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Principal Succession:
A Case Study

By

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ABSTRACT

Principal succession is misunderstood and underutilized as an opportunity to affect dynamic renewal in school communities. In a departure from a research tradition that examines the phenomenon of principal succession through the experiences of principals and teachers, this case study adds the previously neglected perspectives of students, support staff and parents. Within a theoretical framework of presuccession and postsuccession, the data compiled during the study emerged from personal interviews and examination of relevant school documents. The study revealed that principal succession affects all members of a school community and that all stakeholders contribute to the outcome of the succession. Understanding the existence of significant variables can assist educational leaders in shaping the outcome of principal succession experiences. Principal succession should not be viewed as a single, principal-centered event. Effective principal succession is dependent on skillful facilitation of the powerful relationships among the many dimensions of school culture and organization.

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through your example,

to choose the High Road.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Genesis of an Idea

I believe that learning involves a process of revisiting understandings and seeing them in new ways. Whether or not we are intentional in our thinking we draw on previous experiences to establish a foundation for new learning. For example, the research presented in this thesis, which describes the phenomenon of principal succession, began during a conversation with a colleague who expressed frustrations about principal succession. I now realize that the personal experiences I brought to the conversation were rooted in my own frustrations. That is, I was a teacher who had experienced the feeling of powerlessness while watching the school organization in which I worked become significantly altered as a result of a change in principals. Through the research I conducted in order to write this thesis I was able to revisit my earlier principal succession experience with some new understandings of why the events occurred as they did. I have been able to reflect on that experience from a new perspective. As a result, I have the capacity to view principal succession as a positive and potentially revitalizing change in a school organization.

Curiosity Leads to Inquiry

I believed that my interest in principal succession as a topic of inquiry began at a garden party in the summer of 1997 when several employees from our

school district met to bid farewell to a favorite superintendent who had accepted a new position across the country. During the gathering, I engaged in a conversation with a principal who had heard that very day that she had been placed in a new school. I was somewhat taken aback at the anxiety she exhibited while sharing her anger and frustration with me. While we talked, my principal friend and colleague mentioned a feeling of abandonment by the school district because there were no systems in place to support her through this transition. She also shared her dismay that there was no support in place for the school community she was leaving. She pointed out that someone needed to investigate the questions of how principals transfer from school to school and, more importantly, why they transfer when they do. It was this conversation that I credit as being the commencement of my study of principal succession.

As I started to identify and reflect on the questions associated with principal succession, I began to consider my own life experiences and wondered why the conversation with my principal friend had piqued my curiosity. At that point in my career, I had taught in two schools and had experienced only one principal succession. However, I still clearly remember that succession experience because it continues to haunt me as one of the most devastating experiences of my career.

The arrival of a new principal in my school community created havoc to the point where staff morale plummeted. Some staff members left the school on their own. Others left because they had been asked to leave. Parent response

was so negative that school district superintendents, teachers' association representatives and even a lawyer became involved. Ultimately, the school district leaders removed the new principal from the school.

In retrospect, I have some understanding of that principal's actions. Time and distance have helped me to reflect on the impact the principal had on my teaching and leadership practices, and I credit him with posing challenging questions which raised the level of my teaching practice. I acknowledge now that his ideas and beliefs about learning and teaching were sound. What was it that made his transition into the school community so negative?

Perhaps some of the difficulties associated with principal transition highlight the complexity of schools and the nature of leadership in schools that Glickman (1987) described. In particular, Glickman highlighted some of the ways that social dynamics are manifested within school organizations. He wrote about the experiences of school leaders who "were successful in one school and were literally destroyed in another school" (p. 341). Interestingly, Glickman claimed that some leaders may be frustrated by the fact that there is not a single, best way to lead. While not specifically addressing issues of principal succession in schools, Glickman described the complexities of organizational culture which simultaneously challenge and frustrate those in positions of leadership in educational settings.

And so my quest began. I wanted to know why the principal at the farewell party was so anxious about her forthcoming move to a new work

setting. I also wanted to know why the principal who had shaken my own world so dramatically had not been more successful in his attempt to become a positive part of the school community. Clearly, these questions are significant given the fact that schools will continue to experience the phenomenon of principal succession.

Principal Succession is Inevitable

School boards are in the inescapable position of regularly replacing school-based administrators. Historically, school districts have relied on changes in school leadership as a means to provide professional growth for teachers and administrators and to rejuvenate school communities. Weindling and Earley (1987) estimated that 7% to 10% of principals are replaced each year in the United States. Baltzell and Dentler (1983) anticipated that well over half of current principals in North American schools will have retired and been replaced by the year 2003. Gabarro (1987) asserted that retirements and career transitions could result in some school leaders changing principal assignments six to eight times during their careers. Finally, it has been estimated that between 1995 and 2005 the Calgary Board of Education, one of the largest Canadian urban school districts, will have replaced over 85% of its current principals due to reassignments and retirements (J. Frank, personal communication, December 2, 1997).

Unquestionably, there will be many principal transitions over the next several years. Accordingly, one might wonder if school organizations are being

adequately prepared for the potential of these transitions.

The Complexities of Principal Succession

Principal succession is a complex phenomenon which “changes the line of communication, realigns relationships of power, affects decision making, and generally disturbs the equilibrium of normal activities” (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985, p. 88). A change of principal precipitates a complex social process that affects all individuals within a school community. Recent studies have provided qualitative descriptions of the affect of principal succession (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Hart, 1993, 1991; Harvey, 1991; LeGore & Parker, 1997; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985; Miskel & Owens, 1983; Ogawa, 1991; Ogawa & Hart, 1985). These researchers concur that principal succession significantly affects the life of a school. However their findings remain inconsistent on the question of whether the outcome of principal succession is positive or negative. All of these researchers agree that the complexities surrounding a succession experience are immense and varied. In their findings they indicate that the new principal’s leadership style, background and gender interact with situational factors such as the reputation of the previous administrator, school size and dominant socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds to shape the succession experience. However, it remains unclear whether or not principal succession actually enhances school effectiveness.

The Call for Principal Succession Research

Ogawa (1995) argued that one of the limitations we face in understanding

the complexity of principal succession is a lack of research in the area. "Research simply should be conducted. . . . The impending, wholesale replacement of school administrators offers both a rationale and opportunity to study succession" (Ogawa, 1995, p. 385). Hart (1993) claimed that systems of support which may be helpful throughout a school's principal succession experience have not been studied, largely because there appear to be no school systems that have a defined system in place. She asserted that the best possible outcome of a principal's succession experience would result from the implementation of systems of support which are grounded in a more thorough understanding of the complexities of principal succession.

Seiber (1971) felt strongly that the possibility of a negative affect on schools and school districts continues to exist if the potential of principal succession is not more fully explored (Seiber, 1971). Maehr and Buck (1993) proposed that principal succession experiences set the course for the cultural transformation of a school community, and suggested the importance of understanding the complexities that influence the outcome of principal succession.

A more informed perspective of the succession process, including an understanding of the interactive conditions of school organizations, would support principal succession as a way to rejuvenate and revitalize a school community. It is clearly evident that further research in the area of principal succession is required.

The Purpose of This Study

The primary purpose of this study was to explore responses to principal succession and to more fully understand ways that principal succession can be successfully facilitated. This study was based on work previously completed by Fauske and Ogawa (1987) and Ogawa (1991). I appreciated their focus on the ways that individuals respond to principal succession. It is worth noting that my study includes participation by students, parents and support staff, groups that were noticeably absent in previous research.

Organization of the Report

In Chapter I, the relevance and rationale for the study have been provided. Chapter II presents a summary of previous research in the area of principal succession. Chapter III presents the research design used in the study and methods of data analyses. Chapter IV offers a detailed presentation of the study data. Conclusions and recommendations are outlined in Chapter V.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter II provides an overview of the literature that has influenced this study and introduces a foundation for the interpretation of the data. It would appear that there are five significant perspectives through which the phenomenon of principal succession has been observed within the educational context. One area of study has traced the emergence of principal succession research from a tradition of leadership succession within a business context. A second important focus for research has provided insight into how succession studies have led to understandings regarding the impact of the principal on the performance of a school organization, and the influence of the principal on school climate. A third research focus has centered on how principal succession may affect student achievement. The phenomenon of principal succession has provided an opportunity for researchers to closely investigate the ways in which organizations influence principal socialization experiences. Through a fifth perspective of the phenomenon, researchers have attempted to identify predictable stages of succession.

Succession Research in an Educational Context

This review of succession literature focuses on research that deals notably with principal succession as opposed to the less specific topic of leadership succession. Carlson's (1961) vanguard investigation of executive succession with a focus on school superintendents provided the initial bridge from succession

research in business and industry to the unique world of school systems.

Carlson's work established a framework of inquiry that has supported many of the succession studies in education that followed his own. He drew on a succession framework that included stages of presuccession, the actual succession event and its consequences, and preparation for subsequent succession. As well, he examined central patterns of motivation and action dependent on the origin and goals of the successor and how these patterns may influence the selection of the next successor.

Carlson categorized superintendents as being either "Place-Bound" or "Career-Bound". Place-bound individuals were those promoted from within the system, whose careers were "...an ascent through the hierarchy in one school system" (Carlson, 1962, p. 7). Career-bound individuals were those who sought positions with increasing authority wherever they could be found, willingly changing from one school district to another (Carlson, 1962). The primary focus of Carlson's study was to observe the actions of these individuals and the ways others from within school organizations responded to them. Carlson found that there was a difference in the ways place-bound and career-bound superintendents perform the executive role. He identified that the place-bound superintendent tends to maintain the school system as is, and that the career-bound individual tends to facilitate change (Carlson, 1962).

The implications for school boards in a process of hiring a new superintendent are significant. However, what appears to be even more

significant in this study is Carlson's understanding of the importance of the succession event for system personnel. Identifying succession as an "event that calls forward an array of feelings from school personnel. . . ." (Carlson, 1962, p. 41) Carlson determined that succession elicits feelings of excitement, apprehension and expectation which considerably influence the actions of school personnel. Succession also invites response from the organization, which is dependent on a number of variables accompanying the succession process.

The chief executive official is not the whole organization. Though highly influential, he is not the complete master of the organizational course. . . under conditions of change counteracting forces have been expected. . . (Carlson, 1962, p. 58-59)

Carlson's work invited several questions worthy of deliberation. In order to consider ways to apply his findings to individual school settings, it is imperative that one considers whether or not it is possible to transfer his findings at the system level to the succession of the school principal. One would need to consider how the variables within a school are unique from those of a school system. Given that Carlson's work was completed almost forty years ago, it may be worthwhile to investigate whether the role of senior educational leaders is significantly different now than it was at the time of his study. If so, how might these differences influence the findings of a similar study completed today? Carlson himself called for a need to research counteracting forces—the responses of organizations which influence the succession and which are dependent on the

origin of the successor.

Hoy and Aho's (1973) study of patterns of succession of high school principals drew on Carlson's notion of insider and outsider leadership and applied his findings to school-based administrators. Insiders were promoted to the principalship from within the organization, and outsiders were promoted to the principalship from outside the school organization. What did not seem to be entirely clear in this study is whether an outsider was one who came from another school system, or simply from another school within the same system. Hoy and Aho wanted to know if Carlson's finding, that outsider superintendents were more inclined to accept a mandate for change than were insiders, was also applicable in the case of the principalship. Further, they sought to understand the extent to which patterns of succession of high school principals influenced leader-follower relationships. They concluded that insider principals seem to be at a "distinct disadvantage not only in terms of sound principal-teacher relations but also in their ability to act as change agents" (Hoy & Aho, 1973, p. 86), supporting Carlson's earlier findings. They also agreed with Carlson's understanding that the insider faces a "social system that is well defined, structured, and relatively unaltered while the outsider faces a social system which has been temporarily suspended because of his arrival." This has the potential to place the outsider at an advantage with respect to organizational development and adaptation, because of the inherent opportunity to reshape the

“structural and normative patterns of the social system” (Hoy & Aho, 1973, p. 87).

Linking to the Present

Most of the current research on principal succession can be linked to the findings and questions raised in Carlson’s study. Some researchers focused on variables associated with a stage framework of succession, attempting to determine how each phase of a succession process influences the outcome of the next phase (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984; Miskel & Owens, 1983; Ogawa, 1991). Other studies attempted to correlate the variables associated with a succession to those organizational outcomes that may include performance or response to change (Firestone, 1990; Johnson & Licata, 1995; Ogawa & Hart, 1985; Rowan & Denk, 1984). Some researchers have attempted to determine the influence of a variety of factors on the outcomes of the succession. Variables such as size of organization, frequency of succession, management style, perceptions of the new principal, and lag time between appointment and the actual succession event have all been subject to scrutiny (Macmillan, 1993; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984; Miskel & Owens, 1983; Noonan & Goldman, 1995). The majority of early succession studies in education described the effects of succession on the administrator and, conversely, how the administrator affected the organization. Recognizing the importance of the organization in the outcome of succession, Hart (1993, 1991) investigated frameworks of professional and organizational socialization of principals. She defined organizational

socialization as the influence of an organization on the actions of a principal.

Hart identified professional socialization as the influence of formal training and interactions with other principals on the actions of the principal. Hart determined that organizational socialization factors shadow professional socialization experiences of the principal.

There are some theorists who have suggested that succession research should replace more traditional studies of the leadership role (Gordon & Rosen, 1981; Miskel & Owens, 1983). They maintain that a focus on leadership studies during the instability of succession allows an investigation of leadership during phases where "old resource allocation decisions are argued again. . . suppressed ideological divisions over goals and performance are raised for reevaluation, and. . . job responsibilities are redefined" (Miskel & Owens, 1983, p.25).

However, in a later review of succession literature Miskel conceded that rather than substituting for more traditional studies of leadership, ". . . succession studies can supplement and provide alternative strategies for understanding the nature of leadership in schools" (Miskel and Cosgrove, 1985, p. 102). This change, subtle in wording yet conceptually significant, may be indicative of a turning point in an understanding of the role of leadership in school organizations.

Ogawa (1995) called the concept of principal succession "deceptively straightforward" (p. 360) and identified three forms of ambiguity which shroud the research concerning this phenomenon. First, there are the variables inherent

in administrator selection that may affect the process of succession. These include the influence of gender, race and ethnicity, ways in which administrators are socialized to new roles and to the new organization, and the process of administrator selection. The second form of ambiguity to which Ogawa pointed is that the terms administrator and leader are used interchangeably throughout succession literature in spite of a vast conceptual space between the two, noting a need to look critically at these "twins separated at birth" (Ogawa, 1995, p. 361). The third form of ambiguity emphasized by Ogawa is in the purpose of the research that has been completed. He indicated that a subtle but significant difference exists between two traditions of succession research. Some studies (Gordon & Rosen, 1981; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985) looked at the phenomenon of succession in an attempt to explain whether or not administrators influence the performance of school organizations, taking advantage of the opportunity to observe variations in administrative factors while organizational and environmental factors remain somewhat constant. On the other hand, some research attempted to focus on how succession influences organizational performance and how the organization may manipulate the events of the succession.

Hart (1993) responded to the concerns Ogawa expressed by identifying four branches of succession research. The branches she identified included: the effects of succession which are different from general leadership effects; the impact of leadership on organizational performance; personal, social and

organizational variables which interact during succession; and, stages of succession over time. Rather than attempting to segregate the variables as Ogawa seemed to in his discussion of the purpose of succession research in an educational context, Hart appeared to emphasize the interdependent nature of the research that has been completed in this area.

An understanding of principal succession as an interactive group experience, in which the school community and the new principal influence each other invites further consideration of Hart's work. If we focus on the principal, we are not able to consider the history and life of the school that may influence the responses of people to the new principal. However, when focussed solely on the response of the school organization, including people, processes and contexts, we begin to ignore the important social forces that shape the process of succession. When succession is seen and dealt with as a group process, the outcome may be personal and professional growth and development for both the school and the new principal. For this to occur an understanding of the ways an organization reacts to and shapes the new leader is imperative. It is important to understand how the process of selection influences the leader's responses to the actions of the organization. Further investigation of the definition of administrators and leaders in the context of the organization and whether or not school leaders have an impact on the outcomes of the school also need to be pursued. Greenfield (1993) invited consideration of [principal] succession not as an "event," but rather as a "complex social process characterized by interactions

among a school's faculty and their new principal, and among the principal and others" (Greenfield, 1993, p. xi). Those to whom Greenfield referred as others may have included district administrators, children and parents.

Impact of Leadership on Organizational Performance

It is commonly believed that the principal has a major impact on the lives of teachers and students. Research has led to conclusions that effective schools are led by effective principals, and that the role of the principal is crucial (Corcoran, 1985; Ogawa, 1993). Disagreement on the definition of effective schools could be included in Ogawa's list of ambiguities surrounding the topic of principal succession, as testimony to how the impact of the principal continues to be open to debate and study. The "... indirect nature of much of the principal's influence on student learning. . . has long plagued educational administration research and is far from being resolved" (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986, p. 7). However, Edmonds (1979) found that "... one of the most tangible and indispensable characteristics of effective schools is strong administrative leadership, without which the disparate elements of good schooling can neither be brought together nor kept together" (p. 32).

Miskel and Cosgrove (1984) referred to a shadow of doubt being cast on the generally accepted notion that principals are clearly important in determining the effectiveness of schools. Indicating that the administrator's role often consists of fragmented, brief and varied interactions with little involvement in the instructional process, they questioned the support that administrators

could provide learners (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985).

Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee (1982) found evidence in a comprehensive review of literature about effective schools to support the notion that "... effective principals create conditions for success" (Hart, 1993, p. 7). Hallinger and Heck (1996) defined the principal's role as "... part of a web of environmental, personal, and in-school relationships that combine to influence organization outcomes " (p. 6), noting that principal leadership can make a difference in student learning only if attention is paid to the conditions under which this effect is achieved (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

Effects of Principal Succession

A powerful conclusion of Noonan and Goldman's (1995) study of the influence of principal succession on school climate was that "administrative succession does not necessarily change a school's climate" (Noonan & Goldman, 1995, p. 14). While the researchers conceded that many variables such as changing classroom enrolments, budgetary factors and staffing issues make the measurement of climate unstable, their conclusion speaks strongly to the influence of the organization on incoming administrators. They also hypothesize that an organization's initial stage of enchantment where individuals experience feelings of rejuvenation and enthusiasm regarding the change of principal may be

... a result of a fresh and revitalized staff returning from summer holidays and/or a sincere desire on the part of a professional teacher to

keep an open mind and an optimistic nature while giving new principals an opportunity to prove themselves. (Noonan & Goldman, 1995, p. 14)

This raises an important question about how conclusions of principal succession research to this point may have been skewed because of the timing of the research. It also points to the interpretive, interactive nature of the relationship between teaching staff and administrators. Noonan and Goldman's theory is inadequate because it ignores the forces that have already shaped a succession. They fail to address the possibility that the enchantment phase may be a stage where the new principal, the faculty and community stakeholders are simply posturing in preparation for someone to make the first move.

It is reasonable to believe that principal succession may have a significant influence on the culture and conditions of a school organization. However, there does not appear to be a consistent relationship between the performance of an organization and leader succession. Results of studies attempting to determine this influence are mixed and in most cases have been conducted in organizations other than schools (Brown, 1982; Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985). Studies attempting to examine the effect of principal succession on student achievement are inconclusive, which is consistent with the studies that examine principal effect on efficacious schools and student achievement, (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985). In a review of previous succession studies, Fauske and Ogawa (1987) found that a change in principal has little or no affect on an organization's performance. It would appear that conditions and variables

surrounding the succession affect these conclusions. Brown (1982) argued that because of its disruptive effects, succession either has no causal impact or a negative impact on organization effectiveness (p. 1). The role of the leader in a school "... becomes effective when a principal succeeds in shaping a climate in which there is agreement on fundamental values and practices, and such agreement constitutes a shared view of the school's nature and objectives" (Schwartz & Harvey, 1991, p. 291). These findings suggest that two of the issues in determining principal effectiveness are the disagreement about the conditions that are characteristic of a successful school and therefore, disagreement as to the means of measuring "success". Student achievement as evidenced by standardized test scores and perceptions of principal effectiveness are two approaches researchers have used in an attempt to measure the effect of principals.

Principal Succession and Student Achievement

Rowan and Denk (1984) found that school leadership changes can affect the levels of students' basic skills achievement, but the effects are ameliorated by socioeconomic variables within the school community. They argued that previous studies of effective schools, which found that principal leadership affects academic outcomes, had been conducted primarily in schools with high proportions of students from economically disadvantaged environments. Consistent with previous research, Rowan and Denk found that schools where the learning community was composed of students from lower socioeconomic

backgrounds tended to increase in achievement when the principal changed. However, where the percentage of students from families receiving government financial assistance was below 20%, the effects of principal change were negative. Their findings posed a significant challenge to previous research. In a very similar study, also employing standardized test scores as indicators of student achievement, Ogawa and Hart (1985) acknowledged that "... such factors as the socioeconomic status of students and the extent to which students are non-English or limited-English speakers are inadvertently subsumed under school" (Ogawa & Hart, 1985, p. 70). While these quantitative studies indicated statistically that a change in principal does affect student achievement, Rowan & Denk (1984) made a significant discovery that has critical implications for succession research. In a later analysis of their data, Rowan and Denk (1984) found that the succession effects on student achievement they had identified were not sustained in later periods. This suggests "... that the effects of principal turnover were merely short-lived displacements in achievement and were not repeated in following school years" (Rowan & Denk, 1984, p. 532). Miskel and Cosgrove (1985) argued that the change in achievement level could be correlated with a change in teacher effectiveness at the time of succession. They determined that "... once individuals have been successful, they are taken for granted; they rest on previous accomplishments or they become complacent" (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985, p. 92).

From one perspective, these studies may conclude that principal

succession research is not necessary because principals have no long-term effect on student or school achievement. However, the debate around a definition of effective schools and student achievement continues, as does consideration of Ogawa's concern regarding the conceptual gap between leadership and administration. Many scholars call on school administrators to promote and enhance the environment necessary for schools to be effective. They contend that the values of school leaders shape the values of others, leading to an influence on student achievement. (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Pease, 1983). Hallinger & Heck (1996) addressed the debate with a call for a better understanding of the ways in which in-school variables mediate principal effectiveness. They also pointed out that as principals pursue school-level action their effectiveness is more adequately measured over time than at the time of succession. Ogawa and Hart (1985) claimed that even small proportions of variance in student performance are significant. Therefore, a variance as small as 2-8 percent that is attributable to principal succession takes on relative importance. The preceding studies support Hallinger and Heck's (1996) conclusion that understanding the interplay between environmental, personal, and in-school relationships can assist principals in facilitating an increase in student achievement.

Endorsing Ogawa's concerns with regard to the ambiguities surrounding succession research, Hallinger and Heck (1996) pointed to the significance of events which shape the outcomes of leadership succession in a school organization. They invited critical inquiry regarding what we value in our

schools. They questioned how we assess the outcomes of a succession process, how we construct principal evaluative measures, how we define student achievement and who is responsible for improving student achievement. Hallinger and Heck challenged the ways in which school leadership influences changes required for this improvement.

Organizational Influence on Principal Effectiveness

One response to the questions that are raised as we seek to understand how succession influences organizational effectiveness, has been to investigate how members of an organization influence the outcomes of principal succession and the performance of an organization. As a participant observer, Hart (1987) described her own succession experience as principal of a large high school. She concluded that environmental, personal and social dimensions interacted to give meaning to the succession experience, and that it was through this interaction that her leadership was defined. Hart determined that more important than research studying personal and organizational factors of positive succession experiences could be research examining the mechanisms that successors can exercise in order to make visible "... their most appropriate personal and professional traits. . . " (Hart, 1987, p. 9). Hart also contended that the most successful leaders can identify how best to apply personal strengths in order to create "... harmony with the norms of the new environment and nurture important social connections in the organization" (Hart, 1987, p. 9).

Johnson and Licata (1993) studied the relationship between the conditions

existent throughout principal succession as perceived by the principal or the teacher and, subsequently, teacher perceptions of principal effectiveness. In a refreshing departure from previous definitions of school achievement that depended on student achievement as measured by standardized test scores, the definition of principal effectiveness in this study did not draw on standardized measures of student achievement. Rather, determinants of effectiveness included in the study were perceptions of the principal's performance in advancing a vision for the school, the effectiveness of the principal in managing routine administrative practices, and the general impact of the principal's leadership. Another important aspect of this study is that the researchers attempted to identify "situational favorableness" (Johnson & Licata, 1995, p. 400), which included the strength of the predecessor, the "Rebecca Myth" or the tendency to idealize the recollection of the predecessor, and confidence in the successor. The factors identified here are important because they answer, at least in part, a call for the study of the interaction between many variables throughout the succession experiences of schools.

Johnson and Licata (1995) concluded that school districts tended to select new principals from within their own ranks, thus enabling continuation of the values, norms, and practices of the district. It should be noted that Johnson and Licata's 1995 study was conducted within a large urban school district and the question of how smaller districts choose new principals was not addressed. It was the opinion of the teachers interviewed that the most effective successors are

those who demonstrate a "... robust leadership style. . . who successfully articulate and advance a school vision. . . who prove competent in the management of school administrative practices. . ." (Johnson & Licata, 1995, p. 414). Johnson and Licata determined that principals possessing these characteristics generally gained teacher trust early in the succession experience, and were not as consistently compared with the strengths of the previous administrator. Principals judged to be the most effective by teachers were those who succeeded a leader who had been perceived as weak. They also concluded that new principals often forget what they had valued in their own previous principals, and that teachers will remind them that "... effective school leadership is about developing more desirable alternatives for practice in ways that maintain or enhance organizational predictability for teachers" (Johnson & Licata, p. 414).

While the findings of this study are plausible, the weakness in the study is a tendency to neglect other forces that shape a succession. Johnson and Licata appear to be neglecting factors of organizational socialization, where the role and actions of the principal are affected by the formal and informal actions of the members of the school community. Furthermore, an acceptance of the teachers' seeming desire to maintain the predictability of the organization may, in some cases, not be in the best interest of the school. This study indicated that principals deemed to be successful succeeded administrators who were perceived to be weak, but does not adequately investigate the conditions and

actions the members of the organization defined as the predecessor's weaknesses. For example, positive attempts to improve organizational effectiveness, which interfered with the predictability of the organization, may have been defined as weaknesses.

Stage Frameworks for Succession Experiences

Stage frameworks of succession are generally identified in two patterns--a linear continuum or a cyclical process. Both models see leaders moving through each stage until they reach some sense of balance, acceptance and influence in the school. A linear continuum identifies phases of acceptance and influence as the far right of the continuum (Parkay & Hall, 1992), whereas a cyclical pattern values the perpetual nature of leadership succession, and includes the leader's anticipation of the next school assignment (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985).

Presuccession Factors

Identifying presuccession factors that influence the perception the members of the school community have of the new leader is a crucial task because of the strong influence these factors may have on organizational performance. Miskel and Cosgrove (1985) described leadership succession as a "generic organizational phenomenon" (p. 2) in their study of the effectiveness of school administrators. Recognizing the interactive nature of many variables existent in a school organization, they created a theoretical framework of presuccession factors which was comprised of four categories: reasons for the succession, selection process of the new administrator, the reputation of the new

administrator, and the career orientation of the successor (Miskel and Cosgrove, 1985). Gordon and Rosen (1981) found that when leaders are elected, they have more influence over subordinates than do those who are appointed by senior district leadership. They also determined that the circumstances surrounding the departure of the predecessor have a major influence on the effect of the organization's new leader. It is noteworthy that in most school settings stakeholders are invited to contribute to the selection of a new principal, even though they are rarely involved in the final decision.

The origin of the successor is a variable that has continued to be significant in succession studies, just as it was in Carlson's (1961) study. Generally, it is found that those leaders recruited from outside the system experience an increased vulnerability to the "Rebecca Myth," and a decrease in trust because of the successor's willingness to challenge the norms existent within the organization (Carlson, 1961; Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Johnson & Licata, 1995).

Fauske and Ogawa (1987) conducted one of the most thorough case studies of a school faculty's presuccession responses, and identified three themes: detachment, fear, and expectation. The study was conducted to extend Gephart's (1978) grounded theory of leader succession. Gephart's theory was generated from observations of his own forced departure as a leader of a university student association, a context significantly different from that of a principal succession.

Fauske and Ogawa (1987) observed a “nonforced succession in an organization in which members exerted little, if any, influence on the selection process” (p. 25). In Fauske and Ogawa’s study, four existing norms within the school were identified: order, instructional isolation of teachers, limited personal contact for teachers, and the importance of external expectations. It was found that the faculty depended on the principal to set and articulate these professional norms, which could suggest that the school organization may identify a positive succession process as one which has had no impact on the established norms of the organization. Interestingly, the faculty detached themselves from the succession. Fauske and Ogawa found that teachers felt powerless and that they usually expressed an understanding that someone would soon take the departing principal’s place.

The teachers expressed fears of intrusion and the unknown expectations of the incoming administrator. They also shared an expectation that the new administrator would compensate for the perceived weaknesses of the outgoing administrator. The fears and expectations experienced by the faculty began to pervade the organization, adding credence to a term presented and defined by Gephart (1978) as status degradation theory. Gephart described a public ceremony of finding fault in the departing administrator’s practices. Fauske and Ogawa (1987) noted that the faculty relied on songs and jokes presented at the departing principal’s farewell dinner to identify the organizational norms with which the departing principal had not complied.

While studies of presuccession factors have been enlightening as far as responses to succession and factors which influence a positive or negative succession, it is interesting to note that the researchers did not ask important questions about how student achievement was affected through stages of succession. Is it a natural assumption that if a school faculty is experiencing turmoil, then instructional practices and therefore student achievement may be likewise affected? It would appear that this question has not been approached in principal succession research, and, in spite of its difficulty, may be worthy of exploration.

The preceding studies did not analyze the influence of stakeholders other than those employed within the organization. The norms that existed at the school studied by Fauske & Ogawa (1987) may not have been supported in another community or in another school district. This understanding begs for investigation into the influence of system and community stakeholders on school organizational culture.

Postsuccesion Factors

Gordon & Rosen (1981) and Miskel & Cosgrove (1985), queried the relationship between presuccession and postsuccesion factors in their attempts to create a succession model. Miskel & Cosgrove (1985) attempted to determine the influence an administrator has on student learning by studying a framework of succession, specifying variables associated with the succession. They supported Gordon & Rosen (1981) and Carlson (1961) in their calls for

investigation into the interactions among factors of presuccession and postsuccession and organizational effectiveness.

Ogawa (1991) accessed the same school site that he and Fauske (1987) studied during its presuccession. This gave him the opportunity to investigate the relationship between presuccession responses and those that occurred after the succession event. Ogawa (1987) determined that relevant findings emerged when studies investigating how members of an organization make sense of succession have been conducted. Succession events are interpreted in many ways that may be influenced by the existent contextual factors and that, in turn, frame the way members of the organization make sense of the succession. Ogawa maintained that the ways members of an organization interpreted the succession led to the outcome of the succession. He called this interpretation "sense-making".

The conclusion of Ogawa's (1991) study indicated three stages in the postsuccession framework. He used the term "Enchantment" to describe the initial stage when teachers were optimistic about the change in leadership in spite of uncertainty about the change. In this stage, teachers depended on the principal's reputation and, in the case of Ogawa's study, concluded that the new principal was committed to the school. In stage two, or "Disenchantment," teachers questioned the principal's commitment to the school after decisions with which some staff members disagreed were made. Anger and insecurity were expressed and

issues regarding differences in socioeconomic status, the principal's attitude, and his frequent absences from the school were raised. The third stage identified by Ogawa was called "Accommodation." In this stage, he found that teachers became isolated in their practice and they maintained that changes as a result of new administration had not significantly affected them. In this case, the faculty agreed that the new principal was merely biding his time until he was in a better position to make significant changes.

An understanding of the interactive nature of a school community and the significant influence of all stakeholders has been rooted in the tradition of principal succession studies. Interestingly, not one study of succession in a school organization investigated the response or sense-making of stakeholders other than teachers and school or system leaders.

With the exception of rare attempts to determine how student achievement is affected by succession, students, parents and support staff appear to have been ignored in succession literature. An understanding of their influence on all of the variables mentioned may be crucial to gaining a better understanding of principal succession. Considering that in Ogawa's (1991) study it was a decision regarding deployment of a support staff member that caused the beginning of the disenchantment phase, this is a significant anomaly in succession research. When principal succession is defined as a "group experience in which the school and new principal influence each other" (Hart,

1993, p. 266), it is important to acknowledge the involvement and vested interest all stakeholders have in shaping the culture of a school organization.

Organizational Socialization of the New Leader

Response to a new leader begins in the presuccession stage during which variables such as source, expertise, experience and reputation of the new leader set the stage for the succession event (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985). Relationships with the new leader begin, and continue into the early days of the new principal's tenure (Hart, 1994). Patterns are formed through which people can judge the legitimacy of current and future events in the school organization (Cosgrove, 1986). Immediate demands such scheduling issues, budgeting and statistical information, issues raised by parents and teachers, and extracurricular responsibilities may arise, causing a principal new to a school community to abandon resolutions made during university-based professional socialization experiences or previous professional knowledge and experience (Hart, 1994). Relationships and patterns of interaction begin to develop and become stronger, and set the stage for future influence and establishment of credibility of the principal (Hart, 1994). It is during the first stage of the succession that the principal encounters and confronts a new social setting, and where personal interaction confirms expectations, explores personal values, confronts the climate of the school, and reinforces "aspects of self that the setting will reinforce or suppress" (Hart, 1994, p. 13).

The social relationships between the leader and the hierarchy of other

individuals in the school are important in determining the influence a new leader may have on a school. Smith & Peterson (1988) supported the view that superiors and subordinates influence each other, but questioned a common belief that superiors have a greater influence over subordinates. They did concede that “subordinate actions can cause leaders to perceive subordinates in certain ways and consequently to employ certain behaviors towards them rather than others” (p. 40).

When principals are assigned to schools, they are being asked to enter organizations that have existed long before their arrival. Each school is unique and, in spite of the power of official designation, principals will learn the role that is expected of them in order to earn legitimacy and validation (Merton, Reader & Kendall, 1957; cited in Hart, 1994). Therefore, the principal will experience a process of learning to adapt to the expectations of members of the organization. As Schein (1986) indicated, this process of organizational socialization may conflict with the values and norms the individual learned as part of previous professional socialization processes. The power of the organization to overshadow the best intentions of a well-educated leader exists in spite of the leader’s professional socialization experiences and honorable intentions. Even in cases where the leader demonstrates intentions and a vision indicative of change that may positively influence teaching practices, the organization can shape the new leader’s actions. When entering a new cultural situation, “. . . we feel a need to respond, react, ‘do the right thing’, fit into the

situation, remove the tension of uncertainty, gain acceptance, establish communication, or the like" (Schein, 1985 p. 28).

In a compelling study of how principals at different stages of their administrative careers approach leadership succession, Macmillan (1993) determined that as principals gained experience, they were less likely to resist the forces of an organization, and therefore less likely to create change in their new school environment. Referring to Senge's (1990) description of creative tension, which is defined as a conceptual tension between current reality and vision, Macmillan proposed that, with experience, current reality becomes more important to principals than vision. This may be partially a result of an understanding of what time and resources can be available in a given context, but also because of a clearer understanding of the barriers that an organization erects throughout succession processes. That is, experiences in previous organizations rather than professional, theoretical background significantly influence principals' responses to new organizations.

