe Pointe High School for the three previous years, the community knew me well. I was generally perceived as an administrator who held students and teachers accountable for achievement and behavior. The perception was also that I was able to get results from those who worked for me. Very few people included my name in the mix of possible

principals for Sharpe Point Middle. The day before I was to be officially announced I walked across the parking lot to the middle school to pick up some student records. While I was there I had to deal with Cynthia Maynard, the principal's secretary whose two sons I had often disciplined at the high school. Cynthia did not hide the fact that she did not like me. During our very stilted exchange about the student records she said to me:

You know, they are supposed to name our new principal tomorrow. I know it is going to be Mr. Whitman because a friend of mine in the personnel office downtown told me. She told me you had applied too, but I told her that they would never give it to you because you are too hard on teachers. I told her that if they had sent you here as our next principal that I would just have to quit because I know I couldn't work for somebody as demanding as you. Mr. Whitman understands us. (Personal Journal, May 2, 2002).

I smiled and directed the conversation back to the student records I had come to retrieve. On my way out Cynthia called to me and smirked, "Hey, we're having a congratulations party for Mr. Whitman tomorrow at the faculty meeting. Why don't you come over for a piece of cake?" I smiled at her and replied that although I wasn't much of a cake eater but, that I just might drop in on the faculty meeting.

Dr. Josh Summers, the Executive Director of Secondary Schools for our quadrant accompanied me to the middle school the next afternoon where he introduced me as the school's next principal. At first there was silent disbelief, followed by a brief, tepid round of applause. I believe that the reaction was more one of shock than of disapproval in the case of most teachers. Cynthia had

absolutely convinced them all that Michael Whitman had been given the job. I took the podium to thank them for their support and to assure them that together we would improve Sharpe Pointe Middle School. As I was speaking I caught Cynthia out of the corner of my eye. She was taking the boxed cake out of the media center. Michael Whitman followed quickly behind her. Neither of them returned to the meeting.

While making my initial comments I informed the staff that since my current position was right across the parking lot that I would take advantage of the proximity and visit the middle school often during the last month of the school year. That way I could interact with staff, students, and parents, thus getting a head start on a very difficult situation. Many of the teachers shook my hand when I had finished and intimated that they were thankful I had gotten the appointment because the school really lacked leadership. Judith Ryals, the other assistant principal, immediately impressed me by asking for an appointment the following day so she could get me up to speed on scheduling, personnel, and summer school issues. I thanked her and gave her a time for the meeting. Dr. Summers and I then walked back across the parking lot to Sharpe Pointe High School where he announced not only my promotion, but also the promotion of Barbara Harvey to the central office staff. Barbara and I were both genuinely applauded by the high school faculty who wished us well in our new positions.

At 2:00 PM the next afternoon I crossed the parking lot once again to meet with Judith Ryals. I reflected on that initial meeting later that day in my daily journal. I wrote:

I met with Judith Ryals for the first time today. She has 30 years experience and has been an assistant at the middle school level for the past 20 years. She is open and helpful and appears to be very trustworthy. Judith knows scheduling and discipline and we share the same philosophy on accountability and achievement. She told me that Michael Whitman is irate that he did not get the job and that Cynthia is already speaking negatively about me to anyone who will listen. Judith also told me that Deborah, the current principal, had not been in the building for the past three weeks and that the place is in chaos. We decided it would be helpful for me to visit during the day so I could observe classes, students, and teachers just so I would know what the true picture is. Barbara Harvey will let me do that I am sure and I am anxious to see the situation for myself. I asked Judith to select students, teachers, and parents from each grade level to attend about a one hour meeting with me sometime in the next two weeks. I want to get to know them, and I am sure they want to get to know me. I believe Judith has much to teach me and I like her approach. She is very professional and knows the job of an assistant principal.

As I left my meeting with Judith I stopped by Michael's office to say hello and to tell him that I looked forward to working with him. I wrote his reply and my initial impressions of him in my journal for that day also:

Michael was at his desk reading a novel at 2:00 PM. I'm not officially there yet so I could not address this with him, but I did take note. I told him that I looked forward to working with him and that I knew his help would be essential to turning the school around. He laughed and told me that he would do his assigned duties during his assigned hours, but that he was gone every day at 4:00 PM and that he did not take on extra duties. I told him we would need to come to a different understanding by the time I took office on June 1, because I needed someone dedicated to children. He answered that if Wobegone County Schools was not going to be loyal to him, then he was only dedicated to his own welfare. It is going

to be impossible for me to work with Michael, I am afraid. I will call Vernon about this situation tomorrow.

On my way out of the school that afternoon I stopped by to say hello to Cynthia as well, and to extend an olive branch to her. She stammered an apology about her comments to me two days earlier and said she hoped we could work together. I told her I felt we could if she could be loyal to me. She looked shocked when I informed her that I knew what negative things she had been saying about my appointment in the community for the past two days. I told her that if she intended to stay on as school secretary that she would need to rectify those comments with the community. I further informed her that I viewed loyalty as a job requirement and that I would not hesitate to replace her if further examples of disloyalty were brought to my attention. She apologized profusely at that point and told me she would change her attitude immediately.

When I got back to my office at the high school I talked with Barbara Harvey about my conversation with Michael. She told me to inform our boss, Josh Summers, and to consider not renewing Michael's contract. "Can I do that?" I asked her. She told me that he was at the end of an initial two-year contract and that since I was starting on June 1, rather than July 1, I would be the principal of record when it came time to recommend renewals for assistant principals. "He can't return if you don't recommend him," she told me. "Michael is never going to get any better, Randy. He is an obstacle to what you have been hired to do for the children at that school. You have got to let him go." I

thought about her advice, acknowledged that she was right and called Dr. Summers to inform him that I would not recommend that Michael Whitman be given a contract for the following year. He concurred and applauded the decision. I knew at that moment that I had an able mentor in Barbara Harvey and that she would be an asset to my principal socialization experience.

Two weeks after I assumed the principalship I called Michael into my office and presented him with a list of assignments I had given him that had not been completed. He smirked at this confrontation and told me he would “get around to it soon.” I took that opportunity to inform Michael that I was recommending he not be renewed for the coming school year and that he needed to begin looking for employment in another school system. He glared at me, slammed his novel shut, and stormed out of my office. The next morning he called the treasurer at Sharpe Pointe Middle School to tell her that he was taking the last two weeks of June as sick leave and that he would not return. I never saw Michael Whitman again.