Contrasting two case studies that investigated the appointment and effectiveness of new superintendents, Firestone (1987) concluded that the effectiveness of a new superintendent relied on the support of the school board and on government regulations. He also identified a political process of negotiation involving teachers, administrators, and board members shaped by resources and regulations from higher levels of government. This interaction became a system of support for change which went "beyond the staff's current

zone of tolerance. . . " (Firestone, 1987, p. 371). Firestone's findings suggest that further investigation into the ways school communities are invited by school systems to participate in the appointment of a new principal may provide further understanding of the forces that shape the actions and responses of a principal new to a community.

Summary

This review of literature provided me with an understanding of five perspectives through which the phenomenon of leadership succession has been observed within the educational context. The first perspective explored the primary source of leadership succession research in an educational context. The second research tradition identified the perspective of how succession studies led to better understandings of the impact of leadership on the performance and climate of a school. The third perspective examined the influence of principal succession on student achievement. The fourth view of succession research explored principal socialization, while the fifth perspective attempted to identify predictable stages of succession.

Existing studies of administrator succession in school organizations are few, and remain inconclusive as to the effect leadership succession can have on a school organization. Positive, negative, or no effects lead one to the conclusion that the outcome of leadership succession experiences depend on the relationships among many variables in a particular organization.

Most succession studies focused on the principal, the search for outcomes

and the variables which may influence those outcomes, but failed to generate convincing new succession hypotheses (Ogawa, 1995). Therefore, principal succession research in the traditional sense may be nearing an end to its usefulness in leadership studies (Hart, 1993). The reality is that "... little is known about administrator succession, its effects on organizations, and the factors that may color those effects" (Ogawa, 1995, p. 379).

Clearly, what has not been adequately addressed in existing principal succession research is the influence that members of the school organization other than teachers and administrators may have in facilitating a leader's succession. Further, there is a tension between a principal's professional socialization experiences and his organizational socialization experiences that is influenced by factors in a school organization that have not been adequately explored in succession literature. These factors include students, support staff, parents and other involved community members. The school-based administrator is in a unique setting, sandwiched between system expectations and initiatives, community demands, student needs and teacher expectations. Schools are unique in that no two are the same, and the culture that exists in a school is reflective of many interacting forces.

An understanding of these five perspectives of principal succession has been necessary in order to provide an historical context of the phenomenon and also to provide understanding regarding the framework that has been selected for the purposes of this study.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

The Case Study

The intent of this study was for me to emerge with a better understanding of the complexities surrounding principal succession and to contribute to an increasing body of literature about the topic. I felt from the very beginning of my inquiry that in order to achieve my goals I wanted to study the phenomenon of principal succession through the experiences of a variety of stakeholders. I did not want to begin the research project from a perspective of proving or disproving my preconceived notions about the phenomenon. However I did want to understand if the experiences of all stakeholders were consistent with the experiences of teachers and principals as described by previous research (Fauske and Ogawa, 1987; Ogawa, 1991). Thus commenced my belief that a qualitative case study would be the most appropriate approach for me to observe the phenomenon of principal succession. I hoped that observations generated from an in-depth study of one succession experience would enable me to generate rich data that might aid in developing theory and hypotheses related to the phenomenon (Stake, 1981). Hart (1993) and Ogawa (1995) both called for additional cases to add to an increasing body of literature regarding principal succession. While I did not anticipate that this study would result in any

extraordinary findings, I did hope that it would add to the understandings we are beginning to have about the phenomenon of principal succession.

“The purpose of a case study is to determine why, not just what” (Gay, 1987, p. 207). I was interested in understanding why succession experiences vary, and felt that an in-depth case study would enable me to understand more about the critical interactions that influence the outcomes of a principal succession. As well, no previous published studies about principal succession had examined the feedback of all stakeholders in a school community during a succession experience and I believed that a case study of this nature could make an important contribution to the research tradition.

Merriam (1988) wrote that a case study is comprised of four essential properties; it is particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive. This case study possesses each of these properties. The study is particularistic in that it provides focuses on the particular phenomenon of principal succession. It is descriptive in that a rich, “thick” description of the phenomenon of principal succession “in terms of community values, deep-seated attitudes and notions, and the like” (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p. 119) is generated. Because the data gathered in this case “extend the reader’s experience” (Merriam (1988, p. 13) and lead “to a rethinking of the phenomenon being studied” (Stake, 1981, p. 47) the study possesses heuristic characteristics. I chose not to work from predetermined

hypotheses, and sought to discover “new relationships, concepts, and understanding” (Merriam, 1988, p. 13). The data in this case study invite the emergence of generalizations and concepts, thus making the study inductive in nature; readers may interpret the data according to their own experiences and understandings (Merriam, 1988).

Stake’s (1981) claim that knowledge learned from a case study is different from other research knowledge in four important ways may be an overstatement. However, it adds credibility to data gathered through a case study. Stake (1981) proposed that the case study is more concrete, more contextual, more developed by reader interpretation, and based more on reference populations determined by the reader.

The Data

For the purposes of this research project, data were gathered from three primary sources. The literature on principal succession provided examples of previous research, in addition to a variety of possible outcomes of this project. Interviews with study participants provided a rich narrative of the succession experience, told from many perspectives. A collection of relevant documents such as minutes from staff and parent council meetings and newsletters allowed me to see the messages the school chose to share with the community as well as the issues of relevance that arose during meetings.

Interviews

I felt that because the participants for this study were volunteers who came forward on their own, it was necessary for me to begin each interview with a brief review of the purposes of my study. I was concerned that the participants might come to the interview with agendas that strayed from the purposes of this research. I also wondered if some might have chosen to participate in order to give a message to the incoming principal regarding particular issues. I felt it was important to clarify that the research was not an evaluation of the incoming and outgoing principals, nor was it intended to be an evaluation of the work of the teachers in the school.

Each interview began with an informal conversation because I felt it was necessary to gain the trust of participants and also to help them feel comfortable with the presence of my tape recorder. I stressed that the interviews would be strictly confidential. I also informed the participants that the name of the school and the school district would not be revealed in any published work that resulted from this study. I took the opportunity to review the consent form that each participant or, in the case of the children, their legal guardian, was required to sign. A copy of the consent form is included as Appendix B. I felt that these initial steps addressed issues that needed to be discussed as each interview started, as identified by Taylor and Bogdan (1984).

The interviews were semi-structured. In an effort to, as closely as possible, synchronize the data collected from all respondents (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) I felt it was imperative that I ask each stakeholder to describe their experiences throughout similar time-periods of the succession. I divided each interview into two sections, asking the stakeholders to discuss their presuccession experiences and their postsuccession experiences. I rarely addressed the terms 'fear', 'enchantment', 'disenchantment' and 'accommodation' because I wanted to discover whether these theoretical stages identified by Fauske and Ogawa (1987) and Ogawa (1991) would spontaneously emerge. I wanted to ask questions that would investigate the stages of succession without inhibiting stakeholders from discussing thoughts, ideas and feelings that I had not anticipated. The steps I used to direct each interview were:

1. Describe and clarify the project, and obtain signatures on the authorization forms.
2. Obtain information about the participant's involvement in the school.
3. Frame the presuccession experience and the relationship the participant had with the outgoing principal.
4. Frame the postsuccession experience and relationship the participant had with the incoming principal.
5. Identify issues that arose as a result of the succession.
6. Seek overall impressions of the succession experience.

I chose to tape-record the interviews for a number of reasons. Primarily, I believed that "... it reduces the tendency of the interviewer to make an unconscious selection of data favoring his biases" (Borg & Gall, 1983, p. 444). As well, I would be able to replay the data and study intonation, perhaps giving me the opportunity to experience, once again, the emotions of the interviews. This assisted me in better understanding the feedback I received. By taping the interviews I allowed myself to become more involved in the conversations I had with respondents and less concerned about getting relevant information written down during the interview. Not writing during the interviews gave me an opportunity to interact with respondents without necessarily giving clues about information that particularly interested me. If they had seen me writing down certain information, perhaps respondents would have sought to continue providing similar information. A secondary reason for taping the interviews was that my handwriting can be difficult even for me to read. In spite of my understanding that a tape recorder may alter responses somewhat, I felt that with careful explanation of the reasons for taping the interviews, respondents would become less concerned about the presence of the tape recorder.

Related Documents

Document analysis provided another means for gathering data for this project. Merriam (1988) defined related documents as any data other

than those that have been gathered through interviews or observations. The documents I accessed for this study were minutes of the staff and parent council meetings, and newsletters or other correspondence sent from the school. Even though these documents may contain subjectively selected information, they are considered to be objective because they are not easily altered by the investigator (Merriam, 1988) and ground the inquiry in "real-world issues and day-to-day concerns" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 234). The meeting minutes provided valuable information regarding issues that arose at the school during the school year. From the meeting minutes I was able to identify issues of concern that I could listen for in interviews with participants in the study. Documentary data provided an opportunity for me to verify experiences and seek alternate perspectives of situations as described by respondents. Valuable data were gleaned from the documentation regarding the collective experience throughout this principal succession.

The Participants

The five groups of people interviewed for this research project were the principals, students, support staff, parents and faculty of the case school. A more detailed description of participants is included in chapter four where the case data are presented. However, to support the research design it is imperative to include some background about the participants and an understanding of how they were selected for the purposes of this

project.

Departing Principal

The departing principal had been employed by the school district for over twenty years. She had spent the last six years at the case school, as assistant principal for two and subsequently as principal for four. Her previous career experiences had been as classroom teacher and as a district specialist. She was seeking new experiences and her decision to leave precipitated the succession experience at the case school. Once she agreed to be interviewed for this project, we met in her office at her new school. Prior to this meeting we did not know each other very well. The departing principal and I had never worked together and we knew each other only well enough to exchange collegial greetings when we saw each other at large district meetings. It was my understanding that the outgoing principal was highly regarded in the school district for her work at the case school, and for her contributions to the district.

The outgoing principal was selected for this project by default when her successor volunteered for the study. My interview with the departing principal occurred at her new school. Her large desk was in the middle of her office; she sat on one side and I sat on the other. She appeared reluctant to discuss the events surrounding this succession experience, perhaps due to the fact that I neglected to establish a trusting relationship with her. However not long into the interview the departing

principal appeared to become more comfortable with me, and we shared an emotional time of tears and laughter as she recalled the events that described her departure from her previous school.

Incoming Principal

The incoming principal's career experiences had spanned a period of approximately twenty years with the same school district. Before her transfer to the case school, she experienced three years in her first principalship at a small inner-city school. Her career had been comprised of experiences as classroom teacher, teacher-librarian, district specialist and assistant principal. Through my conversations with teacher and administrator colleagues, I discovered that the incoming principal was well regarded in the school district. They described her as being deeply reflective and very professional. We originally met when, in my role as student advisor in the Faculty of Education, I visited the first school where she was the principal. We immediately seemed to be able to discuss with ease many issues, concerns and ideas.

In a conversation I had with the incoming principal before I embarked on this research project, she adamantly expressed her belief that more needed to be understood about principal succession. Because she was in the process of transferring from one school to another in her role as principal, I inquired whether or not she would be interested in participating in this research project. She readily agreed, subject to the

feedback of her staff, to invite me into her school community for the purpose of this research. Our interviews took place in the principal's office at the case school. She had furnished the office in an inviting manner with a stylish black round table and a black halogen pole lamp that provided a comforting, soft light.

When it became apparent that the incoming principal would be the subject for this research I made a difficult decision not to visit or socialize with her, except for the express purposes of the research, until the project was completed. I did not want to jeopardize the integrity of this research and felt that anything other than the most basic, professional relationship might unduly bias my interpretation of the data. This was a difficult decision because I would like to have forged a strong, collegial relationship with this individual.

Teachers and Support Staff

Of fifteen full-time teaching faculty members, four teachers and the assistant principal were interviewed for this project. Their experience ranged from a teacher in her second year of teaching, to one who was in her twentieth year of teaching. Three of five members of the support staff also volunteered to participate. Their experience in the school ranged from one to six years and their roles varied from teaching assistants to library assistant to the secretary.

When the research project was introduced to the staff at a staff

meeting, an invitation was simultaneously extended for participants who would be willing to be interviewed. All were given my telephone number to contact me if they wished to participate, or they were invited to speak with me during one of my visits to the school. I found that most individuals approached me in the hallways of the school, or left notes with the secretary for me to contact them. My interviews with the teaching staff occurred in individual classrooms or in the library. For interviews with the support staff, it was more difficult to find quiet, private spaces. In those cases, we borrowed the offices of the principal or assistant principal when they were away from the school, or we met in the library. I had never met any of the teaching faculty or support staff of this school previous to the research project.

Parents and Children

Once the research project had been discussed and approved by the faculty of the school and I was invited into the school environment, a note was sent home to parents regarding my research. I have included a copy of that letter as Appendix A. The note was included as part of the school's monthly newsletter. It briefly described the project and invited participation from community members, both adults and children. The note elicited responses from five parents, who also agreed to allow their children to participate in the project.

When I originally approached the school district regarding the

involvement of students in the project I was discouraged from including them. The school district was very concerned about any possible negative repercussions that might have arisen from the children's participation in this study. For this reason, I was reluctant to solicit the involvement of any children other than those who had volunteered along with their parents.

The parents I interviewed had varying levels of involvement in the school. One parent who lived within the school boundaries who was a teacher at another school in the same district, was rarely involved as a volunteer at the school but was able to participate through the parent council meetings. Another parent, who lived outside of the school boundaries drove her child to school each day and volunteered within the school almost every day. A third parent, who also lived within the school boundaries, was involved in the executive of the parent council and interacted with the principal almost weekly regarding school business. Two other parents, one from out of the school boundaries and one from within, volunteered infrequently in the school.

The children ranged in age from nine to eleven years, and in grade level from grade three to six. Each was a child of a parent who was also participating. No siblings were interviewed.

Interviews with parents took place in a variety of locations. One interview occurred in the assistant principal's office in his absence.

Another parent and I met in the cluttered storage room of the school library, because there seemed to be no other private spaces available. On three separate occasions I met with parents at the local bookstore where we sat at an outdoor café in the warm spring air.

Because I felt it was important to have the presence of adults other than myself nearby while interviewing the children, I chose to interview them in open spaces that permitted people to see us. This meant interviewing them in the library of the school where we could speak privately but remain visible. For two of my interviews with children, the parents brought the children to the local bookstore at different times and the children and I sipped cool drinks on the patio while we visited and their parents shopped in the store.

Analysis of the Data

Without question, the sorting and analysis of the data presented in this case became the most difficult and challenging aspect of the project for me. While participating in the interviews, reviewing documents and thinking about the case study before me I began to feel very confused about how I wanted to tell the story that I had seen emerge. I wanted to capture the essence of the people and the events I had come to know throughout my experience in the case school but at the same time remain focussed on the purpose of the study. The urge to simply write the story led to a disastrous initial draft that was perceived by my advisor to be

more like a novel than an academic study. My dilemma then was how to present the data with a balance that included academic integrity, the emergence of a story and a description of personalities and events that created the story.

Because the gathering and analysis of data is a "simultaneous process in qualitative research" (Merriam, 1988, p. 123) I was able to spend considerable time rethinking and reorganizing data throughout the process of gathering information. "Without ongoing analysis one runs the risk of ending up with data that are unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed" (Merriam, 1988, p. 124).

One of the difficult parts of this process for me was remaining focussed on the questions I had posed for the research. The nature of this project invited me to look at the school community I was studying from many vantages and many subsequent questions worthy of exploration began to emerge. To assist me in remaining focussed throughout the process of gathering data I carefully studied the theoretical stages of principal succession posed by Fauske and Ogawa (1987) and Ogawa (1991). I had to continually remind myself that one purpose of the study was to observe whether or not stakeholders other than teachers and principals experienced similar stages of succession. My advisor cautioned me to be open to results emerging from the data and not to be too intent

upon making my data fit into another researcher's categories. With this in mind, I proceeded to transcribe the recorded interviews.

Interview Transcripts

Transcribing the interviews became an important opportunity for me to revisit and reconsider each interview. I chose to complete my own transcripts because I could then listen to intonation, replay certain parts of the interview and become much more integrally involved with the data (Gay, 1987; Merriam, 1988). Although a lengthy process, it was very worthwhile and enabled me to observe the case school from yet another perspective. I was able to distance myself from the attachment I felt to the people involved and to become more objective with the data.

Categorizing the Data

Categorizing the data "involves looking for recurring regularities in the data." (Merriam, 1988, p. 133) The nature of the interviews allowed me to quickly categorize the data by the role each person had in the school. This was the easy part. Much more challenging for me was the process of determining convergent themes throughout each interview, and between representative groups. I was continually questioning whether or not I was forcing data into categories. Keeping in mind the importance of limiting the categories to a manageable number (Borg & Gall, 1983; Gay, 1987; Merriam, 1988) I proceeded to reread the transcripts and once again study the documents I had gathered. While reading I jotted down

impressions and possible themes that emerged from the data.

It was after the process of rereading and attempting to categorize the data I had gathered that I made the difficult decision to adopt the theoretical stage framework of principal succession that Fauske and Ogawa (1987) and Ogawa (1991) had applied to their case studies of principal succession. I made the decision for two reasons. One of my primary goals was to determine if the framework applied to all stakeholders in a school community. Therefore it was imperative that I address whether or not the data I gathered could be similarly categorized. Another reason I made the decision to adopt their framework was the emergence of similar themes from the data I had gathered.

It was very difficult to attempt to detach myself from my own predictions and biases. As well, I found it amusingly frustrating when the story in this case did not emerge in the way I felt it should. I was constantly checking myself during the writing stage to ensure that I was not manipulating the outcome of this case study.

Limitations

Considerations that may limit the generalization of the findings of this study are varied. The limitations of interviewing are many and need to be accounted for in interpreting the data gathered for the study. My own biases and desired outcomes of the study need also be considered. External factors such as the contractual bargaining in which teachers were

involved during this study may also have limited the outcome of the study.

This study was restricted to the perceptions and feelings of the representatives who volunteered to be interviewed. The fact that they volunteered to be interviewed meant that respondents had something they wanted to say. The tendency of a respondent to give inaccurate or incorrect responses in an interview is called the response effect (Borg & Gall, 1983). Sometimes respondents choose to give inaccurate information in order to support their own agendas. Sometimes a respondent is keen to please the interviewer (Borg & Gall, 1983) and therefore provides information she thinks the interviewer wants to hear. The questions asked by the interviewer also contribute to the response effect because, if not careful, an interviewer may "seek out answers that support his preconceived notions. . ." (Borg & Gall, 1983, p. 438).

For this case study I was seeking retrospective recollection of the succession so respondents may have forgotten key points or may have replayed experiences so often in their minds that the real events may have become distorted. Interview data may also have been distorted by my own predisposition, and by the way in which participants responded to me. However I felt at ease with the respondents and having spent several years in school environments I believe I was able to interact reasonably well with all of them. Interview data were further limited by my own lack

of experience with gathering data in this manner. The only children interviewed for this study were children of parent participants. Therefore, their recollection of the succession experience may have been distorted as a result of conversations with their parents regarding the study.

At the time of the study teachers were involved in a labor dispute with their school district. A work-to-rule campaign that directed teachers to work within the confines of their contract led to difficulty in arranging meeting times for school business and may have led to the emergence of issues from all that were attributed to the succession experience.

The timing of this study may also have contributed to the outcomes. The interviews took place near the end of the school year in which the succession had occurred. Stakeholders were tired, and very involved in the work of finishing off the school year. The school district's reluctance to allow me to interview children and their insistence on selecting the school community for the study led to an eleven week delay in receiving permission to commence the project thereby severely limiting my opportunities for observing in the school over a longer period of time.

Ethics

I made application and adhered to the ethics guidelines stipulated by the Joint Research Ethics Committee, the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary and the school district of the school community I studied. The guidelines stipulated that research subjects remain

anonymous and that the names of the school district, school and subjects of the study not be divulged. I provided consent forms outlining ethical considerations for each of the subjects (see Appendix B). According to the law of the province in which the study took place, parents or legal guardians were asked to review the ethical considerations of the study on behalf of minors. The consent forms stipulated that transcripts, tapes and any other identifying materials would be destroyed once the study has been completed.

While the incoming principal was keen to participate in the project, I had difficulty obtaining permission from the school district to proceed with the study. The school district representative in charge of making such decisions felt that she should choose the school community I was to study. After some discussion she agreed that I could go ahead with this study because the school community I had selected was considered to be strong and the succession story I wanted to study was deemed to have been a positive experience. I was concerned about this interference because I wondered how one could possibly learn from data gathered only in positive environments. However, I was delighted to have finally received permission to go ahead with the study.

Chapter IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

One School Community's Responses to a Principal Succession

In this chapter I describe how members of one school community responded to the succession of a principal. In some instances I have employed direct quotes from interview transcripts in an attempt to share the intensity of the feelings experienced by different stakeholders within the community. The first section of the chapter provides a description of the school setting in which this research occurred. The next two sections of the chapter reflect the responses of the members of the school community throughout both their presuccession and postsuccession experiences.

The Setting

The school that was accessed for this study was one of over two hundred twenty schools within a large urban public school district in western Canada. A majority of the two hundred seventy-one students who attended the school lived in the surrounding area. Some students were brought from other parts of the city by parents who were drawn to the school by its reputation of academic excellence. In fact, at the time of the study there was a waiting list for students who lived outside of the community boundaries of the school. Most of the students were children of professional, well-educated parents and a majority of the families

enjoyed the presence of both parents in the home. According to some parents and staff, many of the families had chosen to purchase homes in this particular neighborhood in spite of comparatively high real estate values in the area to ensure that their children would be able to attend this specific school.

The school building, a low, flat-roofed structure constructed of gray concrete was twenty-three years old. Some orange and blue metal trim edged the perimeter of the roof and small square windows were placed sparingly along the front wall of the school. A parking lot at one end of the building provided parking for the faculty and staff. Very little shrubbery and only a few small trees were planted on the school grounds, and a large playing field made the building appear small. An asphalt area at the back of the school provided a play surface for the children, and a play structure with ladders and a slide was included in the playground area. Portable classrooms had been connected to one end of the school.

The main entrance led into a hallway with the kindergarten on one side and the office on the other. The library was located in the center of two long wings of the building. Classrooms on either side of the library were open and inviting. A corridor from the back of the library led to the portable classrooms. The walls of painted white brick contained framed pieces of children's art work with description cards, similar to what one might find in a museum or art gallery. I noted that the school appeared

very clean and that jackets and shoes were neatly placed on hooks and shelves. On my first visit to the school, there were no children in attendance and the tone of the school was hushed and quiet. The feeling did not change significantly during subsequent visits when children were there. People seemed to respect the atmosphere of the school.

During my visits to the school the children with whom I came into contact were polite, welcoming and often curious regarding my presence in the school. The staff were always welcoming and made efforts to ensure that I was comfortable and had access to refreshments and supplies. Once the purpose for my frequent visits was identified to the staff, they expressed interest in the research I was conducting and were particularly curious regarding my discoveries. Parents in the school were always introduced to me, and they too expressed an interest in the work I was doing.

Presuccession

In order for principal succession to occur there must be a decision made at some level that the process of replacing one principal with another is going to begin. In this case the departing principal made the decision to move and in so doing she initiated a series of responses to her decision from all stakeholders involved in the school community. The feelings and actions of members of the school community during presuccession are represented in this section.

The Decision to Leave

The events that initiated this principal succession were deeply personal and private for the departing principal. She described the time during which she made her decision to leave this school as being particularly “lonely and strange”. This school district supported a policy that encouraged principals to begin considering a change of schools by their fourth year in one location. Such a policy may have led to speculation on the part of many within the school and within the district as to the intentions of the departing principal. However, at this point she had neither discussed her considerations regarding a change with anyone at the school nor in an official capacity with her superintendent and other colleagues. She did know that she was at a point where she was seeking new challenges and a change.

The departing principal’s career with the school district had spanned a period of over twenty years and comprised the roles of teacher, district specialist and school administrator. Her role as principal in this school had included a strong emphasis on staff development. While she did not have scheduled teaching responsibilities she did strive to interact with the children on a daily basis and to occasionally team-teach with faculty.

Having worked in this school over a period of six years, first as assistant principal and then as principal, she had begun to consider the

possibility of moving on. Some opportunities at a system level had recently been advertised and she thought that would be a challenge she would like to experience. At the same time she wondered about the option of taking on another school that would offer challenges different from the ones she had experienced in her current placement. "This was not an easy decision. Our school had recently outperformed even high-ranking private schools on the provincial exams, and I was happy with where the school was at." But somehow she felt that it was time to go. "I needed to leave. . . I felt like a high point in the school had been reached and it was a good time to leave." This principal wanted one more professional opportunity and challenge before her retirement. She made a decision to discuss possible alternatives with her superintendent.

Sharing the Decision

Initially, with her decision to leave the school remaining private and somewhat personal, the departing principal chose not to share her considerations with many at the school. Although she had discussed the possibility of her departure with her assistant principal, she had not shared her final decision with him. As well, she had confided in her friend and secretary that she was contemplating a move and that it was not going to be easy. "I didn't want to upset anyone. I didn't care to have people talking about something that might not happen. What if a move hadn't happened? Then I would have upset everyone for nothing." The

departing principal approached her area superintendent with her decision to seek new challenges.

In conversation with the superintendent, the departing principal expressed an interest in a system level position that she knew would be available. When the departing principal's application for the system position was unsuccessful, the superintendent identified a different challenge and asked this principal to consider moving to a significantly larger school. It really was not a position this principal had in mind for herself, and she was not sure it would be the kind of challenge she was, in fact, seeking. The position required someone who would be able to work effectively with a school community that had endured a rapid succession of principals over a short period of time. The community to which this principal was being asked to go was furious as a result of the superintendent's refusal to promote the existing assistant principal to the role of principal of the school. The community outcry had been vocal and highly publicized in the local media. It was clear that this community did not welcome the prospect of still another school administrator, and that they were not going to make the transition simple. It took much soul-searching and consideration, as well as considerable encouragement from the superintendent, before the principal accepted the challenge that she had been offered. Upon the principal's acceptance, the superintendent made the recommendation to the board of trustees and it was ratified.

It was not until this principal's new placement had been ratified by the board of trustees that she felt comfortable sharing her decision to leave her current school with staff, children and parents. "I didn't want to shake them up or cause undue upset." The departing principal shared that telling the staff she was leaving was perhaps one of the more difficult conversations she had encountered as a principal. "I thought and thought about what I was going to say, how I was going to make this a celebration and not some dreary announcement." In her conversation with the staff, she chose not to discuss the circumstances awaiting her at the new school because she did not want to cast a negative light on her departure. With the exception of the Parent Council Chairperson whom she personally called, the parents were notified of the principal's impending departure through a letter that was sent home with the children. The teachers were asked to share the news of her departure with the children before the letter was sent home.

The First Response – Fear

During interviews with each stakeholder, fear emerged as the first response to the news regarding the principal's departure. This response was consistent with that described by Fauske and Ogawa (1987). In this case it was noted that all stakeholders felt fear. Fauske and Ogawa framed 'detachment' as an initial response. However, as discussed later in this chapter detachment emerged at a later stage in this particular succession.

experience. Not all representatives who were interviewed identified the emotion of fear by name but they described feelings and actions that seemed to relate to their fears.

The Departing Principal

The departing principal's fears were not connected to her concern for the school organization where she currently worked. Her fears were about her ability to meet the challenges of the situation awaiting her at the new school. In spite of fear and trepidation regarding the circumstances into which she was going, this principal knew for certain that she would be leaving her current school. What had initially been a pursuit of new challenges had become the likes of which the departing principal had never imagined for herself. She knew she had the support of her superintendent. She knew that the community to which she would be going had been informed she was someone who would understand their aspirations and concerns. However, she felt finished before she had even begun. Her fears were not rooted in what would happen to her current school community once she left. Rather, they rested in the anticipated responses she would receive within her new school community. She wondered how she could possibly be successful in this new environment.

Another fear expressed by the departing principal was a concern for her current teaching staff. She had hired, mentored and supported these people and wondered how her decision to leave would impact them

in their personal and professional lives. She also wondered how this staff would respond should a principal who was new to their organization “not understand the work they were about.” The departing principal felt that her staff was special in the knowledge they possessed about teaching and learning and that a new principal could either enhance or destroy the work they were doing. She took comfort in the understanding that they would have the continuity of the assistant principal, whom she understood to be staying at the school. She shared this understanding with people to help alleviate their fears about her leaving.

The Children

The children who were interviewed expressed their fears about the departure of their principal by talking about the aspects of the school that made them feel confident and secure. Rather than being concerned that a new principal would change their world, they talked about the things that would cause their world to stay the same, referring specifically to parents, teachers and their assistant principal. One student said, “I don’t think a principal is somebody you get really attached to like a teacher.” The children felt very secure in their understanding that their interests would be looked after by staff and parents. Said one student “. . . I know that [the assistant principal] would not stand for a not so good principal. . . .” Another student felt reassured that “very rarely is there not somebody who’s a nice principal. . . because they’ve got to be very dedicated to want

to do that.”

The Parents

With the exception of the Parent Council Chairperson, whom the departing principal personally called, the parent population of the school community received a letter drafted by the departing principal explaining that she would be leaving. For those interviewed, with the exception of one, this was the first official indication they had received that they would be losing their principal. Preceding the letter, there had been rumours in the community that the assistant principal of the school would be leaving; they were certain he would be seeking a principalship.

The parents were taken aback at the sudden announcement that their school principal would be leaving, and responded with a need to react to the situation as they would in any emergency. Their response may be indicative of a fear of the unknown. They described a need to be quick and immediate in their response to the news, although when asked they could not verbalize exactly what it was that needed to be done. The parents interviewed found it difficult to explain why they felt a need to respond quickly, indicating that in retrospect it probably had something to do with the sudden nature of the news. One parent said, “It was a ball that came from nowhere.” Another parent observed, “Some parents really didn’t care, and obviously didn’t realize the importance of what was happening.”

Parents described a series of events that included phone calls to each other, meetings for coffee and evening visits during which they co-planned their responses to the impending departure of the school principal. Teachers indicated that parents would “stop us in the halls to see how we were feeling, and to pump us about who might be coming to the school.” One parent interviewed shared that her biggest worry during the presuccession phase was the resistance that existed within the community regarding the departing principal’s focus on academic excellence. She said that she worried because the school council was strong and outspoken, and that a new principal might “. . . be bowled over by all these parents coming and saying we want a principal who gives us more fun. . . .”

The Teachers

It was the teachers with the least teaching experience who were outwardly shocked or surprised that the principal would be leaving. The more experienced teachers interviewed seemed to have a sense that the change was imminent and appeared to have anticipated the impending change of principal. However all teachers did initially express an element of fear which appeared to be rooted in a concern about who the new principal would be and how that principal would view the work of the school. All the teachers referred to their respect for the current principal and, as stated by one teacher, expressed a concern that the system would

never be able to find someone who was "... as committed to teaching and learning. . . ." as the current principal. Another teacher expressed that the principal's departure made her "... uneasy because we didn't know the direction the school would be going, and where we would go as a staff. . . ." Many of the teachers interviewed took some comfort in their belief that the existing assistant principal would automatically become the principal of the school, and experienced further issues of fear when it became evident that possibility would not occur. For some teachers, the fear they felt when hearing that their principal would be leaving was experienced a second time when they heard rumours that the assistant principal would also be leaving the school.

The teachers' fear also stemmed from a concern for their current principal, and the situation into which she was heading. Once they were aware of the volatile, highly publicized community into which she would be going, they became afraid for her welfare. They expressed concern about her decision to go there, and some believed that she had been forced into the move. Said one teacher, "I can see why the system would place her there, but I resent that they have forced her to leave something so good to go to something so awful. Just because she is good, she is being punished."

The Support Staff

The support staff I interviewed described a fear of how the new

principal would view them in their roles and what changes were in store for them. Although there seemed to be a clear positional order of value for the support staff, their perceived importance within the school seemed to be supported by a possession of information about the community or who knew most about what was happening. This was consistently established early in each of the interviews conducted with support staff. One person interviewed knew that she was the confidante of many, including teachers, parents and administrators and that she was the person who was viewed as the holder of information. People would frequently go to her and ask what was happening in the school. She was one of the first people in the school to know that the principal was considering a change. Further, she indicated that she was one of the first individuals to know who the new principal would be. She valued the authority that this knowledge gave her and enjoyed it when people counted on her for what she knew. She wondered if the new principal would continue to confide in her and count on her for the knowledge she possessed about the school community. "Of course I was losing a friend but I wondered if the new principal would hold me in the same regard as [the departing principal]."

Another support staff member interviewed was dismayed because she did not know the principal would be leaving until the official announcement was made at a staff meeting. However, the same person

had been privy to a variety of rumours and said, "... you always hear rumours that this is happening and this is possibly what could happen and things like that. . . ." This same person expressed frustration because of the secrecy that existed concerning the knowledge of the impending departure of the principal. She could not understand why other people were "in the know" and she had not been told. "I find that it's most frustrating because decisions are made by staff and kept secret until it can be made formal. . . ."

All support staff who were interviewed valued the friendship they felt toward the departing principal. They spoke about how they appreciated the personal level on which they had known this principal and how she had been such a support to them through times of personal strife. For them, they felt the impending departure of their friend at a very personal level. Support staff members were also very concerned about the situation into which the departing principal was going, and while they understood that it was time for her to leave they appeared to wonder if perhaps this had been a poor decision on her part. They were worried about their friend.

The support staff felt valued by the departing principal and feared losing this sense of support. All but one support staff member perceived that the principal had the authority to increase or decrease their hours of work, thus determining their value or importance within the school.

There was a fear that a new principal would value the support staff differently than the departing principal had, and that an incoming principal had the authority to assign workload and hours of work in a different way. Said one individual, "I was hoping that the new principal would be able to consider all staff in an equal light, meaning support staff considered as important as the teaching staff." The same person also valued the sense of professionalism with which the departing principal had treated her and was concerned that a new principal might not value support staff in these ways. All support staff wondered about how the new principal would treat them. They felt particularly vulnerable and feared that the new principal had authority to drastically change their roles.

Detachment

Fauske and Ogawa (1987) identified the stage of detachment as one in which individuals felt removed from the process of succession. They identified a sense of powerlessness among teachers that related to their lack of involvement in selecting a new principal. They also suggested that teachers began to minimize the influence the succession would have upon themselves and the organization. In this case study, the sense of detachment described by Fauske and Ogawa was generally experienced by the teachers and support staff. However other stakeholders expressed detachment in different ways. The departing principal's sense of

detachment was identified as a sense of being in two different places, and having responsibility in both. She expressed confidence in her staff. In spite of her concerns for them she felt that she could move on and "... they would continue to be okay." The children in this case did not feel detached or removed from the principal or the process of succession. The parent's expressed a detachment from the way things were currently operating at the school and felt a new sense of power in setting the future direction of the school.

The Departing Principal

Once the decision of the board of trustees was finalized and the reality of the outgoing principal's impending transition was evident, this principal began to shift her thinking away from her initial fears. "I thought, well, this could be very, very interesting." Detachment for the departing principal included a time of reflection and quiet personal celebration. She began to consider her successes and what had led to them. "I thought about the loving children whom I knew so well after spending essentially their entire six years at elementary school with them. I thought about the parents, especially the interesting ones, if you know what I mean. . . ." The principal's thoughts also included a reflection of the aspirations staff members had for the school. She felt a sense of efficacy that allowed her to know she might possibly enjoy the opportunity of recreating some of the ways of being that had led to the

successes her current school was experiencing.