The word of Michael’s departure from the Sharpe Pointe Middle School staff spread rapidly in the community even though school was out. It seemed to please many parents, and even a few of the teachers. Most teachers, however, reacted negatively and I was made aware of this by Judith who told me:

Your decision to get rid of Michael wasn’t popular, but it was the right decision. You did the right thing for this school and it has been a long time since we had a principal with courage. You have earned their respect and required their loyalty by doing this. Believe me, in the long run, this is the best thing for all of us. (Personal Journal, June 14, 2002)

At the end of my first two weeks as a principal, I took time to reflect on the early hurdles. Not renewing Michael Whitman's contract had been a difficult decision. I realized that it had not endeared me to many of the teachers with whom Michael was so popular. However, I understood even more clearly that I had done the right thing and that I had received good advice from three outstanding educators who would serve me well as unofficial mentors during my principal socialization experience. Barbara, Judith, and Vernon had all helped me frame that decision in the correct context; what is right for students? As a result I had made a difficult, but good decision. Though it had a profound impact on another educator's life, I felt good about it because it was in the best interest of our students.

The Second Challenge: Sixth Grade Academy

In mid May of 2002, I met with Judith Ryals, an assistant principal at my new school and with Dr. Pamela Wharton, the curriculum facilitator. I asked them to prepare a short presentation on the most recent student achievement data so that I could begin to familiarize myself with the instructional strengths and challenges at the school. As these ladies shared the data with me it became increasingly apparent that students were struggling with the transition from elementary school to middle school. Our sixth graders held the lowest scores of all three grade levels in reading and in mathematics. Additionally, our sixth grade

reading scores were near the bottom of all middle schools in the district and had been that way for three consecutive years. When these ladies shared the data on discipline referrals and attendance it was again apparent that these students were struggling with transition to a new setting. I was determined to increase the reading scores of these students to at least the county average and to increase their mathematics scores in a similar fashion.

Until my appointment as principal at Sharpe Point Middle School, my entire career had been spent at the high school level. I was acutely aware of my lack of experience at this level and knew that I needed help in implementing sustainable changes that would result in achievement growth. After my meeting with Judith Ryals and Pamela Wharton I walked back across the parking lot to discuss the situation with my mentor, Barbara Harvey. I summarized the content of this conversation in my journal for May 14, 2002:

I met with Barbara today after my meeting with Ryals and Wharton...explained the poor performance of sixth graders in reading and math and the lack of urgency by the current administration to do anything about it. I asked Barbara what she suggested. BH responded that I should meet with William Patterson at Barnes Middle School. She says he is the best and has successfully turned around a low performing school. BH says she was his assistant for two years and learned how to be an administrator from him, especially as an instructional leader. I will call him for an appointment on Friday.

I called William Patterson early the next morning and asked if he would mind meeting with me about some challenges I was facing in moving to the middle school level. He was gracious and kind and agreed to meet with me at

10:00 AM on Friday. During our meeting I found William, whom I had met briefly once before at a system wide principals' meeting, to be affable and very helpful. He took me on a tour of his campus and as we walked he explained that he had been at Barnes Middle School for five years. He went on to share that the success he had experienced had not occurred over night; rather it was the result of a deliberate plan. When I asked what the plan was and how he had implemented it, William responded:

Actually, I think I stumbled upon it. Just like you are doing now, when I was the new principal here I started by taking a hard look at the achievement data. I found many of the same things you are finding. Our sixth graders were low in math, low in reading, high in discipline referrals, and low in attendance. By the time they got to eighth grade they were doing fine, but the sixth grade was an obstacle for them. I spent my whole first year here focusing on that grade level and trying to figure it out. As I observed the teachers, I found that most of them were excellent with the content, but their pedagogy was more suited to the higher grade levels than it was for sixth graders. There was very little active learning going on. Most of the instruction was drill and practice, teacher-centered, and completely content oriented. Students were changing classes three or four times a day and spent a lot of time with the older students as well. The kids performed well on weekly assignments, but by the time their quarterly assessments rolled around, they had forgotten it. A lot of sixth graders spent a lot of time in the office for discipline as well. I was sure that their End-of-Grade results would be abysmal and I was desperate for a solution. Over the Christmas break I read an article in one of my journals about a sixth grade academy that a middle school in South Carolina had implemented three years earlier. They had really turned that grade level around with this approach. I was so impressed that I called my school improvement team to an unscheduled winter break meeting. Those who were in town during the vacation break were so piqued with curiosity about my excitement that they actually showed up for the meeting. They were as frustrated as I was and I knew I would have to have their endorsement of any plan that would significantly change the way we were teaching our sixth graders. By the end of the meeting we had a plan to visit this school so that we could see firsthand what a sixth grade academy looked like. All it took was one visit and they were sold. We found that by isolating sixth

graders for their first year of middle school and by essentially extending the elementary model through that year, that there was a great potential to solve our problem. I let them present the proposal for an academy to the faculty and it passed almost unanimously. It wasn't a magic bullet, but putting sixth graders in their own building and keeping them essentially self-contained with a pair of teachers has really improved our math and reading scores for them over the last four years. We have far, far fewer discipline referrals too. (Personal Daily Journal, May 16, 2002)

I left the meeting with Mr. Patterson absolutely sold on the idea of a sixth grade academy and well armed with recommendations from him on how to achieve the support of faculty and parents. There was one obvious difference between William Patterson's situation with solving the sixth grade puzzle and mine. He had an entire year to gain buy-in from his stakeholders and to design an implementation plan; I had only the remaining three weeks of the school year if I was going to be able to meet the superintendent's requirement to turn the scores around in one year.

During the following week I asked to meet with the school leadership team to discuss the problems confronting our sixth graders. I called on William Patterson and Barbara Harvey to suggest an agenda and method of presentation. As a result of those conversations I invited several of William's teachers, and some of his students to the meeting as well as William himself. I also asked the principal of our feeder elementary school to attend along with some fifth grade students and parents so that they could hear the presentation as well. The school and community immediately started buzzing with negative comments about "all the changes that new principal is going to make." By the

time we convened the meeting the entire sixth grade teaching staff and more than sixty parents of rising sixth graders were assembled and waiting to hear what I had to say. On Barbara Harvey's advice I made sure that the chair of the school leadership team conducted the meeting. I listed myself as only one presenter on the program. When it came time to unveil my proposal I asked William Patterson and his staff to share their experiences with a sixth grade academy. William had been a principal at the middle school level for 22 years in Wobegone County. His reputation as a solid administrator was solid and wide-ranging. More importantly, he was a principal who had the trust of the county. By the time he had finished his presentation, what I thought would be a difficult meeting turned into a very positive experience. The parents were heavily in favor of the move as were the fifth grade teachers and the elementary school principal. The only group who appeared hesitant was the sixth grade teachers at Sharpe Pointe Middle School. One teacher in particular proved to be the catalyst for this discontent.

Mrs. Ada Cates, a sixth grade science teacher, was nearing the end of her career. She had only taught in two schools and had been firmly ensconced in room 209 at Sharpe Pointe since they had opened the doors in 1979. Her influence with the younger sixth grade teachers was considerable and she was adamant that she would not move to the group of eleven mobile units that I had designated as the location for our sixth grade academy. I tried every reasonable way I could think of to gain her support and confidence. I had her visit the sixth

grade academy at William Patterson's school and she admitted she was impressed with how it improved student achievement; still she maintained it was not a good decision for Sharpe Pointe. Throughout the rest of the school year she tried to rally other teachers, parents, and key community members to her point of view, but thankfully was not able to do so.