The principal expressed that an important aspect of her departure from this school community was the feeling that she was in two places at once. While not physically expected to work in two schools, once the appointment had been made she did sense that emotionally and mentally she was in two schools. "While I was trying to close down one school, say goodbye properly, deal with the emotional aspect of it. . . I was wondering what my introductory speech at the new school would be in order to overcome all of the hoopla that had existed."

The principal was not able to identify at what point she no longer felt divided between being the outgoing principal in her current school and being the incoming principal at the new school. "Perhaps it was over the summer, when I spent time at the new school wandering the halls, reading past newsletters and attempting to become a part of this new place. I don't think it was some magical moment when I left the previous school for the last time."

The Parents

For parents the phase of detachment manifested itself through a sense of urgency. Rather than becoming detached from the process of succession, many of the parents in this case felt a need to become integrally involved in the process of selecting a new principal. The parents' sense of detachment, then, was to become detached from the

current principal and her expectations, and to identify what they felt was needed in a new principal in order to move the school organization forward.

Some parents rallied to be involved in the process of working with the superintendent to identify characteristics they would value in a new principal. This was their opportunity to detach themselves from their loyalties to the current principal in order to seek changes they had been considering. They believed that their voice would be heard by the superintendent and by the incoming principal.

The Teachers

Teachers were invited to participate in the process of identifying the characteristics they would value in a different principal. This particular school system's process of replacing a principal involved a collaborative effort with the school community in determining the needs of the community. Consistent with Fauske and Ogawa's (1987) findings, many teachers expressed concern that this was just a formality and their voices would not be heard. Said one teacher, "... you can't vote for your leader; your leader is appointed to you. So democracy is out the window." Another teacher commented, "... there are a lot of conversations like that that aren't followed through... but I did trust that they would find somebody that would carry on the work..."

The teachers expressed that they felt quite removed from the

process of finding a new principal. As one teacher said, "... we were caught in the middle. The parents over here, the superintendent over there." Although some of the teachers speculated about who the new principal would be, their guesses were confined to informal conversations with colleagues, parents, the administrators and support staff. "We were constantly trying to figure out who it was. . . it drove us crazy not to know who it was. But we had no say. The decision wasn't ours to make."

The Support Staff

The support staff interviewed had no sense of inclusion in the process of selecting a new principal or being part of the decisions that were being made on behalf of the school. Speculated one individual, "The best thing we could do was to stay out of the way and hope for the best." Said another member of the support staff, "... we're not here to make decisions for the school. We are here to support the work and the decisions made by teachers and administrators. If we don't like the new principal it is up to us to leave this school. It isn't up to us to try to influence the way that person works." While the latter comment may not have been indicative of the thoughts of all support staff members, it is representative of how they felt about their involvement in the succession process.

Expectation

Fauske and Ogawa (1987) described the stage of expectation as one

of anticipation of change and a time to consider the qualities, characteristics and abilities of the incoming principal. They indicated that this is a time when a faculty begins to consider their wishes for the school and the characteristics they would like to see in a new principal. In this study it was found that all stakeholders anticipated change and possessed hopes and dreams for the future of their school. The actions and feelings demonstrated during the phase of detachment appear to have influenced how expectations were expressed. Those who felt the process was happening to them and that they had no control over it, also believed they had little or no control over the future of the school. Those who felt that the succession provided an opportunity for significant change and that they had control over the direction of those changes expected that their wishes would be met. Others felt that too many changes could be a dangerous outcome of the succession.

The Departing Principal

At this point, the departing principal felt that it was part of her work to reassure her current school community that all would be well, that they would be looked after and that the person who replaced her would be well intended and hard working. "I remember having conversations with people telling them not to worry, and that it would be just fine." She also took it upon herself to encourage a colleague, who in her opinion could best replace her, to apply for the position. She

contacted this person and also suggested to the superintendent that this would be the right candidate for the school. The departing principal's expectation was that she could have some control over how people were responding to her departure, and that by selecting the candidate who would replace her she could feel confident that the work she had initiated would continue.

The Children

All of the children interviewed expressed an expectation that a new principal would facilitate changes in the school, but they were not able to articulate what those changes might be. "Maybe it's how the teachers teach or something like that. . . ." speculated one student. One student seemed to understand that the new principal might change some of the rules. He was very specific in his wish that the new principal would change the rule about riding bicycles across the field.

The Parents

All of the parents who were interviewed identified the impending change of principal as an opportunity to seek change in the school. Some were sensitive with their remarks and said, ". . . we didn't want [the departing principal] to feel that her work had not been valued. . . ." Others were more assertive in their feelings and actions, insisting that ". . . this was our opportunity to change the things we didn't like about this school." Not all of the parents agreed on what changes needed to occur.

One parent I interviewed expressed concern that resistance existed within the community regarding the departing principal's focus on academic excellence. In stark comparison another parent remarked that "... yes, learning and academics are important but this place has no spirit or sense of what it is like to be a child!"

The Teachers

The teachers spoke about the excitement of the prospect of change, and reflected that the change could result in something new and enriching for the school. While they appeared to value the comfort of working with established expectations, they concurrently valued the potential of the change that would occur. However, none of the teachers interviewed could articulate the kinds of changes they would find beneficial. The teachers spoke of the commitment the staff had to their work, and as one teacher reflected, "... the staff felt very cocky and sure of ourselves in that we had strong leadership, we had this wonderful vision as a group, and we felt slightly invincible." They expressed their confidence that the school system would be reluctant to place a principal in the school who did not understand the work these teachers so highly valued. As one teacher commented, "... I knew the reputation that the school had and I really couldn't believe that someone would be put here that couldn't carry on."

The representative teachers referred to the expectation of difficulty

a new principal would likely face with the parent community. The teachers spoke frankly about how some parent members of the community had a clear and vocal agenda for change, and that these parents did not realize the support most of the policies and existing beliefs received from the teachers at the school. The teachers believed that some of the parents saw the outgoing principal as the "... instigator of many of the things that [the parents] didn't support", not realizing that in the opinion of the teachers the new principal would be more likely to support existing practices. The teachers believed that the district "... wouldn't dare put a principal in this school who won't understand and support all the work and decisions we have made around teaching and learning."

The Support Staff

For the majority of the support staff interviewed, their expectations of the forthcoming principal succession were based in their fears of the unknown. "Not knowing who the principal was and what I was going to be facing in my job is a little bit of a scary situation." One person expressed her hope that "the school would be able to maintain that same level of effectiveness under the leadership of a new principal; that the present philosophy would be adhered to." She expected that whether or not that goal would be achieved would depend upon the incoming principal.

In general, the support staff expressed an expectation that their

roles in the school would be greatly influenced by the decisions of the principal. They also expressed that they had no control over the decisions the principal would make regarding their work assignments. "I hoped that we would be able to work amicably and that we would get along. I had never ever worked for a difficult administrator and that was my greatest fear." The support staff felt vulnerable to the expectations, beliefs and whims of the incoming principal.

Farewell Rituals

The school community rallied to say farewell to the departing principal. Through an organized farewell assembly and through personal gifts, phone calls and conversations many members of the community found a way to say goodbye and to share expressions of gratitude and good luck with her. When adults in the school community were asked about the ways they had said farewell to the departing principal they clearly recalled the gifts she had received, the assembly they had carefully planned and how members of the community had expressed feelings of care and concern for her. Said one parent, "It was important to me that she know how much we cared for her and how much we valued what she had done for our children." A teacher, with tears in her eyes said, "I don't know how you can tell someone as wonderful as [the departing principal] how much you appreciate her."

When the children were queried about the ways they said goodbye

to the departing principal the responses reflected vague and unclear memories. Said one, "I think some of us made her a card and bought her some gifts or something like that." In speaking of the farewell assembly a student said, "I didn't really have much to do with it. My teacher told us we were having an assembly and we went and they gave [the departing principal] a present." Another student said, "I don't know how we said goodbye. Saying goodbye didn't seem right because I hoped she would come back to see how we were doing." The children expressed a desire for the departing principal to return to the school and share in their celebrations and accomplishments.

The school year ended and the children went home after the last day of school with no sense of who their new principal would be. The teachers gathered for a luncheon at the home of one of the staff as they might in any other year. They still did not know who their new principal would be. However, because the appointment of the new principal had been made official that very morning the departing principal was able to announce the name of the new principal at the gathering.

Postsuccession

Postsuccession is the stage of principal succession during which the new principal arrives and assumes the role of principal within the school organization. In this case, the new principal was not appointed until after the school had closed for the summer. Therefore, parents and students

did not know who the new principal would be. They were informed through a letter sent from the district office to their homes early in the summer break. As I previously explained, the name of the new principal was announced during the last day the teachers would be at the school and her name was shared with the teaching and support staff at a year-end gathering which took place at the secretary's home. In this section the feelings and actions of members of the school community during postsuccession are represented.

The Incoming Principal

The incoming principal had worked with the school district for almost twenty years. She had been a teacher, teacher librarian, district specialist, assistant principal and principal. Her first principalship had extended over a period of three years in a small, diverse inner-city school with approximately 100 children. This change of schools would be her second principalship.

As the decision regarding her transfer to a different school had not been finalized until after school closed, the incoming principal did not know until the summer months that she would be leaving one school to go to a new one. She left her previous school at the end of the school year fully intending to return in the fall. However, in the fall she was no longer at her former school. She expressed dismay that the decision regarding her transfer had not been made earlier in the year. Had that happened,

she felt that she would have been able to detach herself from the previous school community in a manner that better suited her belief that organizations are characterized through people's interactions. She felt cheated because she had not been able to say a proper farewell to children, staff and parents at her former school. Simultaneously she wondered how it must have felt to be a child or teacher at either of the schools, not knowing who the principal would be prior to the summer break. She spoke about the unfairness to children and her belief that "sometimes we ask [children] to simply accept too much."

When discussing how the school system had facilitated her transfer the incoming principal replied, "... it wasn't non support. . . nor was it support. It was just kind of an absence. . . ." In spite of her feelings, the incoming principal believed that initial steps into a school organization would either "make or break the work I would be able to do in this community." Both she and the superintendent drafted letters introducing her as the new principal. The letters were sent to the school community.

Beginning Relationships - Enchantment

Each of the stakeholders who were interviewed spoke about initial impressions and the opportunity to begin new relationships with the incoming principal. They were able to relate the feelings they experienced at this critical time in the postsuccession experience. Ogawa (1991) labeled this as a time of enchantment. During this stage teachers arrived at the

conclusion that the new principal was committed to the school. In spite of the uncertainty they feared during this stage the teachers generally approached the succession optimistically.

The Incoming Principal

It was important to the new principal that she become drawn into the story and culture of the school and to become familiar with the relationships and the work that existed in the school organization. She identified a need to feel welcomed into the culture as a part of the process of familiarization and indicated that the gracious way she was welcomed by the members of the organization made all the difference in terms of her initial work. The incoming principal identified a desire to be included. She enjoyed the opportunity to meet with staff members in official gatherings such as staff and team planning meetings. She highly valued the opportunity to meet with individuals unofficially when they dropped by her office or when standing in hallways and with groups at lunch. Similarly she met with parents in both official and unofficial settings when they booked appointments with her or when they simply dropped by the school to meet her.

The incoming principal expressed discomfort in the beginning when people would ask her questions about processes and procedures because she was the new person and wanted to honor the existing procedures. In these instances she would take the opportunity to learn

about the processes in place by asking, "Tell me how we've done it in the past and then give me your best advice", thus negotiating an understanding of how the school currently worked. The new principal felt she needed to "... walk beside the people for a while before I could even, in any sort of intelligent or informed way enter into the discussion about the [ways the school would function]." The incoming principal felt that the school "... had functioned very, very successfully for many years. . . ." and identified that her initial work was simply to learn about that and "...not to be asserting this or to be insisting that or to be making many changes. Rather to be moving with the cultural stream of the school and making my contribution where I could. . . ." The incoming principal expressed her belief that the understanding that a new principal would change what exists in a school and not honor the successful work of the school was arrogant and she questioned the motivation that compelled some of her colleagues to act in that way. She indicated that from all appearances this was a school where there was "... really no indication that things needed to be much different than they had been." The incoming principal indicated that she would have no reason to insist on or assert her views unless, in her opinion, existing practices at the school were harmful to the children. She believed that her work in the beginning was to get to know the people of the organization and seek opportunities to be invited into the work of the school.

The Children

Some of the children recalled that their parents had spoken at length with each other once they knew the new principal's name. From listening to their parents, several of the children indicated that they had learned the new principal was "... really very good. . ." and looked forward to meeting her.

The children indicated that they had not spent a significant amount of time considering who the new principal at their school would be, although all indicated that they had spent some time engaging in conversation about the topic. They spoke with friends and their parents about what this new person in their school would do. They all remembered the first time they met the new principal. For one student, it was during the summer because his mother had been active on the school council and was in the school doing some work. He remembered that the new principal had chatted with him in the library. It made him feel important and he remembered that his friends "... thought it was cool. . ." that he had met the new principal. These friends asked him a lot of questions about "whether she was mean and stuff like that. . . ."

Other children remembered seeing a new person in the school whom they assumed was the new principal. They recalled an assembly during which people new to the school were introduced, including the new principal, which gave them a more formal opportunity to meet her.

Some children also commented on the fact that the new principal made visits to their classrooms to observe, which gave them a chance to meet her.

All of the children interviewed related that some time was necessary in order to establish a relationship of trust with the incoming principal. They all felt that issues they previously would have discussed with the former principal would now be discussed with the assistant principal with whom they were more familiar. The new principal's visits to classrooms and conversations with children assisted in the establishment of relationships of trust.

Decisions made by the principal were important in the process of building trusting relationships. Regarding the issue of whether bicycles could be ridden across the field, one student said, "She didn't really say the rule was changing. We just watched and one day a kid rode his bike on the field and she didn't say anything so we knew the rule had been changed." The same student indicated that he knew at that critical point that he could go to the new principal for help or assistance. Another decision that the children connected with the new principal concerned outdoor school. One student reflected, "When [the incoming principal] came we got to have outdoor school. She made that decision and it really helps students." Consistent with Ogawa's (1991) findings regarding teachers during the stage of enchantment, the children expressed

confidence in the incoming principal.

The Parents

The parents in this particular case began to establish their relationship with the incoming principal even before they met her. Upon receiving the letter the district office had sent to introduce the new principal, the parents began to phone each other in order to glean information about this person. Some of the parents of children in the school were teachers elsewhere in the same school system and were viewed as having access to information about the new principal. They became one critical source of information and were relied on by other members of the community to identify how effective the new principal had been in her previous school. One parent who spoke with me explained how a colleague had worked with the incoming principal at her previous school. She explained, "... I had heard for two years how wonderful this principal was so to find out that we were getting her here made it very, very reassuring." Another source of information about the new principal was the former principal. One parent said, "I phoned [the previous principal] and asked if she knew the new principal. She said yes. I asked if she had the same philosophy and she said yes. And that was good enough for me to say we would be fine."

Some parents relied on their children for information about the new principal. They would ask their children what they thought of the new

principal, and then form their opinions based upon their children's responses. Said one parent, "Talk about the new principal of the school was the topic of conversation at our dinner table on more than one occasion. I found that my children were an excellent source of information."

Many opportunities for parents to meet the new principal were informal and unscheduled. They took place in the school's corridors where conversations were generally social in nature and usually not focussed on the work of the school. Some parents who had special concerns regarding their children made appointments to meet the new principal. The first Parent Council meeting early in the fall afforded parents an opportunity to officially meet the new principal. Parent's expressed that in the first official meeting the incoming principal appeared to be more relaxed than her predecessor had been. The parents indicated that she seemed more willing to share information and receive feedback. "She seemed less defensive and more willing to admit that some things happening in the school might not be working well." Another parent mused, "I think it took our people a while to warm up to her. That's just the way we are. We're apprehensive at first."

The parents in this case expressed an increased level of comfort with the succession once they began to know the new principal either through her reputation, through hearsay or through their own meetings

with her. The parents' responses were similar to those described by Ogawa (1991) regarding faculty during the stage of enchantment. They were beginning to believe that this new principal would be committed to their school and would work with the best interests of their children in mind. However in most instances they withheld their final opinions, waiting to see how the new principal would respond to their wishes regarding certain changes in the school.

The parents expressed their understanding that the incoming principal was taking time to get a better understanding of the culture of the school. "To some degree she was feeling her way at the beginning. She was told. . . that the parents were expecting a very academic, intellectual administration until she came to the realization that wasn't what parents wanted." Another parent spoke of how the incoming principal "... masterfully derailed some powerful parents." She shared how the incoming principal had listened carefully to the many questions the parent council posed regarding an issue and then rephrased them to "... look at deeper issues about what we really want for our children even if it looks different than it did when we were kids." Another parent spoke of the upcoming school dance. She indicated that the previous principal would have "... put a kibosh on it before it got off the ground." This particular parent spoke of her appreciation for the new principal's open style. One parent shared her appreciation that the new principal

“... came in and took the bull by the horn and changed things. . . subtle changes that calmed a lot of people.”

Teachers

The teachers interviewed spoke of the interesting ways through which they began to learn about the new principal upon her appointment. With the exception of one teacher who was interviewed, all spoke about their phone calls to colleagues. One teacher related, “... it went like wildfire through the staff. I remember trying to find out everything I could about [the incoming principal].” The incoming principal had a good reputation in the school system and the staff was excited about her arrival at the school. They felt like they had gotten the best possible candidate to be the principal of their school.