Mrs. Cates then turned her attention to the faculty. She constantly undermined my authority to make this decision by creating a very negative atmosphere. At one point she circulated a petition among staff and students requesting the superintendent reconsider his decision to place me at Sharpe Pointe Middle School. I felt this was insubordination and proceeded to handle it as a personnel matter. On the last day of school I went back across the parking lot and summoned her to a meeting with Judith Ryals and me. She arrived at the designated time with her NCAE representative. During the meeting I directed her to immediately stop undermining the academy with her colleagues, with parents, and with students and to have her personal belongings moved to her new mobile unit before the end of the last teacher work day. She insisted she had the right to do whatever she could to stop the academy. At that point I told her she was being insubordinate and shared the legal definition of that term with her from the General Statutes of North Carolina. I warned her that if she engaged in further negative discussions that I would place a letter in her personnel file. She looked to her NCAE representative who weakly admitted that I had every right to require her comply with my directives.

At the end of summer, on the last day of vacation for teachers, Mrs. Cates came by the school. She handed me a letter of resignation and told me she would rather quit than move her classroom. I expressed my disappointment, but told her I had to do what I thought was in the best interest of our children. Leaving her in the classroom she had occupied for almost a quarter of a century, I explained, might be great for her, but it was not what was best for our sixth graders. I accepted her resignation and wished her well.

When teachers reported to work the next day I hosted a “welcome back” breakfast for the faculty. The word of Mrs. Cates’ departure spread rapidly. Some thought I had fired her; others knew she had retired. During my opening remarks I paid homage to the three teachers who had retired since the last school year. I spoke about each of them briefly and then, since I hardly knew any of them at all, asked Judith Ryals to also say a few words about each individual. When it came time for me to speak about Ada Cates, I made sure to emphasize all the great contributions she had made over the years and how many students’ lives she had influenced. When I finished Judith Ryals whispered to me that I made her sound like a saint and that the staff seemed very impressed with my remarks.

This particular challenge in my principal socialization experience was successfully met because of my use of several very valuable tools. I had an excellent mentor, Barbara Harvey, who directed me to the school system’s resident expert on sixth grade academies. William Patterson’s guidance and

support on this issue was instrumental in achieving the buy-in from staff, students, and parents that was essential to the success of this plan to improve student achievement. Another tool that allowed me to successfully clear this hurdle was the series of stakeholder meetings that I held to present my plan to the community. Though I knew what my eventual decision would likely be, I felt it was extremely important to hear their concerns and comments in order to create an environment of empowerment. Because they felt such a strong part of the process in making the decision to implement a sixth grade academy, they were more willing to approve the product I had to sell to them. This process provided me with a jump-start to establishing the moral authority I would need to be an effective school principal. The result was that although they knew I could simply mandate that we would move to the academy model, they supported the decision because I included them in the process. The biggest obstacle in this challenge was the influence that Ada Cates exerted over the staff and some members of the community. What I could not achieve with her through moral authority, I had to achieve with institutional authority. In the end, I was forced to use the power of the principalship to subdue her malignant negativity. When she decided to leave the school my stature as a leader immediately increased tremendously. One staff member told me at the end of the welcome back breakfast:

Mr. Shaver, you took on the giant of this faculty and you brought her down with a smile, a great plan, and a little toss from your slingshot. We have needed someone with your passion for a long time around here. I think that right now this staff is going to be more than willing to follow wherever you want to take us. We have missed someone who could give us

direction and take our advice too for a long time now. I am so glad you are here. (Personal Journal, August 14, 2002)

At the end of the year, when all End-of-Grade test results were in, Sharpe Pointe Middle School sixth graders moved from the bottom of the list in reading to second among all middle schools in the district. The school scored nearly as well in math. Discipline referrals were down by more than 80 percent for sixth graders and at the end of the year, the school was presented with an \$8000 award for being one of the top ten most improved schools in the district for the 2002-03 school year. At the presentation ceremony the superintendent praised our school for its dedication to doing the right thing for students by establishing a sixth grade academy. I understood then, that my socialization experience had been a successful one.

Over the Hump: Acceptance as a Leader

In order to facilitate my transition from high school assistant principal to middle school principal, from one who implement's another leader's vision to visionary leader, I knew that I had to exhibit three distinguishing qualities to my faculty and community. It was imperative that they discover these traits in my leadership for themselves; my responsibility was to provide them with the opportunities to make these connections.

In 1974 I was a senior at Appalachian State University majoring in speech communication education. My goal was to become a high school speech and

English teacher and to successfully coach speech and debate. One of the courses I was required to take was *Classical Rhetoric: Theory and Application* which was taught by a former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. John Austin. Dr. Austin told us on the first day of class that there were three things that successful public speakers must have, if they are to be accepted by their audiences. These essential characteristics were logos, pathos, and ethos; logic, sympathy, and ethics, or truthfulness. For the rest of that semester we read and deconstructed the works of the attic orators and applied their standards to the speeches of the leaders of our day. Quite often Dr. Austin would remind us that leadership and communication were very nearly synonymous terms and that if we were ever to be successful leaders that we would need to constantly exude these three characteristics with the people we would lead.

In order to gain acceptance as an authentic school leader with a faculty that had been essentially, yet happily, leaderless for the past four years I knew they would need to trust my ability and relate to my vision. As far as student achievement was concerned, the school had been in a steady downward spiral for several years and I had a mandate from the superintendent to turn it around quickly. The two biggest problems that I found were that the school was teacher-centered, rather than student-centered and that there was no accountability. Teaching assignments, duty assignments, staff development, field trips, requests for personal days off, and many other principal level decisions had been made in order to placate the teaching staff without consideration of what was in the best

interests of students. Additionally, staff evaluations had gone largely undone with the notable exception of those teachers assigned to Judith Ryals who was meticulous in her documentation of both good and substandard teaching practices. I decided that we could use the evaluation process as an instrument to improve instructional practices by reframing it in the context of professional development. Through this approach, I felt I could exhibit the pathos, logos, and ethos that I knew would be essential to having the staff view me as an authentic school leader.

The most glaring deficiency of the teaching staff was their inability to connect student achievement data to their teaching practices. I met with the school leadership team in early October to address the problem and to solicit possible solutions. What I hoped for was a series of three eight-week studies for various groups of teachers. Each group would be given a problem to resolve. Solutions were to be presented at an appropriate staff development session on designated early release days. Each group would evaluate themselves, their colleagues, and the process at the end of each presentation. These results would be included in their summative evaluations at the end of the year.

By taking this approach, I hoped to shift the ownership for professional development and accountability from the office of the principal to the teachers themselves. During the leadership team meeting where I presented the problem of this disconnect between data and instruction, I tried to guide the team to reach the same conclusions I had already reached for myself. This was real school

reform and if it was to work, I knew that it would have to be presented as something that these key players on the faculty fully supported. As that dialogue occurred and they understood that I was going to give them responsibility for the solution, but I was also going to hold them accountable for the problem, they began to understand how vitally important it was to seriously develop a successful plan. After an hour of brainstorming with modest results they turned to me for help. This moment was an essential one in my socialization as their principal. At that moment they admitted to themselves that they did not have the solution and turned to me for my expertise. This accorded me a foundation of logos, or logic, upon which to build. They trusted that I could lead them to better instruction and better results.

I discussed my plan with them and indicated that it would mean long hours of after school or staff development, but that they could design their own learning plans based on the needs of their assigned groups and the problems they would be given to solve. The leadership team was excited that teachers would have the authority to design their own professional learning, and told me that if they had to do this, they at least appreciated the flexibility I was willing to give them. The team decided that they would present the staff development program to the entire faculty at a called meeting the following Tuesday.

As this initial leadership team meeting drew to a close, the members expressed some reservations about how the staff would react to using problem-solution presentations as a significant part of their evaluations. I told them I

would think of how best to present that part of this process to them and that I would be glad to handle that part of the staff meeting. That afternoon, long after the teachers had left, I wrote in my daily reflective journal:

I gained their trust today, at least on some level. They were forced to turn to me for suggested solutions to the problem of not using data to inform their instructional practice. I understand – the term “data” is pretty scary – I hope this means they see me at least as someone with the intelligence and logic to help lead them. I’m excited over the staff development plan, but if they are to accept it as a part of their evaluation, I will have to put my own evaluation on the line as well. They have to see that I am willing to take the same risk that they are taking. (Personal Journal, October 6, 2002)

By the time the faculty meeting convened on the following Tuesday afternoon I was prepared to sell the staff on the idea of teacher-directed, rather than principal-directed staff development. I hoped that in the process I could also gain their trust and empathy which would assist me in my socialization as the school leader with this very difficult staff. The leadership team did an excellent job of presenting the idea of teacher-centered staff development to the faculty. A few were reluctant to spend any time after 3:30 learning for their own development, but most were at least open to the idea. It was then my turn to speak to them and I knew that the window for gaining their trust (ethos) and sympathy (pathos) for the need to engage professional learning communities would be brief.

I began the conversation by talking about the process for my own evaluation. I told them that I believed in accountability and that my supervisor's evaluation of me would only make me a stronger principal. They looked bored and unfocused until I told them that they would have significant input into my evaluation as their principal that year. They embraced the idea and asked how it would work. I shared that I had written a professional goal for my own evaluation to include a positive rating increase of at least .5 points by my faculty at the end of the year. I shared a Quarterly Principal's Evaluation Form that I had designed based on my results from one of many "360" evaluations I had completed during my stint of leadership training at the Center for Creative Leadership. The form focused on the leadership characteristics that my colleagues, subordinates, and direct supervisors had identified as areas of need for my development as a school leader. During the conversation I gave them examples of some of my developmental needs and how I might correct them. I then explained that their individual evaluations of me would be done anonymously on a Likkert Scale, tallied by the chair of the school leadership team, and presented at the first staff meeting following the quarterly evaluations. "In other words, "I told them, "If my plan for teacher-centered staff development is not successful, if this does not work, then you have the opportunity to hold me accountable for it."

The strategy worked. At the end of the meeting several staff members stopped by to tell me how impressed they were that I trusted them enough to give them the power to control a significant part of my own evaluation. If I was

willing to do that, they indicated, they were willing to be held accountable for their own learning. I had gained the ethos I was looking for: if I trusted them, then they had to trust me with the accountability system we had implemented. I assigned every teacher on the staff to a specific “problem-solving team.” Each team consisted of 5-7 teachers and each team was required to research the problem it had been given and provide solutions and strategies for application of the solution. The first presentation was scheduled for the next staff development day, approximately six weeks later. Each team was required to read specific articles relevant to the problem they were assigned. Their solutions had to be presented orally and visually through use of a presentation board and video or Power Point presentation. Finally, each team was to evaluate its own work and present its self-evaluation to the faculty for validation. My goal was to strengthen their instructional practices by exposing them to as many teaching strategies as possible. It was also to foster in them a sense of ownership not only of their professional development, but also of the profession itself.

The only leadership characteristic missing from the list that Dr. John Austin had prescribed so many years earlier was pathos, or sympathy for the leader’s message. When I considered how I would proceed to gain their sympathy for our plan of school reform, I did so deliberately. Perhaps, I thought, if we can model teacher-centered staff development then they will more readily embrace it. I called a meeting of my administrative team and assigned a problem regarding the connection between data and informed instruction that we were to

solve and present before the next faculty meeting. We spent approximately ten hours developing our presentation which included all of the elements that the leadership team was requiring of the professional learning teams we had established. As we presented our problem and solution, the staff began to realize that we were modeling what we expected from them. Because I was willing to share our group's self-evaluation and because I asked them to share a part of my very real principal evaluation, I placed myself in a position of vulnerability with them. Immediately following the presentation by the administrative team as one of the many professional learning teams we had created, I asked the entire staff to fill out their first Quarterly Principal's Evaluation Form. They turned this in to my secretary who calculated the results and kept the entire process anonymous so that the feedback I received from my teachers would be valid. Throughout the year the results I received from the staff continued to increase. At the end of the year when my supervisor, Dr. Summers, completed my annual evaluation, I presented him with the results and asked that he consider the process as a part of my evaluation and performance for the year. I felt that if my process of school reform was to be considered authentic, that I had to honor my promise to the faculty to include this in my evaluation.

Teacher-directed professional development sessions were very successful. They were done with a high degree of professionalism and ownership by each of the professional learning teams. By the end of the second round the entire staff seemed to be on board with the process. One of them

suggested in a staff meeting that we “take it public” by inviting all other middle schools in the county to a Best Practices Conference at the end of the year. At that time each team would set up in a different classroom and present their favorite problem-solution session of the year. The staff embraced this idea and the local conference was held in early May of 2003. This event not only validated my role as the instructional leader at Sharpe Pointe Middle School, it also elevated my stature within the ranks of middle school principals and the central office administration. This was an important time in my socialization experience.

In May, I had the highest ratings on the Quarterly Principal’s Evaluation Form I had received from the faculty all year. In addition, because I met with parent groups at least monthly I also asked for their input and developed the same form for them to use to evaluate my quarterly performance. Once each nine weeks I sent the form to every parent in the school. Though the return rate was only about 20%, parents expressed to me that they felt included and empowered in the decision making process. Of the 20% who did participate in the evaluation, the results were very favorable towards my leadership.