The teachers valued informal opportunities for meeting the new principal. One teacher spoke of phoning the incoming principal and asking her to go for a walk over the summer. “We had been friends, and worked together previously. It just felt right to phone her and go for a walk by the river.” She took this opportunity to express her pleasure regarding the incoming principal’s appointment. Another teacher spoke about how pleased she was that her first meeting with the new principal had been very casual. It had happened in the latter part of August when they were both working in the school. This teacher had recently returned from a trip to Indonesia and this was the basis of much of their initial

conversation. All of the teachers expressed confidence in their new principal based on her reputation and the ways in which they had engaged in beginning conversations.

In this case it was the reputation of the principal and her casual way of meeting the staff that supported the faculty in the stage of enchantment. They were pleased with their belief that this new principal would be someone who would embrace their work. They felt confident that the new principal would honor the reputation they had, and that she would defend their work and beliefs when challenges were posed from the parent community. "I just knew that everything was going to be okay with [the incoming principal] here." The teachers spoke of the incoming principal's advocacy of them as professional either in dealings with parents or in assisting some teachers through the process of staffing. The teachers felt that the incoming principal was "... interested in our abilities and put her trust in us." The teachers spoke of the incoming principal's willingness to hear their opinions and of her strong support of the programs they valued.

The Support Staff

The initial opportunities to meet the new principal were significant for the support staff. They remembered the circumstances in which they met her and they remembered how they felt at the time. For those interviewed the first meeting led to a feeling of relief. They recalled

feeling a sense of confidence in the new principal. One person interviewed spoke about her first meeting with the new principal in late July. Both she and the incoming principal were in the school. She spoke about how friendly the incoming principal had been in that first meeting. In their conversation this support staff member asked the new principal how she would like things done once the staff arrived back at the end of August. She was told that there would be no changes at this point. "So, I felt comfortable at that point to know that no big changes were going to happen . . . I could enjoy the rest of my holiday." Another support staff member also spoke about how she was relieved in her first meeting with the new principal to know that "this person was planning to uphold the same philosophy that has been practiced in the school. . . I felt we needed to know that and our anxiety quickly disappeared."

One support staff member spoke about the letter she received from the incoming principal over the summer. "It was a form letter introducing herself and what her beliefs were and stuff like that." She did not meet the new principal until school started at the end of August. Their first meeting took place when this individual was putting up a bulletin board display in which she took great pride. "I had been doing this bulletin board for six years." She spoke of her first meeting with the new principal. "She came in and saw me working. She didn't know who I was and I didn't know who she was. She didn't walk up to me and say you

can't do this bulletin board any more." This individual continued to talk about how professional and caring the new principal seemed to be. She knew at that point that she would be able to work well with the new principal. This same individual spoke about how much the incoming principal had helped her in the beginning of the school year by increasing her working hours to a point where she could qualify for benefits through the school board. "[The incoming principal] really went to bat for me. I am so thankful to [the incoming principal] for all she did for me."

Another member of the support staff appreciated that the new principal confided in her. It made her feel appreciated and that the principal was treating her in a professional manner.

The support staff experienced a period of enchantment when their fears were allayed and the incoming principal demonstrated support for them in both their work and personal lives. At this stage the support staff believed the new principal was committed to the work that already existed within the school, and that she valued the work they did as members of the staff.

Disenchantment

Ogawa (1991) described the postsuccession stage of disenchantment as one that culminated in "... teachers' questioning the principal's commitment to them and to the school" (p. 44). He indicated that this stage is typically characterized with anger, insecurity and distrust. Ogawa

further indicated that the stage of disenchantment is precipitated by "... seeds sown earlier. . ." (p. 44) or issues that challenge the status quo of the school organization.

The Incoming Principal

The new principal believed that she had entered this school with no particular agenda for change. While valuing the reputation of the school, she questioned what her contribution might include. It became evident through some of the decisions she had to make that there were ways in which she would act differently from the previous principal. She felt that she had to "... live graciously within" the school. However, she realized that she could not subscribe to the notion that new principals have to sit back, watch and wait; she believed that would imply that she was not present in the life of the school.

After spending some time learning about the school and its community, the incoming principal began to see a clearer picture of the work she was hoping to facilitate while in this school community. She sensed that the staff, along with the previous principal, had worked to cultivate a division between teachers and parents. "I would be hoping to narrow [that division] so there isn't such a gap between us and them." She believed that the gift she would bring to this school community would be the "maintenance of the school's emphasis on generative curriculum and research for teaching and learning." She also believed that her work

in the school would be about "... building community and hearing more voices in decision making." While the principal valued and honored the work that had been done to this point in the school, she believed that her role was to "... ask the hard questions about where we go from here."

She believed that it would not be productive for the school community to "... float aimlessly supported by the previous successes of this school."

This was a shift in attitude from her previous position.

With the exception of the children interviewed, the stakeholders in this school community identified four controversial issues that led to a stage of disenchantment in this succession experience. Three of the issues about which they spoke were the invitation and deployment of volunteers within the school, the considerations related to the provision of a community lunchroom program in the school, and the celebration of special events and holidays as part of the school curriculum and culture. The fourth issue to which stakeholders referred was in the area of staffing: the current contractual strife in which teachers were involved and the necessity for the incoming principal to replace teaching staff who had left the school early in the fall. I asked the incoming principal to describe each of these issues to me because the processes of decision making and the outcome of the decisions regarding these issues defined new relationships and established beliefs, understandings and protocol that influenced the stakeholders' perceptions of the succession experience.

The first issue about which the incoming principal wished to talk was that of staffing. The teachers in the school district were currently involved in a process of bargaining in order to settle on a contract with the board of trustees. It had been a lengthy and sometimes negative experience. During the fall term of the school year, just as the new principal came into the school community, the teachers were in a "work-to-rule" position. Working to rule meant that the teachers would arrive at school fifteen minutes before classes began in the morning and leave fifteen minutes after classes ended. They would not contribute any time that was considered to be voluntary in nature. This bargaining stance made it difficult to schedule meetings or other professional development opportunities for the school staff. Furthermore, three teachers left the school early in the academic year as a result of illness or being offered positions elsewhere. This made it necessary to hire new teachers, thus disrupting classroom designations of children. The incoming principal remarked, "... some of these staffing issues were horrendous."

The incoming principal then discussed the volunteer program that existed at the school. Volunteers had always been welcome in the school. However, as a new principal came into the school community the staff began a discussion about how to utilize volunteers more effectively, drawing upon their strengths, backgrounds and skills. The incoming principal related that "... the staff were feeling that the current program

was not enabling learning in the classroom.” Members of the teaching staff expressed a concern that the volunteers sometimes shared information that threatened the privacy of students. They also felt that volunteers needed specific training to facilitate more effective learning opportunities for the children. The new principal shared the thoughts and concerns of the teaching staff with several parents, seeking feedback through a collaborative process. It was eventually decided that teachers would submit requests for volunteers and a volunteer coordinator would attempt to match volunteers with specific skills to teachers with specific requests. The time it took to seek feedback in order to streamline the process of scheduling and organizing volunteers delayed the date on which volunteers could begin working in the school. However after gathering information from staff and parents the incoming principal made the decision to implement changes to the volunteer program. “That program needed to be altered to support what was going on in classrooms.” The incoming principal knew that the decision to change the volunteer program was not favored by all stakeholders. “The room parents and volunteers initially took a lot of heat because the volunteer program was changing and was late starting. I know they did.”

The next issue about which the incoming principal spoke was the community lunchroom. During the years prior to the arrival of the new principal, the community lunchroom program that existed at the school

was limited to eighty children. When the maximum number was reached a waiting list was created. One of the incoming principal's initial actions was to challenge the message this limit sent to both current and potential members of the school community. The concern was that, on one hand, the school was inviting children from other communities to attend the school but the numbers of students that could be accepted at the school were dictated by the limits imposed by the lunchroom waiting list. She said with a laugh, "You had to have registered at birth in order to get into the program!" Then she questioned, "How is that facilitative of the building of community when there's clearly a hierarchy in terms of who has and who has not access to certain resources that exist in the school?" It was clear in the mind of the incoming principal that she wanted to initiate the question about how to make the lunchroom more accessible to members of the school community.

The incoming principal then discussed with me a decision that had been made by the previous principal and the staff regarding the celebration of special calendar events such as Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. It had been decided through conversations that had taken place over a number of years that focussing units of learning on celebrations of this sort interfered with the direction and activities of the school. Some of the parents felt that there needed to be more fun activities at the school, such as Crazy Hat Days and Easter celebrations. The

teachers and the previous principal felt that learning and curriculum should not be interrupted by celebrations that were dictated by the calendar or by special days that bolstered school spirit at the expense of learning time. The teachers maintained that learning is generated through bigger ideas such as "Relationships" and that celebrations in the school should be focussed on the current topic of study. The new principal remarked, "I see this conversation not so much about how it is we will recognize the calendar in our curriculum, but rather what traditions and celebrations will mark or characterize the culture of this building over the course of a year." She asserted, "... there will be frustration from parents and there will be frustration from teachers but I will not be swayed in my course." She felt that this issue was a prime example of a decision that had been made by the teaching staff without listening to the voices of parents and children. She believed that they needed to, "... work toward some sort of shared understanding about what it means to participate in the programs of the school." At the conclusion of this study, this issue still had not been resolved.

In some ways the new principal felt removed from the school. Personally she was dealing with an ill brother-in-law, the death of her father-in-law and her mother who had endured a heart attack during the school year. "I felt that each time I was called away to these personal traumas I needed to come back and start again to build what home was."

She wondered out loud if this sense of being removed from the school was also part of the natural time it takes for a community to be built and "... for people to begin to understand and support and be supportive." The incoming principal related that a colleague had told her it always takes until Teacher's Convention in February before a new principal feels at home in a new school community. The new principal concluded this part of our conversation by stating, "... this is a year I wouldn't wish to repeat any time soon."

The Children

The children who were interviewed in this case did not express their own feelings of disenchantment as described by Ogawa. However a poignant remark made by a child was, "I hear stuff about [the incoming principal] from my Mom." The child went on to explain that when principals are transferred they should have more choice about where they go. He indicated that while the incoming principal may have chosen this school, she probably would have preferred to go to one of the charter schools in the city. This particular child seemed to be expressing a belief he had heard from somewhere else that the new principal might have been happier in a different school. At the time of this research those children interviewed did not question the new principal's commitment to the school or to their community and they did not present feelings of anger toward the principal.

The Parents

In this case the parents who were interviewed did not experience the stage of disenchantment in the same ways that the teachers did. In most interviews parents expressed that they were impressed with the way in which the new principal negotiated the myriad of issues that arose during the school year. They were pleased that she was willing to at least hear their opinions. One parent interviewed said, "[The incoming principal] attempts to focus people on what is good for all the children in the school." They expressed a belief that the new principal was confined by a bureaucratic school system with regard to the staffing issues that presented themselves early in the year when three teachers left the school. Said one parent, "... after seven days the disenchantment started with some parents because of staffing problems. . . she had no control over. And yet, she [bore] the brunt of the anger of parents." They felt that their voices were being heard regarding the lunchroom issues and they believed that they were part of a collaborative decision making process regarding the issue of celebrations and traditions in the school. At the same time the parents felt that these issues had not been fully resolved at the time of this research. In short, most of the parents who were interviewed trusted the new principal.

In contrast, one parent spoke about her belief that there was a tension in the school community that existed because some of the teachers

liked the incoming principal's way of working in a school community and other teachers did not. This parent indicated that the community was unlikely to see the full potential of the new principal until after the first year of her tenure at the school had been completed. She believed that a number of teachers were leaving the school and that as the new principal hired more of her own staff the school would begin to more accurately reflect the new principal's beliefs. This parent expressed her opinion that the new principal had "... gone along with things she didn't agree with which has cost her in some instances her integrity." She went on to express her belief that some of the existing staff were not willing to support the new principal and this created a tension in the school that even the students felt.

The Teachers

Feelings of disenchantment for teachers became evident as they began to express dismay that the incoming principal practiced a different decision making model than that of the previous principal. They identified that the previous principal would support the teachers in the decisions they made as a staff and "simply told the parents this is how it was going to be." For some of the teachers, the new principal's willingness to engage parents in decisions, especially those having to do with curriculum and program delivery, was very disappointing. The teachers felt that this put them in a difficult situation. Referring to the

special days issue spoken of earlier one teacher said, “. . . [the parents] believe we should have crazy hat day and we don’t.” Another teacher said, “I am actually quite surprised that [the incoming principal] is willing to hear the parents’ voice on this matter!” The teachers felt that the new principal’s willingness to open these kinds of discussions to parents for input and consideration created a division among staff members as well as a division between staff and parents. Regarding the new principal’s invitation for parents to be part of the conversations the school was having around this issue one teacher said, “. . . previously everything went along quite smoothly and people were comfortable. . . and then it became a huge debate and a massive problem.”

Another cause of disenchantment that teachers identified was the beginning sense that the new principal did not support the professional development initiatives in which the staff had been involved with the previous principal. They had been participants in an extensive study with the local university that focussed on generative learning and teaching. Coincidentally, the research project had concluded just prior to the former principal’s departure. Although the teachers felt that this time of transition to a new professional development focus may have occurred even if the former principal had stayed, they believed that the arrival of the new principal impeded their professional development plans. “We hope that the role of professional development and curriculum

development will regain itself. . . ” reflected one teacher.

The Support Staff

Not all members of the support staff felt a sense of disenchantment as described by Ogawa. Feelings of disenchantment appeared to be related to how much the individual felt trusted by the new principal, and where they felt they were in the hierarchy of the support staff. One individual who worked closely with the new principal believed she was one of the new principal's confidantes and someone to whom the new principal turned in order to know about some of the individuals in the community. She knew that there had been concerns regarding issues in the school expressed in the school community but she saw herself as a support for the new principal and an advisor. “[The new principal] trusted me with information and I, in turn, was able to do the same thing with her.”

Another member of the support staff was quite dismayed that she had not been able to establish the same kind of relationship with the new principal as she had formed with the former principal. “. . . The administration this year has drawn very strongly together. . . the support staff are somewhat peons.” She continued to describe how “. . . suddenly someone comes along and changes my work style.” She noted that when the new principal arrived at the school she had taken time to meet individually with each teacher but had not done the same with the

support staff. This individual also discussed how she had been able to confide in the secretary prior to the new principal's arrival but that now, "... she has become part of the administration." Another support staff member indicated that everything had been going along very well until about January. "Now we have issues to deal with, where at the beginning with rose-colored glasses and saying okay, it will work out, we will adjust. . . ." She continued, "... had we not had a strike, had we not had a person with a nervous breakdown and health problems and all the rest of the conflicts that [the new principal] had to put up with and manage through this year maybe everything would have worked out just fine." With the exception of the secretary, the support staff indicated that the succession experience had been quite difficult because the new principal began to challenge and make changes to the way the school functioned. They believed that the new principal dealt with emergent issues in different ways than they believed the previous principal might have.

Looking Forward

The month of June marked the end of the first year of the new principal's tenure at this school. The stakeholders interviewed for this case study began to look forward to the next year. When speaking about their experiences during this principal succession the individuals interviewed shared their hopes for the upcoming year.

The Incoming Principal

The incoming principal spoke with emotion when considering this first year in a new school. She told about how there were times when she felt that she had compromised many of her personal beliefs about community and the work schools do on behalf of children. However, she felt that it was her job to "... walk beside people in the decisions that they have made and to look and to listen and study... but basically to be respectful of the colleagues that have preceded me..." She had made an effort to include the previous principal in the work of the school, and realized that she "had no right to come in and sever [staff] relationships with the previous principal and pretend that she never existed here." Unlike her own experience of leaving her previous school feeling as though she was a person who had "suddenly died," the new principal wanted to value the life and experience of the previous principal in this school. Therefore, she included the former principal in social functions and a study group. She valued the input of the previous principal rather than avoiding or not inviting this expertise.

She looked forward to the following year when she could pose her theory about communities working together on behalf of children and invite the staff to walk with her. The new principal shared her relief that in the next school year parents would be more closely connected to the decisions of the school which would be more compatible with her beliefs.

When projecting a vision of the new school year the new principal expressed her belief that the next year would be very different because it is in June when a staff makes arrangements and agreements about the following year and staff members either agree to come together or not. New staff would be hired by her and not by the previous principal. Therefore, the new staff would agree to come to the school under the new principal's terms and beliefs. She felt very optimistic about the upcoming year and concluded our interview by expressing her belief that a principal new to a school will change the course of that school forever. Therefore, the new principal needs to "walk cautiously in the cultural stream of that school."

The Children

In this case the children who were interviewed had experienced a positive year at school and expressed no concerns that the next year would be any different. They had accepted the change of principals. Said one student, "The school needs change. You can't have a school that goes a certain way every single day for years and years. . . you need a bit of a change and it's good to meet new people. . . ." One child expressed a hope that the new principal would spend more time in the classrooms in the next year so that he could feel more comfortable talking with her. "I don't feel totally safe I guess you could say. . . ." The same student expressed hope that the new principal would have time to meet with each

student individually in the next school year so “. . . we could get to know her better.” The children looked forward to the next school year.

The Parents

The parents who were interviewed expressed a hope that in the next school year the issues that had arisen in the current school year would be resolved. They believed that as new staff members who expressed beliefs more concurrent with those of the new principal were hired she would be more able to pursue the changes they sought. One parent said, “. . . the principal has control over who they hire. . . it makes sense that their philosophy gets carried on through the school.” Another parent appreciated watching the new principal emerge throughout the first year and looked forward to seeing more of “. . . the real person. . . .” She explained, “I guess [she thought] the parents were expecting a very academic, intellectual administration and she worked at that for a while until [she came to the realization] that wasn’t exactly what the parents had wanted.” The parents looked forward to seeing the resolution of the changes that the new principal had spearheaded and to continuing in this work with her in the next year. One parent remarked, “I think we are just seeing the beginning of this succession.”