In late June of 2003 my first year was complete. I felt it had been successful because the results of our End-of-Grade tests indicated significant growth in student achievement. Suspensions were down for the sixth grade and the rest of the school and attendance was up for both students and teachers. South Pointe Middle School had been recognized as one of the ten most improved schools in the entire school system and had received a sizable check

to be used for instructional supplies as a reward. I was proud of the progress we had made, satisfied with transition to this setting and my learning of the role of the principal and anxious to plan the next school year. That was not to occur, however. During a small retirement celebration that the administrative team was having for Judith Ryals at a local restaurant, my cell phone rang. I noticed the number and answered immediately. The superintendent asked how I would like to be principal of the third largest high school in the system. He went on to describe the situation West Pointe High School as very similar to the situation I had just helped rectify at Sharpe Pointe Middle School. Though I was excited about the next school year at Sharpe Pointe Middle School, my ambition was to become a high school principal. That the superintendent recognized my ability to successfully, and quickly implement sustainable school reform was very flattering. I accepted the position without hesitation. The next year, as I again went through the socialization process, I applied the lessons I had learned as a new principal at Sharpe Pointe Middle School. Though the challenges were different and more pronounced at Western Pointe High School, I was able to implement reform far more successfully because I had been through a previous socialization experience.

Case Summary and Conclusions

The principal socialization process that I experienced at Sharpe Pointe Middle School was a successful one. As I moved through the first year of that

position, I went through several different stages of socialization. During the encounter socialization stage as a newcomer to the school and to the position, I found myself locked in battle with the bullying matriarch of the faculty, Mrs. Ada Cates who was adamantly opposed to change of any description, especially if that change required moving her classroom. Additionally, I confronted the disgruntled assistant principal, Michael Whitman, who did not get the job as principal and who wanted to do little more than complain about how badly he had been treated by the superintendent and his staff. During this stage I also encountered resistance from staff and the community to moving the school from a teacher-centered model of instruction to a student-centered model. With the help and advice of several very strong mentors, Dr. Barbara Harvey, William Patterson, and Dr. Joshua Summers, I developed plans and processes that would help lessen this resistance.

By the time the school year was into its second month, I was no longer in the encounter socialization stage, but had moved to the adjustment socialization stage during which time I became somewhat of an insider at Sharpe Pointe Middle School. Several key teachers befriended me when I was able to explain my plans for reform and increased student achievement. No one could argue against a student-centered school and so I was gradually accepted as one of them. I took my place not only with institutional authority granted me by the board of education, but also with the moral authority accorded me by the staff. By the end of the year, we all knew what to expect of each other. I identified with

the school and the school identified with me. This socialization experience was instrumental in preparing me for additional socialization experiences I have subsequently had during my career.

CHAPTER VIII

DATA FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An analysis of the data presented in these biographical and autobiographical case studies indicates that many of the participants have shared common experiences during their principal socialization periods. The data was collected through an autobiographical and biographical case study approach. Subjects were interviewed on three different occasions using the Dolbeare-Schuman-Seidman Narrative Interview Design. Questions were designed to collect information about the participants' family histories, educational backgrounds, pathways to the principalship, and actual socialization experiences. The research reveals patterns, consistencies, and inconsistencies in their narratives which help to define and shape the data into a useful tool for those who will follow these study participants as new public school principals in Wobegone County Schools. One subject provided an obvious negative case study which can perhaps be used to design benchmarks of socialization success for new principals in this school system.

Family History and Public School Experience Impact

A significant part of the research was dedicated to an exploration of the subjects' personal backgrounds and early childhood histories. An understanding of their experiences was gained through the thick description each provided

during the first narrative interview used to construct their biographical case studies. When this process was completed I compared the collected data to the experiences described in my own autobiographical case study in an effort to identify correspondence and patterns, uniqueness and similarities.

The findings indicate several similarities and differences in early childhood experiences and family backgrounds. Three of the study participants indicated that they grew up in a two-parent household, were middle-class in socio-economic terms, and generally did not have to be concerned with having their basic needs met. The other two study participants indicated that they grew up in deep poverty and were often concerned about having their basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter provided. Four of the study participants were raised in two-parent households. Their parents were not dependent on alcohol, drugs, or any other substance. In one case study, my own autobiography, I found that I was the only participant who was raised in a home broken by divorce. I was also the only study participant who felt stigmatized by my parents' dependencies, their general lack of parenting ability, and poverty. Two of the study participants felt that both of their parents played an active role in their elementary and secondary school educations. One of the participants felt that only one parent was actively involved, and two of the participants felt that neither parent was actively involved in their public school experiences. All five study participants were able to articulate an appreciation for one or more teachers they encountered during their elementary and secondary education experiences who made a positive impact

on them and helped to shape their futures as educators. Three of the participants shared details about negative experiences with teachers or other educators during their elementary and secondary school years which also helped to shape their careers as educators. Of the five participants, three aspired to become educators while still in public schools while the remaining two participants aspired to other careers until they were late into their college years. Three of the subjects indicated that they were never concerned with how they would pay for college; they understood that their parents would provide them with a college education. The remaining two participants shared stories of the obstacles they faced in simply finding the money to attend college and receive an undergraduate degree.

There are numerous similarities and differences in the family histories and public school experiences of the study participants. The data indicate significant similarities and differences in backgrounds as described by participants when asked to answer the questions that were posed during the initial narrative interview. These questions are indicated in Table 1 and help to answer part of the primary research question for this study, *what experiences either before your appointment as principal or during your first year as principal, helped to shape the principal socialization process for you?* One's early childhood as well as one's public elementary and secondary school experiences certainly occur before one's principal socialization experience and must be considered to contribute to one's perspective as an educational administrator.

Table 1: Family History and Public School Experiences of Participants

Data Finding	Bob	Nora	Yolanda	Antonio	Randy
Middle Class Status or Higher In Early Childhood	x	x	x		
Impoverished Status In Early Childhood				x	x
Raised in Two-Parent Household	x	x	x	x	
Raised in Single-Parent Household					x
Both Parents Supported Public School Experience	x		x		
One Parent Supported Public School Experience		x		x	
Neither Parent Supported Public School Experience					x
Positive Teacher Episode(s) Helped Shape Career Decision	x	x	x	x	x
Negative Teacher Episode(s) Helped Shape Career Decision	x			x	x
Always Wanted to Become a Teacher			x	x	x
Decided to Become a Teacher in College or After College	x	x			
No Financial Worries for College: Parents Would Pay	x	x	x		
Worried About Paying for College: Parents Would Not Pay				x	x
One or Both Parents Graduated from High School	x	x	x		
One or Both Parents Graduated from College	x		x		

According to their focused life histories, during early childhood and throughout their public school experiences, parental support, family income, level of parents' education, and interactions with teachers were all significant factors in the shaping of the lives and careers of the study participants. Both Antonio and I indicated in our case studies that the experience of poverty imbued us with a type of mental toughness that helped sustain us during the socialization process. After all, there is no better preparation for the personal and often caustic criticisms of a new staff, new student body, or new community than enduring the slings and arrows endured by poor children. Antonio and I each discussed the pain of this poverty and indicated that it created specific values and visions for us as adult administrators. Because we both grew up very poor for example, and yet have led successful lives, we both believe that socioeconomic standing does not have to be a barrier to learning. We each also spoke to the vision of educating all children regardless of their wealth status. While our values, vision, and plans for implementing them were not always popular with all staff, students, and parents during our socialization experiences, poverty had prepared us well for it.