The Teachers

Teachers looked forward to the upcoming year with more focus and direction. They anticipated that more changes would be occurring

and expressed a belief that the new principal's first year had been a "... year of transition. . . ." They believed that the new principal "... is still finding her position and what her role here is." One teacher shared her hope for a relief from the work-to-rule situation in which teachers had been earlier in the year and anticipated a greater focus on professional development which she felt had been absent in this year. Other teachers shared a belief that the forthcoming infusion of new faculty would herald greater changes in the school during the following year. They believed that many issues had been left unresolved. One teacher shared a fear that the new principal's willingness to hear the parent voice in the community would "... take us all over the place. . . we can waste a lot of energy going down all these blind alleys."

In summary, the teachers believed that they had not yet seen the full impact of the new principal's influence on the school community. Some felt fear while others felt encouraged by the changes they believed would happen in the following year. Ogawa (1991) labeled this a stage of accommodation when teachers express a belief that the new principal had not affected change in the teaching and learning practices they valued.

The Support Staff

As with the teachers, the support staff expressed a belief that incoming faculty would provide the kind of support the new principal needed in order to influence the kinds of changes she sought. They shared

their belief that the principal would not be fully effective until she had a staff that had been hired by her and who shared her beliefs and understandings. In their comments, support staff shared an understanding that in most cases the teachers who were leaving were those who could not agree with the new principal's stand on some of the issues they had experienced throughout the year. They were relieved that they would not have the same stress they had felt the year previously when anticipating the arrival of the new principal. Support staff expressed confidence in the new principal and felt relieved that decisions regarding their positions had been made before the summer break. They expressed security in knowing before the summer break what to expect in the new year. One support staff member commented, "I just remember last year and feel so good this year that I don't have to wonder. . . at least now I know [about the new principal] and know what to expect next year."

Summary

In chapter four principal succession as experienced in one school community was explored. The perspectives of the outgoing and incoming principals, children, parents, teaching faculty and support staff were presented. The succession in this case began in April 1997 with the outgoing principal's decision to leave the school. Although some stakeholders felt that the effects of the succession were not yet fully

realized, I concluded the research in June 1998.

The data were organized according to frameworks of presuccession and postsuccession established by Fauske and Ogawa (1987) and Ogawa (1991) who studied the succession experience in one school through the perspective of the teaching faculty. Chapter five provides a summary and analysis of the data gathered, as well as recommendations for action and future research.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflection

Given the literature I have read, my personal experience with principal succession, and the opportunity of closely studying one school community's principal succession experience I have to ask myself how my own beliefs and practices have been influenced as a result of my inquiry. This research began with my desire to learn more about how principal transitions affect members of school communities because of my belief that there needs to be more effective ways to facilitate principal transitions. I discovered that previous research neglected to examine how stakeholders other than teachers and administrators respond to principal succession. In order to facilitate more effective principal transitions, I felt we needed to know more about how members of a school community respond throughout the phenomenon of principal succession. I wondered if children, support staff and parents experience succession in the same stages as Fauske and Ogawa (1987) and Ogawa (1991) identified in their description of the responses of teachers to a principal succession experience. I had originally hoped that I would emerge from the research project with suggestions for practices that would better support and enhance the potential of principal succession in school communities. Early in the project it became apparent to me that studying a school

organization from the perspectives of many stakeholders afforded me a magnified glimpse into the intricate workings of a school organization and the minute details that create what we call the culture of a school. Many emergent issues came to light for me throughout this study.

Because I have chosen to address both answers to my questions and emergent issues that arose as a result of this research project I have organized this chapter into sections of summary and discussion around four significant understandings that emerged from the data. Following the discussion regarding my understandings, I will present implications for further research, recommendations for improving the process of principal succession, and my concluding remarks.

Understandings

Predictable Stages of Responses to Principal Succession

Principal succession precipitates a series of predictable responses from all members of a school organization.

Stakeholders involved in the principal succession I studied experienced stages of succession similar to those described in previous research (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Fauske, 1991; Hart, 1987, 1998; Johnson & Licata (1995); LeGore & Parker, 1997; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1984, 1985; Parkay & Hall, 1992). Fear, detachment, expectation, enchantment, disenchantment and accommodation are stages within a theoretical framework of presuccession and postsuccession that Fauske and Ogawa

(1987) and Ogawa (1991) applied to organize the responses of teachers to the experience of principal succession. These stages of succession characterized the experiences of all stakeholders in this case study. My question regarding whether or not all stakeholders experience stages of succession in ways similar to faculty was answered in the affirmative.

I observed that each stakeholder group experienced the various stages in unique ways and the intensity of each stage appeared to be affected by an individual's sense of placement within the hierarchy of influence in the organization. Each stakeholder group presented a unique perspective or view of the school organization and their role within it. This influenced the way they experienced the succession.

Fear

The outgoing principal and the faculty in this case sought to protect the status quo of the school organization. They experienced fear that a new principal would challenge their accomplishments and redirect the school's focus from that which they had fostered. The children feared that the predictability of their environment would be altered and that their safety would be compromised. The parents represented in this case expressed two competing viewpoints about the direction in which they wanted to see the school go and feared the principal would support one viewpoint over the other. The support staff feared their employment would be changed significantly as a result of a change in principals and

expressed concern that their roles would be changed under the new leadership.

Detachment

All stakeholders in this case experienced some sense of detachment in the succession experience. Consistent with Fauske and Ogawa (1987) the faculty expressed a sense of detachment from the process of selecting a new principal. While they appreciated the opportunity to be included in the identification of characteristics they sought in a new principal, they also felt that, in the final analysis, their opinions would not be considered imperative in the selection process. In fact, the teachers believed that it was the parents who possessed the power to force the school board to find a principal candidate who could match the reputation of the school.

While students and support staff expressed detachment from the process of principal succession, I am not convinced it was the phenomenon itself that precipitated this response from them. I believe that in this case the students and support staff did not view themselves as contributors to decisions that would affect the school and were therefore detached from most of the organizational and leadership imperatives in the school.

Expectation of Change

Hoy and Aho (1973) wrote that faculties associate principal succession with an expectation of change in the school organization. The

data in this case study are consistent with previous research and suggest that all members of the school organization associate principal succession with anticipated changes in the direction and organization of the school. All stakeholders in this case expressed an expectation that as a new principal arrived at the school, change would occur. They expected that the new principal would affect the culture and organizational structure of the school according to the beliefs embraced by the new principal and the experience and strengths she possessed.

Enchantment

All stakeholders experienced a stage of enchantment when they believed the new principal possessed the qualities they sought or demonstrated beliefs congruent with their own. The stage of enchantment depended on the belief resident within each stakeholder that the new principal's actions were supportive of the school community. For teachers and some parents in this case, enchantment was related to the principal's espoused belief that the school was successful and that she would be spending time finding ways to support them in the existing work of the school. For other parents enchantment was related to their perception that the new principal was willing to hear their opinions and to challenge existing beliefs and actions within the school. The support staff members experienced enchantment as they came to realize that the new principal was supportive of them and their current work. Children gained

confidence during a stage of enchantment when the new principal became someone they could trust.

It is safe to say that the stage of enchantment was related to feelings of relief for all stakeholders. They were pleased to see that the new principal would support them in their current work, that they could trust her, that she would listen to their opinions and a call for change in the school. The stage of enchantment continued as long as a stakeholder group felt supported by the new principal.

Disenchantment

As the new principal began to position herself in decisions that needed to be made, such as those around staffing, volunteer programs and core pedagogical beliefs in the school community, it was inevitable that she would express disagreement with someone in the organization. When her decisions challenged the expectations of an individual or a group, reactions were characterized with disillusionment and disappointment. I believe that the stage of disenchantment was perpetuated in this case when the new principal did not act or respond in ways that people anticipated. Real or imagined understandings the stakeholders had formed about the new principal as a result of her reputation and their initial meetings with her created false expectations. For example, the teachers relied on the reputation of the principal to support their belief that she would not challenge the status quo of the school. When she

began to question the lack of parental input in decision making in the school, teachers began to feel disenchanted. They believed they had become repositioned in the hierarchy of power within the school organization.

All stakeholders in this school community experienced succession in similar stages. However, the intensity and outcome varied for each stakeholder group depending on the variables associated with each stage of succession and the amount of authority the group felt they possessed in the decision making processes of the school.

Variables that Affect the Outcomes of Principal Succession.

Stages of succession are influenced by many variables.

My analysis of the data presented for this case study revealed that the outcome of the succession was influenced by variables consistent with those identified in previous studies of principal succession (Firestone, 1990; Johnson & Licata, 1995; LeGore & Parker, 1997; Miskel & Cosgove, 1984, 1985; Ogawa & Hart, 1985; Rowan & Denk, 1984). Considerations such as the reason for the departure of the current principal, the selection process of the successor, and the reputation of the successor significantly influenced the timing and intensity of the shift from one stage of the succession to the next.

Reason for the Departure

The reason for the departure of the outgoing principal influenced

the responses of individuals to the new principal and shaped the incoming principal's initial work in the school organization. Even though some members of the school organization wondered if the outgoing principal had been forced by the superintendent to go to her new placement, it was generally understood that she had independently made the decision that it was time to leave her current school. There was an understanding in the school community that all principals leave after a certain period of time and stakeholders were aware that the departing principal had been at the school for six years. Even though some were shocked with the sudden nature of the announcement, they were not really surprised that their principal would be leaving. This raises a significant question about how an impending succession is communicated to a school community. I had to wonder if it was wise to keep the information from the community until a decision had been formalized. The community was willing to support the incoming principal, at least in part, because they wanted to support the outgoing principal in her new role.

Miskel and Cosgrove (1984) found that when a predecessor advances to a career position that appears to recognize the skills and background he or she possesses, the successor may feel a reluctance to initiate immediate changes. In this case the perception was that the departing principal was being valued by the school system because she was being placed in a school they believed required a strong, effective

principal. At the same time, the incoming principal at the case school felt honored to have been appointed to this school and was reluctant to facilitate change because of the reputations of both the school and her predecessor. The incoming principal was willing to overlook actions and cultural ways of being in the school that may have contradicted her own beliefs as long as she felt there was no harm to the children.

The organization was willing to accept the incoming principal because they were not surprised to see the outgoing principal leave. They believed the outgoing principal was being valued by the school district. This was not perceived to be a forced succession even though it was dictated by time.

The Selection Process

In this case, the adult stakeholders in the school community were given the opportunity to identify characteristics they would like the incoming principal to possess. The outgoing principal recommended and approved of her successor. Although some teachers, parents and support staff expressed cynical feelings about the process, believing that the new principal had already been selected by the district superintendent, it was generally acknowledged that the incoming principal possessed beliefs and capabilities congruent with those identified by the stakeholders. The opportunity to participate in the selection process engendered a sense of confidence in the new principal, and propagated the stage of enchantment

on her arrival.

The Reputation of the Successor

Stakeholders made initial judgements about how successful the new principal would be, based on her reputation within the school system. In this case, the new principal's reputation was positive. The departing principal had recommended her, and individuals in the community had heard from a variety of sources that she was an excellent candidate for the position. Teachers and support staff believed the new principal would support the beliefs and processes that were already in place at the school. Parents hoped the new principal would negotiate some changes that they sought. Gordon and Rosen (1981) found that the perceived characteristics of the successor, even though they may vary from his or her actual characteristics, play a part in determining how smoothly the successor and the group will develop their new association.

The incoming principal's decision that she would be an observer in the school to determine how she could best contribute was short-lived. Soon after her arrival, she noted that some of her core beliefs about community involvement in the school community's decision making processes were challenged by the present decision making processes. It was this contradiction with existing systems of belief in the school that led to a stage of disenchantment for the faculty of the school. When the new principal began to assert beliefs that did not correspond with

stakeholders' perceptions that she would act in the same or, at least, in similar ways as her predecessor, individuals became disillusioned and disappointed.

It is evident that variables connected to the process of succession have a significant influence on the outcome of the succession. The outcome of principal transition can be manipulated by closely analyzing the existent factors and anticipating how these factors will influence the school community.

Hierarchies in Schools

Powerful hierarchical structures should be challenged in principal succession.

Through a research lens that was focussed on principal succession in one school I observed an established hierarchy of position within the organization. This raised a question for me about how stakeholders' perceptions of principal succession arose from their understandings regarding their place in the organization. I questioned whether a stage framework for principal succession such as that presented by Fauske and Ogawa (1987) and Ogawa (1991) would only apply to school organizations that continue to honor traditional hierarchical structures. Previous principal succession research supports a hierarchical perspective of school communities by viewing and studying the phenomenon only through the perspective of the administrators or faculty.

I have concluded that the responses of the organization would be different throughout principal succession if more of the stakeholders had viewed themselves as empowered, informed members of the community. Throughout my examination of this school community during principal succession I noted that each of the stakeholder groups expressed feelings of decreased empowerment and decreased efficacy throughout the principal succession experience. When the teachers' positional authority within the hierarchy was challenged they became disillusioned. As well, parents vied for a more powerful place within the hierarchy. Each group believed that someone else was in control, no matter where they were in the hierarchy of the school community. For example, the principals in this case felt some element of control from their school system. The outgoing principal was distanced from the process of finding a successor even though she took it on herself to make specific recommendations about possible candidates. The teachers felt that a new principal had the power to change the way they worked and to foster a new set of beliefs and understandings about teaching and learning. The support staff felt no sense of being part of the organization other than the fact that they worked in the school and could be told by the principal what their jobs would entail. The children felt they were under the direction of the principal, teachers and their parents.

Those who expressed the most vulnerability throughout this

succession experience were the support staff. They believed that they were viewed as the least important members of the school community and felt they had the least influence on the organization. The support staff members, including the administrative secretary who valued her close relationship with both the departing and incoming principals, believed their individual roles and positions in the school were in jeopardy with the impending principal succession. These individuals, with the exception of the administrative secretary, were the last to be informed officially regarding the transition that was to take place and they were the last employees to know who the new principal would be. Their meetings with the new principal were by chance, except for the rare occasion when they were invited to a staff meeting. They did not have the opportunity to meet with the new principal on an individual basis to discuss their perspective of the school, their hopes for their roles within the school or their vision for the school. The embedded ranking system of the support staff was a hierarchy of importance based on the number of hours one worked, the years one had been at the school, and the amount of knowledge one possessed about the school community. These individuals found themselves in the position of having to anxiously await the decisions of others to determine their destiny in the school. Would the support staff have experienced the same fears and concerns if they had felt included as integral, important members of the school? A partial answer

to this question resides in the experience of the school secretary throughout the succession. She was an invaluable source of information about the community and the workings of the school. Once she had established that she would be valued and trusted by the new principal, her fears were alleviated and she was able to move on in her work.

Parents and teachers unwittingly competed for opportunities to assert their opinions and wishes regarding the direction of the school. The incoming principal's willingness to hear the voice of the parents displaced the teachers from the position they had previously held as a primary voice in the hierarchy of the school. In this case the hierarchy was challenged by the incoming principal. She possessed beliefs about community involvement that differed from those of her predecessor.

The stakeholders in this school community were well intentioned in their espoused belief that they were child-centered in their decisions. However, noticeably absent from the hierarchical structure in the case school were the children. I wonder how different this succession story would have been had children's voices been more prevalent?

I believe hierarchical structures in schools need to be challenged. In this case, a powerful cultural hierarchy tended to exclude learners, marginalize staff and parents and inhibit the progress of the organization. Townsend (1996) observed that there appear to be very few principals who appreciate the potential of the school community to assist in the

achievement of important goals in school development. He expressed concern that many principals did not have a plan in place to build “essential bridges between staff and community that would promote effective partnerships of mutual benefit” (p. 8). Principal succession offers an opportunity for existing hierarchical structures to be examined and challenged by the incoming principal, and for building bridges that invite the school community into the school.

Exclusion of Children

Children are not invited to contribute in the decisions that significantly affect them.

The children I interviewed seemed to observe principal succession as an adult-oriented process in which they had little involvement. They did not even appear to have input into the ways they wanted to say farewell to the outgoing principal and welcome to the new principal. Instead, they were invited to participate in rituals of farewell that the teachers and parents controlled.

However, to me the children appeared to be the most accepting and resilient group throughout this particular principal succession. It seemed to be an unspoken expectation that the children would accept whatever decisions were made on their behalf. They anticipated change, watched for change and welcomed change. School seemed to be something that happened to children rather than with them.

I believe the stakeholders in this case were well intended in their belief that they were working on behalf of the children in their care. However it was evident that the children at this school were excluded from the hierarchy of authority in the decision-making processes of the school. This is a significant observation for me because the unspoken belief that children cannot make reasonable judgements for themselves and about their environment reverberates through the findings of this study. I believe this is ironic because it challenges the centrality of children in schools.

Children were not consulted regarding their hopes for a new principal and the possibility that the children might have been affected by a transition of principals was not considered. As I came to this conclusion about the children in the case school I wondered if their input and expressed wishes might have tempered the responses of parents and teachers at various stages of the succession.

Implications for Further Research

This case study is intended to contribute to an increasing body of literature concerned with the phenomenon of principal succession. It is important to remain cognizant of the need to continue in this important research tradition. We need to continue to illuminate the potential of principal succession to rejuvenate school communities and to inform educational leaders, assisting them in the decisions they make when

guiding individuals and communities through this complex process.

Ogawa (1995) stated that further research is required to more fully understand the complexities of principal succession. Several questions worthy of further investigation arise from this research

1. A primary focus of this research project was to determine if parents, children and support staff experience principal succession in stages similar to those experienced by faculty. Because stakeholders other than teachers and principals have been ignored in previous published research, it is important that the results of this study be confirmed or dismissed by comparable studies. Understanding how communities respond to and shape succession experiences can assist educational leaders in determining effective approaches to facilitating the process of principal succession.
2. It would be an interesting focus of study to continue to look at the issue of the effects of hierarchical structures in schools. While studies focussed on principal succession can magnify the hierarchies that exist in school organizations, it can be determined that hierarchies play an important role in the positive or negative outcome of principal succession in a school community. A further understanding of the ways in which incoming principals effectively or ineffectively challenge existing hierarchies could illuminate our understanding of the potential of succession. More importantly, a

focus on challenging hierarchical structures could provide further insight into the broader context of educational leadership and reform.