Bob and Yolanda were the two study participants who indicated that they were raised in stable, two-parent households with the full support of both parents regarding their public school educational experiences. They were also the only two whose parents were both graduated from college. While these participants had stronger family support than the others, their socialization case studies

indicate that they had difficulty with the experience. Though Yolanda survived, she admittedly struggled with this phase of her career. Bob did not survive as a principal in Wobegone County.

While the data do not directly support a claim that supportive parents perhaps quiesce the development of leadership characteristics in children by doing and advocating for them, thereby suppressing the child's natural inclination to fend for himself or herself, there is at least a correlation found in two of the subjects for this study. This is not a generalization to be extrapolated to all principals who experience socialization or even to other principals in the Wobegone County Schools. It is however, a finding worth noting in this study.

Conversely, Antonio and I both endured extreme poverty. None of our parents were graduated from college and neither of us had a set of parents who were graduated from high school. Our case studies reveal a focus on survival and providing for our basic needs including food, shelter, medicine, and clothing. As children, our struggles for survival might well have sharpened, rather than suppressed, our leadership characteristics, thereby having some bearing on the principal socialization experiences we endured so many years later. Because we did not have parents who either could or would, provide our basic needs for us, we were forced to become self-reliant. The argument can be made that self-reliance prepared us for the rigors of principal socialization as well as the principalship itself. Again, this is data that establishes a correlation between our challenging childhoods and the development of our leadership characteristics,

abilities, and styles. It can not be considered causative and should not be extrapolated to draw conclusions about any other principals outside of this study.

The unique case study in this phase of the data analysis is Nora Thayer. Nora indicated in her life history that she grew up middle class, that her parents were both graduated from high school, but neither was graduated from college. Nora neither suffered the poverty that two other participants suffered, nor did she enjoy the prosperity and full parental nurturing that the other participants experienced. In this study then, her case is unique. Nora's mother was a homemaker and her father a laborer. This was not unusual for the time of her childhood. Nora reported that she felt she led a very normal, very average life as a child. Her father and mother expected her to work hard for what she achieved. Her parents, she indicates in the study, did not intervene at school on her behalf, nor were they very active in her education. Her mother was more involved than her father, but she was expected to accept the responsibility for her own learning. Although Nora was expected to work hard, she did not have to develop the same level of self-reliance that Antonio and I had to develop as a young child. The basic needs of food, clothing, medicine, and shelter were always provided for her by her parents. Her self-reliance and perhaps the foundation for her approach to leadership developed slowly, almost methodically, throughout her primary and secondary school experience. Nora became a self-reliant student and person, not of necessity, but rather because it was expected of her. This same approach to principal socialization, progressing to self-reliance as a school leader, is

evident in her case study. As with the other participants, the data indicates that family history played a strong role in Nora’s preparation for principal socialization.

Teacher Leadership, Debate Coaching, and Longevity

During the first interview, follow-up questions to question number three, were asked regarding length of teacher service and teacher-leadership experiences before becoming a principal. Additional follow-up questions focused on specific athletic coaching duties and co-curricular sponsorship experiences which may have helped shape the participants’ preparation for principal socialization. The results are charted in Table 3.

Table 2: Teacher Leadership, Coaching, and Sponsorship Experiences

Data Finding	Bob	Nora	Yolanda	Antonio	Randy
1-5 Years Teaching	x		x		
6-15 Years Teaching		x			
16-20 Years Teaching				x	
21+ Years Teaching					x
Athletic Coach	x			x	
Debate Coach		x		x	x
Leadership Team		x	x	x	x
Leadership Team Chair		x	x		x
Dept. or Grade Chair					x

Debate Coaching/Administration Impact

Though each case is unique on its own merit due to the very nature of life history reporting, several of the study participants indicated a strong awareness of participation in debate and speech as the key teacher leadership experience that helped to prepare them for principal socialization. The data indicates a correlation between successful principal socialization and experience as high school debate and speech coach. Antonio, Nora, and I all coached speech and debate teams during our tenure as high school teachers. Though Bob did coach an athletic team, as did Antonio, neither he nor Yolanda served as debate and speech coaches while they were classroom teachers.

Antonio, Nora, and I agreed that this experience with speech and debate was uncommon for new principals in Wobegone County, but we felt that the demands of that particular job were a significant part of our preparation for principal socialization and the principalship. Because this experience is so rare among Wobegone County principals, I collected data germane to this discussion in the follow-up questions to last question in the first narrative interview. Those results are evident in Table 3.

Table 3: Debate and Speech Coaching Experience Results

Data Finding	Bob	Nora	Yolanda	Antonio	Randy
Coached Debate 1-10 years				x	
Coached Debate 11-20 years		x			
Coached Debate 21+ years					x
1-10 Tournaments per year				x	
11-20 Tournaments per year		x			
21-26 Tournaments per year					x
Less than 20 team members		x			
20-30 team members				x	
More than 30 team members					x
Limited "national circuit" competition		x		x	
Extensive "national circuit" competition					x
Elected Administrator – District organization		x		x	x
Elected Administrator- State organization		x			x
Elected Administrator National organization					x
Yes, experience prepared me for socialization.		x		x	x

Antonio, Nora, and I all had significant experience in this activity. In addition to teaching and coaching this co-curricular academic competition, Antonio and I both also participated as students in high school and college. In fact, this activity was key to our being able to enter college and sustain our progress towards a degree as reported in our individual case studies. The data suggests a correlation between our experience of serving as debate and speech coaches and adjustment to the principalship through socialization. This is probably due to the administrative nature of the position. High school debate and speech coaches in Wobegone County are assigned a class of students and teach a prescribed curriculum. Tournament competition is required at a minimal level, but encouraged at an advanced level of difficulty and national exposure. In this instructional model, debate and speech is a co-curricular activity. Teaching and learning occur during class time and tournaments serve as the laboratory experience for application of skills learned in class. The debate and speech coach then becomes more of an administrator and facilitator of competitive opportunities than a strategist. Duties for this position include scheduling tournaments, discerning appropriate levels of learning which are matched to the appropriate degree of difficulty in competition, budgeting, parent relations, public relations, and selection of instructional materials. Essentially, a debate coach in Wobegone County becomes a quasi-administrator, not at all unlike athletic directors who perform many of the same tasks for sports programs. All of these

skills are directly transferable to the principalship and so this activity offers excellent preparation for the principal socialization experience.

Experience as a debate and speech coach then, prepared three of these study participants for many of the daily tasks that new principals must perform with little formal preparation. For example, during my socialization experience, I did not have to worry about making embarrassing missteps when dealing with public relations, parents, selection of instructional materials, or budgeting. Because of my tenure as a debate and speech coach, I had already mastered the skills necessary to complete those tasks. Neither Antonio nor Nora reported struggling with these skills during their socialization experiences while both Yolanda and Bob had difficulty developing this skill set. Though the data can not unequivocally establish a causative relationship between success in these areas of principal socialization and debate coaching experience, the correlation is obvious for at least three of this study's participants.

Teacher Leadership Experience Impact

Teacher leadership experiences may help prepare new principals for their socialization experiences. As indicated in Table 2 all of the participants except Bob had some level of experience as a member of the school leadership team, as a department or grade level chair, or as the chair of the school leadership team. Service in these positions can be labeled as quasi-administrative as indicated by several studies in the review of literature. Such service, particularly

as chair of the school leadership team, engages future school leaders in the process of making important decisions about how the school is run. This process includes seeking input from all stakeholders, empowering stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process, creating consensus among stakeholders, and fostering an environment of collegiality in which all members feel safe and free to advocate for their particular positions. These skills are all integral to successful school level leadership.

In this study, Bob was the only participant who had no teacher leadership experience. Interestingly, as reported in his biographical case study, Bob was the principal who had much difficulty with his leadership team. Rather than compromise or seek consensus on difficult issues, Bob instead dismissed his elected leadership team and replaced them with his own appointees. A correlation between successful teacher leadership experiences and principal socialization exists for some of the participants in this study. Wobegone County teachers who aspire to become school level leaders might wisely pursue participation in teacher leadership opportunities as an eventual pathway to the principalship and a successful principal socialization experience.

Teaching Longevity Impact

The data in Table 2 provides information on the length of service as a classroom teacher for each study participant, prior to becoming a principal. The range is from 2-21 years. Bob Perthlander taught as a lateral entry teacher for two years before becoming an administrator. Yolanda Reid taught for less than 5

years. Nora Thayer spent 15 years as a classroom teacher before moving into administration and Antonio Childs taught for 20 years before making the same move. My own classroom teaching career lasted for 21 years before I became an administrator. Perhaps the most important finding of this study point to a pattern of maturity, both personal and professional, as well as a variety of life experiences which result in the types of life learning that is required to serve successfully as a principal. These experiences certainly include the events to be celebrated, but even more importantly, they include the challenges and adverse events that serve as excellent preparation for the principalship. While three of the study participants have the longevity that provided them with these learning opportunities, two did not. The two who did not have such experience struggled far more with their principal socialization periods than the three who had more longevity as teachers prior to becoming principals.

In analyzing this data for learning, I looked for consistency, patterns, and repetition of similar experiences among the five different cases. This is what Stake refers to as “correspondence” (p. 78) and is one method of making meaning of qualitative research findings. The questions I posed to each participant during the second narrative interview were designed to gather information on their present lives during the socialization experience. As each told me of their daily triumphs and trials, they also often referred to their teaching experience as a lens through which their socialization to the principalship was viewed.

Nora and Antonio repeatedly refer to their teaching experience as key to success during principal socialization. Each of them indicates several times in their case studies that the time they spent in the classroom prepared them for what to expect as they were becoming principals. My own case study is very similar. I have indicated in my own autobiographical account that by spending more than two decades as a classroom teacher that I felt better informed of how to deal with the challenges of the principalship. I also indicated, as do both Antonio and Nora, that because I spent so much of my career as a teacher that I felt I had a measure of credibility with my faculty that younger, less experienced principals do not have. Antonio and Nora both also suggested that their length of service in the classroom seemed to validate them as authentic instructional leaders with their faculties while they were experiencing principal socialization. This consistency of validation based on length of service in the classroom was recurrent in our three career histories.

There were similar patterns and consistencies in the second interview narratives of Yolanda Reid and Bob Perthlander as well. Again, in order to analyze this data for learning, I read the case studies and looked for correspondence between the two different participant's stories. What I concluded seems to substantiate my observations in the stories of Antonio and Nora, as well as my own; length of service as a classroom teacher does have an impact on the principal during the principal socialization experience. Additionally, it seemed that the longer one taught before becoming a principal, the easier the

socialization experience. Both Bob and Yolanda reported extremely difficult relationships with significant numbers of their teachers. As their responses to the narrative interview questions and follow-up questions indicates both of these principals struggled with trying to establish themselves as instructional leaders. Each of them reported that because they were so young, and had such little actual teaching experience that they often had to work very hard to obtain the faculty's acceptance of their leadership for instructional issues.

A second validation of the connection between classroom teaching experience and successful principal socialization focuses on the perception of success as a classroom teacher. Longevity alone does not seem to be enough to gain the full confidence of a faculty. Instead, one must be able to report success as a classroom teacher in order to obtain validity as an effective instructional leader. This study examines this phenomenon which is reported in the individual case studies. Three of the subjects, Antonio, Nora, and I were all nominated as Teacher of the Year candidates by our faculties at least once during our tenure as teachers. Our teaching colleagues in Wobegone County Schools, some of whom we would lead as their new principals, seemed to recognize this status as an indicator of instructional knowledge and excellence. Antonio reported in his reflective journal that, "They knew my experience and success as a teacher. One of them told me that if I had been a Teacher of the Year, then, I must know what I was doing." By contrast, Bob Perthlander wrote in this reflective journal that:

The leadership chair called me out in the meeting today. She said they all knew that I had not been renewed as a teacher in Another County and that I had only taught two years there as a lateral entry. She said she spoke for the whole group and that it was difficult for the faculty to buy into my requirement to turn in written lesson plans every day or to write them a certain way when I had not been successful myself. Now I know what Dr. Purpel meant when he talked about the difference in moral and institutional authority. I have no moral authority with these people. (Perthlander, Feb. 6, 2002)

In conclusion, the length of time spent in the classroom as a teacher prior to becoming a principal does seem to have a direct impact on the acceptance of these principals as instructional leaders. In addition, the quality of that teaching service, or at least the perception of quality by the new principal's faculty, can be instrumental in gaining validation as an authentic instructional leader. The participants who taught less than five years before becoming administrators faced far stronger challenges to their instructional authority during the principal socialization experience than did their colleagues who taught from 15-21 years prior to making the move to the principal's office.

Data Analysis for Learning

Analyzing the collected data for learning is the purpose of this study. Principal socialization can be a meaningful experience leading to the professional growth of the new principal or the principal in mid-career transition. However, if specific elements are not present either in the principal's life history, public

school experience, teaching experience, or preparation for the position, then the socialization experience can be a negative one.