3. Another possible focus would be to study a school organization where the outgoing principal had been unsuccessful and subsequently removed or fired, or where the incoming principal experienced a lack of success. Studying succession from these perspectives could provide further insight into a variety of stakeholder expectations and perceptions of the qualities and characteristics of a successful principal.
4. Ogawa (1995) pointed out that traditional leadership succession research fails to address a distinction between administration and leadership. Leadership succession in an organizational perspective has traditionally focussed on the principal as the key leadership figure within a school. This study was no different in that it focussed on the succession of the principal. In order to challenge existing understandings regarding the potential influence of leadership succession, studies that look closely at how school organizations respond to the succession of unofficial leaders in the school need to be designed.
5. Noonan and Goldman (1985) hypothesized that the postsuccession stage of enchantment characterized by feelings of rejuvenation and

enthusiasm could be a result of a faculty returning from summer holidays with a sense of optimism and a desire to prove themselves. The principal succession in this case study took place in a traditional calendar year where the new principal entered the school organization at the beginning of a new school year when teachers and other community members were energized, optimistic and refreshed. Studies that investigate principal succession at various times of the year could challenge existing theoretical frameworks of principal succession.

Improving the Process

One of the goals I had at the beginning of this project was to emerge with an increased understanding of how to improve the process of principal succession for all stakeholders. Recognizing that principal succession is a complex process that affects all members of a school organization I believed that more attention was needed in the facilitation of this process.

An attempt to create a list of recommended procedures for principal succession is futile given what we know about the complexity of school communities. Each school is comprised of variables that contribute to the unique nature of its own community. However we know the goal of a principal entering an established school community is to become a respected member and affirmed leader of that existing social organization.

If the new principal is unsuccessful in achieving this goal, the implications for the school organization are negative. Challenging existing beliefs and then reconsidering existing procedures connected with principal succession may be the most effective way to facilitate more positive succession experiences with school communities.

Changing the Perspective

Perhaps the most important recommendation that must be drawn from this research project is that principal succession cannot be viewed as a principal-centered event. School districts that focus on leadership development in their succession planning must begin to find ways to invite school communities into the work of planning for their schools. This includes planning for succession and infers the need to teach school-based leadership how to hear and empower the voices of all stakeholders. In recognizing the voices of stakeholders, schools hone and value the expertise resident within their communities. This suggests that school communities are very able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their schools. If this is true, then school communities are equally able to identify the strengths they require in a school leader who can move the organization forward.

Timing

The consideration of timing in principal succession is twofold: the period of time over which the succession occurs, and the time of year in

which the succession is to take place. School systems must emphasize issues of timing when planning for principal succession. Support for successor principals should be facilitated through the provision of time for visits to the new school thus ensuring opportunities for the successor principal to work with the departing principal. Furthermore, successor principals should be given the opportunity to work closely with members of the school community in order to confirm or dispel rumors and fears and to begin establishing relational patterns before the succession occurs. It is imperative that principal succession be viewed as a series of events rather than as one event.

The outcome of the succession can be greatly influenced by the time of year the new principal begins the process of becoming immersed in the new school environment. The beginning of the school year may not be the best time for a principal to be introduced to an established school culture. For example, at the end of a school year, the incoming principal could be involved in decisions that would affect the following year. Introduction in the middle of the year would give the new principal time to observe the patterns of the organization and to plan accordingly. Decisions about the timing of succession need to be correlated with the needs of the organization.

Increased Understanding

Educational leaders must be apprised of the potential for principal

succession to be a dynamic, positive experience for a school community. They must also be aware of the potential for this series of events to negate progress. An increased understanding of the stages of succession and the variables that can influence stakeholder groups can assist principals new to a school in interpreting the culture of the school community they are entering. In addition, school communities must be made aware of the dynamic social forces that shape the outcome of a succession. Increased awareness for all stakeholders creates the potential to dismantle hierarchical structures and inhibit the competition these structures enhance.

Conclusion

As I conclude this project I have emerged a different person from whom I was when I initiated this work. I began with a belief that there must be a way to improve the processes we employ to facilitate principal succession. I conclude with an understanding that the ways we facilitate principal succession reflect underlying beliefs about leadership in schools.

I must admit a sense of disillusionment. Carlson (1961) taught educators that the outcome of leadership succession in an educational setting is influenced by the origin of the successor. In other words, we can manipulate the outcome of a succession. Since then a research tradition has studied the phenomenon of principal succession from many vantages and added increasingly to a body of literature. Researchers have

repeatedly concluded that principal succession affects school organizations and that many variables contribute to the outcome of a succession. I have to wonder if all this research has indeed informed practice in school systems in North America. I am not convinced that we have significantly changed the way we facilitate principal succession experiences in spite of research that has spanned a period of over forty years. Nor am I convinced that educators have adequately embraced the potential of leadership to empower people other than those in designated positions of authority.

In my recommendations I called for further research about principal succession. However I have also proposed that the ways we approach principal succession reflect what we truly believe about leadership in schools. Rose (1995) shared the thoughts of teachers who asked, "How do we make positive change sustainable? How do we create a rigorous curriculum that does not lose people?" (p. 433). Perhaps a response to these questions resides in some of the findings of this research project. Could it be that positive change is sustainable in environments that have empowered all members of the organization to contribute to the forces that have motivated the change? Of course! One need only read current literature focussed on leadership to understand this premise. Why then, is there a lack of evidence of a systemic shift of the paradigm of leadership? Why do we still approach principal succession from a principal-centered

perspective?

In spite of my disillusionment I remain hopeful. I am optimistic that more educators will look to the potential of the dynamic, complex interactions among all stakeholders of an organization in order to create and sustain positive, effective change. I hope that we will be able to prepare and lead school communities into the twenty-first century in ways that honor and respect all individuals.

It is likely that to some this conclusion may appear to stray quite far from the intention of the research questions originally pursued. However, as I wrote in the first sentence of this thesis, 'I believe that learning involves a process of revisiting understandings and seeing them in new ways.' I now see the phenomenon of principal succession differently. I now possess a clearer understanding of the complexities surrounding organizational leadership. Interestingly, as I complete this thesis I am embarking on my first experience in the role of principal. I hope the understandings I have gained as a result of this project will reflect in the work that I do.

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APPENDIX A

Research Project

Do you or your children have a story to tell about what it is like for a school community to experience a change of principal? If so. . . read on!!!

My name is Jeff Jones, and I am currently on Sabbatical from the _____ Board of Education, in order to pursue graduate studies in the area of Educational Leadership and Administration.

In order to complete a thesis, I am presently conducting a study to determine how a change in school principal affects a school community. Existing studies of this nature are few, and conclusions remain inconsistent. I have also noted that existing, published studies of principal succession have neglected to include the perspective of parents and students.

I am pleased to have been invited to focus on the _____ School community for the purposes of my study and welcome the opportunity to talk to any parents and students about your experiences this year, with the arrival of your new principal _____.

Your input would be confidential, and any written documentation would refer to you only in terms of your role in the school community. For example: "Several parents indicated a concern about. . . ." At no time will the _____ School community be named in the thesis or any published articles related to this study.

If you have a story to tell about your experiences as a new principal has come into your community, I would like to hear it. I am also interested in hearing your feelings about the process currently in place for facilitating a change in principal. If you are interested in sharing your perspective of this issue, I would need about an hour of your time in order to conduct an interview. You may contact me directly, or leave your name and phone number at the school if you are interested in chatting with me!

Jeff Jones
220-6290 (office)

APPENDIX B

_____ agrees to participate in the research project titled "Responses to Principal Succession: A Case Study" conducted by Jeff Jones under the supervision of Dr. C. F. Webber in the Graduate Division of Educational Research at the University of Calgary. The purpose of the study is to investigate the responses of a school community to a change in leadership in the school.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this project. Your input will become part of a growing body of knowledge which is helping educators to plan for more effective leadership development and staffing.

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from this research at any time without penalty. It is important that you understand that your participation will have no effect on your position within the school, the _____ Board of Education or the community.

Your participation will include audiotaped interviews and providing appropriate correspondence and other materials which may be related to the research. You will have the opportunity to read the transcripts of your interview and correct, change or add what you think is important before your words and ideas are used in the research. Furthermore, in any published results no conflict situation will be reported which might be sufficiently distinctive as to allow the deduction of the identity of yourself or others.

The audiotapes, transcripts and other data related to this research will be kept in the researcher's home in a locked file cabinet, for a maximum of two years after the completion of the project, after which time they will be destroyed.

Your name will not be used at any time in any publications or reports of the findings of this research. You will be referred to in terms of your referent group within the school (ie. Student, parent, support staff or teacher). The researcher will not discuss your individual input with anybody, except in terms of your referent group. All data, such as audiotapes, transcripts and other related documents will be labelled only in terms of your referent group; no names will be attached. Professional integrity and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the project.

The identity of administrators who participate will be kept confidential in any publications or reports of the findings of this research. It may be possible for the readers of the final report to identify participants through descriptive passages.

Neither names of participants nor the participating school community will be included in any materials published as a result of this study.

If you have further questions regarding the project or the contents of this consent form, please contact the principal investigator:

Jeff Jones	
Graduate Student	
Graduate Division of Educational Research	
The University of Calgary	Telephone: (403) 220-6920 (office)
Calgary, Alberta	(403) 932-4676 (res.)
T2N 1N4	E-Mail: jonesj@acs.ucalgary.ca

Questions concerning matters related to this project of the contents of this consent form may also be directed to the principal investigator's academic advisor:

Dr. C. F. Webber
Associate Professor
Faculty of Education
The University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta
T2N 1N4

Telephone: (403) 220-5694
Fax: (403) 282-8479
E-Mail: cwebber@acs.ucalgary.ca

If you have any questions concerning your participation in this project, you may contact this office:

Chair of the Education Joint Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education
The University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta
T2N 1N4

Telephone: (403) 220-5626

Any complaints associated with this research should be directed to:

Specialist, Accountability Services

Board of Education
Alberta

Telephone: (403)
Fax: (403)
E-Mail:

You may also contact the Office of the Vice-President (Research) at the University of Calgary at (403) 220-3381.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding your participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigator, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

(Please print your name here)

(Your signature)

(Date)

In addition, students or any participants under the age of 18 are required to provide the following information.

(Name of school principal)

(Name of parent or guardian)

(Signature of school principal)

(Signature of parent or guardian)

(Date)

(Date)

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions are typical of the ones posed in each stage of the interviews conducted for the purposes of this research. Because the interviews were semi-structured, wording and the order of questions varied.

1. Tell me a bit about yourself and how you came to be a member of this school community.
2. Could you describe some of the ways you are involved in the school?
3. How do you feel about this school, and your opportunity to be part of this community?
4. What was your relationship with the former principal like?
5. As you know, it was about one year ago when you learned that [the former principal] would be leaving. How did you find out? How did that news make you feel?
6. Could you tell about some of the decisions the former principal made with which you agreed? With which you disagreed?
7. How were you involved in decisions that were made at the school?
8. In your opinion, were there issues at the school that you feel the former principal handled well? That she handled poorly?
9. How did you discover the former principal was leaving? How did that make you feel?

10. How do you think other people felt about the change that would be happening at the school?
11. Describe how you learned who the new principal would be.
12. Do you feel you got to be a part of choosing the new principal?
13. Did you do anything to learn about the new principal once she was identified?
14. How did you first meet the new principal?
15. Could you tell about your relationship with the new principal?
16. In your opinion, how has the new principal influenced the school community?
17. Have you noticed any specific ways the new principal has acted the same as the former principal? Differently?
18. Are there specific issues that have arisen, which the former principal would have dealt with differently from the new principal? The same?
19. Has the new principal influenced you to contribute differently to the school?
20. In your opinion, are there issues that have arisen because a new principal came to the school?
21. If you could contribute any advice to people who make decisions about staffing principals in schools, what would you say?
22. Are there any ways this change of principals could have been a more positive experience for you?

APPENDIX D

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Principals

Outgoing Principal:

Caucasian female, early fifties, latter stage of career. Her career had spanned a period of over twenty years with the same school district. She had spent six years at the case school, as assistant principal for two and subsequently as principal for four. Previous career experiences had been as classroom teacher and as a district specialist. This individual had a spouse and teenage children.

Incoming Principal:

Caucasian female, early fifties, latter stage of career. Her career had spanned a period of over twenty years with the same school district. Previous to moving to the case school, she had experienced three years in her first principalship in a small inner-city school. Her career had been comprised of experiences as a classroom teacher, teacher-librarian, district specialist and assistant principal. Colleagues described this individual as being deeply reflective and very professional. She was married, with no children.

Faculty

Assistant Principal:

Caucasian male, mid forties, mid career. This individual's career had

spanned a period of just over fifteen years. His career roles involved being a teacher in a variety of settings, and being an assistant principal in one other school setting previous to being at the case school. At the time of the study, he was seeking a principalship. He had a spouse and no children.

Teacher One:

Caucasian female, late twenties, beginning stage of career. Teaching experience prior to the case school had been limited to short term contracts and substitute teaching. This individual was working on a Masters Degree in education at the time of this study. Her goal at that time was to be an Assistant Principal. She shared that because she was single she enjoyed the amount of time she could dedicate to her studies and her career.

Teacher Two:

Caucasian female, midthirties, midcareer. This individual described the joy she got out of teaching and her career. At the time of the study, her goal was to remain focussed on her work with her class and within the school. She was highly involved with professional development activities offered through the school system. She was married, with no children.

Teacher Three:

Asian female, early fifties, latter stage of career. This individual described herself as being highly energized by her work and the focus of the case

school. She felt quite confident in her work as a teacher, and expressed a desire to continue in her teaching endeavours until she retired. Married, with grown children, this individual valued the time she spent with young people.

Teacher Four:

Caucasian female, late forties, beginning career. At the time of the study, this individual was in a position of having to leave the school because her position had been declared surplus. She had not particularly enjoyed her experiences at the case school, and was looking forward to moving to another school. At the time of the study, this individual's involvement with professional development activity was limited. She was in the beginning of her teaching career, having entered the profession, as she described, much later than most. This individual was divorced, with no children.

Support Staff

Support Staff One:

Caucasian female, late fifties, latter stage of career. Describing herself as one who thoroughly enjoyed her job, this individual expressed a great deal of pleasure about being involved in the case study. She valued opportunities to interact with others in the school system who held positions similar to her own. Married, with grown children, she had been involved in many community activities over a period of several years.

She was looking forward to retirement within a few years of the study.

Support Staff Two:

Caucasian female, late forties, mid--to--latter stage of career. She had been a support staff member for about ten years at the time of the study, having worked in three schools. This individual expressed nervousness about being involved in the study. She valued her role as a support for students and staff, and sought to improve knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning through a variety of staff development opportunities offered by the local university and through the school system. A divorced mother of teenagers and grown children, she expressed that she had significant responsibilities as a parent.

Support Staff Three:

Caucasian female, late forties, mid--to--latter stage of career. She had been a support staff member at three schools over a period of approximately six years. Married, with teenage children, this individual enjoyed her work at the school. She expressed that she valued being able to work in a school during the same hours as her children were in their schools, and that she could be home when they were home.

Children

Child One:

Caucasian male, nine years, grade four. This boy expressed excitement about being involved in the case study, and shared that he really enjoyed

doing things that are different. At the time of the study, it was difficult to arrange a time to meet with this student because he was so involved in music lessons and sports activities. He had no siblings.

Child Two:

Caucasian female, eleven years, grade six. In introductory conversation, this student showed her artwork, and described her interest in being an artist. She felt involved in the school as a leader and expressed that she liked to do a variety of interesting things when she was at school.

Child Three;

Caucasian female, eight years, grade three. This student was shy, and it was difficult to make conversation that extended beyond one or two word answers. She was reluctant to share much about herself and her family.

Child Four:

Asian male, nine years, grade four. This student was also shy about sharing information regarding his family. However, seemed to enjoy being able to talk about the school and his experience as a new principal came into the school.

Child Five:

Caucasian male, eight years, grade three. An outgoing and cheerful student, this youngster enjoyed sharing jokes and appeared to be very comfortable with an adult. His vocabulary seemed to be advanced for his age, and he seemed to have prepared for the interview. In other words,

he seemed to know what he wanted to say about the experience of having a new principal come to the school.

Parents

Parent One:

Caucasian female, whose family lived within the school boundaries. She was a teacher at another school in the same school district as the case school. This individual was rarely able to be involved as a volunteer at the school, but she participated actively on the School Council. She considered both she and her spouse to be actively involved in the rearing of their children.

Parent Two:

Caucasian female who had chosen the case school for her child to attend and felt that she had had to lobby to ensure a place for him. She drove her child to school each day, from an inner-city community, and volunteered frequently at the school. She was university educated and had chosen to be a homemaker.

Parent Three:

Caucasian female, school council executive, university educated, homemaker. The mother of three children, this individual valued the opportunity to be able to parent her children and to be involved in the school community. She considered both she and her spouse to be active parents, but indicated that because she had had the privilege of choosing

to be home with the children she was more involved than her husband.

Parent Four:

Asian female, limited involvement in school, university educated, homemaker, mother of two children. This parent drove her two children to school but chose not to participate as a volunteer in the school community. She had chosen the school for her children because she had spent considerable time researching schools and believed the case school would be the best opportunity for her children. She considered both she and her spouse to be equally involved in the rearing of their children.

Parent Five:

Caucasian female, frequent involvement in the school, responsible for a business she managed from her home. This individual communicated that she was very busy, and although interested in her child's education was unable to be involved as a volunteer in the school. She had two children and a spouse. She indicated that her spouse was also very involved in his professional endeavours.