In this study, four principals had positive principal socialization experiences. They each reported similar or corresponding experiences, for many aspects of principal socialization. Antonio Childs, Nora Thayer, Yolanda Reid, and the author of this study all reported more positive socialization experiences than they did negative ones. While each of these four can be considered examples of successful principal socialization experiences, Yolanda Reid had some challenges to overcome that the other three did not. She was younger, she had taught less than five years, and though she had a supportive unofficial mentor, her official mentor was of little help to her during this period. Additionally, Yolanda struggled with the relationship she had with her direct supervisor who had supported a different candidate for her position. Still, because of the support of an unofficial mentor, her principal socialization experience was ultimately a positive one as she gained the confidence of her faculty and was able to implement her own vision and plans for the school she was chosen to lead.

In searching for correspondence, the patterns of consistency in each of these case studies, definite conclusions can be drawn about the principals in this dissertation study. For example, there seems to be a positive relationship between the number of years of service as a classroom teacher and success as a first year principal. This seems to be especially true in the case studies of Antonio Childs, Nora Thayer, and Randy Shaver. This establishes a consistent

pattern and helps to validate the trustworthiness of this research. Conversely, both Yolanda Reid and Bob Perthlander struggled during their principal socialization experiences, Yolanda far less so than Bob. Yolanda and Bob each had less than five years of experience as classroom teachers and Bob's teaching experience can not be classified as successful since he was not renewed after an initial two-year contract with Wobegone County Schools.

Nora, Antonio, Yolanda, and the study author, Randy Shaver, all had attentive, concerned, high quality mentors during their principal socialization experiences. While these individuals were not in all four cases *assigned* supportive official mentors, their actual mentors, whether assigned or volunteer, were nonetheless essential to the success of these participants in their new roles as principals. Antonio Childs and I seemed to be the two most fortunate study subjects regarding the assignment of mentors. We both relied heavily on very experienced principals with whom we had worked previously. Yolanda Reid was not assigned an official mentor whom she trusted so she turned to a principal for whom she too had previously worked for support, advice, and validation. This seemed to work out fine for her as she met with him regularly and he availed her of his time and attention during her earliest months on the job as principal. Nora Thayer was assigned a mentor with whom she was familiar and who supported her throughout the socialization experience.

Bob Perthlander's principal socialization experience serves as the negative case for this study. Bob was not successful as a new principal and,

according to his case study, his lack of an authentic mentor was a key reason his principal socialization experience was so negative. Bob indicated during the data collection phase for his case study that he had unintentionally, yet irrevocably alienated his assigned mentor even before he officially began his duties as a principal in Wobegone County Schools. The relationship could not be repaired and Bob was never assigned a different mentor. Bob felt that his lack of support contributed to his downfall as a new principal. His biographical case study indicates that he made several poor decisions as a new principal simply because he did not have a mentor he could consult for advice before proceeding with an ill advised course of action.

Though Bob represents the negative case in this study, his lack of a valid mentor supports the finding that an experienced, competent, and supportive mentor was essential to the success or failure of the participants in this study. The other participants all had better mentors. Consequently all had far better principal socialization experiences than Bob. The patterns and consistencies are clear here.

Other patterns and consistencies include years of classroom teaching service as analogous to the level of success or failure during principal socialization, family background and history, positive and negative public school experiences as students, service as a debate and speech coach, and teacher leadership experiences. The patterns are clear here as well and so the data, when analyzed for learning, teaches many things about the principal socialization

experiences of these study participants. Of this group, clearly, those with longer teaching tenures had more successful principal socialization experiences than those with fewer years of teaching experience. Participants with supportive mentors navigated principal socialization more easily than Bob who had no mentor. Another pattern emerges that indicates that the more teacher leadership opportunities the participants had, the more likely they were to be successful as new principals.

The correspondence noted in this dissertation study delineates the things that matter most to this group of Wobegone County Schools principals. These include supportive mentors, experience as a teacher-leader, experience as a debate and speech coach, experience as an athletic coach or co-curricular activity sponsor, family background, elementary and secondary school experiences, both positive and traumatic, and length of time spent as a classroom teacher prior to becoming a principal.

Wobegone County Schools might be well served to approach the assignment of mentors for new principals in a more critical way. Perhaps criteria designed to establish a good match between mentor and mentee could be developed to help ensure that all new principals have supportive and available mentors. Wobegone County Schools should re-examine its official new principal induction program to include the selection, training, and assignment of new principal mentors in order to avoid the catastrophic experience that Bob Perthlander endured and to which he eventually succumbed.

Limitations of the Study

This study addresses specific aspects of the principal socialization experiences of a select group of only five Wobegone County Schools principals. The sample size is small when compared to the total number of new principals in Wobegone County Schools each year. Though the patterns, consistencies, and thick description provide detailed data on the socialization of these principals, this data can not be extrapolated to draw conclusions about other principals' socialization experiences. Because each of these case studies as presented in this dissertation are unique, the conclusions reached can not be considered definitive enough to radically alter the process of selecting and inducting new principals in Wobegone County Schools without further study. This information is valuable to the author of the study and its participants because it examines their unique principal socialization experiences. Such examination results in personal and professional growth, but its value to other new principals may be limited.

Recommendations for Further Research

The primary limitation of this study is the sample size. In narrative reporting of research my experience in this study indicates that including more than the five principals in a biographical and autobiographical approach would be far too lengthy and cumbersome to be used as a tool to implement effective change in the new principal induction process in Wobegone County Schools. Still, if this school system is to assist new principals in becoming successful

school leaders then additional research is needed. I would recommend that future researchers studying principal socialization in general and Wobegone County specifically investigate all new principals in the system to discover the corresponding patterns, consistencies, and connections in their experiences. This could perhaps be a combination of quantitative and qualitative research in the hope of producing a more useful document and increasing the sample size of the study.

No doubt, if more new principals and their socialization experiences are studied then new connections can be made between the data and recommendations for change in this process. The more new principals who are studied and reported, the more we will learn about each of their unique socialization experiences. From so many unique cases, then more knowledge can be gained to make important generalizations about principal socialization. This could ultimately lead to a higher rate of success for new principals and ultimately better schools for children.

Additionally, the data I collected on Bob Perthlander included observations from teachers he currently leads as the principal of an allied health services academy in the Atlanta area. These teachers are obviously far happier with his leadership than were the teachers in Wobegone County. It can be concluded that Bob's negative experience in Wobegone County contributed to his positive principal socialization experience in Atlanta. Obviously Bob benefited from the lessons he learned in his first principal socialization experience. This presents

an intriguing opportunity to study principals who overcome initial failure and derailing and eventually resume successful careers. What is it about initial principal socialization failure that shapes additional experiences into successful ones? Research into this leadership phenomenon would benefit all who teach and practice educational leadership.

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